

Mid Week • Hebrews 10

INTRODUCTION

As we come now to chapter 10, we conclude the writer's long argument on the superiority of Christ to the ritual of the Mosaic Law.

For those of you who are just joining us, let me briefly bring you up to speed on the purpose of the book of Hebrews.

While we don't know who wrote this letter – his purpose is clear enough.

He is writing to Jewish believers in Jesus Christ who are under pressure to revert back to Judaism.

His method is to alternate between showing the superiority of Christ and gently exhorting his readers to cling tenaciously *to Him*.

Starting in chapter 5, and running all the way through the middle of chapter 10, he argues forcefully for the superiority of Christ.

He shows how the ritual of the Mosaic Law, given by God to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai during the Exodus, was meant to foreshadow and point to the Messiah who would come and fulfill it all.

The temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices; all these things were temporary signs pointing to Jesus Christ who is our Great High Priest who came to offer Himself as the final, perfect sacrifice, and to officiate eternally in the heavenly sanctuary.

Chapter 10 concludes that argument and then moves on to a stirring application of it.

CHAPTER 10

Vs. 1-

¹For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more

consciousness of sins. ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

The writer is now summarizing his previous points.

All along he's been saying much the same thing – that the annual observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, did not really remove or forgive the sins of the people.

It merely covered over them and provided a temporary solution.

Every year, the sacrifice of the goat that was made on the Day of Atonement by the High Priest was supposed to dispense with their guilt, but all it did was *remind* them of their failure.

Note carefully what v. 4 says – **“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”**

The blood of a bull or goat might provide a temporary covering for sins, but it could never discharge sins; it could never “take them away” as the writer says it here.

Why? Because while the blood of an animal is precious, it is not precious enough to atone for the sins of a human being committed against a Holy God.

Human blood and animal blood do not equate.

As we saw in our study last Sunday – the blood speaks of life.

The shedding of blood, as in a sacrifice, speaks of death.

Human life is of infinitely greater worth than animal life because human beings bear the image of God.

Let me be perfectly clear here: In scripture, the life of an animal is counted as special.

The law places specific rules on the treatment of animals – the respect of life enjoined on the part of people toward animals is clearly spelled out in the Mosaic Law.

Jesus affirmed the preciousness of animal life in the NT when he said the Father marks the fall of a sparrow.

But He went on to speak of the *greater value* of human life.

The point is this – while animals are precious in the sight of God, the value of their life does not equal the value of human life.

So it's not possible for the blood of animals to perfectly deal with sin.

Perfect forgiveness demands a perfect sacrifice – and that means a

life whose value is sufficient to atone for sin.
And there my friends is the answer to one of the biggest questions many people have.
How could the death of Jesus Christ atone for the sins of the entire world?
Wouldn't His one death be sufficient for just one person's sin? Substitutionary atonement makes sense – but only on a one for one basis.
How could one many died for many?
Here's the answer.
It's the value of the sacrifice offered that determines its scope. Jesus Christ – as a perfect, sinless man, meets all the just requirements of the Law and righteousness of God.
How many requirements does Jesus meet? ALL OF THEM!
To what degree? PERFECTLY!
So when He offers Himself as our substitute – how much of His perfection does one person exhaust – none of it!
Because perfection is inexhaustible!
If it could be used up, then it would be *imperfect!*
The *value* of Jesus' sacrifice for sins is *infinite!*
This is why His one death provides atonement for the sins of the entire world.
And this is why the condemnation of those who reject Christ will be *even greater* – because Jesus' death provided potential forgiveness for their sins, but they passed it by; they rejected it.
I utterly reject the idea taught by some that Jesus died only for the elect – that His work on the cross was only good for those who will be saved.
I reject that idea because it limits the atonement and presents a well of mercy and grace that runs dry when the last person is saved.
No – the well called atonement never runs dry – it is bottomless!
And this is why the condemnation of the lost will be even greater; because like men dying of thirst in the desert, all they had to do was come and drink, but their stubborn and foolish hearts *refused* to believe.

5Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.’”

8Previously saying, **“Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them”** (which are offered according to the law), **9**then He said, **“Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.”** He takes away the first that He may establish the second. **10**By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once **for all.**

The writer quotes Psalm 40:6-8 here and applies it to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

It’s clear that Jesus Christ is the *fulfillment* of the sacrifices commanded under the Law of Moses.

In v. 5, the phrase, **“a body You have prepared for Me”** is not found in the original quotation in the King James translation of Psalm 40.

Psalm 40:6 reads, **“My ears You have opened.”**

The difference is explained by discovering that the writer of Hebrews was quoting from the *Septuagint*, the *Greek* translation of the Old Testament.

So - how do we explain this difference in the text?

Why does the Hebrew say one thing, and the Greek translation say something very different.

Actually, this can become a very complex and labored issue so let me try to keep it as simple as possible and then get back to seeing what the writer is saying in these verses.

In about 250 BC, 70 Hebrew scholars realized that since Greek was becoming the common language of the world and many of the Jews who lived in far flung lands had lost the ability to speak in Hebrew, they needed to translate the Bible into Greek so Jews

around the world could read it.

In order to properly render the *meaning* of the text, they sometimes altered the words rather than give a strict *translation* from Hebrew into Greek.

In Psalm 40, it meant taking the words “**My ears You have opened**” and rendering them as “**a body You have prepared for Me.**”

The reason they paraphrased this was because they understood the *idiomatic sense* of the words “**My ears You have opened**” as meaning that God had fashioned a body with ears for the Son to come as man and take the role of a servant – offering Himself in total submission to the Father’s will.

Think of it this way – If you were to write a letter to someone and said, “I was totally stoked by the radical 360 you did on the slopes last week.” And then that letter was discovered 1000 years from now – how would someone who was translating it make it understandable to the people of her day?

She would have to convey it in words that are not strict translations but would have to use conveyed the sense of what you were saying.

That is what the translators of the Septuagint did – and it is why we often find a difference between a NT quote of an OT passage and what the OT actually says when we look back to it.

The 70 Scholars of the Septuagint, *translated* things *idiomatically* as opposed to doing a simple straightforward *transliteration* of the text.

Okay – so, back to what the writer is saying here . . .

Twice in this paragraph, he stated that God “had no pleasure” in the previous sacrifices.

This doesn’t mean they were wrong. After all, God did command them.

The point he was making was simply that God had no delight in the sacrifices as mere acts of ritual.

What He was looking for was *obedient and compliant hearts*.^[1]

No amount of sacrifices could substitute for *obedience*.^[2]

You see, all too often, people adopted the attitude – I can sin, and then make a sacrifice and everything will be kosher with God again.

It was like the attitude of many people during the Middle Ages that they could buy *indulgences*.

The idea was that the saints had lived such holy lives they had an *excess* of goodness that others could draw on and add to their account.

Rome then developed the concept of *selling indulgences*.

By paying a priest, you could purchase a *license* to sin.

This then reduced a person's time in Purgatory.

They even had a little slogan to go along with the advertising for selling indulgences

“When the coin in the box doth ring – Another soul from Purgatory springs.”

Now, think about what kind of a heart would fix on this system.

Imagine someone, who claims to be a Christian, who thinks, “I really want to commit this sin, and all I need to do is pay the priest, and I have a free license to do it!”

What kind of a heart does that reveal?

And how do you suppose God feels about this system?

This is largely the way the system of sacrifices were being used in Ancient Israel.

This is what the temple and the priesthood had degenerated into – a system to buy permission to sin.

The mentality of the people had switched from honoring the holiness of God, being convicted of their sin and having a way to restored fellowship with God to a clever way to buy permission to sin.

