

Hebrews 10:26-39 // God's Siren - The Warning of Hebrews

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Preacher: Josh Stocks

[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 10 starting in verse 26. If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth.

! No sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot?

Who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them? And who has insulted the spirit of grace? For we know him who said, it is mine to avenge, I will repay.

And again, the Lord will judge his people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Remember those earlier days after you had received the light when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering.

[1 : 13] Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution. At other times, you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had a better and lasting possessions.

So do not throw away your confidence. It will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

For in just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. And, but my righteous one will live by faith.

And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back. But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

Thank you so much for reading. Let me add my welcome to David as well.

[2 : 27] As he so ably introduced me, I'm Josh. I'm one of the ministry trainees here. And tonight we're in part two of our fresh talent double bill. If you were here last week, you might be willing to admit that Azariah maybe drew the slightly longer straw.

Let's pray before we begin. Heavenly Father, we thank you that every word from your scriptures is good. We thank you that they teach us, they instruct us, and they rebuke us.

We pray this evening as I speak that the words of my mouth would build us up. That the meditations of our heart would be fruitful. That we would all be brought closer to you. That we'd be reminded of your grace and your goodness in all that you've done for us in shedding the blood of Christ.

We ask that we would know you better and understand you and follow you with a deeper faith and a greater love. Amen. Well, I'm going to ask you to keep your Bibles open in front of you as we go through tonight.

The reason that preachers do this is because it's important that you weigh what I am saying against the text. We don't just do it because we like everyone to say it awkwardly. It's like your safety rope.

[3 : 30] So imagine yourselves tonight as mountaineers climbing a mountain. I might be up ahead of you, up the mountain slightly further on, but I am not the thing that keeps you safe. It's the safety rope of the text that keeps you safe.

So please look at it, please weigh what you hear, and consider it in your hearts. Thinking of safety ropes, as I was preparing for this passage, I was reminded of a climbing biography I once read.

While making the ascent of a particularly dangerous mountain, the mountaineer saw two climbers descending the safety rope towards him. So he decided to let go of the safety rope and step aside

to allow them to descend past him.

In doing so, he slipped and fell and began to careen down the mountain towards his death. He managed to stop himself, as he then went on to write said biography. But I bring the story up because I want to use it as an illustration for the passage tonight.

It tells us that there is a safety rope, which we have to keep a hold of. We must not let go of it. If we do, we court disaster. Tonight's passage speaks in hard ways, in difficult ways, but it does it for our good and for our safety.

[4 : 46] And there is a great mountaintop to reach together. So tonight we're going to dive into this passage in two sections. The danger for those who reject Jesus and the promise to those who endure with Jesus.

The danger for those who reject Jesus. The author of Hebrews starts this section with his letter by sounding a loud siren, by blasting an alarm at you.

Look down at verse 27. There is a fearful expectation of judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. That sounds like rhetoric, which has more in common with certain social media accounts of foreign world leaders than what we might expect to find in our Bibles.

It's not usually how we think about a God of unending mercy and love. They're hard words for us to read. But if we dive deeper, I think we can see why they are here.

Throughout the whole book of Hebrews, the author has compared and contrasted the shadow of the Old Testament law with the reality of the New Testament. He shows that everything that happened in the past was to give us a sketch, a shadow, a foretaste of what is to come with Jesus.

[6 : 02] And he's doing it again with this section of warning. In the Old Covenant, the death penalty was the ultimate punishment. It cut people off from God. It cut them off from the covenant people.

But the author of Hebrews says that fate is a shadow compared to those who trample Jesus' blood underfoot. To grapple with that reality, that warning, we've got to understand where that shadow comes from.

We've got to understand that sketch first. Look down at verse 28. It says, This isn't referring to people who break our small law by mistake.

It's not talking about someone who touched the wrong animal or wore the wrong type of cloth. It's not talking about someone who made an honest mistake. The author of Hebrews is deliberately taking us back to the stories of the Israelites that we read in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In those stories, we see a group of people who consistently reject God's salvation. They blatantly and deliberately pushed away God's salvation.

[7 : 13] God rescued them from Egypt. They said, we're all going to die at the hands of Pharaoh. He promised them covenant blessings that they would receive when they go into the promised land. And they said it would be better to be back in Egypt.

God spoke the words of the law to them. He gave them a sacrificial system so they could draw close. And they said, make for us gods of gold. God told them to keep themselves pure from the nations around them, not to marry with those who worshipped idols.

And they brought idol worshippers into their tents and married them right in front of the tabernacle. They hard-heartedly rejected the salvation of God.

Rather than being the people of God that they were meant to, they became his enemies. They moved from being the people of God to being the enemies of God.

