

**Remember How You Endured Past Sufferings
Hebrews 10:32-39**

What have we been saved to? We have been saved to life and life abundant.

Does this mean that Christians will live a life without trials? No! Job 5:7 "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." As long as we are in this fallen world and possess these bodies we will be continuously subject to various trials.

But it gets even worse than this. When we come to Christ and become one of His followers not only should we expect to continue to suffer the normal, ordinary run of the mill problems as everyone else but we should in addition to this also expect to be persecuted.

What does 2 Timothy 3:12 say, **"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."**

So should we expect as Christians to live lives free of trials and even persecutions? No! This should not be our expectation and neither should we expect that each and every Christian will experience the same degree of trials and persecutions. There will be differences and sometimes those differences could be quite extreme.

So if we do, at some point in time in our lives, enter into a period of great trial or persecution what can help us to persevere in our faith and protect us from falling away?

This question brings us back to the book of Hebrews, which was written to keep certain struggling Hebrews believers living in Rome from falling away from Christ during a period of great persecution.

The author in the first part of the book in order to protect his readers from this, emphasized the various superiorities of Christ. Based on these various superiorities of Christ he then in **Hebrews 10:26-31** went on to give a warning against the sin of apostasy or in other words the sin of falling away from Christ, which concluded with this statement from **Hebrews 10:31 "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."**

MESSAGE

What did the author do following his warning concerning the sin of apostasy? The author attempted to turn his reader's attention away from their present sufferings to what they had been **promised** by Christ (Hebrews 10:32-29).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 10:32-39** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, "**But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, (33) partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches, and tribulations and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. (34) 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. (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 was promised. (37) For yet in a very little while, He who is coming 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 to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.**" So did the author after having warned his readers concerning the sin of apostasy then attempt to turn his reader's attention away from what they were suffering to what they had been promised by Christ? I believe he did. So how did the author seek to do this?

The author first of all exhorted his readers to remember their **past** sufferings (Hebrews 10:32-34).

And where do we find this exhortation? We find it in **Hebrews 10:32-34**. So let us now go back to our text and examine these verses beginning with the very first words of **verse 32, "But remember the former days..."**

The word translated, "**remember**" is a present active imperative. And what does this mean? It means that the author commanded his readers to remember and to continue to remember their, "**former days.**"

And what were those **"former days"**? Let us go back to **verse 32** and continue to read, **"But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened..."** So based on what we just read, what were the former days that the recipients of this letter were being commanded to remember and to continue to remember?

The former days were those days that had immediately followed their **"enlightenment"** or in other words that had immediately followed their profession of faith in Christ.

And what did this author want his readers to remember about those former days that had immediately followed their profession of faith in Christ? Did he want them to remember how good things were or how easy things were? No! He wanted his readers to remember how they, **"after they had been enlightened"** had **"endured a great conflict of sufferings..."**

This is what he wanted his readers to remember and to continue to remember. But for what purpose did he want them to remember these past sufferings? He wanted them to remember these past sufferings so that he might use these past sufferings to remind them how they had endured those past sufferings.

And how had they endured those past sufferings according to this author? This will be answered for us at the end of **verse 34**. But before the author supplied this answer he first of all chose to highlight for his readers two different ways in which they in the past had suffered. So what were these two ways?

First of all: The recipients had suffered **"reproaches and tribulations"** (Hebrews 10:33). We see this particular aspect of their past suffering highlighted at the beginning of **verse 33**, when the author, referencing their past suffering said, **"partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations."** So what was the meaning of these particular words?

The word rendered **"reproaches"** (ONEIDISMOS) emphasized the **verbal** abuse that certain recipients of this letter had earlier endured. And the word rendered **"tribulations"** (THILIPSIS) emphasized the **non-verbal** abuses that the recipients of this letter had endured. So what was the second aspect

of their suffering that this author chose to highlight? This was the second aspect:

The recipients had also suffered by having become sharers in the sufferings of other fellow believers (Hebrews 10:33-34). We see this particular aspect of their suffering detailed for us by this author at the end of **verse 33** through the beginning of **verse 34** when this author referencing this particular aspect of their past suffering said, "**and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.**" And what specifically did this author have on his mind when he said this? Let us continue to read, "**(34) For you showed sympathy to the prisoners ...**"

So what was happening here? It would appear that certain recipients as result of their profession of faith in Christ had been imprisoned. And how did the other recipients of this letter who had not been imprisoned respond? They out of sympathy and compassion for those imprisoned became sharers with them, apparently by being willing to visit and to assist them to whatever degree they could while their fellow believers were in prison.

Was this dangerous for them to do? Absolutely! And what did some of them or perhaps even many of them suffer as a result of this? They suffered the seizure of their property.

