

# Recall The Glory Days

by James Jennings

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**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:32, Hebrews 12:1, Philippians 1:21, 1 John 2:19, Matthew 10:22, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Hebrews 11:15, Revelation 2:5, 1 John 2:5

**Topics:** "Reflecting on Faith", "Endurance in Trials"

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## Description

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## Transcript

If you have been a Christian, a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, for ten years or more, raise your hand. For twenty years or more, keep your hand up. Thirty.

Yeah, you can put them down. Thirty years to follow Christ. If you consistently made a journal, you would have a lot to remember.

A lot to reflect back on. And I want to speak right now on the reality of recalling the former days or the glory days. The glory days.

Turn to Hebrews 10. Someone ever looked at you and they said, ah, you remember the glory days? I've heard some of you talk like that about past experiences as a Christian. The idea is you reminisce about the most successful time that you experienced from a past period of your life.

A past time that in many ways was maybe going better than you think it is right now. The glory days might refer to, in the secular sense, when your business was successful and maybe as you reflect on the glory days, it's encouraging you to reignite a new business plan and make things better than they ever were

before. Athletes often reflect on the former days.

Often, you will find athletes reflecting on the glory days. They might even go sit in the gym on the bleachers with the lights partly dimmed and the gym is empty and there that athlete is in his 60s and he goes in the gym. He sits down and there he reflects on the days gone by.

He reflects on the dunks that he used to be able to do. But now he can no longer do that. With most sports, you can't have a more glorious day in the future.

Your body falls apart. You age. You can't jump.

You can't be as quick as you used to be. When we think about the glory days, often what it is filled with is a lot of sentimental longing for those days again. Someone wants to go back.

Now what does that have to do with us? Does the Bible, does the Scriptures ever call us to reflect on the former days? Or on the glory days, if you want to put it like that, where certain things happened that we would look and say that was pretty glorious. Does the Bible want us as Christians to think back on experiences that happened in our spiritual lives? And it even makes you ask this, what even makes something considered glorious? Do I even categorize the glory days correctly? Do I even think rightly about this? Does the Scriptures call us to sit here today? Is it right for me to even exhort you to think about the former days and reflect on those days? Or am I actually putting a stumbling block? Or am I doing something that is Scriptural? If we think about the glory days, won't that just create some discontentment? Make you discontent with the present? If it did, would that be all bad? No, holy discontentment can actually be a blessing. Doesn't Paul say in Philippians 2.13, forgetting what lies behind? Shouldn't we forget what lies behind and just press forward to what lies ahead? Yeah, Paul says that there in its context.

But elsewhere, Hebrews 10.32, this writer here in a letter that he says at the end is a brief exhortation to these Hebrew believers who many of them are drifting away from the Lord Jesus Christ. They're entertaining things like Moses and angels and all these things, and he's appealing to them, Christ is better, and what he says is a brief exhortation in which this entire letter would be read in one setting to those believers. He says right there in v. 32, but recall the former days.

Recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. You sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding 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 is promised. For yet a little while, and the coming one 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 and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and persevere their souls. And then he goes in chapter 11 and gives all these examples of people who by faith conquered kingdoms.

He very well could have skipped that and went right to Hebrews 12.1, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our

faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. You know, children, many of you memorized that verse this last week in VBS. And if you listen to me today, you're going to realize all the more importance of why that text is right here in this letter.

You're going to realize how essential it is that your parents, if they're Christians, keep their eyes on Christ. Let's pray and then we'll hop in. Father, Lord, as Jeff already prayed for me, I just ask for Your help.

Lord, everyone who's been in a pulpit to preach, Lord, they can leave the pulpit knowing the sense of the help of God or the sense of not having that help. Lord, no matter what sense subjectively I feel, Lord, here I am by faith, trusting that this is the Word for the hour, and I pray, Lord, that You would empower it for the sake of these blood-bought ones whom You purchased with the precious blood of Your only Son. You gave up and consumed by Your wrath on that cross for our sakes.

Lord, help, please. Make us alert, quicken our minds. Drive this home where it is needed in different believers' hearts.

And somehow, Father, draw the loss to Yourself. In Christ's precious name, Amen. So though we cannot and should not live on past or even present experiences, there is a place for reflecting on those former days.

And there's a purpose for doing so. And it's a purpose that goes beyond just remembering it to be encouraged about what happened in the past and what God has done. And so we see here in the verse, Hebrews 10.32, he says here, recall the former days.

Recall. How do you recall something? Where does that take place? It takes place up here. Like the guy in the gym.

He's sitting there and he's kind of imagining the replays and the highlights of all that he could do. Right? He's reflecting on that in his mind. So the author here is calling us to use the mind.

Some of you realize that's a battle in and of itself to actually meditate and reflect without being distracted in this very busy world. He says, recall the former days. What days? Then he goes on.

After you were enlightened. Isn't that an interesting term? After you were enlightened. He used that same term chapters earlier in chapter 6, verse 4. Don't turn there, but he referred to people there who've tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come.

