

~Hebrews~

Lesson 22 - Rejoicing in Sufferings

When you read this text, remember the main points Paul is admonishing the Hebrew believers to do.

- Do not reject Jesus and the New Covenant by going back under the Law
- Jesus is superior to all, even Moses and the angels
- The New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant and the fulfillment of the Old Covenant

Hebrews 10:32-39

32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 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.

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 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." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

What an amazing text.

In these eight verses, Paul is reminding them of their endurance in the faith and the love for Christ and one another.

- First, we will look at the outline of the main points in these eight verses.
 - There are 3 verses of accommodation reminding them of their Christian heritage.
 - And then 5 verses of admonition and encouragement.
- Secondly, we will take a look at the historical events and happenings to shape the Hebrew believers.
- Finally, we will go thru these 8 verses exegetically gaining an understanding not only of Paul's time, but how we can apply this to our lives today.

Heroic Christian Heart of the Former Days

1. They were illuminated with the Truth of the Gospel and then proclaimed this Gospel to others, v.32
2. Endured a great struggle of sufferings, v.32
3. They were made a public spectacle of both reproaches and insults and distress and afflictions, v.33
4. They became companions of those in prison, v.33
 - a. They identified themselves as Christians while showing compassion to Paul and others in their chains, v.34
5. They **joyfully accepted** the plundering of their earthly possessions, v.34
6. Knowing they have a better and lasting possession in heaven, v.34

Admonition to the Hebrew Believers

1. Do not cast away your confidence, v.35
2. You have need of endurance, v.36
3. Do the will of God, v.36
4. Live by faith, v.38
5. Do not draw back and forsake the blood of Jesus, v.38
6. Be of those who have faith to the saving of the soul, v.39

If we look at these two sections, they seem like they are speaking of two different sets of people.

1. Strong Christian believers willing to die for Jesus
2. Weak and wavering Christians on the border of rejecting Jesus.

We need to understand what was going on that would make these Hebrew Christians think about rejecting their faith

- And then take heed to the heart felt admonition from Paul to stay strong and persevere.
- As we study this, we need to be laying this over our lives and happenings in America today.

Historical Study The Jerusalem Church its enlightenment and its persecution

- In 50AD after Paul's 1st missionary journey- Paul met the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church at the Jerusalem council, Gal 2:9
- Paul shared the Gospel of Christ to the Jerusalem Church, Acts 15:2-12
- He changed their outlook of saving grace apart from the Law, Acts 15:2-12
- He corrected them by saying Jews and Gentiles are saved by faith in Jesus and not according to the Law of Moses, Acts 15:2-12
 - However, James didn't get this and still pushed the Law onto the Hebrew believers, Acts 15:19-21; 21:20-25.
 - Peter got it and agreed with Paul, Acts 15:7-11
- I believe it was from this point forward that the Jerusalem Church was enlightened by the Gospel, but under the leadership of James, they were still baby Christians.
- Notice that at this council, 18 years after the resurrection of Jesus, 32 – 50, they are still ignorant of the Truth.
- After the Jerusalem Council in 50AD and up until Paul was arrested after he returned from his 3rd missionary journey in 58AD, the Hebrew Christians demonstrated heroic faith, but still confused of the truth of the Gospel compared to the Law.
 - Although these Hebrew Christians knew of their eternal possession in heaven.
 - The whole time resisting and enduring suffering and persecution from the unbelieving Jews.
- Let us read the text below to gain an understanding just how much these Jews hated Christians and the kind of persecution they were facing.

Acts 21:17-32

17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, **"You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 21 but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses,** saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. ... 23 Therefore, do what we tell you... 24 ... so that they all will know that that **those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing,** but that you yourself also keep the law. 25 But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing... 27 ...Now...the Jews from Asia, seeing him (Paul) in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; ... 30 And all the city was disturbed; and **the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple;** and immediately the doors were shut. 31 Now **as they were seeking to kill him,** news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, **they stopped beating Paul.**

This account in Acts gives us the insight into what was actually happening in Jerusalem. There is still this false idea of responsibility among the believing Jews to keep the Law.

