



Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Good Shepherd Church - November 20, 2011

Sermon Title: Inside Out and Upside Down

Sermon Text: Hebrews 10.32-39

Related Texts: Matthew 25.14-23;
Habakkuk 2.3-4 and 3.17-18; Job 1.6-22

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

When you think of those who demonstrate or have demonstrated faithfulness who comes to your mind?

II. Introduction

The author of Hebrews has taken the reader on a journey through deep, rich theological expositions of the divine nature and unique activity of Jesus. From there has come an exhortation to draw near to God, to hold on to hope, and to encourage one another in the face of adversity. Then from this exposition and exhortation comes a stern warning against apostasy and of God's judgment against those who reject and malign Jesus. Now, with a true pastoral heart, the author recalls the faithfulness of the Hebrew Christians and gently coaxes them to remain faithful even when their world is turned inside out and upside down.

III. Study the Text – Read Hebrews 10.32-39

- 1) Look at verses 32 through 34. What specific forms of persecution did they experience? How did they support others who were persecuted? As you think through the forms of suffering these mid-first century brothers and sisters experienced do you recognize any comparable forms of suffering that you have experienced? How do you think you would react to the things listed in these verses?
- 2) Verses 35-36 get to the heart of the exhortation - be confident, persevere. Upon what is the "confidence" based? What do you think of the way the Greek word "parrhesia" (confidence) is described in the following article: from the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*:

Parrhesia is freedom of access to God, authority to enter the sanctuary, openness for the new and living way which Jesus has restored for us, Hebrews 10:19. It is given with the blood of Jesus and is grounded in his high-priestly role. The saving work of Jesus, which penetrates all the heavens, has created *parrhesia* and made its fulfillment possible. *Parrhesia* works itself out in the confidence and openness which need not be ashamed when it stands before the Judge (Hebrews 4:16). It is preserved by patience in tribulation. It demands a heart of faith, and presupposes purifying of the conscience and baptism. Since it is freedom on the way to God, it contains a reward - the attainment of hope.

- 3) Verse 36 moves from holding on to confidence to perseverance in doing the will of God. How would you relate verse 35 to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25.14-23? What does doing "the will of God" imply for you?

- 4) Hebrews 10.37 and 38 are drawn from the prophet Habakkuk who spoke God's word as the Babylonian Empire threatened to conquer Israel (c. 605 B.C.). In the midst of imminent captivity of Israel comes a reminder in Habakkuk 2.3-4 - "but the righteous will live by his/her faith." This idea is expounded by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1;17 and Galatians 3.11 - we are reconciled to God and made righteous through faith alone. Here in Hebrews 10 it becomes an admonition to live by faith or to live as faithful followers of Jesus. Look again to Habakkuk, this time to 3.17-18. How do these words parallel the line of thought of the author of Hebrews? How do they serve as a picture of faithfulness - when everything is turned inside out and upside down? Are these words that you can honestly avow?
- 5) When you think of models of perseverance and faithfulness does Job come to mind? Read through Job 1.6-22 to get a sense of the way Job's world was turned inside out and upside down. How well did he do in the "faithfulness" department? How about you, is it easy to be faithful when everything is smooth cruising? How does adversity affect your faithfulness to Jesus and to doing his will?
- 6) The Hebrews author hints at an athletic event like the Olympics - "stood your ground in a great contest" (v. 32). How do remembering past times of endurance, having confidence in Jesus, and imitating the faithfulness of others enable you to faithfully continue the "marathon" of following and trusting in Jesus.

IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) The author began this passage by pointing back to a time in the history of this congregation when they were faithful and persevering as their lives were turned inside out and upside down. It's good for us to look back at times of faithfulness in order to do some self-evaluation. As you do this, do you identify ways in which you have grown in faithfulness to Jesus? Do you see any ways in which your faithfulness has diminished?
- 2) Reflect on your level of confidence in Jesus. Do you find that you are deeply confident as you trust in him or is that confidence easily shaken? Ask God for a rich, deep confidence - particularly in the face of adversity - to grow within you.
- 3) The parable of the servants in Matthew 25.14-23 includes a very compelling picture of Jesus saying "*well done, good and faithful servant.*" For what things would you imagine you will hear these words from Jesus? Are there ways that you might be hiding your talents, that is, not being faithful to the will of God? What can you do to continue to be faithful?

What looks for all the world like and experience of abuse and mistreatment, public humiliation and plundering, turns out, from the perspective of faith, to be a "contest," like an Olympic time trial... redefines the word "endurance" from a negative experience (look what you had to endure) to an athletic virtue (you will need endurance), transforming it from a bitter description of abuse they had to stomach to a naming of the strength and conditioning in faith they have received... the preacher knows his congregation is tired, discouraged and laying with injuries... he tells them what they cannot see: you are running in the supreme contest of humanity; the end of the race is near, and the victor's prize of the promised eternal inheritance awaits.

Thomas G. Long