



A Call To Endurance

Hebrews 10:32-36

1. Remember Your Past Victories (verses 32-34).

2. Look to Your Future Reward (verses 34-36).

In our exposition of the book of Hebrews, we arrive this morning at Hebrews 10:32-36. As we begin, I want to tell you a bit about the life of John Bunyan, author of one of the most popular books of all time, "The Pilgrim's Progress." John Bunyan was born in England in 1628. Bunyan was born into a poor working class family. He was trained as a "tinker" (i.e. a metal-worker, who repaired pots and pans and other small metal items). When he was 21 years old, he married. Somewhere during the first 5 years of his marriage, he was converted to Christ.

Although he was poorly educated, he poured over the Scriptures and became a mighty powerful preacher. One man said, "Mr. Bunyan preached so New Testament-like he made me admire and weep for joy, and give him my affections." ^[1] He would regularly preach to a crowd of 1,000 people. So powerful was his preaching that the great intellectual giant of Oxford, John Owen, would willingly go and listen to him preach. When King Charles found out about this, he asked Owen, the great scholar of the day, why he enjoyed going to listen to such an uneducated man preach. Owen replied, "I would willingly exchange my learning for the tinker's power of touching men's hearts."

Bunyan lived in a day of religious controversy. There was a constant battle between the Anglican church (the church of England) and the Puritans. The Anglicans followed the Book of Common prayer and sought high control in their churches. The Puritans were for freedom in their churches, and preferred to submit themselves only to the teaching of the Scriptures. This controversy was often political. Those in power were able to enact laws for or against their persuasion. Ultimately, it led, in 1662, to the expulsion of some 2,000 Puritan pastors from their churches. Such was the context of John Bunyan's day.

Now, in the political environment of the day, Bunyan's preaching ability could be a good thing, or it could be a bad thing. It would be a good thing if your theological persuasion was in power. It would be a bad thing if your side wasn't in power. Well, in the days of John Bunyan, his side had enough power to allow him to preach freely for about 10 years. Then the political winds turned against Bunyan's position. He was jailed for preaching.

This took place about a few years after his wife died and shortly after he remarried. At one point, his wife came to protest before the authorities in August of 1661, pleading for his release from prison. She stood before several men who would decide Bunyan's fate. She was met with one question:

"Would he stop preaching? "

"My lord, he dares not leave off preaching as long as he can speak."

"What is the need of talking?"

"There is need for this, my lord, for I have four small children that cannot help themselves, of which one is blind, and we have nothing to live upon but the charity of good people."

Matthew Hale with pity asks if she really has four children being so young.

"My lord, I am but mother-in-law to them, having not been married to him yet full two years. Indeed, I was with child when my husband was first apprehended; but being young and unaccustomed to such things, I being [overcome] at the news, fell into labor, and so continued for eight days, and then was delivered; but my child died."

Hale was moved, but other judges were hardened and spoke against him. "He is a mere tinker!"

"Yes, and because he is a tinker and a poor man, therefore he is despised and cannot have justice."

One Mr. Chester is enraged and says that Bunyan will preach and do as he wishes. "He preaches nothing but the word of God!" she says.

Mr. Twisden, in a rage: "He runs up and down and does harm."

"No, my lord, it is not so; God has owned him and done much good by him."

The angry man: "His doctrine is the doctrine of the devil."

[1]

She: "My lord, when the righteous Judge shall appear, it will be known that his doctrine is not the doctrine of the devil!" [\[1\]](#)

Such was the political hostility to Bunyan's views in his day. John Bunyan could have been released at any time, if he had merely promised the government that he would not preach. And yet, he knew that he couldn't keep such a promise. God's word was so much in him that he would be compelled to preach. And so, as John Piper said, "[John Bunyan chose] prison and a clear conscience over freedom and a conscious soiled by the agreement not to preach." [\[1\]](#)

There John Bunyan remained, in prison for 12 years. And these weren't easy years. Regarding the torment of those days, Bunyan wrote, ...

"The parting with my Wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling of the Flesh from my bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great Mercies, but also because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor Family was like to meet with should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides; O the thoughts of the hardship I thought my Blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces." [\[1\]](#)

And yet, John Bunyan endured 12 years of suffering in prison for the gospel of Christ.

You may not be called to endure such sufferings of this weight. But, you are called to endure in your faith. As we come this morning to our text in Hebrews, it is a call to endurance. Indeed, this is the title of my message this morning: "A Call to Endurance." This text calls us to endure in our faith through our trials and our difficulties.

As I read our text for you, I want for you to look for the call.

Hebrews 10:32-39

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

The call to endurance comes in the center of these verses (in verses 35-36).

