

Anticipating the Future

[Hebrews 10:35-39](#)

This morning we will be concluding our study of the fourth warning passage in the book of Hebrews. In this passage we have a strong warning against apostasy followed by words of comfort and confidence, words of encouragement. This passage is very similar in structure and theology to that of chapter 6.

In our last study we looked at verses 32-34 in which he reminds them of their past faithfulness and endurance in the midst of great persecution. Their lives gave evidence of the Spirit's control and a mind that was fixed on things above. These verses are quite a testimony to the Christlike lives of these believers:

Hebrews 10:32 (NKJV) *But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:*

Hebrews 10:34 (NKJV) *for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.*

They were truly abiding in Christ and producing fruit to God's glory.

1 John 2:6 (NKJV) *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

They were walking as Jesus walked! And our author is calling on them to remember their godly attitudes and actions. He is saying to them, "You have been through so much, don't give up now."

Hebrews 10:35 (NKJV) *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*

"*Therefore*" - this is an inference drawn from what they have already been through. You've come so far, don't turn away now, you can make it. Remember the past!

This warning is obviously addressed to the same people spoken to in verses 32-34, right? Once again the possibility of defection is set before real Christians. Those who had so radiantly displayed Christ are warned not to turn away but to continue to endure.

Two words are of tremendous importance, they are; "confidence and reward". It doesn't read, "Do not cast away your redemption". It's not a matter of losing eternal life (you can't lose that), the danger is of losing their "reward". The Epistle as a whole is concerned with this concept - not with eternal life. He's writing to believers, they have eternal life. The book of Hebrews is setting before us a hope that is more than simply living with God, as great as that is. The book of Hebrews sets before us the marvelous rewards that are available to those who faithfully serve Jesus Christ.

After enduring great trials and afflictions in Egypt and at the Red Sea, Israel of old became discouraged by the perils and hardships of the wilderness and turned away from God, they

apostatized. These Hebrew believers of the first century were in danger of following this evil example:

Hebrews 3:12 (NKJV) *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;*

So, he exhorts them to not cast away their confidence. The words "cast away" are from the Greek word *apoballo*, which means: "to throw away from one as worthless." This word is used in Mark 10:50 - or throwing away a garment:

Mark 10:50 (NKJV) *And throwing aside (apoballo) his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.*

What is it that these Hebrew believers were not to cast away? Their "confidence". This is from the Greek word *parrhesia*, which comes from "pan" meaning: "all", and "herma", which means: "speech". So it literally means: "all speech". Its dominate idea is one of boldness and confidence which are exhibited in freedom of speech. It is used throughout the book of Acts to refer to the openness and frankness with which a disciple testified of his faith in Christ. We may think of the boldness of Peter and John which made such an impression on the Sanhedrin:

Acts 4:13 (NKJV) *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

Acts 4:29 (NKJV) *"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,*

Acts 4:31 (NKJV) *And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

The forthrightness of their language evidenced an inner confidence of heart and life; so had it been with these Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:32 (NKJV) *But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:*

"Preserve that former confidence of yours", says our author, "for it carries a great reward." The text says, "*which has great reward*" - reward is from the Greek word *misthapodosia*, which literally means: "payment of wages." The faithfulness of God's children will be rewarded:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NKJV) *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

How is it that they were to obtain this reward? Endurance!

Hebrews 10:36 (NKJV) *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

The Greek word used here for "endurance" is *hupomone*, which means: "to remain under". They were not to seek to escape their trials and pressures by turning from Christ. Notice that the writer says... "*you have need of endurance.*" Verse 36 states as clearly as anything in the Epistle, the fundamental spiritual need of the readers. They didn't need to get saved - they needed endurance!

We all need endurance that we may persevere in the trials and temptations of life. How do we get endurance?

Romans 8:24-25 (NKJV) *For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.*

The hope of the future gives us endurance. These believers endured in the past, because they had hope.

