

# Hebrews

## A Faith That Endures

### Hebrews 10:32-39

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**What a Day That Will Be!**

# Hebrews

## A Faith That Endures

### Hebrews 10:32-39

#### INTRODUCTION:

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

#### **Hebrews 10:32-39 (NASB95)**

<sup>32</sup> But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, <sup>33</sup> partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. <sup>34</sup> For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. <sup>35</sup> Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

<sup>37</sup> For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. <sup>38</sup> But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

#### Prayer

Our text exhorts us to have enduring faith in times of persecution. It is a difficult topic to speak about because probably none of us have ever experienced what could legitimately be called “persecution” for our faith. Sure, most of us have faced rejection when people discovered that we believe in Christ. I have had people say false things about me or have tried to get me removed from my position as pastor.

But I’ve never been beaten, tortured, or thrown in prison because of my faith. I have never had my property confiscated or my family torn away from me because I confess Christ as Lord. That probably is true of most of you, too. A pastor who has suffered **real** physical persecution could deliver a more credible message than I can.

Another reason that it is difficult to speak on this text is that American Christians and TV evangelists for many years have bought in a false view of the Christian life that emphasizes the benefits of the faith **in this life**. We are told, “God offers an abundant plan for your life. Send us money and trust in Jesus and He will help you overcome all of your problems and you can enjoy life to the fullest!” Jesus is marketed as the solution to everything from weight loss to prosperity theology to success in business to having a happy marriage. The sales pitch is that receiving Christ will bring you the greatest happiness in this life.

Somehow, getting persecuted and losing your material possessions and maybe your life does not harmonize with that message! Many people have signed up for the prosperity plan, **not** the persecution plan! When they encounter difficult trials, they get angry at God and maybe even decide, "If that is the way He is going to treat me, I am not going to follow Him! Hardship, persecution, and suffering are not in the deal that I signed up for!"

How could we have strayed so far from the biblical picture of the Christian life? It is often referred to as a fight or war neither of which are pleasant. Many passages tell us to expect trials and hardship. Peter told us...

### **1 Peter 4:12-13 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup> but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

The abundant life that Jesus promised has nothing to do with a trouble-free life here on this earth, but rather with having His joy in the midst of tribulation. He stated plainly the requirements for following Him: "**Deny yourself, and take up your cross daily and follow Him.**" The cross was not a slightly irritating circumstance; it was an instrument of slow, tortuous death!

The author assumes the best about his readers. He encourages them by saying that he knows they are not going to turn away from Christ, but rather that they will endure in faith, in spite of whatever hardships they may suffer. The author shows how to have a faith that endures any kind of trial, **especially** persecution. If you're going to make it as a Christian, you must learn to apply what he says here about enduring faith:

**To have faith that endures trials, (1) Remember how God worked in the past, (2) Focus on doing His will in the present, and (3) Look to His promises in the future.**

Before we work through the text, one other word of introduction may be helpful. Jesus' parable of the sower serves as a useful backdrop to our text.

### **Luke 8:5-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>5</sup> "The sower went out to sow his seed; (the seed represents the word of God) and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. (This represents unbelievers who hear the gospel, but do not understand or believe it.)

<sup>6</sup> Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. (This represents those who hear the Word and immediately receive it with joy. But when affliction or persecution arises, they quickly fall away.)

<sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. (This represents those who hear the Word but they are eventually overcome with worries, riches, and earthly pleasure and also fall away.) <sup>8</sup> Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." (This represents the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance).

Believers from the good soil may fail under pressure, as Peter did when he denied Jesus. Every believer struggles daily against sin, not always victoriously. But if God has changed the heart and if His saving life is "in the vine," the person will repent, endure in faith, and bear fruit unto eternal life.

## **I. Remember How God Has Been Faithful in the Past.**

### **Hebrews 10:32-34 (NASB95)**

<sup>32</sup> But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, <sup>33</sup> partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. <sup>34</sup> For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

“The former days” refers to the time just after these Hebrew Christians had been saved. The author draws their minds back to how God had worked in their lives during that time, in spite of some very difficult circumstances. His point is, “You did well then, so you can hang in there now and in the future if persecution persists.” He reminds them of three things that were true of them as new converts, which also are true of all believers:

#### **A. Remember How God Enlightened You with a New, Godly Understanding of Life.**

**Unbelievers** are described in Scripture as being spiritually blind, unable to “see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” Only God can command the light to shine out of darkness. Before God opened our eyes, we did not see our need for the Savior. We mistakenly thought that we were good enough to get into heaven by our own righteousness. We had no idea of how terrible our sins were or of how holy God is. We did not appreciate the fact that the Son of God gave Himself on the cross to pay our debt of sin. But then, while we were yet in such darkness, God graciously opened our eyes.

#### **B. Remember your New Found Joy in the Faith, No Matter Your Circumstances.**

Coming to Christ is like falling in love. The Lord rebuked the church at Ephesus for losing their first love.