They adopted an attitude of, it's okay to sin, just so long as I keep bringing my sacrifices and offerings.

It was to this kind of mentality that God showed His displeasure.

The Old Covenant had become hopelessly corrupted and needed to be changed.

That's what Jesus came to do.

He came to do the Father's will.

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has taken away the first covenant and established the second.

The readers of this letter would get the message: Why go back to a covenant that has been taken away?

Why go back to sacrifices that are inferior?

Let's say you own a gas-guzzling, decrepit Ford Pinto that you bought from a shady used car lot last year. The loan papers you signed were for a 5 year loan at 25% interest. The vehicle barely gets you around and so you decide to go car shopping again. You go to the local Subaru dealer and see a brand new Impreza WRX. A salesman walks up and says that you can have it for a simple straight across trade in on the Pinto. They will pay off your current loan, the Impreza's yours, and oh yeah – the interest rate is 0% because rates are so low anyway they just want to move cars. Are you going to walk away from that deal? Only if you're a complete fool! That's the idea behind what the author is saying here.

11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Again – the old sacrifices could only provide a temporary covering for sins – not remove them.

12 But this Man, [meaning Jesus] after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Jesus' one sacrifice has provided the final and complete offering so that the *whole principle* of sin has been taken out of the way.

Jesus didn't just die for our sins – His death on the Cross breaks the sin-principle!

It's like this:

- 1) At the Cross our *sins* and *sin* was put on Jesus,
- 2) And in the resurrection, His *righteousness* was put on us.

God no longer deals with us on the basis of the Law and a system of works.

We are now His children and He deals with us on the basis of that *relationship*.

Think of it this way:

A college professor has a class of students.

She deals with them on the basis of the grades they get.

The grade they get is determined by the way they perform on tests.

But that professor is also a mother and has three children at home.

Does she relate to them on the basis of grades?

Does she give them tests and base the quality of their family life on how they do?

Of course not – they are her children and she doesn't relate to them as she does to her students.

Faith in Jesus Christ results in a new birth that changes us from men and woman whose lives are *governed by performance* to children whose *performance is governed by our relationship with our heavenly Father*.

The writer says that now that Jesus has made the perfect and final sacrifice, He's taken His seat at the place of favor in heaven and there awaits the Father's word that it's time for Him to return to Earth to fully implement the results of His victory.

That phrase, "**till His enemies are made His footstool**" comes from Psalm 110 and was clearly Messianic.

The writer is once again enforcing the idea that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah who was foretold would come to fulfill the old covenant and establish a new.

Of that new covenant the writer how presses on to speak . . .

15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

16 "*This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,*" **17** then He adds, "*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*"

He quotes the prophet Jeremiah here and attributes the words to the Holy Spirit.

This is from Jeremiah 31 where a new covenant is promised – one

that will be brought in and mediated eternally by the Messiah. It's a new relationship with God *not* based on *external religious rituals* but on a new relationship of the heart.

18 Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

The fundamental difference between the old and new covenants is the way they dealt with sin.

At best, all the old covenant could do was provide a *temporary covering* because the sacrifices were inadequate to properly deal with sin.

The new covenant, because it's based in a perfect sacrifice, is able to more than adequately dispense with sin altogether – or as the writer says it here – there is a remission, a removal of sin out of the way.

The issue of sin & salvation is the crux of every religion.

Every religion had to deal with the sin problem.

A careful examination of every religion quickly reveals that there is only one that deals with sin realistically and provides a satisfactory way for dealing with it – and that is the Christian faith.

In the final analysis, either we attempt to discharge our own sin, or we look to God to forgive us.

And forgiveness, by its very nature is something that has to be given from a place of authority.

Self-forgiveness only works if self is the final absolute authority, but it's not.

God is – so forgiveness must be sought from Him.

Because Jesus provides the perfect substitute for our sins, the Father reckons His work sufficient for us.