As in these people just got exposed to the truth, it seems like many of them are new converts. These are new believers at this point. He's saying after you were enlightened.

So there was a time when these people had just been exposed to the glory of Christ. They believed in Him. They embraced Him.

They trusted in Him. And he's saying recall after you got saved. What happened then? Recall that time.

Now, how long ago was this that happened compared to when he's writing? Was it two years? Twenty years? Ten years? Is this ten months later? It's hard to specifically narrow that down. We also find the word enlightened in Ephesians 1.18. It says, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. And what

happens when the eyes of your heart are enlightened? What does Paul say to the Ephesians? He says that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.

You see, there's something that the Bible describes as being enlightened, where one hears the truth and their eyes are open. In Hebrews 6, many of those who were enlightened, they didn't make it. So you can be enlightened and yet not have the true thing.

Yet the true Christian has true enlightenment and they maintain that hope. He says right here in Hebrews 10, but we are not of those who shrink back. You can shrink back and be destroyed, but we are of those who have faith.

We have faith. We have trust in God. We are looking to Christ and we persevere.

We persevere. We keep going on with the Lord. Okay, so recall the former days.

Remember when you were first saved. Now, for many of us, what did your former days look like? You got saved. You're going to church meetings four times a week.

Going to Christian conferences all the time, right? You're going to the G3. You're going to the Fellowship Conference. You go to all these conferences.

Is this what these new believers' early days looked like? Does it talk about all the Christian conferences they were going to and all the podcasts they were listening to? Look at the text. This is not how most of us had to start. After you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with suffering.

Isn't that amazing? You enter in to the truth, and all of a sudden, you're faced with a hard struggle with sufferings. And then he expounds on the sufferings by giving two broad examples. He says, sometimes, and then he says, sometimes.

He says sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction. Meaning, your stand for Christ exposed you to slanderous comments about your character, and it exposed you to suffering at the hands of evil men. How many of us got saved and right away the media, was it maligning us? Right away they were sticking us in prison? That's not a lot of our former days.

That's not what we had to go through. What specific time is he referring to when he says right here, verse 33, publicly exposed to reproach? There's a lot of that that happens in the Bible. I don't know what time specifically with this audience is he thinking about.

It made me think about Acts 17. Jason, it says that the people, they formed a mob, they set the city in an uproar, and they attacked the house of Jason. Seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

Have any of you had that? Have you had that, David? I haven't seen a mob in front of your house or my house. We don't suffer like they do in their former days. At least most of us have not.

Yeah, not yet. Then he mentions something else. The second thing he says at verse 33, sometimes being partners with those so treated.

Partners. How were they partners? He explains, for you had compassion on those in prison. So he's saying if you weren't suffering yourself, you went and identified and joined in support of those who were

suffering.

And again, this is totally different than us going and visiting someone in the prison. They were going and visiting someone in the prison for being a Christian and therefore identifying with the person who's in prison for being a Christian and exposing themselves that they're a Christian and then possibly bringing persecution on themselves. I mean, how did they know to go to Jason's house anyways? You're partnering with those who might cost you your home, your life, your job.

That's what's happening here for these people when they were first enlightened and exposed to the truth. They joined in support. It makes you think about Paul when he told Timothy, you are not ashamed of my chains.

Many people, they are ashamed when others are suffering severely. In a small way, we kind of see that in Canada right now. There's one church that's got millions of dollars of fines.

And it's like if you say publicly in support of that church he's wanting to gather together, then the government is going to see you on their radar and now they're going to go after you. And then, you know what? If all the Christians would speak up, it'd be hard for the government to go after all of them. But are you going to partner with them? Or, you know, the cost is too much.

We don't want to identify with them. We don't want to partner with them. The same exhortation which this entire letter is.

Remember what he says at the end? He says in Hebrews 13.3, remember those who are in prison. What does it say after that? Remember those who are in prison as if you were in prison with them. As though in prison with them.

And those who are mistreated, remember them. Why? What reason does he give? Since you are one body. Isn't that amazing? These early days, the days he's wanting these people to remember were days of hard struggles, trials, persecution, property being taken, having to realize am I willing to identify with this Christian? It might cost me this, this, and that.

And he's exhorting them to go back to that. Remember, why would he end the letter reminding them to be with those who are in prison? Because apparently, they have fallen off on some of this ministry to those who are in prison. You know, having compassion on those in prison is not easy.

Look what he says after this. Verse 34, you had compassion. You're showing love to those who are in prison.

And you did what? You joyfully accepted Joe Biden's stimulus check. Many of us maybe did joyfully accept that. These people, they joyfully accepted the plundering of their property.

It's incredible. You so identify with Christ. You so identify with His people that it led your property to get taken, to get stolen, whether taken by the government, what all the technicalities happened.

This earthly possession was lost. And their attitude in the midst of losing it was what? Joyfully. They were joyful in the midst of that.

Why did you identify with the Christians? Why did you joyfully lose this property? I mean, you just got the house paid off. You were putting extra payments in your mortgage for 20 years. And now it's gone! What a

foolish decision, Christian! Why lose that? Well, he gives the answer.