And they faced his judgment for it. These passages in Hebrews tell us that now more than ever to be an enemy of God is to face judgment.

[8 : 17] That's the what. That's what's happening. But we have to remember the why. We have these warning passages throughout the Book of Hebrews to function as guardrails.

When I was four years old, I did my level best to give my mother a heart attack. My family lived in Germany and we had gone skiing in the Alps.

As a boundless four-year-old, I had a much deeper love for speed than for the other finer points of the sport. Things like steering or braking.

This caught up with me when at the bottom of the run, there was a sharp turn to avoid a rather sudden drop. I'm sure you can all see where this is going. Four-year-old Josh could not.

With my enthusiastic disregard for braking, I was unable to make the turn and I went straight through the guardrail and found myself stuck on this steep slope down towards the drop. Very fortunately, a passing stranger saw the whole incident and was able to get down after me and pull

me back to my rather distraught mother.

[9 : 22] She has, I think, just about gotten over the incident now. You see, the guardrail that I shot past was there to warn of danger. It was to see there is a danger here.

That danger is this. The deliberate continued rejection of Jesus. It's to warn us against apostasy. It's to warn us against taking ourselves from being the people of God to being an enemy of God.

See, for the church of the Hebrews, the circumstances were very different from the Old Testament Israelites. But the threat was the same. They were being tempted to stop being the people of God. They were being tempted to reject Jesus. They were thinking that if they were to return to the synagogue to go back to Judaism with its legal and social and political protections, they would be safer.

But if they were going to do that, it required them to stop confessing Jesus as Lord. It required a return to a deliberate pattern of life which ignored and silenced Jesus.

[10 : 29] It rejected him as the means of salvation. It said, we don't need your blood. We don't need to confess you. We'll be fine under Judaism. It would mean moving from being the chosen people of God in the church to being opposed to him.

It would mean being an enemy of God. For us, the circumstances are very different. But the threat is the same.

Now, we're unlikely to stop going to St. Silas to begin attending the local synagogue or the mosque. But we might be tempted to give up on Jesus. To walk away from life with him and his people.

To walk away from God in the church.

We're going to get married eventually. It would just be easier. Or, I don't need to take the whole Jesus thing too seriously.

[11 : 57] It's good for the kids and my wife. She really enjoys it. She gets a lot from it. They have them prayer meetings and she goes along and it's fine. But if they're not around, I don't need to bother too much. Life is just easier when I don't have to do Jesus.

Life would just be easier if Jesus wasn't around. And then one day he isn't.

You see, that's the real danger of apostasy. Of drifting away from Jesus. One day you look around at your life and he's nowhere to be seen. You've moved from being one of his people to being not one of his people.

This passage in Hebrews, with its difficult words, with its language, with the things that it's saying, is to put up a sign saying, The road ahead is dangerous. There is a sharp turn coming up.

Pay attention to your life. Look at what you're doing. Danger is on the way. I want to note before we move on, that you might be sitting here hearing these words thinking, Is that me?

[13 : 08] Am I rejecting Jesus? And I want to be really, really clear here. The sin that the author of Hebrews talks about is deliberate rejection of Jesus' salvation.

It's not if you're struggling with weakness. It's not fighting doubts. This passage isn't speaking to someone who's heartbroken and repentant over their repeated sin.

If you're here tonight and your heart burns as you hear those words, if you think, am I really trusting Jesus? Then I want you to hear this. The passage is not here to bring you under judgment or doubt.

If you are here amongst God's people, hearing these words, treating them seriously, then you're doing the good thing. You're treating Jesus' blood as your means of salvation.

This warning is directed to those who've stopped paying attention, who are just drifting along in life, going with the flow, who've become passive.

[14 : 09] Like the guardrails or a tornado warning siren, these words are here to motivate that person to action. That passivity needs to be broken against.

The warning's not meant to paralyze, but to motivate, to push us forward. Like a drill sergeant on the march, bellowing all manner of unimaginable threats at his flagging recruits.

The goal is not to stop them. The goal is to push them over the finish line with any means necessary. And notice, that finish line is exactly what the author is desperate for the congregation to look towards.

Look down at verses 30 and 31. We see a pattern here which is designed not to stop us, not to make us hesitate, not to give us fear, but to help us orientate ourselves correctly forward.

It warns the congregation of the Hebrews of the certainty of future judgment. The Lord will judge his people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[15:18] Brothers and sisters, make no mistake, the day is coming. And so often that apostasy comes when we lose sight of that future certainty. Deliberate, repeated sin creeps in when we lose sight of where we're going.