Therefore, as it says here in v. 18, there is no need for further sacrifices.

This is why God allowed the temple to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

The continued work of the priests there was actually an abomination because Christ had already come.

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the

Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Now the writer moves to apply all that he's been saying since chapter 5.

Since Jesus has offered the final and perfect sacrifice and since sin has been remitted, taken forever out of the way, and since He now sits at the right hand of God, we have a vital avenue of access to come in to the very presence of God and fellowship with Him.

Notice the words he uses to encourage the confidence we can have in Christ . . .

1) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,

No Israelite worshiper would have been bold enough to try to enter the holy of holies in the tabernacle or the temple in Jerusalem!

Even the high priest entered the holy of holies only once a year and even then with fear and trembling!

The thick veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies was a barrier between people and God.

Only the death of Christ could tear that veil and open the way into the *heavenly* sanctuary where God dwells. [\[3\]](#)

The torn veil was God's sign that the way to Him has been made wide open to all who will come by faith in His Son.

2) having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience

Think about what the high priest had to do in preparation to enter the Holy of holies on the Day of Atonement.

He had to change his garments and submit to elaborate ritual washings.

Then he had to offer a sacrifice on his own behalf before he could officiate on behalf of the people.

In the same way, our entrance into the presence of God is secured by the cleansing and forgiving work of Jesus Christ.

3) and our bodies washed with pure water.

Just as the high priest had to stop at the laver and wash himself before He was capable of entering the holy places – so we must be clean if we are to enter the presence of the holiness of God.

What's exciting is that while the ritual of the high priest was merely *ceremonial*, the work of Christ actually provides for the redemption and sanctification of our physical bodies.

Christian – do not loath or hate you body.

God created humans with bodies – physical vehicles through which our spirits can interact with the material world.

In our final perfected state – we will have bodies.

And as Paul makes so abundantly clear in 1 Cor. 15, while they are significantly different from these material bodies we possess now, they will be *essentially* the same.

Just as a seed gives rise to a plant – so these bodies are a seed that will give rise to something new, but something that takes up and uses the husk and kernel.

The redemption Christ secured at the cross includes your body.

And this is why Paul says in Romans 6

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul writes . . .

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

These passages remind us that as Christians, we are not to think of our bodies as somehow inherently corrupt and sinful and therefore

unredeemable.

On the contrary – the salvation Jesus secured includes our bodies.

Our spirits *were saved* and quickened the moment we were born again.

Our souls *are being saved* as our minds are being renewed by truth and our wills our being moved by grace.

Our bodies *will be saved* when Christ comes again and they shed their mortality to put on immortality.

While we wait for that day and the completion of Christ's work of salvation in our behalf, we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord.

We do that, not by climbing up on some altar but by yielding the members of our bodies; our hands and arms, our legs and feet, our lips and tongues, to serve God by serving our fellow man.

Now – just as in v. 22 the writer has told us to draw near to God, he now tells us to hold fast to our faith . . .

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

This is such a critical truth.

Think about who this is written to – to followers of Christ who were being hammered for their faith.

Wavering was precisely what they were doing.

Like a child just learning to ride a bike wobbles in her seat till she gains her balance, they were wobbling back and forth because they were being knocked off their confidence in Christ.

So in application of his masterful argument for the superiority of Christ, He calls them to re-center themselves and lay confident hold of the hope they had in their Messiah.

Their hope was to be based, not in their own faith or faithfulness, but in what?

Their hope was in God who is faithful.

A promise is only as good as the one who makes it.

When the one who makes a promise is incapable of failure or of lying, then the promise is more than trustworthy – it's an already sure thing.

My wife loves volleyball and if she's going to be gone and a game is televised, she tapes it.

Let's say she tapes a game, but I happen to be home and see the whole thing and know the final score.

When she gets home, and asks if it taped, I say it did but then ask her if she wants to know the score.

If she says "yes" – I tell her who won and what the score was.

