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# NOTES ON HEBREWS

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## Chapter 10: 32-39

### *Introduction*

The writer now turns to minister comfort to his converted reader, just as he did at ch. 6:9 when he said, 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.' He reminds them of their former afflictions, their endurance and devoted ministry: he also exhorts them to boldness and patience in view of the coming of the Lord, and rejoices that he and they are not of them that 'shrink back unto perdition,' as with those whose judgment he had mentioned in verses 26 to 31, but of 'them that have faith to the saving of the soul'.

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### **Notes**

*Verse 32. But call to remembrance the former days:* That is, the time after their conversion, when they suffered greater persecutions and afflictions than those which they were now experiencing.

*in which, after ye were enlightened:* See at ch. 6:4. The enlightenment was by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10; Gal. 1:16).

*ye endured a great conflict of sufferings:* *Athlēsis*, used here only in the N.T., primarily meant a contest of athletes; hence, a conflict the nature of which is described in a twofold way in what follows.

*Verse 33. partly, being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions:* The verb *theatrizō*, a spectacle, really signifies to be exposed in the theatre by way of shame, or shameful and horrible treatment Cp. the two separate words in 1 Cor. 4:9. The word *oneidismos*, contemptuous defamation, is used also in 11:26; 13:13; Rom. 15:3 and 1 Tim. 3:7. *Thilipsis*, afflictions, primarily means a pressure, that which weighs down the spirit. For the believer who is enabled to endure it, it becomes a means of triumph.

*and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used:* That is, part of their conflict consisted in the fellowship (*ḡoinōnoi* = 'sharers') with others who were similarly treated. As the verb *anastrephomai* is not used elsewhere in the Passive Voice, it may here mean 'those who lived their life thus', i.e., in the same way of suffering afflictions.

*Verse 34. For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds:* The weight of MS. evidence is decidedly in favour of this reading (as against the A.V.—'of me in my bonds'); also it is supported by the context, and there is no actual evidence that the Apostle Paul was the writer of the Epistle. Literally, the word is 'ye suffered with'.

*and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions,* the verb *prosedchomai*, here rendered 'the plundering of their property with joy' was so contrary to natural inclinations that it was no small evidence of genuine faith, by which they counted it an honour and joy to suffer in the cause of Christ. 'Possessions' is the accurate rendering if *huparchonta* (from *huparchō*, to exist); it signifies those things of which a person has the use and disposal.

*knowing that ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one:* *Ginōskō* = to know as a process arising from the experience (contrast *oida* in verse 30), as in ch. 3:10 and 8:11.

The reading which gives 'in yourselves' has much in favour of it; not so the R.V. margin. Many ancient texts have 'in heaven'. In any case the possession is obviously heavenly. The noun *huparxis*, possession, corresponds to the verb rendered 'possessions' earlier in the verse: elsewhere in the N.T. in Acts 2:45. Note also this is the ninth occasion of the word 'better' in the Epistle, and there are four more. *Meno*, to abide, is again in 7:3, 24; 12:27; 13:1, 14.

*Verse 35. Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompence of reward:* The meaning of *apoballō* here means rather to be 'let go'; see the opposite idea, 'hold fast', in regard to boldness, in ch. 3:6; and see note there. For 'recompence of reward' see ch. 2:2, there used retributively for evil, here compensating for faithfulness. The reward is to be at the Judgment-Seat of Christ, as the next verses show.

*Verse 36. For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise:* *Hupomonē*, (lit., 'an abiding under') patience, may either be Active, i.e., perseverance as (1) in well doing, Rom. 2:7; (2) fruit bearing, Luke 8:15; (3) running the appointed race, Rom. 12:1. Or, it may be passive i.e., endurance, as (1) in trials, whether generally, cf. Matt. 24:13; Rom. 12:12; Jas. 1:12; or (2) those incident to Gospel service, as in 2 Cor. 6:4; 12:12; 2 Tim. 3:10; or (3) those under chastisement as from the hand of God our Father, cf. Heb. 12:1. Such patience perfects Christian character (Jas. 1:14): fellowship in the patience of Christ is a condition for reigning with Him, 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:9. And for this believers are strengthened 'with all power', Col. 1:11. In Rev. 3:10 'the word of My patience' is the word which tells us of HIS patience and its effects in producing patience in us. In regard to the desire in 2 Thess. 3:5, the best interpretation probably is, 'the Lord teach you and enable you to love as God loves, and to be patient as Christ is patient'. Patience in doing the will of God (in the present passage) may come under both (1) and (2) above, for these believers needed both perseverance and endurance in their trials.

