

## THROUGH THE BIBLE HEBREWS 9-10

In the fiction of C.S. Lewis, *“The Chronicles of Narnia,”* Aslan the lion, and the little girl Lucy, meet after a time apart... Aslan greets her, *“Welcome, child.”*

*“Aslan, your bigger,”* says Lucy.

*“That’s because you are older, little one.”*

She asks, *“Not because you are?”*

Aslan responds, *“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”* And this is what happens as we grow in our faith - we discover our Lord Jesus is far bigger than we imagined. As we grow in Christ, our concept of His greatness and glory expands and deepens. We learn to see Him as bigger and better!

This is what Hebrews is all about! The writer explains how Jesus is greater than Judaism. He wants us to be proud of Jesus! He’s better than all that came before...

In the OT God made a covenant with Israel that included a priesthood and Temple. But Jesus eclipsed both the Levitical priesthood and Temple in Jerusalem.

He is a priest of a different order - of *Melchizedek*.

And He works in a better Temple - in Heaven itself.

At the end of chapter 8 we learned how Jesus even cuts a *better covenant* with *better promises... And now in chapter 9 we’ll learn how He offers a better sacrifice!*

Chapter 9, *“Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.*

For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary..." The Tabernacle Moses built was a tent 45' long by 15' wide.

It was made of four layers: the inner layer was **linen with blue, purple, and scarlet thread**. The linen was then covered with animal skins: **goat, ram, and badger**.

The badger skins were what you saw when you approached the Tabernacle. Since they were dark and ugly they gave the dwelling an unappealing appearance. It's beauty was seen only from the inside.

And all these details made the Tabernacle a type of Christ. Jesus was a man. Isaiah 53:2 describes him as plain and nondescript. He says, "**when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.**" Yet on the inside Jesus had a divine beauty. Jesus was God!

The Tabernacle had two rooms... The outer room or "**the Holy place**" was 15' x 30' and held three pieces of furniture - **a lampstand** or gold Menorah, **the table of sacred showbread**, and **an altar** for burning incense.

Since, the Tabernacle had no windows it's only light came from a **lampstand**. Jesus is our lamp. He's "**the light of the world.**" In Revelation 2-3 the churches are also envisioned as lamp stands - *we testify of His light*.

There was also **the table of showbread**, or as the Jews called it, "**the table of presence.**" Jesus is the bread of life. His presence is sustenance for our soul.

But there was also a second room - the inner sanctum of the Tabernacle. Verse 3, "**behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All...**" It's OT name, "**the Holy of Holies.**"

“Which had the golden altar of incense...” Now in Exodus 30 the altar of incense was placed outside the veil. Here it’s inside the veil. *So which is it? It’s both!*

The table was outside the veil, but the smoke and fragrance went up inside - into the presence of God.

The altar of incense is a type of our prayers. Right now we’re outside the heavenly throne room. We’re earthbound. But in Christ and through prayer we can go before the Lord and spend time in His presence.

Also in the Holy of Holies was “the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.” The Ark represented the very throne of God.

Inside the box were the stone tablets on which were written God’s Top Ten Commandments. Hovering over this 2’ by 4’ Ark was the awesome presence of God.

Again, the Ark was a mini-replica of God’s throne.

Psalms 99:1 and other OT passages refer to God as “the Holy One who dwells between the cherubim.” In heaven He’s surrounded by angels, and there were two gold cherubim on either end of the OT Ark...

God’s presence, or glory, hovered over the Ark. The Law or commandments rested in the belly of the Ark.

That means between *God’s glory* and *righteousness* there was a solid gold lid called “*the mercy seat.*”

And it was here that the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice. Here is where *God’s mercy* was extended and *His righteousness* satisfied. *God is love* and *God is*

*holy*, so how does He love sinners without lower the bar, or overlooking our sin? It's only by the blood.

The sacrifice satisfies God's justice, and accesses God's mercy. Thus, the one and only place where God's love and holiness harmonize is "*the mercy seat.*"

This is the background that makes sense of 1 John 2:2 where it says Jesus "*is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*"

The word "*propitiation*" means "*place of mercy.*" In other words, Jesus has become our "*mercy seat.*"

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God's holiness is satisfied, and God's mercy is extended. Jesus is now the one place to go to in the world today and be reconciled to God. Jesus is the only way to know God!

Notice, the last line in verse 5, "*Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*" *What's a bummer!* This goes down as the greatest Bible study that never was!