Why were you joyfully accepting the plundering of your property? Since you knew that you had a better property. A better possession, right? You see, the eyes of faith are always looking to what is to come. What is to come.

And he says that is an abiding one, right? Nothing here is going to abide. It's all going to rust, decay, and burn up. Why did 21-year-old Perpetua in 182, she was born into a prominent and wealthy Roman family, why did she become partners with those publicly exposed to affliction? History says her father came into the jail cell trying to convince her to deny Christ.

And she records this, while we were still with the persecutors and my father, for the sake of his love for me, was persisting in seeking to turn me away and to cast me down from the faith. Father, I said, do you see, let us say, this vessel lying here to be a little pitcher? You know, a thing to hold water. Or something else.

And the father said, I see it to be so. And Perpetua replied, can it be called by any other name than what it is? And he said, no. And she said, neither can I myself call myself anything else than what I am.

I am a Christian. Then my father provoked at this saying through himself upon me as if he would tear my eyes away. In the arena, it's recorded how accurate all this is or not, but it's recorded she was attacked by a gladiator.

His knife plunged into her neck. And she died at 21, leaving the nursing child she had had and her prominent family behind for Christ. She was looking to a better possession.

Why? Why would you do that? Since you knew. I mean, just look at this phrase in v. 34. Why do all this? Since you knew.

They were really convinced at some point. Since. You did all this back then.

Since you knew. You knew. You were really, really gripped, Hebrews, that you had a better possession and an abiding one.

You were really convinced. Remember, Hebrews, the confident faith you had? Remember what it led you to do? And then he gives all these examples in Hebrews 11 that talks about faith being the conviction of things not seen. In Hebrews 11.26, he reminds them of Moses who considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Where was Moses looking to? To the reward. Where were these Hebrews looking to when they joyfully suffered the plundering of their property? Since you knew, you yourselves had a better possession. They were looking past all that is in this world by sight, by faith, trusting the Lord.

And then he says here, his conclusion here in wanting them to remember these former days. Him wanting them to reflect on the golden days, the glory days, the golden days, his answer, his goal is right here in v. 35. Therefore, in view of all of this I have reminded you of, don't throw away your confidence.

Isn't that an interesting way the ESV renders that? Throw it away. Have you ever seen someone, they have something that is of great value, they don't know it. You see them going near the treasure.

Let's say there's a piece of paper and in it it's got \$1,000 in cash and they don't know it. They just think it's some crumbled up envelope. And they go to throw it in the trash.

What are you going to do? If you know the value of what they possess and they don't recognize it, what are you going to do? You're going to tell them to stop. This is what this writer is seeing the Hebrews do. He's seen them go after angels.

He's seen all these things where they're not considering Christ to be better. They're not living as they used to live. They're thinking of throwing it away.

And he's going to appeal to them and one of his arguments throughout this letter is remember your former days. Recall to when you were first saved and all that you did by faith. Recall the joy that you had as your property was plundered.

Why do you now look at it in the present as miserable to lose your property for the sake of Christ? The author's hope was that as some recalled the former days, it would stir them up and encourage their faith and confidence in the Lord. He just said this, Hebrews 10, verse 24. He just said, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

And he's seeking to do that. He's seeking to stir them up. And so obviously that's my hope here in this message.

I want to stir you up. As you recall the former days, as you remember the days, even as a new Christian, as you remember the bygone days in the past, is there something that you can look at in the past of your Christian life where it actually brings some sense of embarrassment upon you to see where you're at running right now and the speed in the present. He's appealing to them with this to motivate them in the present to run all the harder for the Lord Jesus Christ.

How many of you remember those early days as a believer? Since I came out of false Christianity, I was just so gripped with how all these people were going to hell who thought they were going to heaven. That hit me. All these people I assume were Christians because they said they were Christians.

All of a sudden, I'm confronted with Matthew 7, verse 21 to 23. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. And there was a love of Christ and a love for these people's souls that motivated me that 13 years later is it gripping me, this love of Christ as it did then? You know, we can all be very critical of ourselves in our former days.

We were overly zealous. Many of us would admit the term they use now is I was in cage stage. Have any of you heard that? Cage stage.

Meaning you get saved and they're so judgmental as a new Christian, you should stick them in a cage until they calm down, right? Is that what Christ did to those who wanted to call fire to come down from heaven to consume? Right there in Luke 9. No, He didn't. We don't get stuck in a cage. We live by faith and we learn.

We learn as we go. We learn as we're a part of this church. You know, there's some freshness and a love for Christ as a new Christian when your eyes are first opened that you don't want to be like those in Revelation who left their first love.

Right? We don't want that to happen. A.W. Pink said, it is a noticeable fact of history that babes in Christ have often been the bravest of all in facing suffering and death, perhaps because the great and glorious change involved in the passage from death unto life is fresher in their minds than in that of older Christians. Recall the former days of the freshness of the love of Christ and the cross and how it gripped you and how words and psalms, the first time you sang them impacted you, and now the hundredth time, it's kind of become more monotonous.