The 'promise' mentioned stands for the thing promised, that is to say, the reward (v. 35). The verb *komizō*, used in the Middle Voice both here and in ch. 11:13 and 19, signifies to receive for oneself, and that by way of compensation.

*Verse 37. 'For yet a very little while':* This gives the reason for the preceding exhortation and points to the time of receiving the promises. Literally, the phrase is 'a little (while), how little, how little!' The Sept. has the same phrase in Isa. 26:20, but the context there is different.

*'He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry':* This quotation is from Habak. 2:3, 4. 'He that cometh' is literally 'the coming One', as in Rev. 1:8, where it indicates the eternal character of His being; He is ever the coming One, just as He ever was self-existent, and ever is. Faith enables us to bridge over the interval. When the Apostle said 'the time is shortened' (R.V.), he at once instructed us how to view the circumstances of our present life (1 Cor. 7:29). The coming of the Lord, in fulfilment of His promise is the great incentive to doing the will of God.

*Verse 38. 'But my righteous one shall live by faith':* This continues the quotation from Habakkuk, though the two statements are reversed. Hab. 2:4 should read as in the margin, 'but the just (i.e. righteous) shall live in his faithfulness'. The prophet is drawing a contrast between the waverer and the steadfast person. But the writer to the Hebrews reads the Scripture by a new light, since he knew Christ; he goes below the surface meaning; faith lies at the root of faithfulness. A man is faithful to God because he has faith in God. If faith preserves a man in temporal danger, it will preserve him from spiritual disaster also.

This quotation is made also in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11. In Romans the point is that a man who is righteous has life, not because of his adherence to law, but by faith; faith is essential to salvation, to the life which a justified man receives. Galatians teaches the same thing, but there, where the Apostle is combating Judaism, he declares that no man, however virtuous, can be justified by law-keeping. Here in Hebrews, faith is declared to be necessary for deliverance from condemnation and for the possession of eternal life. Whilst faith is the great point in all three passages, prominence is given in Rom. 1:17 to 'righteous'; in Gal. 3:11 to 'faith'; in Heb. 10:38 to 'live'. Here faith is the means of preservation, in contrast to apostasy.

*'And if he shrink back, my soul hath no please in him':* Here the writer follows the Septugint, which differs considerably from the Hebrew. The professing believer who apostatizes, renouncing

his professed faith, must incur God's disapprobation. Cp. ch. 6: 4-9. The verb *hupostellō*, here in the Middle Voice, suggesting determination in the act, signifies to withdraw from holding the truth.

*Verse 39.* 'But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition': Literally, 'we are not of the shrinking-back-ones' (*hupostolē*). The 'we' is very emphatic. A complete distinction is being made, as previously in this passage and in chapter 6, between true believers, whose life is that of doing the will of God, with the consequent reward, and those who are mere professors, whose doom is perdition. Perdition is not the destiny of any child of God. *Apoleia*, perdition, destruction, and its synonyms, mean not loss of being, but loss of well-being.

*but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul:* The clause is parallel to the preceding, and is lit., 'but of faith', signifying that this is their characteristic. The word *peripoiēsis*, 'saving', means 'possession' or 'gaining', the act of acquiring anything, as, e.g., salvation in its completeness; it is rendered 'obtaining' in 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:14. The exercise of faith by a believer enables him so to live that he gains his life or soul, in the sense of receiving a full reward hereafter.

## Chapter 11

### Introduction

The author now proceeds to determine the action of faith. The preceding verses have shown the necessity for faith in order to obtain the promise. Now encouragement is to be given to believers by the examples of 'the elders' of former periods. They walked according to the very principles by which believers are now called to walk. Thus shall we together with 'be made perfect'.