- This stemmed from poor and ignorant leadership from James.
- When Paul arrives, he speaks to James, who was leading the Jerusalem church, Acts 21:18
- You can still see the confusion the Jews have concerning the Law, Acts 21:20
- James comments that there are myriads of Jews who believe and they are still zealous for the Law.
 - In James' mind he thinks this is a good thing, Acts 21:20

- He even tries to persuade Paul to keep the Law while in Jerusalem, Acts 21:23-24

When Paul goes to the temple, he agrees to be purified with them, but then he starts preaching the Gospel contrary to what even James is saying.

- The Jews from Asia hear this and stir up the crowd to start beating Paul to death.
 - These Jews from Asia are not the believing Jews that James spoke of.
 - These are haters of Jesus and the Gospel.

Meanwhile, the believing Hebrews are looking at what just happened to Paul, knowing that they would be next if they continued following Jesus.

- You can see the predicament the believing Jews are faced with.
- The Jewish persecution is starting to make them waver.

Paul is arrested and placed in prison in Caesarea, north of Jerusalem about 70 miles, for two years.

- All the while Paul was probably hearing of the heartbreaking persecution from the Jews.
- This is when in v. 34 it says they had compassion on him in his chains.
 - Some of the Hebrew Christians probably came to see Paul in prison.
- As you can see from the text in Acts, there was immense pressure to turn back under the Law and forsake Jesus.
 - The unbelieving Jews were hostile toward them, Acts 21:27.
 - And even in the Jerusalem church there was pressure to keep and observe the Law, Acts 21:24
- Unfortunately, many of these Hebrew Christians were starting to waver, especially after seeing Paul beaten and thrown in prison.
- After two years of being in prison in Caesarea, Paul appeals to Cesar in Rome.
 - After Paul arrives in Rome, around 60AD, he is put in prison and writes his first epistle in chains, the Book of Hebrews.
 - His heart and mind was always on the churches, 2 Cor 11:28 and the Jerusalem church especially since these were the people he had last seen.
- Paul was reminding them of the former days to persevere and endure the pressure and persecution of the Jews.
 - That which he had just endured himself and the very reason for his chains.

Exegetical Study Necessary Persecution for the Sake of Christ

Hebrews 10:32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

- Recall the former days... – imperative command in the middle voice, they need to remember their hearts for God.
 - Jesus said this in His letter to Ephesus, “Remember from where you have fallen”, Rev 2:5
 - If the person is still passionate about God, this will convict him and give him a heart of repentance.
- After they were illuminated...
 - Illuminated, φωτισθέντες, verb, aorist, passive, participle, it happened in the past and they were enlightened by someone else- having been enlightened by God.
 - These Hebrews were absolutely Christians
- You endured a great struggle with sufferings...
 - Endured, ὑπέμεινότε, aorist indicative, happened in the past and stayed in the past. It is not continuing now.
 - This is why Paul says in v. 36, “You have need of endurance.”
 - James says, “the proving of your faith intensely works patience” (same word), James 1:3.
 - It is this endurance that gets us through sufferings, just as Jesus endured the cross with joy, Heb 12:2.

Hebrews 10:33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;

God has not promised His people an easy life in this world. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Jesus Himself promises persecution and tribulation.

- If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you, Jn 15:20.
- Blessed are those when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My name's sake; REJOICE!!! For great is your reward in heaven! Matt 5:11-12
- In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, REJOICE!!!, I have overcome the world, John 16:33

Hebrews 10:34 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.