Does she doubt me? No!

She had no reason to doubt me because I have no reason whatsoever to deceive her.

Now, she's going to watch the match because she loves to watch volleyball.

But does the tape ever put her in doubt as to what the final outcome is going to be?

No! Though she's now seeing the game as if it were live, she knows that in fact, the game's outcome has already been determined.

Because God is eternal and dwells outside the time domain, when He makes a promise, it's really already done!

Our faith is really only an issue of time.

Hope is faith invested in the future, a future God holds in the palm of His hand.

You & I can hold fast to our hope without any wavering or wobbling because God is as good as His word.

The writer adds one important thing to this – we can hold fast to the CONFESSON, *the verbal expression*, of our hope.

Even when surrounded by circumstances that would deny our faith or lob doubts at us, we can maintain a steady composure because he who promised is faithful.

24And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **25**not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

These verses will be my text for Sunday so I will leave them till then.

Now the writer moves to lay out a heavy and solemn warning – a warning that makes no sense unless there is the possibility that a person can walk away from the faith.

I am painfully aware of the debate that goes on about whether or not a person can lose their salvation.

Let's suspend that for right now and simply let this passage speak for itself . . .

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ **but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.**

When we were in chapter 6 we covered the same subject.

The writer returns to that now and says that if a person *repents of repentance*, there is no hope for them.

The verb tense in v. 26 is continuous so that we could render this as, “If we willfully *go on sinning*.”

This isn't a simple case of a Christian who does some backsliding.

This is wholesale apostasy in which the person turns their back on Christ in full awareness of what they are doing and returns to a lifestyle of rebellion.

Having already shown that Jesus' one death is the final and perfect sacrifice that provides atonement, he says that if a person has truly received the benefit of that sacrifice, and then walks away from it *willingly* – meaning in full-knowledge of what they are doing, there is no *other* sacrifice that will avail.

All that's left is the certain expectation of the wrath of God.

Then he goes on to elaborate on this . . .

28 **Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.** ²⁹ **Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?** ³⁰ **For we know Him who said,**

“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.”³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

If an Israelite was caught and convicted of blatant rebellion and defiance of the Law of Moses, he was executed. [4]

If that was the punishment for a willful violation of the Old Covenant, how much more severe is a willing and purposeful violation of the New Covenant?

Jesus said that guilt and punishment were in direct proportion to the nature of the violation. [5]

What violation of the will of God could be greater than the sin of apostasy?

There’s an unfortunate idea floating around today that in our modern age, God has become MORE tolerant of sin and less disposed toward judgment.

People think of the Bible as being an old fashioned book that reveals a God who was less forgiving and more intolerant in His younger days, but now that He’s mellowed with age and a few thousands years, He’s become a lot more lenient.

Far from being more tolerant of sin today, God is *less* tolerant, because people now have far more light than they used to.

In preaching on Mars Hill to the Greek philosophers Paul said, “Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” [6]

Note the terms used by the writer to describe the apostate here:

1) he has trampled the Son of God underfoot,

In other words, he’s despised the person of Jesus Christ.

This is indeed the case with apostates – they do not remain neutral toward Jesus – they come to loath Him.

Most people at least recognize that Jesus was an exceptionally good man.

Even if they do not worship Him, they honor Him as one of history's all-time best human beings.

Apostates come to despise Him.

When love goes sour, it turns to intense dislike – and that's what happens to apostates.

2) he has counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing,

The apostate not only despises the person of Christ, he comes to mock the cross.

3) He has insulted the Spirit of grace?

In the ancient world, hospitality was an expected virtue; it was simply a part of life to open your home and entertain others. There were few insults greater than to invite someone into your home and then tell them to leave.

That's what the apostate does.

He's invited the Holy Spirit to take up residence in himself, then he's told the Spirit to get lost!

This is an insult to God that is irreparable.

