

Hebrews 10:32-39

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding 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 is promised. 37 For,

“Yet a little while, and the coming one 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 and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Why were the Hebrews earlier willing to endure persecution for their Christian faith? *“You knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.”* They had something no persecution could take away. They had Jesus, and with Him, and in Him, and through Him they had eternal life in an everlasting kingdom with no more sickness, sorrow, or suffering. How often do we call that to mind? I think we ponder it less now than they ancients did, especially those facing persecution. Life has perhaps become too removed from any considerable hardship for some of us in the West for us to remember that this is not meant to be our paradise. Yet it is no less true for us. Those who seek their heaven here will be woefully disappointed both in this life and in the next. We await our heaven. We await the great reward of our confidence in Christ.

What an important reminder the writer to the Hebrews shares with them: *“We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”* For what are people willing to sacrifice? For that which they love. How can we not love Christ who loved us so much He sacrificed Himself for us, left behind His heaven to rescue us from this fallen morass? Whenever you would be willing to set aside your confidence in Christ, to put your faith on the back shelf, to compromise your biblical convictions to avoid compromising your temporal and personal comfort, you have to ask yourself what you’ve let happen to your love for Him. And the only way your love for Him can wane is if His cross slips from your view and His Word becomes more and more a distant echo in your ears. He’s revealed Himself to you in the Scriptures. He’s proved His love by His passion. He’s proven it again in all that He has provided you in this life beyond what you deserve, what any of us deserve. And so *“we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”*

Life had become hard for the Hebrews because of their faith. Some of us know what that is like. Others have never experienced anything remotely close to such a cross or persecution as that which they knew. And yet we are tempted to wonder if it is worth it all, walking the Christian walk, offering our lives as living sacrifices to Him who lived and still lives for us. Perhaps no persecution of the devil is more effective than a lack of persecution. We can grow apathetic and forget the full value of our faith in Christ. But that is pure foolishness, and we must not forget it. As the writer to the Hebrews told them, *“You knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one,”* you know it as well. Remember it, and let it console and bolster you in affliction, doubt, or confusion. Amen.