

Text: Hebrews 10:36-39

Title: Enduring Faith

Truth: Christian faith is faith that endures.

Date/Location: July 24, 2011 at FBC

Diagram

36 For you have need of endurance,
so that after you have done the will of God,
you may receive the promise:

37 "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." [Hab. 2:3b-4]

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition,
but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Introduction

10:26-31 has a severe warning against apostasy. Apostasy means to know about the Christian faith, but then to totally turn away and reject it. Someone who does this indicates they were never saved to begin with.

From 10:32-35 we learned of Paul's confidence that the readers were saved, at least in the main, and had endured difficult persecutions soon after they became Christians. He encouraged them to remember their endurance in the faith and that what awaits in heaven is far better than the earthly possessions they had lost. In light of that, they were not to throw away their confidence. I take that to mean that they were to not abandon the faith, because the reward is so great. And, there is severe danger in throwing away confidence in Christ—eternal danger.

In the passage before us in these notes, 10:36-39, the apostle restates the case in a positive fashion: instead of "don't throw away" he says "you have need of endurance." They had endured great suffering earlier; they were to continue that pattern of life and faith.

Two fundamentals of the faith are called out in these verses. The first is the Second Coming of Christ. This is a certainty and it is the promise that is mentioned in v. 36. The second basic Christian truth that is found here is

salvation by faith alone. Justification and the justified life are only lived by faith in God. In chapter 11 we will see a definition and multiple examples of faith. But without faith, the only alternative is what the text calls *perdition* or destruction.

I. Enduring and Doing the Will of God, v. 36

The normal Christian life is one that hangs on and does not throw away confidence in Christ. Instead, it continues in doing the will of God.

A. What the Verse Does *Not* Say.

Verse 36 does not say “the ultimate cause of receiving the promise is that you did the will of God.”

The ultimate cause is God’s grace, and what we could call the *procuring* cause is faith in the gospel. Afterward, the believer does the will of God—not perfectly, but if not at all, then his faith is actually dead.

B. The Verse Says that *Chronologically After* Doing the Will of God, the Promise is Received.

After being saved and after doing the will of God, the believer receives the promise of God.

C. The Meaning of Endurance

Endurance means holding out in the face of difficulty, whatever may come. That works out in terms of obedient faith to God. The kind of endurance they need is the kind they had once – in v. 32. They just need to continue that.

Endurance reflects that you believe God will keep his promise.

Endurance is continuation in doing the will of God. Heb. 10:7 and 9 show us that this is what Christ did. Phil. 2:13 says that God is at work in us so that we do His good pleasure.

Endurance is persevering in obedience to God’s word.

To boil it all down, endurance in the faith amounts doing the will of God—including continuation in belief and persevering in obedience to God. This is just what the Christian life looks like.

D. The encouragement to hold fast is a never-ending thing. It never goes out of style to remind ourselves that we have to hold on and keep on believing. See Acts 14:22 for an earlier rendition of the same truth. There are times we all *feel* like we need a little extra endurance. But whether or not we feel like it, we need to endure.

II. The Promise, v. 37

- A. God's promise to the Christian has a lot of dimensions, but it basically revolves around Jesus Christ and His coming again. The promise is that in a short time the coming One will come and not delay. This refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ and the full blessing of eternal life.
- B. The idea is to hang on for that little while and you will be rewarded with the promise which is His coming. That will also bring us eternal rest, freedom from sin, an eternal dwelling place, and all the other things we hope for in the eternal future.
- C. 2 Peter 3:9 says the Lord is not slow concerning his promise. Sometimes the second coming seems near; other times we might despair that it will ever come; the world mocks at the thought of Christ returning. But the quotation from Habakkuk 2:3-4 is used to remind us that in just a little while, the coming One will certainly come and will not wait any longer.
- D. Doubt about the second coming of Christ calls into question whether you really believe in the first coming!

III. While Awaiting the Promise, Live by Faith, v. 38-39

In the meanwhile, believers must live by faith.

A. Issues with the Quotation of Habakkuk

- 1. The quotation of Habakkuk is used in at least two ways in the NT:
 - i. Those who are justified-by-faith=righteous shall live-eternally (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11).
 - ii. Those who are justified shall live-now-by-faith (Hebrews 10:38, see 2 Cor. 5:7 and Col. 2:6).
- 2. Furthermore, the quotation is modified by the author of Hebrews to make clearer that the coming thing is actually the second coming of Messiah (*it* versus *he*). Some other modifications are made as well to words and word order. I am going to leave the details of this discussion to another time. The point is that we believe the text that we have in front of us is inspired, whether it is a direct quote or purposely adjusted to meet the present needs of the author.

B. The Christian life is the life of faith.

The first part of verse 38 is trying to get across that the life of endurance and the life of doing the will of God *is* the life of faith lived by a person who has been justified by faith. All of this goes together:

1. *By faith* in Christ we are justified.
 2. *By faith* we endure, seeing that He is coming back again even when the world scoffs at the notion.
 3. *By faith* we do the will of God, knowing it is not only the right thing to do but also that God rewards it.
 4. *By faith* we hang on and do not cast off our confidence in Christ.
 5. *By faith* we live because we know this pleases God (Heb. 11:6).
- C. If someone does not live by faith, that is, they draw back, then God is not pleased with that person.
1. Drawing back has to do with hesitancy to the point of distancing one's self from something. The something in this case is the life of faith, shrinking back from endurance, and ultimately from Christ. See Acts 20:20, 27 and Gal. 2:12 for other uses of this term.
 2. In this context, shrinking back is the abandonment of the assembly to the extent of apostasy. I do not believe any shrinking back is an acceptable Christian position—as if it is OK to be backslidden or carnal or worldly as a Christian. Shrinking back amounts to unbelief; there is simply no such thing as an unbelieving or worldly Christian! The outcome of drawing back—perdition—ought to convince us.
 3. *Perdition* is a word we rarely use, but it is used in the English translation of the Bible in 8 places (John 17:12, Phil. 1:28, 2 Thess. 2:3, 1 Tim. 6:9, here, 2 Peter 3:7, Rev. 17:8, 11). The word means *destruction* or *ruin* and can also mean *death* or *waste*. The same Greek word is used in some other verses (Matt. 7:13, 26:8; Mark 14:4; Acts 8:20, 25:16; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 3:19; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Peter 2:1, 3, 3:16).

Conclusion

This passage contains a severe warning against apostasy, but like chapter six, it expresses confidence that the audience consists of saved people (as in 6:9). “We are of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” That’s what belief does—it saves your soul! But the tension remains that there are two kinds of people:

- Those who believe in Jesus, which leads to the saving of the soul.
- Those who draw back or cast away Christ, which leads to perdition.

In which category are you?

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