

# Hebrews

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Hebrews 10:32-39 – Practical Lessons – Part III

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I. **Hebrews 10:32-39** . . . But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, [33] partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. [34] For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, **knowing that you have** for yourselves a better possession and a lasting 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 was promised. [37] For yet in a very little while, he who is coming 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 to destruction, but of those **who have faith to the preserving of the soul**.

## II. Review of Practical Lessons from Hebrews 10:32-39

- A. Remember the good in your life and use it to build more godliness.
- B. The decision to repent and put our faith in Jesus Christ for salvation from the power, practice and penalty of sin is a very serious decision – for it is a decision that is very costly to your self-life.
- C. Remember joy is as different from happiness as day is from night.
- D. We are God's people and our home is not here, but there! We are never citizens here, only sojourner's. Therefore, we are not looking to stay here, but to go there!
- E. On a planned daily basis, or at least on a regular basis, confidently come into God's presence for an extended time of intimate communion, mediation, prayer, contemplation, worship, and learning.
- F. Remember how much you need endurance to go from where you are today to the end of your life as a full-fledged Christian so that you will be approved for eternal life at the judgment seat of Christ.

## III. Prayer

## IV. Seventh Lesson from **Hebrews 10:32-39**

- A. **Hebrews 10:37** . . . For yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay.

1. This is a quote taken from **Habakkuk 2:3** . . . *For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.*
2. There are two sides to this prophetic quote from Habakkuk, just like there are two sides to a coin. And these two sides are to be applied to its use here in Hebrews:
  - a. **First Side:** What God said will happen – will happen – in spite of the fact it has not happened yet. So don't think that the delay means it isn't going to happen.
  - b. **Second Side:** The judgment of God is a significant part of what is coming. For us today, this judgment will determine who is approved for eternal life and who is condemned.
  - c. Let's look at these two important sides of this single promise.

B. **The first point of this statement is this:** What God said about the return of Christ will happen in spite of the fact it has not happened yet. It's delay doesn't mean it isn't going to happen. The fact that Jesus has not returned – as yet – should in no way discourage us or prompt us to question the certainty of Christ's return or lead us to fall away from the faith as if Christ's failure to return by now means He isn't coming.

1. Peter reminded the earliest Christians to be careful of faulty thinking concerning the return of Christ. **II Peter 3:8-9** . . . But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. [9] **The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**
2. In response to Peter's exhortation concerning the return of Christ, the Church – down through the ages – has nurtured an expectant mindset concerning Christ's return.
  - a. For centuries, Christians have seen themselves living for the there and then, not the here and now. They have seen themselves as the people of God who were – like strangers and aliens – passing through this world on their way home. Eternity with God was not their final destination – it was their only destination.
  - b. What should this mean for us? It means that though we are very involved in the daily affairs of life, our heart is not to be here, but there. And though we are still waiting for Christ's

return, we are waiting with the kind of longing that drove the Apostle John to write these words at the end of Revelation, “**Come, Lord Jesus.**” Or as Christians have been repeating down through the ages “**Maranatha**” which means, “**O Lord, come!**”

3. Possibly, this longing for the return of Christ is not your mindset, or the longing in your heart. And I would say that the absence of such a longing is not entirely your fault. From my perspective, the American church in general has moved away from this kind of mindset and longing for some time now. We can see this loss in several ways, but let me use music as one example.
    - a. Most of the hymns we sing (older music) conclude with a verse about eternity – the there and then. These hymns were written at a time when the church’s mindset was set on things above and things future rather than things below and things current – and so the writers of these hymns ended with that eternal emphasis.
    - b. By comparison, look at the music that is being written today for the church. Do you find much, if anything, about the there and then? This should give us a clue that something significant has changed in the thinking of the church at large. And if you, like me, think this change isn’t good, then I urge you to nurture a mindset in yourself and in our fellowship that we are Christians looking for the return of Christ, and travelers longing to get home!
  4. There is one more point I want to make about the second coming of Christ. The people of faith listed in Hebrews 11 all died without seeing the promised Messiah. He came, but he came after their death. In a similar way, we, like thousands of Christians before us, may die without seeing the return of Christ. He’ll come, but it may be after our death.
- C. **Second**, the return of Christ and judgment are inseparable. And this coming judgment will separate the sheep from the goats, and the tares from the wheat. In other words, it will determine who is approved for eternal life and who is condemned to eternal damnation.
1. To help us keep the bigger picture in mind as we look at this side of the promised return of Christ, I want to remind you that the book of **Hebrews** contains **eight** warnings about falling away from the faith, and **nine** reminders of a coming, final judgment

(**Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:6-19; 4:1, 11-13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31, 35-39; 12:14-17, 25**). Interestingly, almost all the warnings about falling away are tied to the reminders of a coming, final judgment – as can easily be seen here in **Hebrews 10:35-39** by even the casual reader.