### **Revelation 2:4-5 (NASB95)**

<sup>4</sup> But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

He tells them to remember from where they had fallen and repent. These Hebrew Christians had experienced this the same love when they first came to faith in Christ.

Not long into the process, they encountered some difficult trials. In **verse 32** the author calls it “**a great conflict of sufferings.**” Our word “athletic” comes from the Greek word translated “conflict”. It was like a hard-fought athletic contest, with Satan vying for their souls. In verse 32 again, some of them were “**made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations**”. We get our word “theater” from the Greek word for “public spectacle.” As you know, when someone from a strong Jewish family embraces Jesus as the Messiah, he often is made a spectacle. He is ridiculed and rejected by all of his friends and family.

Some of these Hebrew Christians had been imprisoned. Those who remained free showed sympathy to the prisoners and publicly identified themselves in solidarity with them. They probably visited them and brought them food and clothing, since the jails in that time did not supply such things. Some of them lost their property, either by corrupt officials taking it or by mobs stealing everything of value and then destroying their houses.

But the significant word in **verse 34** is "joyfully"! They didn't just grimly endure the loss of their property; they accepted it **joyfully**! Many modern Christians would rage at such unfair treatment and file a lawsuit to recover what they lost, plus damages for emotional suffering! But these new believers had such a profound joy in knowing Christ that they, in essence, sang the doxology as the mob hauled off their belongings and leveled their houses.

**SING:** Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Most Christians in this American society would have a very difficult time with this concept. I am afraid that they would become either rocky-ground or thorny-ground believers and fall away! God has not promised a comfortable life if we endure in our faith. Various trials will come upon us to test our faith.

### **James 1:2-4 (NASB95)**

**<sup>2</sup> Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Most of you are probably aware of the Chinese spy balloon that entered over Alaska and floated across our country. We chose to watch it for some time before we finally shot it down last week off of the coast of Virginia. This could begin to propel us into an unimaginable world war three and could place Christians into a horrific period of persecution! There is nothing in the scripture that says, as Americans, we will forever remain exempt from severe physical persecution. We think we are so "entitled" for our freedom. I ask you "Are you prepared to endure in your faith should the unthinkable occur?" Or would your faith be planted on rocky or thorny soil? Were you ever really saved, or did you fall from your salvation? If you are never tested this severely and you continued to live as you are now for the rest of your life, with God knowing that you could not endure that much persecution, would it mean that you are just a pretender going through the motions? Or did God show mercy on you, for some reason, by not putting you through it while at the same time placing others into the severe persecution? Will you hear "Well done my good and faithful servant" while they hear "Depart from me I never knew you"?

I want you to remember that God is a **just** God! You must take your salvation **very seriously** and be prepared for whatever may be placed upon you! Including severe physical persecution and even, if necessary, the loss of your life!

### **C. Remember How Your Values and Focus in Life Radically Shifted.**

These verses reveal four ways that these new believers had experienced a radical shift in their values and focus. If you think back to your conversion, you should be able to identify with them.

#### **1. Your Values Changed from the Temporal to the Eternal.**

The only way that they could joyfully accept the seizure of their property was, they knew that they had "a better possession and a lasting one." They had "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal". They

knew that Jesus had gone to prepare a place for them to dwell with Him forever and that He was coming again to take them to be with Him there. So while, no doubt, it was hard to lose their earthly possessions, their focus had shifted from the temporal to the eternal.

I want you to hear how Paul summarizes his argument for the resurrection.

### **1 Corinthians 15:19 (NASB95)**

***19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.***

Paul is saying, “If there is no resurrection and no heaven, if this life is all there is, being a Christian is ludicrous!” Why suffer ridicule? Why give your money away? Why spend this short life serving the Lord? Why deny yourself the pleasures of sin? Why bother living for anyone other than yourself? Why would I even consider being killed for my religious beliefs? Better to eat and drink today, for tomorrow you may die. But, a Christian knows that this life is **not** all there is. True Christians have shifted their priorities and values from the temporal to the eternal. Have you fully made that shift in your life? Or are you allowing yourself to occasionally enjoy the ways of the world? Do you remember what we were just told about unrepentant **willful** sinning? You will face terrifying judgment before God.

### **2. You Value How God Thinks of You Over the Opinion of Others.**

In **verse 33** these new believers suffered “**by being made a public spectacle through reproaches.**” Why put up with that? Why not just blend in with the crowd? Why not laugh at the same dirty jokes? Why not be one of the guys? It was because their new focus was not on pleasing people, but pleasing God, who examines the heart.

### **1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NASB95)**

***4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.***

Worldly people live for the acclaim of others. Most want people to like them, and so their focus is on making a good impression on them even if they **are of the world**. But those who have been rescued from sin by the crucified and risen Savior live to please God.

### **3. You Put God and Others Ahead of Yourself.**

Every unbeliever lives for himself or herself. They are innately self-centered. If helping someone will gain them some advantage, they will do it. But their overall aim in life is to be happy and get ahead, even if it means stepping on others at times.