If we allow ourselves to stop thinking about the end, we will drift. Allow me to illustrate. I don't know how many of you have tried paddleboarding, but going by the average sunny day at Loch Lomond, I would hazard that it's quite a lot of you.

When I first attempted it, I was useless. I'd struggle manfully to get up onto the board. I'd eventually manage to get my knees beneath me. I'd start standing up, wobbling like a baby giraffe, only to immediately topple straight into the water the second I attempted to roll.

This happened a lot more times than I'd like to admit, much to the amusement of everyone watching, including my wife. She was much better at it than me, and after she let me struggle and flounder and fall into the water lots, she decided to tell me the secret.

Stop looking at your feet. Look up. Look at the horizon. And suddenly, everything was so much easier. It felt really unnatural, but as soon as I stopped looking down at the water and started looking up ahead, I was able to glide like someone from an advert across the water, beautifully and gracefully.

[16:43] Or at least I stopped falling in every five seconds. Like paddle boarding, the Christian life tends to go poorly when we get so solely focused on our feet, when we become so focused on the here and the now that we forget to raise our eyes to what is coming.

The author of the Hebrews is using harsh words to remind the congregation of what is coming. God is going to come back, and he will judge who his people are to draw between themselves, between those who are his own, whom he vindicates, and those who've said, no, I'm stepping out of the people of God.

We must fix our eyes, our hearts, our minds on that truth, that Jesus is coming back, we must be certain about where all of this is going. If you're in the building tonight and you're not a Christian, I want to implore you two things.

The first is this. This is not something to put off. Don't leave today thinking, I'll get round to it. What Jesus did for you and for me on the cross, the way he made it possible for us to join the people of God, to join the family of God, is not an unlimited time offer.

There is coming a day when it will expire. The other thing I would say is this. I compared the warnings in this passage to a siren. If you're sitting in the room and you don't know Jesus, the siren is not a burglar alarm.

[18:11] It's not a fire alarm. It's not to tell you to get out, run away from the building, you don't belong here. No, it's an air raid siren or a tornado warning.

It's to say, come inside, get into shelter, be safe. Danger is coming, but here is safe, in here. For all of us, saved or unsaved, it's so important that we heed that warning.

That if we feel far from God, if we feel that we've sinned or if we feel we've fallen away or if we feel distant, the warnings should not push you further away. They should come closer. The safe places with Jesus.

If you feel far as a Christian or if you don't know him, the answer is this, come closer. Get into shelter. You don't survive a bombing raid by running out of the bomb shelter.

So that's the warning. Don't reject Jesus. Don't become an enemy of God. But even in the midst of that warning, there was a hint of something more. Verse 30 of our passage quotes from Deuteronomy 32.

[19:18] And here, Moses promises that God is going to return to judge his enemies, but also to restore and vindicate his people. He promises them blessing, unimaginable.

And for the rest of the time, we're going to look at how that promise unfolds. So point number two, the promise if we trust in Jesus. The first thing that we see about this promise is that it is based in the past.

We see it in the past in good things. In verse 32, the author of Hebrews asks the congregation to recall the former days. He says to them, remember what God has done through you and in you. He's reminding them, encouraging them of all the things that they faced for God. They are not God's enemies. They are his people. Look, he says, you endured insults. You endured persecution. You lost your property. You stood with those who were disgraced. And you did it joyfully. Look at how far you've come. Look at everything that God has done.

[20 : 18] It would be so foolish to reject God now. Like the congregation in Hebrews, we should be quick to remember everything that God has done in our lives. Rejoice in the victories that he has won for us.

Share testimonies of God's faithfulness with your brothers and sisters. I would encourage you, when you meet with your brothers and sisters in Christ, tell them about what God has done. Say to them, you know, this week God answered my prayer.

This week my Bible reading, it just really worked for me. It really helped me. It built me up. Or even, this week I repented and it brought me closer to God.

We should, as a group of people, tell each other the stories of God's good and celebrate it. And when your brothers and sisters tell you about the good that God has done in their lives, celebrate it. Even if it's a struggle, take joy in it. Notice verse 34, they joyfully accepted the plundering of their property. It's really hard to do this when you're in a hard place.

[21 : 21] Some of you might be suffering right now. Some of you are facing pressure and hardship. For some of you, there'll be insults for your faith. For some, you will have loss because you've chosen to be known as a Christian.

Friends who went distant after you talked to them about the gospel. Family members who mock or needle your faith. Opportunities missed at work because you won't give up meeting with God's people.

The author of Hebrews would say to you, look at all the good that God has done in your life and in the lives of the brothers and sisters around you. We're tempted in the midst of that difficulty, of that pain to shrink back from God and from our brothers and sisters.

