

CHAPTER 10

The apostle knew very well that the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, were strangely fond of the Levitical dispensation, and therefore he fills his mouth with arguments to wean them from it; and in order thereto proceeds in this chapter,

- I.** To lay low the whole of that priesthood and sacrifice (v. 1-6).
- II.** He raises and exalts the priesthood of Christ very high, that he might effectually recommend him and his gospel to them (v. 7-18).
- III.** He shows to believers the honours and dignities of their state, and calls them to suitable duties (v. 19 to the end).

~~SEE~~ HEBREWS 10:1-6

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Here the apostle, by the direction of the Spirit of God, sets himself to lay low the Levitical dispensation; for though it was of divine appointment, and very excellent and useful in its time and place, yet, when it was set up in competition with Christ, to whom it was only designed to lead the people, it was very proper and necessary to show the weakness and imperfection of it, which the apostle does effectually, from several arguments. As,

- I.** That the law had a shadow, and but a shadow, of good things to come; and who would dote upon a shadow, though of good things, especially when the substance has come? Observe,
 - 1.** The things of Christ and the gospel are good things; they are the best things; they are best in themselves, and the best for us: they are realities of an excellent nature.
 - 2.** These good things were, under the Old Testament, good things to come, not clearly discovered, nor fully enjoyed.

3. That the Jews then had but the shadow of the good things of Christ, some adumbrations of them; we under the gospel have the substance.

II. That the law was not the very image of the good things to come. An image is an exact draught of the thing represented thereby. The law did not go so far, but was only a shadow, as the image of a person in a looking-glass is a much more perfect representation than his shadow upon the wall. The law was a very rough draught of the great design of divine grace, and therefore not to be so much doted on.

III. The legal sacrifices, being offered year by year, could never make the comers thereunto perfect; for then there would have been an end of offering them, v. 1, 2. Could they have satisfied the demands of justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity, — could they have purified and pacified conscience, — then they had ceased, as being no further necessary, since the offerers would have had no more sin lying upon their consciences. But this was not the case; after one day of atonement was over, the sinner would fall again into one fault or another, and so there would be need of another day of atonement, and of one every year, besides the daily ministrations. Whereas now, under the gospel, the atonement is perfect, and not to be repeated; and the sinner, once pardoned, is ever pardoned as to his state, and only needs to renew his repentance and faith, that he may have a comfortable sense of a continued pardon.

IV. As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should, v. 4. There was an essential defect in them.

1. They were not of the same nature with us who sinned.

2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts offered to the justice and government of God. They were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable. Much less were they of the same nature that was offended; and nothing less than the nature that was offended could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for the offence.

3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

V. There was a time fixed and foretold by the great God, and that time had now come, when these legal sacrifices would be no longer accepted by him nor useful to men. God never did desire them for themselves, and now he abrogated them; and therefore to adhere to them now would be resisting God and rejecting him. This time of the repeal of the Levitical laws was foretold by David (~~3906~~ Psalm 40:6, 7), and is recited here as now come. Thus industriously does the apostle lay low the Mosaical dispensation.

~~5807~~ HEBREWS 10:7-18

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Here the apostle raises up and exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, as high as he had laid the Levitical priesthood low. He recommends Christ to them as the true high priest, the true atoning sacrifice, the antitype of all the rest: and this he illustrates,

I. From the purpose and promise of God concerning Christ, which are frequently recorded in the volume of the book of God, v. 7. God had not only decreed, but declared by Moses and the prophets, that Christ should come and be the great high priest of the church, and should offer up a perfect and a perfecting sacrifice. It was written of Christ, in the beginning of the book of God, that *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*; and the Old Testament abounds with prophecies concerning Christ. Now since he is the person so often promised, so much spoken of, so long expected by the people of God, he ought to be received with great honour and gratitude.

II. From what God had done in preparing a body for Christ (that is, a human nature), that he might be qualified to be our Redeemer and Advocate; uniting the two natures in his own person, he was a fit Mediator to go between God and man; a days-man to lay his hand upon both, a peace-maker, to reconcile them, and an everlasting band of union between God and the creature — “*My ears hast thou opened; thou has fully instructed me, furnished and fitted me for the work, and engaged me in it,*” ~~3906~~ Psalm 40:6. Now a Saviour thus provided, and prepared by God himself in so extraordinary a manner, ought to be received with great affection and gladness.

III. From the readiness and willingness that Christ discovered to engage in this work, when no other sacrifice would be accepted, v. 7-9. When no less sacrifice would be a proper satisfaction to the justice of God than that of Christ himself, then Christ voluntarily came into it: "*Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O God! Let thy curse fall upon me, but let these go their way. Father, I delight to fulfil thy counsels, and my covenant with thee for them; I delight to perform all thy promises, to fulfil all the prophecies.*" This should endear Christ and our Bibles to us, that in Christ we have the fulfilling of the scriptures.

IV. From the errand and design upon which Christ came; and this was to do the will of God, not only as a prophet to reveal the will of God, not only as a king to give forth divine laws, but as a priest to satisfy the demands of justice, and to fulfil all righteousness. Christ came to do the will of God in two instances.

1. In taking away the first priesthood, which God had no pleasure in; not only taking away the curse of the covenant of works, and canceling the sentence denounced against us as sinners, but taking away the insufficient typical priesthood, and blotting out the hand-writing of ceremonial ordinances and nailing it to his cross.

2. In establishing the second, that is, his own priesthood and the everlasting gospel, the most pure and perfect dispensation of the covenant of grace; this is the great design upon which the heart of God was set from all eternity. The will of God centers and terminates in it; and it is not more agreeable to the will of God than it is advantageous to the souls of men; for it is by this will that *we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*, v. 10. Observe,

(1.) What is the fountain of all that Christ has done for his people — the sovereign will and grace of God.