Remember in Hebrews 8:5 we're told the Tabernacle was really just a small-scale model of heaven itself.

The writer of Hebrews could've gone on to explain "*The Typology of the Tabernacle*" - how every detail of the earthly Tabernacle speaks of Jesus and of heaven.

In fact, when I get to heaven I'm going to seek him out and ask for the rest of the story. But here he says he has to move on to more vital matters. He wants to speak *not of the sanctuary, but of its sacrifices.* For the whole point of the Tabernacle was a place for sacrifice.

Verse 6, “Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.” In the OT, access to the Tabernacle, and thus to God was limited.

The **people** couldn't come into the Tabernacle at all. They stopped with their sacrifice at the outside altar.

A **priest** only entered the first room, the Holy Place.

*It was the **High Priest** who had the greatest access.*

Verse 7, “But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year...” Only one man, the High Priest, entered God's presence, and only once a year.

And when he entered he didn't dare come empty-handed. He came with the blood of a sacrifice.

It was “not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.” The fact that every year these sacrifices had to be repeated indicated God had yet to grant a permanent access.

And this limited acceptance was proof of *the inadequacy of Judaism*. Even after a steady stream of sacrifices you still weren't allowed entrance to God.

Judaism “was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience...” It was all evidence that the Law was never able to make a person right with God.

And here's why, verse 10 - the Law "concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation."

The effects of the Tabernacle, and the sacrifices that were offered there, were superficial. The diet, fastings, and washings of Judaism couldn't effect a man's soul.

Verse 11 tells us, "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation." The priesthood of Jesus was different. Rather than *surface, superficial*, His work was *spiritual*.

God had made future promises - a New Covenant. Jesus was the fulfillment of "*the good things to come*."

*His Spirit* works deep inside *our spirit* to effect permanent changes. What Jesus does is more than *self-help*, or *behavior modification*, or *positive thinking* - His power is supernatural. It comes from heaven.

And the sacrifice He makes - verse 12 - is "not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Here's the difference between the Levitical sacrifices and the blood of Jesus.

The OT sacrifices had to be repeated. Jesus offered Himself up "*once for all*." It never has to be duplicated.

Under the Old Covenant the blood of animals covered man's sin for the moment. They earned us **a temporary probation**. But they had to be repeated.

Yet now, the sacrifice of Jesus is one size, one time fits all. Jesus has provided us **a permanent pardon**.



Verse 13, “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh...” In Numbers 19 Moses told Israel to sacrifice a red heifer, and burn its carcass.

The ashes were mixed with water and sprinkled on anyone who touched a dead body. It was a purification.

The ashes of the red heifer were also used to dedicate the Tabernacle and the Temple. That’s why those in Israel today who want to rebuild the Jewish Temple are trying desperately to breed a red heifer.

It’s of figurative significance that the ashes were mixed with water and applied by sprinkling.

In Scripture “*water*” is symbolic of “*the Holy Spirit,*” and it’s the Holy Spirit that takes the merits of Christ’s sacrifice and applies them to the cleansing of our lives.

*Former Methodists will love it,* but we’re cleansed by sprinkling. We’re sprinkled with His blood by His Spirit.

But if the blood of bulls and goats were effective for a time, verse 14, “**how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**” The blood of Jesus is so powerful it has a deep and lasting impact!

Once, “**Good Morning America**” interviewed Albert Speer, a former Nazi. Speer was the industrial genius that kept Hitler’s factories functioning during the war.

He was the only one of 24 war criminals tried at Nuremburg to admit his guilt. Speer was sentenced, and served 20 years in prison. He was remorseful to the end. He

said in the interview, “I served 20 years. But I still carry the burden of what happened to millions of people, and I can’t get rid of it.” It was his last public statement.. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse a guilty conscience like Albert Speer’s *and like our’s...*

Verse 15, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Jesus died not just for those alive at the time or who would come after. He died for those who lived before Him - who were under the Old Covenant, and trusted in the Coming Deliverer.

“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.” We talk about the Old and New “*Testaments*” - it’s another word for “*Covenant.*”

It’s the terms of an agreement. And in the case of Jesus, God’s covenant acted as a “*last will and testament.*” His death activated God’s salvation.

Say your rich ole uncle Bob promised you his boat and house and stocks and bonds - but until He dies you don’t inherit a dime... Like a will, under the New Covenant, God made promises and provisions for His people that were only set in motion by Jesus’ death.