What is hope? Let me give you the biblical definition of hope, because the word "hope" has come to have a different meaning today than that which was originally used in the New Testament. Today it indicates something of contingency; an expectancy that something will happen, but there is some question as to whether or not it will really occur. We say, "I hope it doesn't rain," or, "I hope I can make it to next payday," indicating some uneasiness or uncertainty about the future. But this is not the New Testament usage. In the New Testament it indicates an **absolute certainty about the future**, an attitude of eager expectancy, of confidence in God and his ability to do what he has promised.

Having hope is a big deal. The Bible verifies this:

Proverbs 13:12 (NKJV) *Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.*

In GWT it is stated this way, "*Delayed hope makes one sick at heart.*" We tend to give up when we have no hope. But when we have hope it gives us endurance:

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 (NKJV) *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,*

"*Patience of hope*" - the Greek word for "patience" here is *hupomone*, which means: "endurance." I take this to mean that hope produces endurance, or that endurance is the fruit of hope. We can endure a lot when we have hope.

Where Does Hope Come From?

Romans 15:13 (NKJV) *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

"*The God of hope*" - this means that he is both the origin of hope and the object of hope. "*In believing*" - this is the key to hope. Our life must first be a life of faith and **from our faith comes hope**. If you have lost your hope, it is because you have taken your mind off of God and become focused on your circumstances.

Romans 15:4 (NKJV) *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

We see that in one place hope is attributed to the Holy Spirit (15:13), and in another place it is attributed to the Bible. Hope comes as the Holy Spirit enlightens believers to understand and trust the God of the Bible. As we focus on the Lord through the Scriptures, our faith will grow and our faith in God will give us hope.

Let's continue on in our text of Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:37-38 (NKJV) *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

This is a quote from Habakkuk 2. Why does our author appeal to Habakkuk 2? What point is he trying to make? What is the point of our text? It is to encourage them on to endurance in the midst of great persecution. First, he calls them to remember their past faithfulness and now he appeals to Habakkuk 2 to reinforce his exhortation. Let's look at Habakkuk. Go to Matthew and take a left five books back - Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, Zephaniah and Habakkuk.

In Habakkuk chapter 1 and 2, we have a dialogue between Habakkuk and God. In the first chapter Habakkuk is concerned about the wickedness of his people Israel:

Habakkuk 1:2-4 (NKJV) *O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.*

Habakkuk is saying to God, "How long are you going to let this go on, Lord?" The answer that comes in verses 5-11 surprises Habakkuk. God says that he is going to chasten his people by using the Chaldeans:

Habakkuk 1:6 (NKJV) *For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.*

This upsets Habakkuk, he can't understand this:

Habakkuk 1:13 (NKJV) *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?*

He is asking, "How can you use the wicked Chaldeans to chasten Israel, they're worse than us?" Habakkuk waits for God to answer him:

Habakkuk 2:1 (NKJV) *I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.*

God speaks:

Habakkuk 2:2-4 (NKJV) *Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*

Verses 3 -4 are the text that the author of Hebrews uses. God is saying to Habakkuk, "I'm going to use the Chaldeans to judge Israel but don't be discouraged by it. Don't be shaken by the afflictions and tribulations that you and the people of Israel are about to experience."

Do you see the similarity between this and Hebrews? The people of God suffering affliction and persecution at the hands of unrighteous people. God tells Habakkuk, "Write the vision" in verse 2, I will judge the Chaldeans. The vision referred to in verse 2 is God's wrath coming to judge the Chaldeans and to vindicate the righteous.

In Habakkuk it is the coming of an event (verse 2 & 3 - "it"), but the author of Hebrews personalizes it - "He" who is coming will come. This prophecy was fulfilled at the second coming of Christ in AD 70 when God came in judgment on the enemies of His people, the Jews, and vindicated His people, Christians, forever.

The point of the text is to reinforce the endurance of God's people by reminding them that their afflictions were only temporary. God was about to judge their oppressors:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 (NKJV) *since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,*

God was about to, in the first century, judge those who were troubling the first century saints. He was going to judge them in the destruction of Jerusalem at the second coming.