So here, a few observations are. First is this, the glory days are not exactly what one might picture. This is very important to say because what do you tend to think about when someone says the glory days or the former days? What would be one of the first things on people's minds? Revival? Mass conversion? Is that what he reminds them of here? You know what he reminds them of here? Look at this.

He reminds them of their suffering. What they were willing to suffer for. He tells them why they were willing to suffer as they were since they knew that they had a better possession and an abiding one.

And then what's one of the acts here that the believers were doing that he wants them to remember? Verse 34, you had compassion on those in prison. You know what I want to phrase to you is something the glory days to remember. Recall the time in your life where you were willing to partner and love the brethren like no other day.

Not the time you were all the more evangelistic. I'm talking about the time when you were willing to show compassion and love even to the least of these in this church. He's reminding them of that.

Their willingness to be sacrificial and love the brethren. He's not reminding them of the mighty works they did. He's not reminding them of the time there's tons of fire up there in the upper room.

He's reminding them of the time that they so manifested the love of Christ to these other believers who were being persecuted and they were willing to identify with Christ and these other believers because they were looking to an eternal possession and the life to come which is far, far better. Do you remember that time in your life? When have you most been loving towards the brethren? You know, John says by this you know you've passed from death to life. And what reason does he give? That you love the brethren.

Really, I can know if I'm a Christian whether or not I love the brethren? That's a test of salvation? Yeah. What's so glorious about partnering with those in prison? Something like that's never going to get brought up, is it? Jesus would argue differently. Matthew 25.

Picture of Judgment Day. Christ says, I was sick. You visited Me.

I was in prison. And you did what? You came to Me. It doesn't mean Christ Himself was in prison, but one of His members of the body of Christ was in prison and you came to Him.

And according to the author of Hebrews, they came to that person and associated with Him in prison knowing their house might even get taken. Knowing their life might even get taken. You're loving this brother so much who is one of Christ's little ones to even lose your own home.

What did the early church do in Acts? They sold their property to give to those who were in need. It's incredible the love that was happening. So, what makes the present days glorious is not so much what is happening, but what is your level of anticipation for Christ in heaven.

When have you most been gripped with Christ and the heaven to come and the pleasures forevermore at His right hand? That's what He says to them, since you knew. Can you recall the time that you were most convinced about how much better it will be to depart and be with Christ? Where you could say like Paul in Philippians 1.21, for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. For to depart and be with Christ is far better.

So today could be a glory day if by your faith you are convinced of a future glory being far better than anything that this world has to offer you right now. You see what I'm saying? His focus isn't so much... it is on the works. But the bigger focus on the days to recall was the faith and confidence in Christ and the heaven to come that they had that led to the works.

Some people, they want to reflect on the time they were the most busy. They were just being busy all the time and doing all these things for the Lord. You can be busy doing all these things for the Lord and have no confidence of heaven.

You can be doing it all to try to earn your salvation and make yourself feel like you're a Christian. That's not a glory day. That's a bondage day.

Second observation. What is the big difference between them right now compared to then? He's saying recall the former days. Something has changed.

We've already emphasized it, but let me say it again. Since you knew. So what does he say? Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession.

That seems to imply that in their mind, they're now thinking maybe this is not worth it. Maybe it's not worth it to be a Christian. Should I throw away my confidence in Christ? Should I throw it away for some of this false doctrine that's come in? Should I throw it away for sin? Should I throw it away for what? Hebrews 2, he said pay much closer attention to what you've heard.

Don't drift from it. He said don't neglect so great a salvation. He said take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart.

Evil, unbelieving, meaning not being as convinced of the greatness of Christ. And you fall away from the living God. The Hebrews are drifting.

He wants them to turn back to Christ and see His greatness. He wants them to recall the former days and let them be reminded of the trials by which they confidently trusted the Lord in. Can you recall that? That severe trial you went through, believer? And all of a sudden, you committed it to the Lord by faith and God marvelously helped you in the midst of that trial.

In view of that, don't throw away your present confidence. Can you recall the former day, believer, where you had all manner of purity in your life and you were always taking the ways of escape? You were believing the Lord. Recall those days.

That can be now. You can trust the Lord now. You can believe.

I don't have to go back to that sin. As 1 John says, if anyone does sin, imply that's not the usual thing for the Christian. The third thing, why would one throw away their confidence? Why? We throw away things that are no longer valuable to us.

Right? The scrap piece of wood. You easily put it in the trash can. It has no more value to us.

What's Christ mean to you right now? What does the better possession mean to you right now? Are you looking to that? Am I looking to that? Am I focused on the better possession? Or do I have all these things in the physical realm and a house and a family and all these things where is my mind being too consumed with this? Or am I seeing through all of it knowing I would be glad to joyfully have it taken for the sake of loving a brother and sister who are in prison? Am I willing to lose these things? Is heaven my home and not earth? They knew in the past of the value of Christ. It was seen in their life. They were willing to have their property plundered at one time.