Think of the OT believers, who lived before Jesus. When these folks died in faith, rather than go straight into the presence of God, they went to a holding tank.

In Luke 16 Jesus called it “*Abraham’s bosom.*” There they waited on the Savior’s death to receive salvation.



Ephesians 4 tells us that after His death, Jesus ascended into heaven and led the OT believers into the presence of God. Upon the death of the Savior they became eligible to possess their inheritance.

Verse 18, “Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.”

Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.”

When Moses dedicated the Tabernacle, and launched the Old Covenant, he took a hyssop branch, a leafy twig - and dipped it in the blood of bulls and goats - then he sprinkled it just about everywhere – on the tabernacle, its furniture, the Law, even the people.

The Old Covenant was a bloody affair from its outset. When Moses was done with the dedication *it resembled a drive-by shooting*, blood was everywhere.

All this blood and gore emphasized to Israel the seriousness of their sin. They picked a lamb out of their flock - and then its throat was slit because of their sin.

It would be like taking a pet - putting Rover on a leash - and taking him to the priest, where he'd be slaughtered because of the stupid stuff you've done.

If that happened you'd see sin in a new light.

The thought of taking our little dog to the priest, with the butcher knife in his hand, almost brings tears to our eyes. But think now about taking Jesus to His slaughter.

That's what happened because of our sin. Sin is a serious crime and deserves a severe penalty.

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” This was the Law's primary lesson.

Today our places of worship are clean and sanitary, but walk into the OT Tabernacle, and it looked and smelled like a beef cattle slaughterhouse or a meat market. The job of a priest was like that of a butcher.

As one author writes, “The Old Testament sacrificial system... was a gory affair indeed! During the thousand-plus years of the Old Covenant, there were more than a million animal sacrifices. So considering that each bull's sacrifice spilled a gallon or two of blood, and each goat a quart, the Old Covenant truly rested on a sea of blood.” During the Passover a trough was dug from the Temple into the Kidron Valley to channel off the blood. It was a “*sacrificial drainpipe*.”

Leviticus 17:11 says it clearly, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

God told Adam and Eve, the wages of sin was death.

And since the nutrients of life flow to the rest of the body through the bloodstream - then biblical reasoning demands that the debt of sin requires spilling of blood.

Of course, this is where some liberal theologians ridicule Christianity. They call it “a slaughterhouse faith” or “a bloody religion.” The necessity of blood offends their modern sensibilities. They consider it barbaric.

Well, I have one response, “So what!” It doesn’t matter what some theologian thinks. If God is the One doing the forgiveness then He can set the terms for that forgiveness. And He’s told us unequivocally that “*without shedding of blood there is no remission*” of sin.

People who try to eliminate the cross, and clean up the gore, and sanitize Christianity - *strip it of its power!*

When John visited heaven he saw “a Lamb as though it had been slain.” Jesus, the Lamb of God, will bear the marks of His crucifixion for all eternity.

To negate the blood is to insult the Savior.

The old hymn puts it, “There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains”

Verse 23, “Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these...” The earthly Tabernacle was dedicated with earthly animals. “But the heavenly things (God’s throne) themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us...”

Moses dedicated the Tabernacle with the blood of bulls, but Christ dedicated Heaven with His own blood!

“Not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another - He then would have had to suffer often since

the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Christ had to die, but once.

This is why we Protestants reject the Roman Catholic doctrine of **transubstantiation** - the belief that the waver and wine turn into the literal body and blood of Christ each time it's offered. He's sacrificed again.

God forbid! Christ was sacrificed but once!

On the cross all that needed to be done for our salvation was done - and it was done once and for all!

Verse 27, **“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...”** Here the Bible refutes the idea of reincarnation. You don't return in another form.

There was Rocky, then Rocky 2, and 3, and 4... But there won't be Sandy 2, and 3, and 4. When I die I'll meet my Maker, and give an account of my life.

There're no do-overs or second chances.

You die, then there's the judgment.

When you die, don't expect tunnels and bright lights.

CS Lewis tells us what to expect the moment after we die, **“There will be God without disguise: something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature.**

**It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it is impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we have really chosen, whether we realized it or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is**

holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.” Let me say it again, *you die, then it’s your judgment!*

Verse 28, “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

**There’s no more dying for Jesus.**

On the cross He cried, “It is finished.” When He comes a second time it won’t be to add anything to our salvation - it will be to enforce what He’s already done.