Was this something they regretted? No! This was made very clear to us at the end of **verse 34** when author said, "**They joyfully suffered the seizure of their property.**"

They could have kept themselves hidden away and safe but they didn't. They stepped forward and ministered to those who had been imprisoned and they suffered because of it.

The recipients of this letter had suffered greatly after they had been enlightened. This author wanted the recipients of this letter to remember, not only that they had suffered in the past but also what they had suffered in the past. And why was this? He wanted to use their memories of their past suffering to help his readers understand how they were to endure all that they had suffered in their past.

And how were they able to endure all that they suffered? The author provided that answer at the end of **verse 34** which involved what they knew. And what was that? Let me read that portion of the verse, "**knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**" So what did they know that helped them to endure all that they suffered?

The recipients of this letter were able to endure all that they had suffered because they knew that they had a better **possession** and a lasting one (Hebrews 10:34).

So what was this better and lasting possession? The "better" and "lasting" possession that this author referenced is the heavenly and eternal **dwelling place** that Christ had promised to all of His followers (John 14:1,2; 1 Peter 1:3-7).

Where do we find this promise? Let me read for you **John 14:1-2 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. (2) In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."**

This dwelling place and all the blessings that are associated with it is what Peter referred to as our inheritance or in other words the inheritance of every true believer. Let me read for you **I Peter 1:3-7**. And this is what it says, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.**"

If we are a true born-again believer there is an eternal dwelling place that Christ has prepared for us in His Father's house and this is our inheritance. And this inheritance is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away. And this was the knowledge that helped the recipients of this letter to endure their past trials.

So after having exhorted his readers to remember how they had endured their past sufferings in **Hebrews 10:32-34** and had reminded them how they had endured those past sufferings, what did the author do next?

The author after his exhortation in Hebrews 10:32-34 to remember their past sufferings then challenged his readers, based on how they had endured their past sufferings, to endure their **present** sufferings (Hebrews 10:35-39).

So now let us look now at how this author developed this challenge and we will begin with the very first words of **verse 35**, "**Therefore do not throw away your confidence...**" or in other words to not throw away your confidence in this better and lasting possession that Christ has promised to all true believers.

And why should they do this? Why should they not throw away their confidence? It is because the author told his readers that there was a great reward associated with this promise, which implies that if they threw away their confidence in that promise, the award associated with that promise could be lost.

Why? If they threw away their confidence in the promise that had sustained them in the past they would not be able to endure their present sufferings. And if they do not endure their present sufferings they would not receive the reward associated with Christ's promise. Why? It is because their endurance in the Christian faith is necessary.

Let us now read **verse 36**, "**For you have need of endurance (Why?) so that when you have done the will of God, (which is endure by holding fast their confession of faith to the end) you may receive what has been promised.**"

Professing Christians who truly believe in Christ's promise that there is "a better and lasting possession" will endure and they will receive what Christ has **promised** (Hebrews 10:36).

So what will the author do now as he continued to challenge his readers to endure their **present** sufferings in the same way as they had endured their past sufferings?

Let me now read for you **Hebrews 10:37-38**. "**(37) For yet in a very little while, He who is coming 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 author in these two verses quoted from two Old Testament texts; Isaiah 26:20-21 and Habakkuk 2:3-4. So what is the link between these two texts?

Both of these texts referenced the promised future coming of the Jewish Messiah and the future judgment associated with His coming.

And why did this author choose to highlight this particular theme using these Old Testament texts in Hebrews 10:37-38?

The author in Hebrews 10:37-38 wanted his readers in the context of judgment to understand the pleasure God derives from the righteous who walk by **faith** and the lack of pleasure He derives from those who do not. So after the author had helped his readers to understand this particular point what then did the author do?

The author in Hebrews 10:39 **summarized** the preceding challenge in Hebrews 10:35-39 and applied it to his readers. Let me now read this passage for you and this is what it says, "**But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.**"

So what was the author's conclusion based on what he had just said in **Hebrews 10:35-38**? The author, believing that his readers would respond positively to what he had just said, was confident that neither he nor his readers would fail to continue to walk by faith which led him to conclude that not only would they not be amongst those who "**shrink back to destruction**" or in other words eternal judgment but that they would in fact be amongst those who would "**have faith to the preserving of the soul**" or in other words would ultimately reach their heavenly reward.

CONCLUSION

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Will we suffer? Yes! We will be persecuted? Yes! We may even at some time in our lives experience severe persecution.

But if we, in the midst of those trials and in the midst of those persecutions, would do exactly what this author encouraged his readers to do which would be to choose not to focus on our trials and persecutions but to focus on what we have been promised, we can also, like this author and his readers, expect that we also, along with his readers, not to be amongst those who "**shrink back to destructions**" but rather amongst those who "**have faith to the persevering of the soul.**"

May God give us the grace to hold fast our confession of faith knowing that if we do we will receive the "better and lasting possession" that is promised to those who **persevere** until the end.