But you see, it's not what you and I were willing to do one time. It's what are we willing to do right now? Are we keeping on in this belief of the value of Christ? A fourth thing. You know what this text shows us? A reality that a lot of churches don't talk about.

You and I have to endure to the end. Jesus' well-known words in Matthew 10.22 are often unknown or misunderstood. What does Jesus say in Matthew 10.22? Those who endure to the end will be saved.

And right before that, He said, you will be hated by all for My name's sake. Those who endure to the end will be saved. Endure is a word constantly found in this book of Hebrews.

It means to remain behind. To stay when others depart. In John 6, when the 2,000 left and the 12 remained, they endured.

They endured a trial. What was that trial in John 6? It was the hard sayings of Jesus Christ. The hard statements Christ made caused 2,000 people to abandon ship.

Twelve remained. They endured. They remained behind when others departed.

To endure, it means to refuse to flee. It means to hold out. To stand one's ground.

It's to continually be firm. The Hebrews are drifting, right? They don't have the same firmness that they used to have. He's wanting them to remember that past confidence they had in the Lord and how they endured a hard struggle with sufferings and they did that as a new Christian.

He's wanting them to remember this. Now, does enduring to the end mean one can lose their salvation? The short answer is no. But you know what it clearly indicates? You can prove, and I can prove, that we don't have true salvation to begin with.

It's not a matter of losing one's salvation. It's not a matter of going from being justified and regenerated to now being condemned and being born again is reverted. But rather, by one's life, we prove what was true of us, and many prove they never had true faith to begin.

The well-known verse, 1 John 2.19, they went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out to make it obvious they were never of us.

Why do so many people get upset at that statement, you have to endure to the end? What does it make it sound to them? That you and I have got to save ourselves? They say, well, it sounds like a work salvation. Well, interesting enough, what does Paul say in Philippians 2? Work out your salvation. So yes, your salvation involves recalling your former days.

Your salvation involves stirring one another up. Your salvation involves clearing your conscience. Your salvation involves cutting off right hands that cause you to sin.

Why do they get upset? Often, it's because their confidence presently is not in Christ. It's in a past experience. And their present walk is one of allowing for all manner of sin in their life, so then they get challenged that they've got to endure to the end and their confidence is shaken because the fruit in their life right now is very concerning.

And so they get upset because you've touched an idol in their life. You know what this entire book of Hebrews testifies to? It testifies to the reality we cannot just start well. We have to finish.

Look, as much as he might motivate them by recalling the glory days, he's definitely not wanting to live in those past days. He's wanting the glory days and recalling the former days to affect their conduct in the present. That's his goal.

It's the present conduct of these Christians. It's amazing, isn't it? Christians who've gone through such severe trials, and all of a sudden, they're wavering. It kind of reminds you of that Old Testament verse, if you can't run with the horsemen, then you can't do what? You can't run with the chariots.

We haven't even got to run with the footmen yet. Not horsemen. We haven't even been able to run with the footmen, many of us.

Our trials, it says right there, you endured a hard struggle. What do you and I consider to be a hard struggle? There are some things in my life that I think are a big trial, and I would be ashamed to tell you what I thought was a big trial in my life. Because in the big picture of it, it's teensy-teensy kind.

It really is. But here, these people endured really hard trials, and their faith is wavering. Faith they used to have that was confident.

Things have come along, false doctrine, to get their eyes off of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin has come along. He says don't be immoral like Esau who sold his birthright.

Why is he appealing to Esau selling his birthright? Because some of those Hebrews are doing that very thing. He's wanting them to remember those former days. Remember what they endured through.

And how long do we have to endure? I mean, that sounds kind of burdensome, right? I've got to endure it to the end. How long until we get to the end? What does he say? It says right there in v. 37, yet a little while. Just a little while.

That's it. God's time is just going to be a little while and it's going to be over. He says right there in v. 25, all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Wait, he said this almost 2,000 years ago? The day drawing near? When's Christ coming? You know what? When eternity comes, it will be very, very small. This time that we've got to endure. We're not like Methuselah living 900-something years.

Most of us are not going to make it to 90. Imagine being 900, Papa. I mean, you would have a lot less.

I wonder how many people who lived that long had what they had of the Old Testament Scriptures memorized. Well, where was I at? We often feel like trials go on forever. I mean, sometimes just a health trial that lasts one week can feel like it's gone on forever.

Because it's your present reality. But the text says, in a little while. So don't shrink back.

I mean, if you knew. If you knew the war is about to end. Yes, you're in danger.

Yes, bombs are going off. Yes, there's a war. Yes, people are committing mutiny and trying to do a takeover and all this conflict is happening.

And it's a hard struggle. And if you've got news, just a little while left and we're going to have victory. It would encourage you to press on.

That's what He's doing here to them. Don't shrink back. Don't shrink back from the suffering.

Don't shrink back from striving for the holiness without which you will not see the Lord. As He says in Hebrews 12.14. Don't shrink back. Fifth thing, why didn't they endure? Why? Was it exhaustion? Did the suffering go on and on and they just quit? Or did the suffering cease? And ease came in and hardened them.