Chapter 10, “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things,” What if I came home one night and found my wife sitting on the couch in a negligee. She has it in her mind to spend a romantic evening with her hubby.

But instead of sitting next to her, what if I walked over to the mantle, pull down a picture of Kathy, and begin embracing the picture. I’m kissing the frame, and talking to the picture - while the real Kathy Adams is on the couch! You would classify me a *certifiable nut!*

Yet this is what these Hebrew believers were doing by returning to the sacrifices and traditions of Judaism.

They were embracing *the shadows* and *the symbols* while ignoring *the substance*. They’re acting like *nuts!*

He continues, “(OT religion) can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no

more consciousness of sins.” If the debt of sin had truly been paid, then why repeat the slaughter year after year.

“But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” I like how the poet puts it, “Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience rest, or wash away one stain.” The OT sacrifices failed to accomplish a permanent solution for the man’s sin and rebellion.

Usually when you turn to the Christmas story you go to Matthew, and read of Joseph and the wise men, or to Luke where it recalls Mary and the shepherds.

You don’t turn to Hebrews, but you should!

For here we find the most vital, yet most overlooked scene in the Christmas narrative. Here is the parting statement of Jesus to His Father in Heaven, just before leaving His *eternal home* for His *embryonic home*...

Verse 5, “Therefore, when (Jesus) came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.”

For centuries Jesus watched the Father in Heaven.

He received the *sacrifices*, but they achieved no *satisfaction*. There was a *reluctance* in His *acceptance*.

The look in His eye indicated it was not quite right.

The animals that were offered were tainted with sin themselves. All creation had been effected by the fall of mankind. The Father understood that only a sinless



sacrifice - untainted blood - could at the same time, *sanitize a sin-stained world and satisfy a sinless God.*

But where would God go for such a sinless sacrifice?

That's when His only Son stepped up and said, "*Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.*" Understand, spirit doesn't pierce. It doesn't bruise or bleed - that's why Jesus, the eternal Son, needed a body. Jesus was born to die!

Thus, the next thing we see, "*Mary had a little Lamb... and named Him Jesus!*" Understand, God became a man so He could take a nail for you and me.

Verse 7, "*Then I said...*" And Jesus is now quoting Psalm 40, "*Behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God.*"

On every single page of Scripture, buried in every ritual, seen in every sacrifice slaughtered - there was a prophetic portrait of the person and work of Jesus.

And when the time came to deliver the goods - to do the dirty work - Jesus was obedient to the will of God.

Verse 8, "*Previously saying, 'Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second.*" The OT, Jewish sacrifices were replaced by the ultimate sacrifice - God's own Son.

*"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” The writer of Hebrews is talking about the Temple in his day. It was standing, operating as it had for thousands of years. Obviously, Hebrews was written before 70 AD - that was the year Rome toppled the Temple, and ended the animal sacrifices.

After the sacrifice of Jesus, God ended the Temple operation. It was now obsolete and irrelevant. Once the ultimate sacrifice was made, who needed the shadow.

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” Jesus sat down, because His job was done.

The OT priest ministering in the Tabernacle never sat down. There was furniture, but no chairs in the Temple.

The priest was always on his feet, for under the Law the work was never finished - a full pardon and forgiveness for sin could never be accomplished.

Yet when Jesus offered His sacrifice He “*sat down at the right hand of God*” to await His exaltation. On the cross Jesus uttered, “*It is finished.*” All that needed to be done had been done for us to be right with God.

Verse 14, “*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*”

What a blessing - in Christ we have been “*perfected forever*” - we’re complete in our relationship with God.

You don’t have to worry and fret about measuring up, by faith in Christ you’re pleasing and satisfying to God.

“But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them...” The New Covenant is about **a new heart**. God writes His law on our hearts - love for Him and others.

“Then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” And here’s another blessing of the New Covenant - **a new start** - a clean slate.

“Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” He’s quoted Jeremiah 31.

The sacrifice of Jesus paid for the New Covenant.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh...” The old veil of separation between man and God that stood in the Temple was literally torn in two. When Jesus died it split in half from top to bottom.

Now today, the veil that stands between God and man is **the torn body of Jesus**. To enter God’s presence you don’t have to offer sacrifices, or live by Law, or fast, or wash, or jump through religious hoops.

All that stands in the way between you and God is the person of Jesus. Bow to Him and you can enter in!

And when you embrace Jesus, verse 21 tells us, “and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near.” We have this incredible access to God so how should we respond? He gives three commands...