The writer quotes Deut. 32:35& 36 and reminds his readers that God is a God of Justice and will requite evil.

Before we move on, let's clarify a couple things about apostasy . . .

First of all – Chapter 6 and what we read here make it pretty clear that apostasy is a very real possibility.

But they also make it clear that no one wanders aimlessly into apostasy.

It is a decision made with full awareness of what one is doing.

People do not just “fall away” from the Lord – they “run away” from Him.

Backsliding is *not* apostasy – there's a vast difference between the two.

Second, if a person is a true apostate – they are lost and there is no hope for their being restored to fellowship with God.

Third, what does this mean for us in terms of how we deal with someone?

The answer to that is simple – since we do not know what's really in a person's heart, the Lord tells us to relate to a person on the basis of their behavior.

By their fruit you will know them - He said.
When a person's claims to be a believer and acts like a believer – we enjoy spiritual communion with them.
When a person *claims* to be a believer but *acts* like an unbeliever, we pray for their conviction and repentance.
When a person simply acts like an unbeliever, regardless of their profession, even saying they were a Christian at one time, there is still only one proper course for us to take – to pray for their repentance and conversion.
What about the person we've known who seemed to at one time be a dedicated believer and gave solid evidence of being born again but has now gone off into a lifestyle of decadent sin?
Again – we don't know the condition of the human heart, either now or in the past.
All we can go on is the present evidence – and if a man or woman is living a life outside the pale of what God's word says – we only have one thing to do – love them and pray for their conversion.

After warning them about the danger of apostasy, the writer now moves to affirm them and give them a word of encouragement . . .

- 32** But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: ³³partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; ³⁴for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. ³⁵Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:
- 37** *“For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*
- 38** *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws*

back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

The writer quotes Habakkuk 2 here and mentions his chains.

It's from this and the subtle way he frames his argument throughout the letter that move many to conclude that it was the Apostle Paul who wrote Hebrews.

His whole doctrine of justification by faith that's spelled out in Romans is based on Habakkuk 2 – and here we find it again.

The former days he mentions in v. 32 were the days when he himself led the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem and Judea as described in the book of Acts.

He arrested the followers of Christ, confiscated their goods and threw many of them into prison.

It was their courageous faith that helped win him.

He's reminding them of that here and encouraging them to not lose touch with their roots.

If they could come through such fierce times of persecution in their initial days, why not now that they are even more mature and experienced in the things of God?

He hits on an element of our faith that can only be developed by trial – and that is endurance.

It's one thing to rally to a great crisis or need for a short time.

It's altogether different to endure a prolonged season of pressure.

The American people have rallied and responded to the events of Sept. 11th with courage and patriotism.

But what will happen if there are a dozen more September 11th's?

What if there are anthrax attacks in Dallas, Seattle and San Francisco?

What if a suitcase nuclear bomb is detonated in downtown LA on a Wednesday morning?

What if the water supplies of Miami, Chicago and Omaha are poisoned?

What if oil refineries in Denver, St. Louis, and Memphis are blown up?

What then? Will we endure or be beaten down and capitulate to the terrorist's demands?

We laud the courage of the passengers of the plane that went down in Pennsylvania.

They were heroes.

Will we endure a plane going down once a day?

Our faith is not a sprint – it's a marathon and we need endurance.

The writer knew that so he encouraged them with the reminder that Jesus who came once, is coming again.

The faith that brought us to Christ must be maintained till He brings us home.

Don't draw back!

Don't allow your passion or conviction to cool.

Don't let the trials and distractions this world tries to bring your way hinder you from pressing on.

[1] Wiersbe, Warren

[2] 1 Sam. 15:22, Ps. 51:16-17; Isa. 1:11, 19; Jer. 6:19-20; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:20-21

[3] Wiersbe - Mark 15:38

[4] Deut. 17:1-7)

[5] Luke 12:47-48

[6] MacArthur, John • Acts 17:30-31