You can endure almost anything if you know it's only temporary. And the sooner we see an end, the stronger our endurance.

Hebrews 10:37 (NKJV) *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

The phrase "For yet a little while" is not from Habakkuk but from:

Isaiah 26:20 (NKJV) *Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past.*

The context is one in which ultimate deliverance is promised to the people of Judah though for the present they are sorely pressed by peril and adversity. The author of Hebrews uses this quote here, I believe, to emphasize the temporary nature of their persecutions.

"For yet a little while" - the Greek is very expressive and emphatic. The author used a word which signifies "a little while", and then for further emphasis added a particle meaning "very", and this he still further intensified by repeating it; thus literally rendered, this clause reads: *"For yet a very, very little while, and He that shall come will come."*

The idea which the author wishes to convey is evidently that the time of their deliverance from their trials was not far remote. The reference is undoubtedly to the second coming of Christ. If this is a reference to the second coming of Christ, and if he has not yet come as most of the Church believes, then what did this mean to the people to whom it was written? Nothing! Nothing at all!

What does it mean to us? Can we understand, "*For yet a very, very little while, and He that shall come will come*" to mean over 2, 000 years? If the Lord did not return in the first century, this would have meant nothing to the Hebrews. To tell you the truth it would have been deceptive to them.

God inspired the author of Hebrews to write at around 65 AD to the first century saints, "For yet a very, very little while, and He that shall come will come". How could he have made it clearer that the second coming of Christ would happen SOON to them?

Do you believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word?

2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV) *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*

The Greek word translated "inspired" literally means: "God breathed." The thought of the Bible being from God suggests that since God is perfect or infallible, if the Bible is from Him it ought to be infallible as well. Specifically, if the Bible made a promise that something would happen within a specified time frame, if that event did not happen when and as promised, the Bible's claim to inspiration falls.

Notice what God says about those who speak His Word:

Deuteronomy 18:18-22 (NKJV) *'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 19 'And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him. 20 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' 21 'And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'; 22 "when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.*

Most Christians would say that the Lord has not yet returned, making the writer of Hebrews a false prophet. But the problem is that it wasn't just the writer of Hebrews who said that Jesus was to return in the first century, Jesus himself taught this:

Matthew 16:27-28 (NKJV) *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. 28 "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."*

Jesus is speaking to his disciples and says that some of them would still be alive when he returned in the second coming. Was Jesus wrong? If he was, then according to Deuteronomy, he was a false prophet. If Jesus was a false prophet, then we are all dead in our sins and on our way to Hell. If God does not keep the WHEN part of his promises, he has not kept his promise! The inspiration of the scriptures demands complete fulfillment of every aspect of God's promises. But if Jesus is Lord, then what he said was true - he returned in the second coming before all of his disciples had died.

The Bible is God's word to MAN! The time statements about the second coming were made to those men who lived in the first century. The time statements in the Bible were spoken to man to encourage or to warn man. If God did not mean, "*For yet a very, very little while, and He that shall come will come*", what did he mean? Wouldn't it have been misleading for God to say something was going to happen "in a very, very little while" when it was really not to happen for centuries?

In Numbers 24:17-18, Balaam, the prophet, made a prediction of Christ's coming:

Numbers 24:17-18 (NKJV) *"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult. 18 "And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, While Israel does valiantly.*

This is a prophecy of Christ's coming and he says, "It was NOT NEAR"; it wasn't going to happen in "a very little while." Why did he say this? Because Christ's coming was over 1400 years away, and 1400 years is a long time!

In Daniel 10-12 is a vision encompassing a period of time from 536 BC to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD; about 600 years. Two times in this text Daniel was told "the appointed time is long" and "the vision refers to many days to come" (10:1,14). Remember, this vision was relayed to Daniel from God. God called this 600 year period of time "long;" he said it involved "many days."