I call these three responses “**salad commands,**” because they all begin, “*Let us... Let us... Let us...*”

Verse 22, “**Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**” If the door is open between you and God - if you have access - then by all means enter in!

Spend time with God! Enjoy His presence! One of the great catechisms of Christianity states as our duty, “**To know God, and enjoy Him forever.**” Draw near!

And “**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.**”

If you’ve been given access to God - hold on! Have faith! Strengthen your grip on God’s grace. Don’t drift!

“**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...**” Never underestimate the value of an encouraging word, or a pat on the back.

“**Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**” If we have access to God, let’s hang out with God, and hold on by faith - and let’s do it together.

Its easier to *hang on* if we *hang out with like-minded believers*. My faith fuels your faith and vice versa.

Notice these three salad commands taken together...

The first deals with **faith**, the second with **hope**, and the third with **love**. It takes **faith to enter in...** it takes **hope to hold on...** *and love to consider one another...*

Let's use all three virtues - faith, hope, and love - to take advantage of our blood-bought access to God.

Verse 26, “**For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.**” Understand the “**sin**” in view here isn't simple slip-up - *a foul word in the heat of battle... or a beer too many... or an outburst of anger.*

This is the same sin we've been dealing with throughout the book of Hebrews. This is the sin of deliberately and willfully turning your back on Jesus, and returning your trust to the institutions of Judaism.

*This is the sin of renouncing your faith in Christ.*

And the writer assures us, since salvation comes by faith, if you stop having faith, then it's impossible to be saved. “**If we sin willfully... there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.**” If you turn your back on God's only provision for sin, Jesus, then how can you be forgiven?

Verse 28, “**Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.**” The inferior covenant, the Law of Moses, had serious consequences if you rejected it's terms.

“**Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which**

he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" How much worse to you think your fate would be if you rejected the superior covenant?

If you return to Judaism you've insulted Christ.

If you say you can be right with God by your good deeds, or rituals, or sacrifices you've deemed his precious blood to be worthless, and insulted the Spirit of His grace. You've made a mockery of all Jesus did.

Verse 30, "For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." Here're two quotes from Deuteronomy 32. "And again, "The LORD will judge His people." And take heed to verse 31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

God is a God of mercy and grace, but reject His only Son - callously trample on the Son He sent to die in your place - and there's not a punishment too harsh!

Verse 32, "But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 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." The current wave of persecution wasn't the first to hit the Hebrews. Shortly after they came to Christ they were hassled to the point of having their possessions confiscated.

They were probably excommunicated by their Jewish families, and thus required to return family heirlooms and keepsakes. *Yet they'd continued in their faith!*

Now they need to show the same perseverance.



Every Christian experiences times when their faith offers no real worldly advantage. Instead of making us rich it causes us loss... Instead of popularity it draws persecution... Instead of promotion we get put down...

And it's in those times that we need to hunker down! We need to buck up and continue trusting in Jesus.

We will receive a great reward - an eternal reward - if we don't lose heart, but keep walking in the faith.

The writer encourages them in verse 35, **“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.”** Throwing away their confidence - their sure position in Christ - wasn't hypothetical, but possible.

In John 10:28, Jesus made a promise that's been misinterpreted. He said, **“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”** It's true, no one can snatch a believer from the hand of Jesus, but that doesn't mean that believer can't get up and walk out. Faith continues.

Author, GK Chesterton, use to say, **“The only way to love anything is to realize it might be lost.”** That's especially true of God's blessings and our salvation.

I believe it's naive to teach that just because you made a decision for Jesus in your past, there's now nothing you can do to jeopardize your salvation - *that there's no possibility to turn from Jesus and walk away.*

That's not only wrong, as I see it, but it's doing folks a disservice. You're promoting an apathy, and neglect, and nonchalance. We need to be helped to continue!

Verse 36, "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise..." You don't reap in the season you sow.

There's a lag time between God's promise and its fulfillment. To receive His blessing you have to endure!

"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry." Jesus returns without notice. He won't give you thirty days to shape up. We never know... that's why we need to keep our faith current.

"Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." That's tough talk - draw back from faith and you'll no longer please God. Those who are right with God will live by faith.

And the tough talk isn't over, "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition..." (which can be translate "damnation" or "ruin") "but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." Cease having faith and it can mean hell. *To be saved by faith we have to continue in faith.*

In Christ, we have a better way - a new and living way. Let's not draw back. Let's continue in our faith...