

Having begun by faith, persevere to the end (Hebrews 10:32–39)

The readers of the letter to the Hebrews were facing trials, but that was nothing new for them. They had faced persecution and stood firm in their faith. Faithfulness in trials for Christ's sake is a mark of what God has done in the heart and an encouragement to continue in faith to the end. As they had begun in faith, they were to persevere to the end.

I. *Remember the hard start (10:32–34). Consider these five characteristics of their “hard start”:*

1. *There had been a pivotal point of new understanding (v.32a).*

There had been a “before” when they had not known the truth, and an “after” when the truths of Jesus Christ were clearly understood. They had been “enlightened.”

2. *There had been a firmness of conviction revealed in trial (v.32b).*

They had faced suffering as an opponent and been victorious, a victory of great profit to the believer (cf. 1 Peter 1:6–7; James 1:2–4; Romans 5:3).

3. *There had been treatment like Christ was treated (v.33a).*

Just as Christ had been physically and verbally abused (cf. 11:26; 13:13), they, too, had been similarly abused. Jesus had warned His disciples of this truth (John 15:20–21; 16:33; Matthew 5:11–12).

4. *There had been a allegiance to a new fellowship (vv.33b–34a).*

Willingly they stood with other believers who were persecuted and risked identification with them and their suffering.

5. *There had been a reassessment of lasting treasure (v.34b).*

When they lost their property for Christ's sake, they could rejoice and be glad (cf. Matthew 5:12). They possessed something much greater: eternal life in Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 9:24–25, their “own souls”) and an eternal home with God.

God's earlier work in their lives should stand as a memorial, a reminder of the change in them and an encouragement to keep persevering in the faith. The final verses exhort them to endure.

II. *Endure to the rewarding end (10:35–39).*

1. *Keep the confidence and be rewarded (v.35).*

Their confidence was access to the throne of grace by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. v.19). Do not reject that sole provision of God even though trials come, because in suffering for Christ there is reward (Matthew 5:12) and with access to God there is a source of strength to endure.

2. *Persevere in God's will and receive the promise (v.36).*

Christ came to do God's will (10:7, 9) giving a pattern of obedient faithfulness. Such faithfulness demonstrates the change that God has worked in the heart and assures us of receiving the full salvation promised.

3. *Live by faith and avoid shame at Christ's return (vv.37–39).*

With an allusion to Isaiah 26:20 and a free citation of Habakkuk 2:3–4 the author reminds the readers of the imminent return of Christ and the importance of continuing to live by faith. Those who have been declared righteous by God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will demonstrate that by continuing in faith. Those who “shrink back” show that they belong to those who are not truly “of faith.” The author is assured that the readers belong to those “of faith.”

“Faith” is the means by which a person receives the forgiveness of God. God saves in Christ, by the sacrifice of Christ, and gives salvation as a gift. The person who truly trusts God for that will persevere even in trials. Continued perseverance will lead to a strengthened hope in that promised salvation. So, as you began in faith, persevere to the end.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- Explain in one paragraph with Scriptural support the “enlightenment” (v.32) that is required for a person to rightly hope in eternal salvation. Was it difficult or easy to do so? Where could your explanation be enriched?
- What trials have you experienced? Have you experienced any “for Christ's sake”? How has your faith been strengthened? How can you better recall these experiences to strengthen your endurance now?
- How would you distinguish between coming to Christ in faith and living by faith? What does living by faith look like on a day by day basis?
- What would help you personally to persevere in faith to the end?