In Jeremiah 29:10, Jehovah told his prophet the Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years. In verse 28 the people complained that Jeremiah had told them the captivity would be long:

Jeremiah 29:28 (NKJV) *For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, 'This captivity is long; build houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat their fruit.'*

Here 70 years is said to be long. Remember the prophet, who was inspired of God, said the captivity would be "long." Why was seventy years called a long time by Jeremiah? Because to man seventy years IS A LONG TIME! And the Bible is written to men.

In our passage in Hebrews, the author very emphatically tells these believers that the Lord's coming was not far distant, and he therefore urges them to endurance during the little time of trial that remained. It was only to be a very, very little while until Christ returned and destroyed their enemies, the Jews.

Hebrews 10:38 (NKJV) *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

This is quoted from Habakkuk:

Habakkuk 2:4 (NKJV) *"Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*

This is the statement of a great principle. The whole life experience of the righteous man is built on faith. Habakkuk must believe that the Chaldeans will be judged. The readers of Hebrews must believe that the promise of Christ's coming will be realized.

The word "just" is from the Greek *dikaiois*, which means: "righteous or the sanctified." Believers are to live by faith - dependant trust upon God. Apart from a life of faith, we cannot please God:

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) *But 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 diligently seek Him.*

We are saved by faith and we are to live by faith.

Hebrews 10:38 (NKJV) *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

"But if anyone draws back" - "anyone" is an addition, the NAS and NIV are correct "if he" draws back. Who is the "he"? The just or righteous one. It is the man who walked by faith turning back to walk by sight.

The "if" is a third class condition in the Greek meaning: "maybe yes, maybe no." If the just man himself were to draw back, God would be displeased with him. One Lordship writer says here, "If a man is truly just, he will live by faith". But our text says, it is possible for the just to draw back.

Hebrews 3:18-19 (NKJV) *And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

Their turning from faith cost them their reward. Was the entire Exodus generation unregenerate? No! Moses was one who didn't enter the land. They were God's children, but in the midst of trial and persecution instead of trusting God they turned away. Believer, we are to live and walk by faith, trusting God in each and every situation:

Hebrews 10:39 (NKJV) *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

The writer concludes this section with a final word of comfort. This verse is identical to the ninth verse of chapter 6. It is an expression of pastoral confidence. This verse is not to be taken in such a way as to nullify the entire warning.

The word "perdition" is from the Greek word *apoleia*. Weust says it means: "the destruction which consists in the loss of eternal life." Then in the same paragraph he says, "The Word of God is very clear in its statements to the effect that a person once saved can never be lost. Therefore, this person who draws back to perdition must be an unbeliever." What can an unbeliever draw back from? In verse 38, it is the just who can draw back.

Does this word *apoleia* mean hell? The noun is used 18 times in the New Testament and in several of these it refers to eternal destruction, but its meaning in Matthew 26:8 and Mark 14:4 is waste:

Matthew 26:8 (NKJV) *But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste (apoleia)?"*

In Acts 25:16, it refers to capital punishment and several of its uses are more than a little debatable.

Acts 8:20 (NKJV) *But Peter said to him, "Your money perish (apoleia) with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!"*

There is no technical sense for *apoleia*, and it must be interpreted in context. Here in Hebrews 10:39 it should be translated "ruin."

The writer of Hebrews goes on in verse 38 to say.... *"but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."* The phrase "saving the soul" is probably best translated: "preserving of the life." The word "saving" is *peripoiesis*, which means: "acquisition or preservation". The word "soul" is from *psuche*, which can mean: "soul or life." This word is used in:

Luke 17:33 (NKJV) *"Whoever seeks to save his life (psuche) will lose it, and whoever loses his life (psuche) will preserve it."*

Psuche is clearly "life" from the context of verse 32. Our writer says, "We are of them who have faith unto the keeping of the life."

Believers, we need endurance. And endurance comes from hope which comes from faith. Please remember, we must avail ourselves of the help of our High Priest. Whatever you're experiencing is temporary and the reward for faithful endurance will far outweigh the suffering. Don't draw back and be judged, live a life of faith and be rewarded.

This message preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on October 14, 2001. [Tape #219](#).

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