Hebrews 10:35-36

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Verse 35: "do not throw away our confidence." Verse 36: "You have need of endurance." One may easily argue that this is the main burden of the book of Hebrews. Certainly, this epistle is saturated with explanations of why Jesus is better. He is better than the angels or Moses or Joshua or Aaron or any of the high priests. The writer argues over and over of how Jesus offered Himself as a better sacrifice, and has given to us a better covenant. But, all of these things have an aim. They have an aim to the endurance of the hearers.

In other words, the book of Hebrews was not written to be a theological treatise on the excellencies of Jesus Christ (though it is that). Rather, the book of Hebrews was written to encourage the readers to persevere in their faith, to have confidence in Jesus firm until the end (verse 35), and to endure the trials of life that come by believing in Him (verse 36). Don't be wishy-washy regarding your faith, but be all-in with Jesus all the way until the end!

We've seen these concepts before in the book of Hebrews. The warning in chapter 2, verse 1 is simply this: "Don't drift away [from what we have heard]." Stay true to the message you have heard from the beginning. Be confident in the message of the truth and hold fast. In chapter 3, verses 12-14, the writer says it like this, ...

Hebrews 3:12-14

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

"Don't fall away; don't harden your hearts, but hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." It's a call to endure. It's a call to endure in the assurance that Jesus is your only hope in this life. We see the call again in chapter 4.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast

our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Again, you see the same ideas of confidence and boldness. We are to "hold fast our confession." That is, we should cling to it as our sole source of hope! We should "draw near with confidence." We should come to Jesus confident that our sins are forgiven; we should come to Jesus confident that we will find mercy and grace at His throne! We need to come to God with confidence. We need to come to God with assurance. We are to press on in these things, firm until the end (Heb. 6:1).

That is the essence of faith, which we will see in chapter 11. The first verse of chapter 11 says this, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith is the assurance that God will make good on all of His promises. Faith is the conviction that everything we have heard about Jesus is true! When you have such a conviction, you will hold fast until the end.

Look now at chapter 10, verse 19, ...

Hebrews 10:19-23

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

These verses are a call to boldly lean on Jesus, trusting that He is waiting for you to approach Him with your needs! And it's incumbent upon you to come in "full assurance" (verse 22) and "without wavering" (verse 23). Jesus doesn't want us to doubt. Rather, he wants for us to come into His presence boldly with full assurance of faith. Such assurance will lead us to endure in our faith. Such is the call of our text. It is "A Call to Endurance."

Now, before we dig into the beginning of our text, it's important for you to realize that these words come, primarily, as an **encouragement**. They come immediately after a very severe warning in verses 26-31 of the impending doom of those who reject Christ. And those of you who were here last week know of the serious nature of those words. Last week, I preached a message that came hard and heavy, because the writer to the Hebrews came hard and heavy in his words as well. He spoke of those who come to the knowledge of the truth concerning Jesus Christ and the salvation that He provides. And then, turn away from Him and continue in their willful sin. Those who do so face the terrible prospect that, for them, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins!" (Verse 26). And there could never be a more terrifying reality for you to face than to have no more sacrifice for sins!

The biggest danger that you will ever face is the reality of standing before God with unforgiven sin. All of us will stand before God. In Hebrews 9:27 we read that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." Your only hope in that day will be to claim your trust in the blood of Jesus to forgive your sins. And if you have refused to believe in Jesus for the remission of your sins, then you will face that judgment in the fullness of your guilt! Indeed, as Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

But, lest the original readers sink into deep depression, with little hope, the writer gives them hope to realize that there is good reason that they will escape the terrifying hands of God. All in favor of encouragement this morning? The writer of Hebrews seeks to encourage.

In seeking to encourage his readers to endure, the writer first points them to their past experiences. He points them to their past trials and difficulties, and how they remained true through them all. And, remembering what they had experienced in the past would encourage them to press on in the faith in Christ.

Indeed, this is my first point this morning. How do you endure?

1. Remember Your Past Victories (verses 32-34)

Do you want to be encouraged that you will escape the terrible wrath of God? Then, remember the ways that God has already worked in your life to stand firm. Verse 32 tells us, "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings..."

At this point, he's reminding them of the days of their conversion. They were enlightened to the truth about Jesus, the Messiah. And having been enlightened, they believed in what they had come to see. They, then, having believed, they were saved from their sins. And when they came to faith (he reminds them), they experienced sufferings. But, it wasn't the experiencing of the sufferings that was significant here. It was how they endured through the sufferings that is significant.

Look again at verse 32, "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings." In other words, they faced some great difficulties, but the difficulties weren't greater than they. They overcame them.