Please don't. In those moments, even though it's hard, get amongst it. Get around God's people.

You don't need to pretend with family. You don't need to pretend with the people in this room.

You don't need to put a brave face on it and just smile through it. Let them know. Say, hey, I'm having a hard time. Pray for me. Help me. But also listen to them as they encourage you and they say, remember what God did for you or remember what God did for that person or remember what God did for me.

[22 : 35] Take their testimonies and say, yeah, it is hard, but I know that we have a good God who fulfills his promises. I'm going to take encouragement from that. In verses 35 to 38, we see that he encourages them to keep going, to endure, because their confidence will have a greater reward.

That theme of faithful endurance leading to the promise of God will be more fully realized in the later passages. But on the back of giving these warnings, the author of Hebrews wanted to give us this boost, this encouragement.

Faithful endurance will be rewarded. Being in the people of God is the right place to be. I'm going to just slightly pause here because sometimes we can hear passages like this and we can think that it's being said that it's all up to us, that it's about our strength, our endurance.

To return to our safety rope analogy, we can be tempted to think it's like someone dangling over the edge of a cliff, holding onto the rope for dear life, a white-knuckle determination to survive long enough in the hopes that someone will pull the rope up.

That's not how safety ropes work in climbing. They wouldn't be very safe if that was the case.

They're attached to a rope, a harness, and that's it. That's all they need to do. If you've ever gone to a climbing center, you'll have probably seen someone hanging from a rope at quite a high height, just chilling, relaxing, completely safe, fully trusting their weight to the safety rope, secure in the knowledge that they won't fall.

[24 : 07] Sometimes when we look at the Christian life when we hear these exhortations, we can be tempted to think that we're like that man dangling off the edge of a cliff, clinging to the rope with all his strength. We can think that the Christian life is a desperate, white-knuckled grip which we must maintain.

But that's not what the author of Hebrews is saying to us. Look with me at verse 37. Can you see the source of the faith that he has? It's not about our endurance.

It's about his coming. He who is coming will come and will not delay. If you are a Christian, the only thing you need to do is trust in Jesus.

It's not about bearing down and gripping through. It just means trusting in what Jesus has done for you. It's about his work, his blood, his return.

He paid for all your sin on the cross. He offers his blood to keep you clean even now. He's brought you into the people of God to gather you in as a member of his church.

[25 : 13] He will return and he will reward your faithful endurance. I want everyone in this room who's trusting Jesus to be encouraged. We are not those who shrink back but those who have faith.

Verse 39 is the key to the whole passage. The author of Hebrews tells them after warning them be certain you are God's people.

Be encouraged. You can and should have confidence because the blood of Jesus has brought you in. Yes, there is hardship. Yes, there's persecution.

Yes, there's danger but endure because Jesus is coming back. He will vindicate you. He will reward you. Some of you are facing great difficulties.

Some of you are fighting battles that nobody else sees. Maybe it's a distance that's going between you and a loved one. Every time you think of them your heart aches and when you mention church to them they retreat.

[26 : 21] They lash out. They're angry. They have no interest in coming anywhere close. Hebrews says to you be confident in God who writes his words on hearts of stone.

Perhaps it's the fight against sin which feels completely unwinnable. You've promised yourself you'd stop a hundred times and yet every time the opportunity arises you're right back there.

The author of Hebrews says endure. Jesus is with you. His blood washes you clean. Spotless and holy able to enter the holy places of God.

Maybe the cost for being a Christian feels really high right now. Lost friends missed opportunities given up to better serve the church promotions withheld because you maintained gospel integrity and you wonder is it worth it?

The author of Hebrews would say Jesus is bringing you the greatest reward you can imagine. Don't lose heart. You have a much better and lasting possession.

[27 : 30] Brothers and sisters as we close let's remember there is absolutely a day coming when Christ will return and for some they will face judgment but for those who are trusting in Jesus for those who are God's people there will be vindication.

Rejoice in him. Trust his blood for your salvation and endure joyfully knowing that he will certainly reward you.

Let's pray. King Jesus we thank you that you came to this world. We thank you that you shed your blood that you poured it out like water and that in doing so that we can be safe from the wrath of God that we are cleansed from our sin so that no longer do we sit under your wrath and your judgment but we have been brought close we have been drawn into your people and made one of the holy congregation.

Lord I pray that you would encourage those of us who feel weak this evening whose knees feel like they're about to bend remind us of all that has been done in our lives let us look to the testimonies of our brothers and sisters to know that you are a good God as we go from this place let your spirit bring a new flame in our hearts that we might know you and be closer to you in your great name
Amen