

DAY 7: A CALL TO PERSEVERE

Hebrews 10:19-39

CONFIDENCE AND PERSEVERANCE “*Therefore*” refers to the preceding section of teaching. Now, steadfastness becomes the focus. The author’s use of the words “*brothers*” and “*we*” emphasizes his identification with them.

For believers there is no need for uncertainty when drawing near to God. The Most Holy Place has been opened. We enter “*by the new and living way that He opened*”—through Jesus Christ, who is the only way into the presence of the Father. “*Living*” may also mean *enduring*, in contrast to the temporary rituals of the past. This new way goes through the curtain that is Christ’s own body (“*through His flesh*”), which was offered, once for all, as the perfect, eternal sacrifice.

The author suggests that the tearing of Christ’s flesh is similar to the tearing of the temple curtain at the time of the Crucifixion. Christ’s death provides direct access into God’s presence. We also “*have a great priest,*” superior to any former high priest because He is the Son of God. “*The house of God*” signifies the family, or kingdom, made up of all God’s people.

Without hesitation, we are urged to “*draw near.*” However, one needs to have a sincere and honest heart full of faith to draw near effectively. We are prepared to do this through the internal work of God (purified consciences, 9:14) and the outward sign (the washing of our bodies), probably *baptism*. Because of what Jesus has done for us, we are to draw near to God with the assurance of faith.

Verse 23 urges steadfastness based on God’s faithful and trustworthy Word. God’s faithful character is never in doubt. So we can hold firmly to our hope and faith, and encourage each other to live in ways that please God.

Spiritual maturity and steadfastness grow through worshiping together, but some were neglecting these gatherings. Loss of love and a weakened spiritual resolve result. Christians need each other, especially “*as you see the Day drawing near*”—a reference to the final coming of the Lord and the judgment to follow. Love and good deeds must be the activities of God’s people until that Day.

THINK ABOUT the reality of Christ’s return. The early church expected Christ to return any day. Jesus’ own teaching about His return stresses our duty to be ready for His coming, which means being busy doing His will. We must expect Him to return momentarily—and be faithful as we wait. Consider Jesus’ words: “*You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*” (Luke 12:40). Are you ready?

WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY The warnings in Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26-31 are meant to guard against apostasy by revealing the nature of this sin and its fatal results. If people “*deliberately*” reject God’s love, they are left to face His judgment. To “*go on sinning deliberately*” (10:26) refers to a willful abandonment of the truth after it has been received. If a person rejects the sacrifice of Christ, his situation is hopeless for “*there is no other name under heaven*” (Acts 4:12) by which salvation is obtained.

Those who reject Jesus to the end, have no further opportunity for salvation—only “*a fearful expectation of judgment.*” If physical death was the punishment for deliberately offending the Law of Moses, how much greater must be the consequence for rejecting the new covenant, instituted by Jesus. The apostate, then, is described as one who tramples underfoot God’s Son, regarding with contempt the prophet and priest of the new covenant; one who counts the blood of the covenant a common or unholy thing, and one who “*has outraged the Spirit of grace*” (Hebrews 10:29). So God’s plan is rejected and the Godhead insulted. These words do not refer to one who is weak in the faith, but to one who understands what it means to walk with God, yet willfully throws aside salvation.



To support the idea that judgment is no idle threat, the writer appeals to knowledge of

God's character and quotes from Scripture. Deuteronomy 32:35 declares God's right to punish: "*Vengeance is Mine, and recompense.*" The second quotation is found in Deuteronomy 32:36 and Psalm 135:14: "*The LORD will vindicate His people.*" *Vindicate* can mean *to judge, to rule in favor of one, or to mete out deserved punishment*. God's holy judgment is framed by exactness and mercy, and no one escapes it. Only two verdicts are possible: *acquitted*—in the name of Jesus, or *condemned*—to the wrath of God that is against sin. Verse 31 describes this fearful reality.

THINK ABOUT the words "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (10:31). Every person will be called to give an account before God. The phrase "*fall into the hands*" implies an involuntary action, which will be true of God's enemies. But we believers put ourselves into the hands of God when we commit our lives to Christ. His hands shelter, protect, and guide us. The judgment seat of Christ is not a place where those who believe are judged for salvation. It is where the things we have done will be evaluated for rewards. We have no reason to fear God's hands when we are His children. We can say with the psalmist, "*Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me*" (Psalm 139:10).

THE REWARD FOR THOSE WHO ENDURE Wisely, then, the writer encourages his readers to renewed endurance by recalling their former experiences. Hebrews 10:32 states that their past courage deserves commendation and should be a steadying force to them now. Some of these Jewish Christians had undergone persecution after they had been "*enlightened*" (10:32). They had suffered public disgrace, affliction, and loss of property. Believing and suffering went hand-in-hand.

The theme of encouragement continues as the author adapts Habakkuk 2:3-4, "*The vision awaits its appointed time; ... it will surely come; it will not delay. ... But the righteous shall live by his faith.*" The Hebrew language used by Habakkuk refers to a *vision* or *revelation*, but the Greek encourages a strong Messianic interpretation: "*the coming one will come*" (Hebrews 10:37). Christ will soon appear in order to bestow promised glory. The fulfillment of the promise is not far off: "*yet a little while.*" His name is still "*the coming one,*" for as He once came in the flesh, He is coming again in power and great glory.

When the writer of Hebrews says, "*My righteous one shall live by faith*" (10:38), he turns his attention to a complementary thought—God's people will live according to faith. Faith and faithfulness are rooted in God's faithfulness to us. "*If he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him*" presents a warning. The verb means to turn oneself back in a cowardly way. Clearly, God enables the believer to stand; thus, the believer must choose to stand.

The author is confident of his readers' eventual victory. He uses the personal pronoun "*we*" in speaking of those who do not shrink back but "*have faith and preserve their souls.*" The emphasis is positive. If they are true to what they believe and take advantage of all the resources that God has provided, they will find strength to endure their present crisis without falling.

PERSONALIZE this lesson. By nature most of us are not patient or persevering. But patience is a fruit of the Spirit—something God will produce in us if we allow Him to. In fact, three aspects of the fruit of the Spirit will help us persevere in hardship: patience, faithfulness, and self-control. What do you need from God in order to persevere in the circumstances you are challenged by today? Ask Him for it—and believe that He will help you.

REVIEW: A CALL TO PERSEVERE

12. How does this passage present a serious warning yet still encourage its readers? Cite verses or insights from the teaching or Commentary.