

Hebrews Book Study
Lesson Thirty-seven
Hebrews 10:32-39

Introduction/Review

It is staggering to think that a person who hears the plea of the gospel could turn their heart from it! I suppose I have met few people who would ever turn down a free gift. And when you consider the enormity of the repercussions associated with rejecting God's free gift it truly is heartbreaking. The Hebrew writer said it well, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It is a wonderful thing to be in His hands as a redeemed child but a fearful thing to fall into His hands and face His judgment (Rev. 21:11-15).

Vss. 32-34 As in Ch. 6, a severe warning is followed by words of encouragement and hope. Here we are given some helpful insights into the experience of the first readers, not long after their conversion (after you were illuminated). They are called to remember what they 'endured'. Similar words are then used in vs. 36 and in 12:1, 2, 3 and 7 to emphasize the need for continuing endurance (the challenge of this letter to Christians). Their experience of persecution is described with an athletic metaphor: it was a great contest in the face of suffering (12:1-3). They suffered themselves, being publicly exposed to insult and persecution, and shared in the suffering of others, standing side by side with those who were so treated. Their sympathy with those in prison and their joyful acceptance of the seizure of their possessions was made possible by their certainty about God's promises. They knew that Jesus had made it possible for them to inherit better and lasting possessions (13:14) and this controlled their thinking about the present and its values.

Vss. 35-36 This recollection of their faith, hope and love in earlier days becomes the basis for an appeal not to throw away your confidence. Confidence of free and open access to God, which is given by the blood of Jesus, must be held fast and openly expressed. The confidence in God which the readers previously demonstrated must not be abandoned or lightly discarded, no matter what difficulties they might now be facing. It will be richly rewarded. Salvation does not depend on human effort, since it is totally the work of God. But, as long as salvation remains a promise, we need to persevere in faith, in order to do God's will and receive His promises.

Vss. 37-39 A special encouragement to persevere in faith is found in the assurance that Christ will return and not delay in fulfilling his saving plan. In Hebrews, the implication is that Jesus Christ is the one who is coming and who will not delay. The introductory words (For yet a little while) emphasize the point and suggest that the readers had a problem about the need to wait patiently for Christ's return. This would have been especially the case if they could see more persecution and suffering on the horizon. The writer has also transposed the order of the sentences in Hab. 2:4 to make it clear that the person who lives by faith (the just) may be tempted to shrink back. God will not be pleased with those who shrink back in unbelief: they will be destroyed in the coming judgment. Those who will go into perdition or destruction are those

who have turned their backs on the truth or the free gift of salvation. However, the writer ends the chapter on a positive note by suggesting that his readers are those who believe and are saved.