What were their circumstances? Like I said, much of this letter, it deals with false doctrine that has come in, taking them away from Christ to different things that are Jewish. And sure enough, false doctrine will do that. It'll get your eyes off of Christ.

And you get your eyes off of Christ, guess where your confidence goes? It's gone. You get talking about all these things in the physical realm and the legalistic cults that get you focused on the here and now. You're not thinking about your better possession here.

You're thinking about all the things that are external. The sixth thing, what is this better possession? Is it a physical land? Is it Cana? No, it's not. He says right here, it's an abiding one.

It's an abiding one. It goes on eternally. Forever.

I mean, you and I have an inheritance that's not going to run out. You say I've got \$10 million in physical inheritance. It's going to run out.

It's not going to last. We have an inheritance. It's not going to run out.

It's unfading. The Scriptures say we can't see it. Right.

We live by faith. Isn't that what all these in Hebrews 11 did? Did all these in Hebrews 11, did they come before or after Christ? Oh, you mean they endured all they did before the fulfillment of the promises and His coming? You mean they did all they did looking to the shadows and trusting that these things would happen? Wait, and you mean we actually live after Christ came? Perfectly lived? Substitutionarily died? Was raised, appeared to hundreds, and ascended to heaven? You mean we've got such more evidence? Well, the Christian isn't looking for all the evidence. They're going by faith.

They're believing God. God's changed their heart. We're trusting Him.

If these people in Hebrews 11 could by faith endure all they did without having the fulfillment of the Christ, and we have Christ who has come, how much more should our faith be stirred to believe the Lord? In Hebrews, it talks about better things belonging to salvation. It talks about we have a better hope, a better covenant, better promises, better possession. Hebrews 11 says we've got a better country.

It says we're going to rise again to a better life. It's just better, better, better, better. God provided something better for us.

Hebrews 11. Christ's blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Isn't that what he says here in v. 34? Since you yourselves, you knew you had a better possession.

You've got to remember, we've got something better than anything here in this life. We've got to keep trusting the Lord by faith. F. F. Bruce, he says, the eternal inheritance laid up for them was so real in their eyes that they could lightheartedly, they could joyfully bid farewell to material possessions which were short-lived in any case.

This attitude of mind is precisely that faith of which our author goes on to speak of. They could lightheartedly just lose all this physical stuff that they labored and toiled with their hands? Yeah, we have something better. Who else joyfully endured trials? Look at Hebrews 12.

Consider Him. It talks about considering. Verse 2, look into Jesus, for the joy set before Him endured the cross.

Right? Christ could see His exaltation. He was looking to His death and resurrection and exaltation and entering in through those gates as Psalm 24 talks about with clean hands and a pure heart. And He did.

And He went and endured the cross despising the shame. He's seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And He says to these same people who are enduring a hard struggle, in Hebrews 10.32, He says in v. 3 of chapter 12, consider Christ.

Don't just look at all these people in chapter 11. Consider Christ who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself so that you will not grow weary. Oh, we're getting weary.

Getting fainthearted. Don't let that happen in your struggle against sin. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Meaning, you've not yet resisted to the point of what? Of death. Christ resisted sin. He never sinned.

Not one time. And He could have sinned and resisted the shedding of His blood. But instead, He did not sin and He went to that cross and His blood did get shed.

And He's saying to these Hebrews in chapter 10, some of you, you had these afflictions. Some of you, you had things plundered. Some in chapter 11, it talks about them dying.

They were willing to shed their blood and die for Christ. Where are you at? What's real? What's more real to you? I mean, I'm asking myself that. The earthly or the spiritual? That which I can't see, or that which I can see.

Andrew Murray, he says this, they took joyfully the spoiling of their possessions, knowing that they themselves had a better and abiding possession. The Christian stands between two worlds. Each one offers him its goods as possessions.

In unceasing conflict, the two compete for mastery. The one has the advantage of being infinitely more worthy than the other. And it gives infinite satisfaction and lasting forever.

That's Christ. That's the better possession. The other is in no way to be compared.

It cannot satisfy. It does not last. But, in the conflict, it has two immense, two terrible advantages.

The one is it is nearer. It is visible. It has access to us by every sense.

Its influence on us is natural and easy and unceasing. The other disadvantage or advantage it has is that our heart is pre-possessed. The spirit of the world is in it.

And so it comes that the possession of this world would the most actually win the day, even against the better and abiding possession. Murray's right. There's this battle here.

Now I would say when he says the other, that our heart is pre-possessed, for the Christian, that's not true. The Christian is now obedient from the heart. We battle against the passions of our flesh that wage war.

But we're looking by faith to Christ. Where are you at in that battle this morning? What's going on? Where am I at? What's my view? Can I say I know that I have a better possession? Or, like the Hebrews, if something happened in my life, I drift, right? You slowly start losing the confidence and then the conduct is affected. Just like the market is causing our houses to be appraised right now at a higher value, which if you're selling, that's good.

If you're paying property taxes and staying, that's bad. But I hope your knowledge of the truth is increasing in its appraisal. That the value keeps going up and up.