They weren't like the rocky soil, which immediately received the seed with joy and sprouted up, but was only temporary, having no firm root (Matt. 13:20-21). Jesus said of this soil, "when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matt. 13:21). Nor were they like the thorny soil, which also receives the word, but due to the troubles of the world, they fall away. Jesus said of this soil, "the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). Instead, they were like the good soil, which heard the word and understood the word and brought forth fruit from the word. As Jesus said, "some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Matt. 13:23).

And the author here is telling them to remember the fruit in their lives during times of hardship and difficulty. This is the line of reasoning here in this text: "You are facing some hardships in your life right now. Some of your fellow Jews are calling you back to the law and the sacrifices and synagogue life. But, reflect back upon the early days of your conversion; remember the difficulties that they went through; remember how they endured through them all. Such a remembrance will come as an encouragement to them to help empower you to press on in the future."

See, all of us receive the word who face sufferings. Acts 14:22 says, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." But, many fall away, because they are bad soil. But, it's those who bear fruit and endure to the end, who Jesus identifies as the good soil. Jesus, Himself said, "The one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

And this is the encouragement that comes to the original hearers. "After being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings" (verse 32). In other words, "You have reason to believe that you are the real deal. God will strengthen you until the end." The author made the same sort of statement in chapter 6. Again, a very strong warning, much like chapter 10. Listen to it again, ...

Hebrews 6:4-6

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

But, following up quickly after the warning, the writer says, ...

Hebrews 6:9

But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

Like in chapter 10, these words have come as an encouragement to the original listeners. It is as if to say, "Yes, the warning has come. Feel it strongly. But, as I have written to you, I have confidence that you have come to faith. I have seen 'your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints' (6:10)." So, press on in confidence. He says, ...

Hebrews 6:11-12

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

And chapter 10 is just like chapter 6. First, warning. Then, encouragement. Finally, a call to persevere.

Notice here how he encourages them. He doesn't tell them to remember a past emotional decision that they had made. He doesn't tell them, "Hey, remember the prayer that you prayed?" He doesn't say, "Hey, remember the time when you were broken about your sin and you cried out to God and He forgave you?" No, he tells them of the ways in which they endured through difficulty. He reminds them of the fruit in their lives that came through times of distress.

Now, that's not to say that a decision to follow Christ isn't important. A past decision can help carry you through difficult days as well. I remember Dirk (a man in our congregation) telling me of the time when he was on a missions trip in Guatemala. He was helping some missionaries down there on a construction project. At one point, he found himself out too late at night and away from the missions ground. He was then captured by some guerrilla soldiers at gunpoint. I believe that he was detained for about half an hour. I remember Dirk telling me that a song kept ringing through his mind. "I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. No turning back."

During Dirk's time of difficulty, he was rehearsing how he had resolved with his whole heart to follow the Lord completely, "no turning back." Or, to use the imagery of Jesus, "I've put my hand to the plow. I'm not looking back" (Luke 9:62). And today, should he travel again to a foreign land and find himself in similar danger, or should he find himself in some other morally dangerous situation, I'm sure that he'll remember the time when he was captured. Such a remembrance will help him endure through the hardship. "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. I'm not turning back. The Lord sustained me in Guatemala. He'll sustain me again."

At this point, the question comes to mind, "What sort of suffering did they experience?" Well, we have some clues.

First, verse 32 identifies them as "a great conflict of sufferings." These weren't little sufferings. They were "great sufferings." These were things in their life that they would remember. These were things in their life that would make a big impact upon your life. Verse 33 gives us more insight, ...

Hebrews 10:33

... partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

Second of all, we notice that their sufferings were very public. They were made a "public spectacle." The Greek word used here is "theatrizo", from which we get the word, "theatre." Their sufferings were on stage of the theatre for all to see. This, by the way, can make the suffering more painful. It's one thing to suffer alone; it's another thing to suffer in the sight of uncompassionate observers looking on.

Third, in verse 33, we can see the various types of sufferings that they experienced. They experienced "reproaches and tribulations." The first term refers to verbal assault. They were ridiculed, they were mocked, they were scorned for following Jesus. The second term is more general and can refer to many types of sufferings. In this context, it probably refers to more physical sufferings, like beatings and imprisonment.

Fourth, in verse 33, we can see that their sufferings came directly as well as indirectly. Not only did they face the sufferings themselves. But, in some measure, they shared in the sufferings of others.

Hebrews 10:33

partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations [yourselves], and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

Verse 34 shows how they joined in the suffering of others. "You showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property." In other words, there were those who were suffering imprisonment because of their faith. And imprisonment back then doesn't mean the same thing as imprisonment today. Today, everyone in our prisons get "three hots and a cot." That is, they get three good meals and a bed to sleep on.