But a Christian focuses on loving God and others (the two great commandments). Christians take their focus off of self and consider the needs of others (the Golden Rule). So these Hebrew believers had showed sympathy for the prisoners. They were willing to share in the sufferings of those who were mistreated.

### **4. You Quit Demanding God be “Fair” and Submitted to His Sovereign Will.**

Unbelievers want God to treat them “fairly,” as they feel they deserve to be treated. They do not understand that if God gave them what they deserve, they would be struck down and face God's terrifying wrath in judgment. When a tragedy strikes them, they rail against God and complain, “This isn't fair! I don't deserve to be treated in this way!”



Notice that some of the new Hebrew believers were thrown in prison, but some were not. God has different purposes for His people with regard to persecution and suffering. We have no right to question His wisdom or justice if He chooses to send trials our way, while other believers escape such trials. If we are the ones who are not in the hospital or in prison for our faith, then we ought to visit those who are and show them compassion. If trials come our way, we should submit to God's dealings, trusting Him to work all things together for our good.

Secondly, we should...

## II. Focus on Doing God's Will in the Present.

The author gives two aspects of this:

### A. Do Not Throw Away Your Confidence in Christ.

#### Hebrews 10:35 (NASB95)

<sup>35</sup> Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

He is **not** talking about confidence in **yourself**, but confidence in **Christ**. I have heard many Christians say, "You have got to believe in yourself!" That is a worldly idea, but not a biblical one! Our confidence must be in God.

#### Philippians 4:13 (NASB95)

<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

The focus here is on what the believer can do through the strength that **Christ** gives. This is not a promise that Christians will have superpowers or that they will be invincible or immune to life's challenges. Instead, the promise here is that we will have strength from the Lord to faithfully endure the difficulties that arise in life. We must keep our confidence in Him.

Such confidence is at the core of saving faith, and thus it has a great reward, namely, heaven and eternal glory with Christ. The "**great reward**" of verse 35 is synonymous with "the promise" of **verse 36**. Both refer to God's promise of eternal life.

We are also encouraged to...

### B. Continue to Persevere in Obedience to God

#### Hebrews 10:36 (NASB95)

<sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

"**The will of God**" refers to His moral commandments and priorities as revealed in His Word. Under the pressure of trials, it is easy to justify moral compromise. Jesus came to do the Father's will, namely, the cross. It was not easy! Satan tempted Jesus to avoid it: "Just worship me and I'll give you all the kingdoms of this world". "There is no need to suffer and die as the sin-bearer!" But Jesus resisted all compromise and steadfastly obeyed God's will, even when it meant a horrible death. We should also endure in obeying



God, even if it means suffering or persecution. After you have suffered, you will receive God's promise of salvation.

### III. Look Toward God's Promises for the Future.

In verses 37 & 38 the author combines a quote from Isaiah with another from the book of Habakkuk.

#### A. Understand God's Perspective on Time and Eternity.

##### Hebrews 10:37 (NASB95)

<sup>37</sup> For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.

The "very little while" is from God's perspective of time, not from our perspective! The original quote in Isaiah was written to the people of Judah who were being threatened by hostile enemies. God is encouraging them to hold on for a little while, until He delivers them and judges their enemy. The point is, this present life is for "a very little while" in comparison with the eternal joys of heaven.

We are to...

#### B. Live By Faith Every Day.

##### Hebrews 10:38 (NASB95)

<sup>38</sup> But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

The Christian life is not a 100-yard dash; it's a marathon. Saving faith is not a one-time action, but an ongoing, daily matter of trusting in God's promise of salvation in Christ. This verse seems to me to suggest that one can lose their salvation. First he says "my righteous one shall live by faith" then he refers back to the same person and says "if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him".

I meet many Christians who live by their feelings, not by faith in Christ. We are to walk with Christ just as we received Him, by grace through faith. Our aim should be to please Him, as the author will go on to say:

##### Hebrews 11:6 (NASB95)

<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Not to trust God is to call Him a liar and to question His integrity. Genuine faith perseveres through difficult trials. If one falls away he will return to terrifying judgment.

We are also encouraged to..

#### C. Let Eternal Reality Govern Your Present Way of Life.

##### Hebrews 10:39 (NASB95)

<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

The author expresses his confidence that his readers, along with himself, will remain faithful by allowing God's threat of eternal damnation and their faith in His promise of eternal life govern the way they will live. Remember what Paul said...

### **Romans 8:18 (NASB95)**

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

### **CONCLUSION:**

If there is a heaven and a hell, living by faith in God's promises is the only way to go. Spend your time, your money, and your very life knowing that God's promises in the gospel are true. Remember how God worked in your life in the past, when you first came to faith in Christ. Live in that same way now, because you know that in Christ you have a better and lasting possession than you will ever have on earth. Focus on doing God's will in the present, especially when trials tempt you to compromise. Look to God's promises for the future. Live with enduring faith in God and He will sustain you through every trial.

**What a Day That Will Be!**