2. And though we are looking at this section of **Hebrews** in a verse-by-verse manner, it is clear **verse 37** does not stand alone. It is preceded by **verse 36** – which tells us that we have need of endurance so that when we have done the will of God we will receive what is promised.
  - a. And what is the “promise” spoken of here? It is eternal salvation and all the blessings that go with it.
  - b. And what does the idea of a coming judgment have to do with eternal salvation? To put it succinctly, the “born again” experience is not a guarantee of entering God’s eternal kingdom after leaving this world any more than going through a marriage ceremony is a guarantee you will remain married until death parts you. And this is why God follows **verse 37** with His words in **verse 38 and 39!** But I am getting ahead of myself.
3. Now let me stop here and clarify something. It is my opinion that if God, in His infinite wisdom has left some things unclear – or even said some things that seem contradictory – we should accept it instead of going beyond reason in trying to make clear what He has left unclear.
  - a. Without question, the Bible teaches eternal security (once saved always saved) and it teaches that Christians can lose their salvation (falling away from the faith).
  - b. Matthew Henry suggests this way of looking at this matter.
    - (1) Eternal security for those who live in a spiritually unhealthy fear of losing their salvation.
    - (2) The Bible’s warnings against falling away are for those who want to go to heaven and live with God when they die but do not want to live, or give attention to living as godly as it is possible for them to live, here and now.
4. So back to the point I am trying to make about the return of Christ and judgment. There is coming a judgment day – which takes place soon after the return of Christ. Those who are born again **and** who live righteously to the end of their life, will pass through the judgment approved and be received into God’s eternal kingdom.

- a. If you hear what I am saying as implying Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf is no longer the thing that saves us from the penalty of sin, you are missing my point. There is no eternal life with God apart from coming to God through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Why? If we want to live with God forever, Christ's payment is the only acceptable payment for our sin. The only other way our sin can be paid for is to pay for it ourselves. And the only way we can pay for it is by spending eternity in hell.
    - b. However, trusting in Christ for salvation and being born again is only the beginning of the story; it is only the entrance through the narrow gate; it is simply the start of a journey that must be completed if we are to be approved by God as acceptable on that judgment day. In other words, salvation unto eternal life is not a one-time act. It is an entrance into a way of life that begins with a one-time act.
      - (1) Jesus says it is those who endure to the end who will be saved.
      - (2) Paul exhorts us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.
  5. Now you may be thinking that if salvation is not a one time act but a way of life that begins with repentance and faith in Christ, then this must mean we have to live the Christian life perfectly to be approved for eternal life at the final judgment. Let me assure you that perfection is not required any more than the unrepentant practice of willful sin is approved. Like any good parent, God is looking for us to consistently live life as we ought (holy and blameless) so that whatever foolish failures or willfully sinful choices we make along the way never become the rule or practice of our life but remain the exception.
- D. To support what we are talking about from another passage of scripture, turn with me again to **II Peter 3:10-14**
1. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.
    - a. This speaks of judgment upon the earth and its inhabitants.
  2. [11] Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, **what sort of people ought you to be** in holy conduct and godliness,

- a. If God will judge the earth this way, don't you suppose He will judge us this way also? (*Hebrews 10:30 . . . "The Lord will judge His people."*)
  - b. And if God is going to judge us, what will He be looking for?
    - (1) He will be looking to see if we have trusted in Christ to be the paid up sacrifice for our sin instead of trusting in our own righteousness or some other means of appeasing Him.
    - (2) He will judge us according to how we have lived (*our deeds*) from the day of our new birth until our death.
    - (3) These two things taken together determine whether or not our names are written in the **Book Of Life**.
  - c. And as Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21-23**, he will judge us according to whether or not we have obeyed God and have lived according to His will – not partially or selectively, but as completely as humanly possible. Those who have allowed the practice of known sin to remain a part of their life will, at the judgment, hear the words: "I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."
  - d. And as if this warning from Christ, himself, in Matthew is not enough, consider these words from **Revelation 3:1-6 . . .** "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, **but you are dead**. [2] 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for **I have not found your deeds completed** in the sight of My God. [3] 'So remember what you have received and heard; and **keep it, and repent**. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. [4] 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. [5] '**He who overcomes** will thus be clothed in white garments; **and I will not erase his name from the book of life**, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. [6] 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'
3. (**Back to II Peter 3**)[12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!
    - a. Again, more judgment language.

4. [13] But according to His promise **we are looking for new heavens and a new earth**, in which righteousness dwells.
  - a. We Christians are not afraid God's judgment will bring to ruin all our hopes of a wonderful eternity. Rather, we are confident God is going to make a new heavens and new earth – filled with righteousness and free of every shade or amount of sin.
5. [14] Therefore, beloved, **since** you look for these things (*eternal life*), **be diligent** (*make every effort*) to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,
  - a. Since we fully expect Christ to return and then the judgment, be diligent to live the rest of your days on the earth in such a way as to be found spotless and blameless at the final judgment.

E. Let me summarize what I have been saying about Christ's return and the coming judgment.

1. Salvation is by faith – faith in the paid up sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But the born again experience does not guarantee passing through the final judgment uncondemned – as affirmed by Jesus' words in **Matthew 7:21-23** and God's words in **Revelation 3:1-6**, along with the many statements of like nature found here in Hebrews.
2. We enter the narrow gate by faith, and faith alone – for if we are to be saved from the penalty of sin, our only option is saving faith in Jesus Christ, that is, entering the narrow gate by faith.
3. And it is by faith – faith which takes us beyond the initial act of salvation – that we travel down the narrow path, that we remain faithful to God until our last breath, that we live holy and blameless lives, and in so doing, that we gain God's approval at the judgment day.

## V. Conclusion

- A. The return of Christ is our door to God's eternal kingdom. May our attitude toward His return be like those who sincerely say, **Maranatha – Come Lord Jesus**.
- B. The coming judgment is for all mankind – Christian and unbeliever alike. May we not be like those who go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, or who call Jesus Lord but do not do what he says, or who build their Christianity on the sand instead of the solid rock, or who fall away from the faith, or who shrink back and lose their approval before God.