But, in almost all other times of history, this was not the case. Prisoners would be locked up in a dungeon with no beds and with no bathrooms and no running water. They would need to eliminate their waste in a corner of the room. They would often be in a room with many other prisoners, all of whom had to deal with the unsanitary conditions. Illness was commonplace. Death came as no surprise. Furthermore, no food was provided by the prison. So, if anyone wanted food, a friend on the outside had to bring it in. People often died in prison because of the harsh conditions and lack of food.

It only makes sense, then, when you heard about a fellow believer being imprisoned, you would go to visit them and help them in their sufferings, by bringing them food and other items for their comfort. But, doing so marked you as a fellow believer. And as a result, you then, fell into the crosshairs of their attacks. And who knows what this would lead to. Such were their sufferings: verbal abuse, physical abuse, imprisonment, and seizure of property.

Now, this is all that the writer to the Hebrews tells us about the specifics of the persecutions that took place. But, we can look to the book of Acts to help put some tangible examples of the sorts of things that they faced. Soon after some of the Jews began following Jesus, a great persecution erupted, particularly among the leaders. We read at the beginning of Acts, chapter 4, ...

Hebrews 4:1-3

As [Peter and John] were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

The next day, they stood trial before the religious leaders and were threatened not to preach again in the name of Christ (Acts 4:17, 21). But, you know what happened: they went out and preached again. This was a sign of their endurance. But, again, they were arrested and brought before the religious leaders. This time, they didn't get away as easily. They were flogged and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus. We read in Acts 5:41, "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name." This was a sign of their endurance.

Then came Stephen. He was preaching the truth of Jesus. He also was dragged before the council. When he finished preaching, the crowds picked up stones, threw them at him and killed him. And yet, even as he was dying, "he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!'" (Acts 7:60). This was a sign of his endurance until the end. The stoning of Stephen, then, was the catalyst for the persecutions to extend beyond the leaders to all who named the name of Christ. Because, on that very day when he was stoned, "a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1).

In Acts 9, we read of Saul, who was traveling to cities with papers, warranting the arrest of all who were following Jesus. He was seeking to bring them back, bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1), where they might be tried for heresy and punished. In Acts 12:1 we read, "Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them." Later, Herod had James the brother of John killed (Acts 12:2). He also imprisoned Peter and had every intention to kill him as well (Acts 12:3-4).

Perhaps some of the original readers had witnessed Peter and John's imprisonment. Perhaps some of the original readers had been arrested by Saul. Perhaps some of the original readers faced the wrath of king Herod. Regardless of how it happened, we know that they faced verbal abuse, physical abuse, imprisonment, seizure of property. And through it all, they endured. This is a help to our future endurance. The application is to look to your past sufferings and how God has carried you through. Can you think of such instances in your life? Have you ever faced verbal or physical abuse for your faith? If so, think back to those times and think back to the victories you have gained through such times. These will strengthen you to endure in the trials you will face.

But, more than merely enduring, the original hearers went through these things utterly victorious. "You accepted joyfully the seizure of your property" (verse 34). It reminds me of the scene in *Les Miserable*, when Jean Valjean, the convict was graciously brought into the home of the Bishop of Digne. He returns his kindness by stealing the bishop's silverware and runs away. He was soon caught by the police and brought back to the bishop for identification. Rather than condemning Jean Valjean for stealing the silverware, he tells the officers that the silverware was a gift. He then turns and gives Jean Valjean his two silver candlesticks as well, chastising him in front of the police for leaving in such a rush that he forgot these most valuable pieces.

That's a bit of the scene here in Hebrews. Because of their faith in Christ, the believers' homes are being plundered, and they aren't fighting against it. They aren't protesting to the government. They aren't seeking their civil liberties. Rather, they joyfully allowed others to come and take their own possessions. Now, that's not to say that we ought not to protest when the government seeks to take our money. There are provisions in place in our country where we can protest the raising of taxes. We can vote the lawmakers into office that will give us our freedoms. Should injustice take place, there are means by which we can pursue them. But, for those of the first century, the choice was clear. They were losing their property because they were followers of Christ. And if it ever comes to that in our country, we must be prepared to part ways with our possessions.

