

The Book of

Hebrews

מֵאַנֶשׁ מִנֵּמ דַּא מִנֵּ ת אֶקְלֵא
צִמְאֵל לְנִתְאַתְצֵרְחָ דְרִתְסֵנִ סְק
אֵת פִּקְלֵא תִסְנִ סְרְבֵאל
רֵךְ תֵּא סְךָ תֶּאֶקְסֵנִצִּ דְמִמְצִ
תֵּאֲתַפְלֵשׁ נִתְרִדְנֵהֶרְפֵרְ נִרְלֵד
תֵּאֲנֵשׁ רֵלְדֵ מְלִלְצֵ סֵס תֵּלֵשׁ



Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)**
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

Outline of Hebrews

V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)

- A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
- B. Warning: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
- C. Call to Persevere in Faith (10:32-12:3)
 - 1. Don't Abandon Confidence but Persevere in Faith (10:32-39)
 - 2. The "Hall of Faith" – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
- D. Exhortations to Readers to Endure (12:4-29)

Don't Abandon Confidence but Endure in Faith (10:32–39)

³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

³² *But recall the former days when, after you were **enlightened**, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings...*

- Like the warning that we covered several weeks ago in Heb 6:4-8, the warning that we looked at last week (Heb 10:26-31) is now followed by words of **reassurance** and **encouragement**.
- Our author does not wish to **discourage** his readers, but to **embolden** them so that they will emerge victorious from the current test of their faith.
- He does this by first **reminding** them of how they withstood a severe test in the **earlier** days of their Christian lives, not long after they were “**enlightened**.”
- The word translated “**enlightened**” here is the same Greek word used in Hebrews 6:4 to describe the illumination and understanding that men experience when they first embraced the gospel.

³² *But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you **endured** a **hard struggle** with sufferings...*

- In those days they “*endured*” while suffering.
- If they endured **then**, the author reasons, they can endure **now** – **if** they will renew the devotion that carried them through the “*hard struggle*” of their **earlier** sufferings.
- The Greek word translated “*hard struggle*” was used of athletic events where there were difficult contests involved. The term could also be translated “challenge”.
- In other words, the readers are faced with a new struggle or challenge. If they stayed true earlier, presumably they can do so again.

³³ ...sometimes being **publicly exposed to reproach and affliction**, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ 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.

- Specifically, the believers had endured at least **four** forms of ill treatment.
- **First**, they had faced **public ridicule** and persecution. The verb rendered “**publicly exposed**” originally meant “to bring up on the stage,” but as the language developed it took on the figurative meaning of “to make a public spectacle of.”
- They had been made an object of public ridicule both by “**reproach and affliction**” – that is, both by **verbal** and **physical** abuse.

³³ ...sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes **being partners with those so treated.** ³⁴ 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.

- **Second**, even when they **themselves** had **not** been the objects of such abuse, they had felt the pain of standing side by side with those who **were** being abused.
- **Third**, this solidarity extended from the public square to the prison cell, as the readers in their earlier Christian lives “**had compassion**” on those “**in prison**”.
- The word “**compassion**” here carries the idea of being “affected by the same suffering, the same impressions, the same emotions as another” person.
- By rendering aid to those in dire straights they were putting their compassion into action.

³³ ...sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ 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.

- **Finally**, these believers “**joyfully accepted the plundering**” of their property.
- A fascinating window is opened into the lives of the readers, one which we wish was opened further.
- After their conversion they had accepted the “**plundering**” of their “**property**” with joy.
- We don’t know what precipitated the seizing of their belongings, but what is remarkable is **not** that their property was plundered but their **response** to it. They were filled with **joy**!

³³ ...sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ 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.

- In having this joy at the plundering of their property they fulfilled Jesus' command to rejoice when persecuted (Mat 5:12).
- Their delight in God and Jesus Christ could hardly be more evident.
- But, there was a **reason** for their delight.
- These believers rejoiced because they knew a **greater** joy awaited them.

³³ ... sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ 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.

- They knew there was something **better** than the possessions **on earth** that they were losing.
- They looked forward to receiving their **heavenly** inheritance, for they knew that the new creation that is coming at the end of the ages – the heavenly city (11:10, 13-16; 12:22; 13:14), is a far “**better**” city.
- The word “**better**” which has played such a major role in Hebrews, surfaces again.
- Here we see our **heavenly** “**possession**” is “**better**” than our **earthly** one.

³³ ... sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ 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**.

- Furthermore, they knew the joy that awaited them was “**an abiding one**” – it was **permanent**.
- The same word will be used again in Heb 13:14 where the author declares, “**For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.**”
- The author wants his readers to remember their **initial** spiritual fervor and joy and to embrace it again in their **present** circumstance.
- They have put too much hope in the city of **man**, and have **forgotten** about the city of **God**.

³⁵ *Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*

- Following this reminder of their former boldness in the face of severe persecution, the author exhorts his hearers to **stay** that course: “*do not throw away your confidence.*”
- The word “*confidence*” can mean “openness or boldness”; often, as here, it has overtones of something done in **public**.
- The author, therefore, is encouraging the believers not to retreat from a pattern of public identification with the body of Christ (cf. Heb 10:25), reminding them that such identification will be rewarded richly.