That more and more you see the eternal possession. It keeps having more and more value as all the trials you endure in this life, and you start to realize everything here ultimately has no value compared to the glory that is to come. How things were in the past should challenge us to trust the Lord in the present.

If you were recalling the way you joyfully had your house plundered in order to identify with these Christians, wouldn't you step back and say, wow, I trusted the Lord like that? I was willing to show hospitality to those random people who came on the street and take them into my house. I was willing to do this. I was willing to go give that person a ride five hours away for this small meal.

I was willing to take hundreds of dollars and pay this man's fee to get rid of the block on his license that he had from his past when he was lost. I was willing to do these things by faith. Where am I at now? Why does my heart close when I want to do some of these things? The author wants these believers to remember what they had previously gone through.

They had already endured a hard struggle. Look, many of you, you've already endured many hard struggles as a Christian. Recall the confidence you had in Christ during that season.

And if it's not so right now, it should humble you. Not into a self-pity party, but it should humble you into a godly grief that causes you to repent of any apathy and any lacking of a zeal for your first love like it was back then. You know, being disgraced at your present conduct compared to the former, it's not always a bad thing.

There's a godly shame that one can experience that God can use to really motivate us in the present. So, a couple applications here. Number one, recall the season in your life that you manifested the greatest love towards the present.

If it was genuine love, you will find hand in hand there was a confidence of the greater possession. It was a confidence of Christ. You're going to have those things together.

When your first love for Christ overflowed in great love for the brethren, so much so, you joyfully partnered with other believers in their sufferings. Do you recall times like that? Have you had times like that? When was the last time you had times like that? When was the last time I had times like that? Remembering that our suffering is far less significant than what they went through. Remember how mightily supported you were by the Lord.

Second thing, recall the season in your life where out of your love, you took the Gospel the most vigorously to the lost. Remember that. We should reflect on the former days and the times we were more evangelistically zealous and loving for the lost souls.

We always don't have the same zeal as Paul did and say I could wish myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my kinsmen. We can't say that every day of the week. We need fresh glimpses of the Lord.

How did he say in Hebrews 12? He told us to be looking to Jesus. That's where our eyes have to be. Think about other areas in your life.

Recall the former days in your marriage. If you're married here, some of you have been married five years, ten years, fifteen years, twenty years. We all know the example of how people were head over heels for each other in the engagement period and then the first thirty minutes of their marriage for thirty days.

Or maybe by God's grace, through such holiness, you didn't cave off. Right? Months and years. Maybe you've got married and that first love is still there burning like it was back then.

But we should even remember our former days in our marriage. He's talking here about being convinced of a better possession causing you to love right now. You know who is not going to be there to love in heaven? Who's not going to need my affection? My wife won't care.

There's no marriage in heaven. This is my opportunity to love my wife as Christ loved the church. Not going to have that opportunity in heaven.

This is it. This is the one chance I get to be so convinced of a better possession than an abiding one to do that which is pleasing to the Lord in the present. Notice even here how he describes their obedience.

He begins, verse 36, "...so when you have done..." what? "...the will of God." That's what this is all about. It's about doing the will of God in every single facet of your life. Being willing to do the will of God as you boast and trust in Christ.

Recall the former days of your parenting. Maybe some would say, well, it wasn't that good actually. We didn't know what we were doing.

Or some say, wow, we really were on our A-game with the first couple of children and then life just got busy and we've totally dropped off for the youngest. Maybe recall your former days when life was far more simple. 2 Corinthians 11:3 "...I'm afraid for you as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, so will some of your thoughts be led astray from a simple and pure devotion to Christ." I mean, is your Christianity a simple devotion to a person? Is following a person, you're looking to Him.

You're following Him. I mean, think about any area in your life as far as how you used to do the will of God compared to right now. And if you look at the former days, when you had more faith and confidence in the Lord, you should do exactly as He's calling these Hebrews to do.

He's calling them to recall it in the hopes that they will turn and have those days again. The great thing with the spiritual realm is this, we're not like the sports athlete. We're not in the gym right now reflecting on all the dunks we could do and thinking it's never going to happen again.

I blew my knee out. I did this. I did that.

You know what? As the Christian, the spiritual realm, it can get all the better, all the holier going forward. There's great hope to increase. Isn't that what Peter says? If increasing.

If these qualities are increasing in you, it will cause you to never fail. We should expect to be increasing. Isn't that what progressive sanctification is? From one degree of glory to the next, becoming more and more holy.

Yes, it's got trials and ups and downs, but we've got to press on. Some of you might say, I have no glory days. I'm just recently saved.

Well, look at Hebrews 11 and all those who had some pretty glorious days of trusting the Lord and go and imitate them. Imitate those people. Imitate those even in this church.

This letter ends with him saying, remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God, consider the outcome of their way of life, the outcome of their way of life, pursuing a better possession, and then what does he say to do? Imitate what about them? Imitate their Hebrews 13. Imitate their faith. Imitate their confident trust in believing that God will supply all of their needs according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

Believe their confident faith. Look, even as you see Craig going through this trial with his wife having cancer, it's an example of a faith that's trusting the Lord. I mean, there's times you would even forget his wife has cancer.