I remember a few years back talking with someone in California, who was paranoid about the government giving tax breaks to those who give to charitable organizations. His big concern was for the church buildings. He said something to the effect that taking a tax break submits the church to the rules and regulations of the government, which then gives the government ultimate authority over our practices. And then the government may well come and tell us that we can't preach certain things in our churches, and they will threaten to take away our church buildings if we do. So, let's learn to funnel our money a different way, to keep the government out of controlling our church. To these things, I simply said this, "If it ever gets to that situation, then we must be prepared to lose our church buildings. We must obey God, rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

If it ever comes to this, are you willing to part with your possessions? This is a very pertinent question for us Americans. We who have so much have so much to part with. The early church was willing. In Acts 2, we see the picture of them willingly selling their possessions to give to those in need. Certainly, they were able and willing to part ways with their possessions when doing so was part of the cost of following Christ (verse 34). Well, how were they able to do this? How were they able to endure?

This is my second point. How do you endure until the end? You Remember Your Past Victories (verses 32-34) and, ...
2. Look to Your Future Reward (verses 34-36)

I want for us to go back again to verse 34. There's an element to that verse that I haven't really talked about this morning. It's the heart that looks forward to the future.

Hebrews 10:34

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

The reason why these believers were able to part ways with their material possessions is because they had their eyes looking forward to what lies ahead. They knew that they were going to receive a "better possession." Everything in heaven is "better" than what we have here on earth. The streets are made of gold (Rev. 21:21). The gates are made of pearls (Rev. 21:21). There's no need for a lamp, because God will illumine everything in the holy city (Rev. 21:23). There's no sin in the city (Rev. 21:24). The river will be pure and life-giving (Rev. 22:1, 2). The tree of life will be there (Rev. 22:2). Everything in heaven is "better."

The thing is, they believed it! So when they lost their earthly possessions, they had no problems with it. They believed the words of Jesus, "None of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33). In following Christ, they had given up all claim to their possessions. So when the authorities came to take them away, they were fine with it because, they really had already given them up.

Now, we have to come to grips with this--especially for us in America, where we are flooded with worldly riches. Are you willing to let your possessions go? Do you want to be willing to let them go? Then look to the future and the reward that will come with it.

This leads us to verse 35. I have already addressed the first half of this verse, but not the second.

Hebrews 10:35

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

We're talking here about our confidence in Christ. We're talking here about trusting completely in Him! And when you do that, there is a great reward that awaits you. Oh, it's not here in this life. But, it is awaiting you in the life to come. You obtain it, not by works, but by faith. Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a reward of those who seek Him."

It's amazing what placing your eye on the prize will do to your endurance today. Athletes endure amazing things, because they know the glory of what awaits them in the game. Musicians will endure torturous hours of practice, because they know that the concert is coming. Businessmen will endure long hours at the office, because they know of the financial rewards on the other side. We need to believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him. We need to really believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Let's press on, ...

Hebrews 10:36

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

In many ways, we are in this Christian life for the reward. And that's not a bad thing. You go to work each day for your reward - a paycheck. And that's not a bad thing. You take your photographs to enter them in the fair so that you might win the reward - a first-place ribbon. And that's not a bad thing. The hard-working farmer works for his reward--a crop. And that's not a bad thing. We believe and trust in Jesus for His reward--eternal life with Him. And that's not a bad thing.

Philippians 3:14 says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul pictures Himself as the athlete, who is pressing on to win the prize. He says in the next verse, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you" (Phil. 3:15). We long for the day when Jesus will take us into His arms and say, "Well done, good and faithful slave. ... enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21, 23). And so, I urge you church family, to Look to Your Future Reward (verses 34-39)

Let's finish here this morning. Next week we'll look at the last three verses of this chapter, which I will likely title "A Call to Faith." But, I want to close with this thought. When John Bunyan was in prison, what held him there? How did he endure for those 12 long years in prison? One insight comes in his autobiography. He quotes 2 Corinthians 1:9 where Paul says, "We had this sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead." Then he says,

By this scripture I was made to see that if ever I would suffer rightly, I must first pass a sentence of death upon every thing that can be properly called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyment, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them. The second was, to live upon God that is invisible, as Paul said in another place; the way not to faint, is to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. [1]

In many ways, John Bunyan followed the counsel of our text this morning. First, John Bunyan remembered his past victories. By God's grace, he was able to reckon everything in his former life as dead to him. Second, John Bunyan looked to his future reward. His eye wasn't upon the here and now. Rather, it was upon the eternal things, where he was to receive his reward.

And so, I urge you to Remember Your Past Victories (verses 32-34) and to Look to Your Future Reward (verses 34-36)

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 12, 2010 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] I am indebted to John Piper's biographical talk on John Bunyan for all of the information distilled in this message. His talk was entitled, "To Live Upon God that Is Invisible." You can listen to it and read his notes here: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/resources/to-live-upon-god-that-is-invisible>.