³⁶ *For you have need of **endurance**, so that when you have done the **will of God** you may receive what is promised.*

- Our final reward will **not** be obtained without “*endurance*”.
- We **must** persevere to the end to be saved.
- Endurance manifests itself in faithfully doing the “*will of God.*”
- God’s will is something we must do over the entirety of our lives.
- It isn’t just restricted to those times when we’re “in the mood” to do what God commands.

³⁶ *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may **receive what is promised.***

- If we continue to endure we will receive “*what is promised.*”
- The “promise” here is eschatological (something that comes at the end of the ages), as is often the case in Hebrews.
- We must not harden our hearts and miss out on God’s promised rest (cf. Heb 4:1)
- The promise for believers is an “*eternal inheritance*” (Heb 9:15).
- The promises given to the Patriarchs were ultimately eschatological as well.
- They did not receive them during their lifetime (Heb 11:9, 13, 17), so it is clear the “promise” here is **ultimately** the **heavenly** country or city (Heb 11:10, 13-16; 12:22; 13:14)

³⁷ For, “Yet **a little while**, and the coming one will come and **will not delay**; ³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

- Here the author gives a citation from the OT.
- **Most** of this OT quotation is from Habakkuk 2:3-4, but “**a little while**” comes from Isaiah 26:20-21, intensifying the promise that the Coming One “**will not delay**” his arrival.
- Both prophetic texts advise sufferers to patiently wait for the coming of their God to **deliver** them and **judge** their enemies.
- The context of the words drawn from Habakkuk expresses the tension between **eager expectancy** and **patient endurance** demanded by the mysterious timing of God’s promise keeping: “**The vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end. . . . If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay**” (Hab 2:3).

³⁷ For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸ but **my righteous one shall live by faith**, and if he **shrinks back**, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

- The Hebrew of Habakkuk 2:4 is difficult. The Septuagint translation seems to capture its sense by contrasting the individual who displeases God because he “*shrinks back*” with “*my righteous one*” who “*shall live by faith.*”
- Our author reverses the descriptions as they appear in the OT text, introducing the faithful righteous one before the apostate who “*shrinks back*” in cowardice and thereby displeasing God.

³⁹ *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

- The author of Hebrews applies these conflated Old Testament texts to his hearers' situation.
- The concept of “waiting” for an impending time of reward and punishment fits the tension of the reader's present circumstances.
- The readers struggle (as do we) to remain faithful in a time prior to the Lord's coming.

³⁹ *But **we** are not of those who **shrink back** and are destroyed, but of **those who have faith and preserve their souls**.*

- The decision before them is clear: They can choose the route of faith and be rewarded by the Lord at his coming, or they can “*shrink back*” and face the Lord’s displeasure and destruction.
- The author ends this section with a confident assertion that he and his community (“*we*”) belong to those who have chosen the former path, for they walk the way of faith as “*those who have faith and preserve their souls*,” more literally, “*those who have faith resulting in the preservation [or salvation] of their soul*”

Summary of Hebrews 10:32-39

- The author reminds his readers that falling away from the living God doesn't fit with the amazing changes that marked their lives in the past (10:32)
 - They faced reproach themselves and identified with those being mistreated (10:33)
 - They showed compassion to prisoners and even responded in joy to the plunder of their possessions since they were looking to their final reward (10:34)
- After enduring so much in the past, they must not abandon their boldness now and lose their eternal reward (10:35)
- For they must endure to the end to receive the promise of final inheritance (10:36)

Summary of Hebrews 10:32-39

- The readers are assured the day of promise will arrive – Jesus **will** come again (10:37)
- Those who are righteous will trust him until the end, but those who turn back will not receive God's favor (10:38)
- The author ends with a word of assurance: The readers, he is confident, do not belong to the sort of people who fall away and face destruction, but will exercise faith and enjoy eternal life (10:39).

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- The author contrasts the readers' *present* behavior in which they seem to be wavering in their Christian commitment with the behavior they exhibited in their *earlier* Christian lives – calling them back that zeal that they once had.
- This contrast is reminiscent of a contrast that the glorified Christ makes regarding the church at Ephesus:
 - *I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that **you have abandoned the love you had at first.** ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent, and do the works you did at first.** If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Rev 2:3-5)*
- Question for those here who are “seasoned saints”: Do you find that, in some ways, you do not have the zeal that you had when you were a new Christian? If so, why is that?

*Class Discussion Time

- The readers are commended for having once rejoiced in the opportunity to suffer for Christ (through the confiscation of their property).
- Jesus commends such behavior (Mat 5:12) and we see it exemplified by the apostles:
 - After being beaten the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Christ (Act 5:41)
 - Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns after being beaten and put in stocks (Acts 16:25)
- And yet, there were times the apostles would avoid suffering or persecution when given an opportunity to do so:
 - When the Jews plotted to kill Saul (Paul), the disciples helped him escape (Acts 8:25)
 - Paul once avoided a beating by reminding his persecutors that he was a Roman citizen.
- There seems to be a balance taught in scripture between rejoicing in the opportunity to suffer for Christ and avoiding suffering (or death) when possible. How do we determine that balance?

***Class Discussion Time**

- Our text today talks about the importance of persevering in our Christian walk – even in those times when we have grown weary and are discouraged.
- We all struggle with growing weary from time to time. We all get worn out doing things that we know we need to keep on doing – and yet we must persevere.
- What kind of things have you found it encouraging to say to yourself in such times?