- for you had compassion on me in my chains...
 - This is in 58AD after Paul was arrested
 - Literally says, "to the bonds of me you sympathized"
 - At this point it was the strong Hebrew Christians that went to visit Paul, but probably not the myriads of believing Jews that James spoke of.
 - I think it was at this point they started wavering.
- ...and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods...
 - There were some strong Hebrew Christians that were actually living this.
 - They **joyfully accepted** the plundering of their property.
 - They were living the words of Jesus that we just read above.
 - On the way to the prison or in the Jerusalem church as they stood up to the unbelieving Jews they joyfully watched as all their possessions were being plundered, burned, stolen.
 - Their reaction to this persecution is so off the charts miraculous, I want that kind of joy in me.
 - To be so satisfied in Jesus that nothing else even matters.
 - This Greek word for property is more than just possessions, all though it does include these, but it is so much more.
 - That which they are possessing, not just in physical goods, but even their very life and reputation.
 - Their life and everything in it was being plundered and taken away, but even in this persecution they REJOICED because they knew they had an enduring and lasting possession (same word) in heaven, v.34.

Persecution for Christ's sake is a necessary part of the Christian life.

- We must through much tribulation enter His kingdom, Acts 14:22.
- In this you REJOICE, though now for a little while if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 1 Pet 1:6
- Think it not strange when these fiery trials come upon you, but REJOICE!!!, 1 Pet 4:12.

This is a necessary step to glory. It is the purification of our soul designed by God

- The world hates when we shine the Light on their wicked deeds.
 - But in order to proclaim Jesus it is necessary
- Because of this, there is persecution
 - So God designed a process of purification through this process of persecution
- Just as gold is refined in fire, so our soul is refined or proven genuine by these fiery trials.
- This is a necessary step in our sanctification. The separation of ourselves from this world and the prepared usefulness of the Father's work in us.
- The process results in *δοκίμιον*- a proving of genuine character, 1 Pet 1:7, James 1:3, 12, Rom 5:4, 2 Tim 2:15.
- Christ is our example- 1 Pet 2:21
- Moses chose the people of Israel rather than the fleeting pleasures of Egypt, Hebrews 11:24-25
- Jesus chose to suffer for us, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despised the shame", Heb 12:2.

We as Christians today need to choose Jesus no matter what the cost. Even if it means giving up or having all our possessions and even our life taken from us.

- Because no matter what earthly thing they take, they can never take our eternal possession.

The Admonition and Encouragement from Paul

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

- The reward is the better and enduring possession in heaven.
 - The reward is Jesus!
- So don't cast away, forsake, or reject your confidence in the blood of Jesus by returning to the Law

Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

- For you have need of endurance...
 - Paul tells them they are in need of endurance like they had in the former days, v.32
- So that after you have done the will of God...
 - God's will is that He would have an eternal family who loves Him,
 - As Christians it is necessary to suffer persecution in this life to let the light of God shine on the world.
 - It is not that God wants us to suffer for nothing, but it is necessary to suffer as a Christian proclaiming His Truth, 1 Pet 4:16, because the world hates us.
 - Just as they hated Jesus, so will they hate you, John 15:18-21
 - And it is through this suffering that the genuineness of our character, δοκίμιον, will be proven, 1 Pet 1:6-7
- ...you may receive the promise: Hebrews 10:37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
 - This is our promise and our hope.
 - That Jesus is coming and will not tarry

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

- Now the just shall live by faith...
 - Paul is quoting Hab 2:4 from the Septuagint.
 - In which Paul also uses this verse in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11
 - It is not by the works of the Law that we are justified, but it is by faith in Jesus that we are made righteous, Gal 2:16.
- But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.
 - This is the admonishment of the entire letter to the Hebrews.
 - Don't draw back from the Gospel going back under the Law
 - This is a rejection of His Son Jesus and He will have no pleasure in the person who does this.

Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

- This is Paul's encouragement to the Hebrews and also to us who believe.
 - We are those who believe and live by faith, not those who are drawing back to destruction
 - We are those persevering and enduring to the end.
 - We are those who have our hope fixed on our Savior Jesus Christ

Next week we start chapter 11, the "Hall of Faith"