

" Unlike Those Who Shrink Back, Persevere in the Faith"**Hebrews 10: 32-39****Facilitator: Min. Joseph Williams**

Historical Background: In this letter (Book of Hebrews) Apostle Paul is reminding the converted Jews, the believers, of the Divinity of Christ, of His personal Sacrifice once for all. Throughout the letter Paul has reminded them that for the believer, because of the shedding of the blood of Christ, all sin is forgiven and they now have a Great High Priest that sits in intercession with the Father for all whom He has called to believe. Paul reminds them (and us) that we have a charge to stay the course until Jesus returns for His Church.

The issue that Paul witnessed with the early the church was that some that had confessed their faith in Christ had succumb to the pressures within their communities and either returned to the useless practice of animal sacrifice (ceremonialism) as a means of forgiveness of sin or were considering a return. Paul has informed them that after one has embraced and professed the truth of the gospel of Christ (and particularly the great truth of this chapter--that Jesus Christ is the only High Priest, his blood the only atonement, his sacrifice the end and fulfillment of all types) and yet after all *this*, against all evidences, light, and revelation, they willfully deny the sufficiency of Christ and the efficacy of his sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice for sin--there is no other Savior! There is no help for them, no hope, only a certain fearful judgment against them eternally. There is no going back to the Mosaic ceremonies; so if you willfully turn from Christ, there is no hope! (Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 3:11.) And for anyone that chooses to return to Mosaic ceremonies they can expect to meet with sure and certain destruction, because this is a blasphemous occurrence to which there is no forgiveness.

Biblical Context:

When God used Moses to lead the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, they continually looked back to Egypt. They complained that they were hungry. After being provided bread from heaven, they complained that they had no meat. They complained that they were thirsty. Each time that they would complain, God provided. Yet they looked back to Egypt. Did they forget what pain, suffering and enslaved conditions they had suffered? Did they not appreciate the fact that the God of the universe had claimed them as His chosen people and had brought them out of those circumstances? Or, had they simply become comfortable being un-

comfortable, being ridiculed, considered mere commodities to be used at the discretion of the Egyptians? Yet as awful as their enslavement was, they kept looking back to Egypt as if there was a sort of comfort or even freedom there. For the Israelites, this was looking back without reminding themselves that the same God that had rescued them from their enslavement by providing plagues on Egypt, would also provide for their every need after setting them free from their bondage. Their reward; 40 years of turning in circles in the wilderness and still none of them that departed Egypt, with the exception of Joshua, lived to enter into the promised land.

This lesson deals with this some of the same type of stinkin thinkin. Paul makes an attempt to appeal to the true believers. Looking back is not a bad thing, but that really depends on what you are looking back for. If we continue to look back to our former lives (for comfort, for provision, for salvation) we will likely turn back. However, that type of turning back will be without a true memory of the past. A truer memory of the past will indefinitely remind us of the love shone us by Christ in His sacrificial shedding of blood and the promise of the eternal life to come.

The Lesson: *“Unlike Those Who Shrink Back, Persevere in the Faith”*

Vv. 32-33 *Remember the Confidence/Faith You First Had*

“Remember those early days after that you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution, at other times you stood side by side with those that were so treated”

Paul writes to remind them how they have already endured suffering for Christ's sake. The people that he was writing to were not fly-by-night believers, here today and gone tomorrow. They had experienced suffering for Christ and had endured that suffering. He acknowledges how they had suffered persecution, and how in the past they had been continually mocked and treated as public spectacles, and how at times they had willingly shared in the sufferings of others who were experiencing the same treatment.

Who better to remind them of their endurance and compassion than one who himself was an eye witness as the chief persecutor. He draws their

attention back to that time, to 'the earlier days', those days of their first experiences as Christians. Continued endurance earns for them a great reward (vv. 34-35). Don't give up now!

Vv. 34

"You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions"

Paul reminds them of the compassion they exhibited for fellow believers. He implores them to remember how they had visited those who had been imprisoned, taking them food and offering encouragement, (prisoners were dependent on food brought in by friends and family), in spite of the danger to themselves, and had joyfully looked on in a state of exaltation while they themselves were robbed of their own possessions. They exhibited their belief that they had a better and greater possession to look forward to; a possession that would last forever that no one could take away. This better possession is 'eternal life', the life of Christ now presently enjoyed, which made them citizens of Heaven now, and would guarantee Heaven as their eternal home in the future.

By their behavior, their bold confidence, they had revealed something of what it meant to be a genuine Christian. This was why Paul could not believe that they would now desert Christ. For no genuine Christian who had been willing to face such things triumphantly, could renege on the promises of Christ. These were things that accompanied God's saving work in the heart (see on Hebrews 6:9-10), and that nothing could take away. As John said, 'we know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters in Christ' (1 John 3:14).

Vv. 35-36 *Keep the Faith, God's Promise is Sure*

"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised"

Paul urges them not to be moved by present uncertainties, to not throw away the boldness they previously had when they faced persecution. In essence, know that these things are temporary and that their bold service will bring them great reward. He informs them that in order to do the will of God, as Christ had done before them (Hebrews 10:7-10), to patiently

persevere and receive the promise, the same boldness will be required. God's inheritance and God's rewards come through suffering and patient endurance in well-doing (2 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Peter 4:13; Romans 2:7).

***'The Promise.'* That is, the good things promised for the future, the coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:4), the heavenly resting place (John 14:2), the coming redemption, the crown of life (James 1:12), the eternal kingdom (James 2:5), eternal life (1 John 2:25; 2 Timothy 1:1), new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13).**

Vv. 37-38

"For, In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. And, "But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back"

The time of the coming of Christ is nigh! If they/WE are to be numbered among the righteous, they/WE must show evidence of true faith in Him. The Lord takes no pleasure in those who shrink back from trusting Him, who reveal that they are not *His* righteous ones. Faith in the *faithfulness of God* is the essence of what a Christian is.

True believers live by faith, not by law, works, merit, or ceremony.

1. They **receive** spiritual life by faith in Christ.
2. That life is **sustained** and kept by the power of God through faith.
3. That life shall be **perfected** by faith! Works make no contribution to our life in Christ; and if any professor of faith turns back to ceremonialism or away from PURE faith in Christ, 'I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.'

Vv. 39

"But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved"

Hallelujah!!!