You'd even forget his wife could die in a year or something because there's a rest and a confidence in Christ. We're to imitate that trust. You know what, new believer? Don't set the bar too low.

Right after I got converted, we had that first Denton Conference and I remember, I'll never forget Bob Jennings. He did a sermon on God is light and he made the comment there. He said, isn't it amazing that the Lord has set it up where the new convert can have more reality than an elder in a church? That kind of took me aback as a new Christian thinking, really? That can happen.

Just like it's happened with the Hebrews. In their early days, they're on fire. But now, it's not what it used to be.

So don't set the bar too low. The new believers in the early church often got thrust right into trials and persecutions. You know one thing this teaches us? God allows new believers to suffer.

Right? If you've just been converted and you're suffering right now, guess what? They did too. And probably more severe than what you are going through. God allows new believers to suffer.

He's giving you right now with those trials former days to remember years down the road and reflect on the present confidence you have in Christ. So trust Him in the present. Another thing, the book of Hebrews testifies to the fact that believers go through spiritual seasons of ups and downs.

Right? Isn't that what we see in the book of Revelation too? I mean, where are you at? Where am I at? Have you plateaued? Have you gone like this and now it's just plateauing? And again, the way I'm identifying it increasing is not a great show of outward zeal. Though they were outwardly zealous by allowing their property to be plundered, what I'm saying for you and I to look at is this, are you confidently trusting in the Lord? In the better possession, looking to heaven towards leading you to love your brethren and have compassion on those who are being mistreated? Because that's something He points to here. Are you joyfully showing love towards the brethren? Or is your love grown dim? Where can we go wrong in recalling our former days? Well, we might not view them accurately.

I have found that people often exaggerate on the past to be far better than it actually was. They tend to keep adding a new factor to it. Not maliciously lying, but we add things to our imagination if we did not journal it down.

You know what this is a good reminder to do? To have a journal. Because right there in the darkness and in the midst of a trial, if you've got that journal, you can reflect and read through it and see the faithfulness of God on your life. It will encourage your faith.

Where can we go wrong in recalling our former days? As I already mentioned, don't put so much stock in what happened in the past. Where are you and I at today? And you know what He says to these Hebrews? He says this verse our kids memorized this week at VBS. He doesn't just call them to recall the former days and not throw off their confidence.

He tells them something to throw off. Don't throw away the confidence, but Hebrews 12, do throw away every weight and every sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. And the ironic thing is if you go to Hebrews 11 and you look at things that these people had to throw away, even look at Hebrews 11.15, this is something they needed to lay aside.

If they had been thinking of the land from which they had gone out, they would have had an opportunity to return. But, as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.

You know what you need to lay aside? You need to lay aside thoughts of thinking that the here and now is going to be better than what is to come that you cannot see. Because it says here if they had been thinking, they would have had opportunity to return. People who fall away, they give themselves opportunity to fall away by what's going on in their mind.

Those thoughts not being where they should, their confidence in Christ not being what it should, they give an opportunity to make shipwreck of the faith. Well, one other thing here, is there something you see from someone else's former days that you should exhort them to recall in the present? Whereby you can stir them up. Didn't he just say we ought to stir one another up to love and good works? One way you could stir me up and others up is by recalling the former days and things that happened in the past.

And it can stir up your present faith so that you do not shrink back. And Christ is going to help us. Did Christ have former days? Did Jesus ever have to recall the former days? No, He didn't.

For He always knew to the max that one could know that God is faithful and He was always looking to this joyful exaltation that is to come. It's incredible. Christ is our example.

We've got to be looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's where all this even comes to a head right here in Hebrews 12. It's looking to Jesus.

That's what He's talking about in Hebrews 11. These people who by faith trusted in Jesus Christ. Am I trusting in Christ today? Well, that's my exhortation to you.

Recall your former days. Not of us corporately as a church, so much as you individually as a believer. Where has the joyful attitude of losing things for Christ and loving your brethren, is that right now present? And it will only be present in the present if you trust, if you're looking to this better possession that will not be taken away.

And this testifies to us the scary reality of how our possessions in this life can so easily take our eyes away from that which is eternal. Let's pray. Father, Lord, I admit I don't have a completely clear perspective on my own life on how all of this even applies to me.

Lord, as I've studied this, I've searched my heart. I've asked You to search my heart. Lord, I pray You'd help us to run faster.

Lord, to keep progressing. Lord, help us to not shrink back. Lord, You say there to shrink back and be destroyed.

Lord, instead of being destroyed, help us to lay aside every weight and sin which would lead to our destruction. Lord, help us to have faith in You. Lord, give us a reality of this eternal possession that we have.

Lord, forgive us. Lord, there are different ways that we love the world. We love the things in the world.

Maybe in ways we don't realize. Lord, I pray You'd help us. Show us Christ as we sing.

Show us more of the Lord Jesus who lived full of the Spirit, full of faith. Lord, we thank You for Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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