### Analysis

	VERSES
1. Faith: its principle, power, and practice ...	1-3
2. ,, and the patriarchs ... ..	4-16
3. ,, and Israel, its formation and conquest	7-31
4. ,, and triumphant Israelites ... ..	32-38
5. ,, its expectations and full fruition ...	39-40

## Notes

*Verse 1. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen:* This is not a definition of faith, it is a statement of its power and activity. There is special emphasis upon the word 'is'; this marks the reality of faith, and the confirmation of this is introduced by the 'For' of verse. For the word *hupostasis*, here rendered 'assurance', see ch. 1:5, 'substance', and ch. 3:14, 'confidence'. Here the R.V. margin gives an excellent rendering, 'the giving substance to'; that is what faith does to things hoped for, it makes them facts instead of matters of mere speculation. The word 'substance' is the exact English equivalent of *hupostasis*. The word *olenchos*, here only in the N.T., denotes a proving; it is not merely a conviction of the fact that things unseen exist, it brings them into the experience of the believer's life. This is the work of the unseen yet actually indwelling Holy Spirit. Faith accepts what God declares and puts it to the proof.

*Verse 2. For therein the elders had witness borne to them:* The term 'elders' is here comprehensive of all those mentioned in this chapter, indeed of all the heroes of faith in O.T. times. The witness was given by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, causing the records of their faith to be made thus.

*Verse 3. By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God:* The verb *noeō* means to exercise the mind by way of discernment, enabling us to enter into the circumstances of what is mentioned. The *aionēs* are here not merely the ages, or various periods in succession; it refers to the physical creation, but the time factor is included, indicating the process of the fulfilment of the divine will. The verb *katartizō*, rendered 'framed' means to make fit, prepare. Here it describes both the creation and the preparation or framing of the universe, both the bringing into existence and the disposal (cp. ch. 1:3). It is not in itself a producing cause; that is the 'word of God'; but *rhēma* (as distinct from *logos*) denotes an utterance, the will outwardly expressed (1:3), whereas *logos* is a more comprehensive term, including the inward will as expressed, and is the word used to describe a whole discourse and sometimes the sum total of God's utterances (there are other uses, but this is in contrast to *rhēma*). The *rhēma* describes the phrase in Gen. 1, 'the Lord said'. Though the article is not used in the original it is implied.

*so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear.* This has been understood in different ways. So take the original as expressing a purpose, i.e., 'in order that that which is seen should not have its origin from things which do appear'. Others would render it, 'so that the visible might not (seem to) have come into existence from visible things', and so on. On the whole we incline to the view that the statement really expresses the fact that the visible creation was not formed out of pre-existing materials; that is to say, that it was formed from nothing: and this entirely agrees with the preceding statement in the verse, that the universe came into being by the word of God.

*Verse 4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain:* His sacrifice was based on a revelation which God had made, and was a recognition that he was a sinner and needed the Divinely-appointed substitute. The shedding of the blood was an acknowledgment that life had been forfeited, and only God's grace could bestow spiritual life. His offering was an act of faith. There was nothing of this in Cain's sacrifice.

*through which he had witness borne to him that, he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts:* He was righteous according to God's righteousness (cp. Matt. 23:35). God had been righteous in condemning man, and Abel's sacrifice was an acknowledgment of that. God bore witness in regard to his gifts; the plural suggests that it was Abel's practice to come to God with the sacrifice of a lamb. So the believer in coming to God on the ground of the blood of Christ is declared by God to be righteous (justified), Rom. 3:24-26; 5:9; and God bears witness to the efficacy of the sacrifice—not to our condition, but to the fact of our coming in HIS appointed way.

*and through it he being dead yet speaketh:* By his faith, causing him to come to God in the Divinely-appointed way, he speaks. His faith is the basic instrument; he speaks by the example he set, involving death. The excellence of his faith is seen in two ways: one in the offering he presented, the other in the value God sets upon him since his death—in this way he still speaks through the Scripture.

(To be continued)