(2.) How we come to partake of what Christ has done for us — by being sanctified, converted, effectually called, wherein we are united to Christ, and so partake of the benefits of his redemption; and this sanctification is owing to the oblation he made of himself to God.

V. From the perfect efficacy of the priesthood of Christ (v. 14): *By one offering he hath for ever perfected those that are sanctified*; he has delivered and will perfectly deliver those that are brought over to him,

from all the guilt, power, and punishment of sin, and will put them into the sure possession of perfect holiness and felicity. This is what the Levitical priesthood could never do; and, if we indeed are aiming at a perfect state, we must receive the Lord Jesus as the only high priest that can bring us to that state.

VI. From the place to which our Lord Jesus is now exalted, the honour he has there, and the further honour he shall have: *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool*, v. 12, 13. Here observe,

- 1.** To what honour Christ, as man and Mediator, is exalted — to the right hand of God, the seat of power, interest, and activity: the giving hand; all the favours that God bestows on his people are handed to them by Christ: the receiving hand; all the duties that God accepts from men are presented by Christ: the working hand; all that pertains to the kingdoms of providence and grace is administered by Christ; and therefore this is the highest post of honour.
- 2.** How Christ came to this honour — not merely by the purpose or donation of the Father, but by his own merit and purchase, as a reward due to his sufferings; and, as he can never be deprived of an honour so much his due, so he will never quit it, nor cease to employ it for his people's good.
- 3.** How he enjoys this honour — with the greatest satisfaction and rest; he is for ever sitting down there. The Father acquiesces and is satisfied in him; he is satisfied in his Father's will and presence; this is his rest for ever; here he will dwell, for he has both desired and deserved it.
- 4.** He has further expectations, which shall not be disappointed; for they are grounded upon the promise of the Father, who hath said unto him, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 110:1. One would think such a person as Christ could have no enemies except in hell; but it is certain that he has enemies on earth, very many, and very inveterate ones. Let not Christians then wonder that they have enemies, though they desire to live peaceably with all men. But Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool; some by conversion, others by confusion; and, which way soever it be, Christ will be honoured. Of this Christ is assured, this he is expecting, and his people should rejoice in the

expectation of it; for, when his enemies shall be subdued, their enemies, that are so for his sake, shall be subdued also.

VII. The apostle recommends Christ from the witness the Holy Ghost has given in the scriptures concerning him; this relates chiefly to what should be the happy fruit and consequence of his humiliation and sufferings, which in general is that new and gracious covenant that is founded upon his satisfaction, and sealed by his blood (v. 15): *Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness.* The passage is cited from ~~2481~~ Jeremiah 31:31, in which covenant God promises,

- 1.** That he will pour out his Spirit upon his people, so as to give them wisdom, will, and power, to obey his word; he will put his laws in their hearts, and write them in their minds, v. 16. This will make their duty plain, easy, and pleasant.
- 2.** Their sins and iniquities he will remember no more (v. 17), which will alone show the riches of divine grace, and the sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction, that it needs not be repeated, v. 18. For there shall be no more remembrance of sin against true believers, either to shame them now or to condemn them hereafter. This was much more than the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices could effect.

And now we have gone through the doctrinal part of the epistle, in which we have met with many things dark and difficult to be understood, which we must impute to the weakness and dulness of our own minds. The apostle now proceeds to apply this great doctrine, so as to influence their affections, and direct their practice, setting before them the dignities and duties of the gospel state.

~~309~~ HEBREWS 10:19-39

CAUTIONS AGAINST APOSTASY

I. Here the apostle sets forth the dignities of the gospel state. It is fit that believers should know the honours and privileges that Christ has procured for them, that, while they take the comfort, they may give him the glory of all. The privileges are,

1. Boldness to enter into the holiest. They have access to God, light to direct them, liberty of spirit and of speech to conform to the direction; they have a right to the privilege and a readiness for it, assistance to use and improve it and assurance of acceptance and advantage. They may enter into the gracious presence of God in his holy oracles, ordinances, providences, and covenant, and so into communion with God, where they receive communications from him, till they are prepared to enter into his glorious presence in heaven.

2. A high priest over the house of God, even this blessed Jesus, who presides over the church militant, and every member thereof on earth, and over the church triumphant in heaven. God is willing to dwell with men on earth, and to have them dwell with him in heaven; but fallen man cannot dwell with God without a high priest, who is the Mediator of reconciliation here and of fruition hereafter.

II. The apostle tells us the way and means by which Christians enjoy such privileges, and, in general, declares it to be *by the blood of Jesus*, by the merit of that blood which he offered up to God as an atoning sacrifice: he has purchased for all who believe in him free access to God in the ordinances of his grace here and in the kingdom of his glory. This blood, being sprinkled on the conscience, chases away slavish fear, and gives the believer assurance both of his safety and his welcome into the divine presence. Now the apostle, having given this general account of the way by which we have access to God, enters further into the particulars of it, v. 20. As,

1. It is the only way; there is no way left but this. The first way to the tree of life is, and has been, long shut up.

2. It is a new way, both in opposition to the covenant of works and to the antiquated dispensation of the Old Testament; it is *via novissima* — *the last way* that will ever be opened to men. Those who will not enter in this way exclude themselves for ever. It is a way that will always be effectual.

3. It is a living way. It would be death to attempt to come to God in the way of the covenant of works; but this way we may come to God, and live. It is by a living Saviour, who, though he was dead, is alive; and it is a way that gives life and lively hope to those who enter into it.

4. It is a way that Christ has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh. The veil in the tabernacle and temple signified the body of Christ; when he died, the veil of the temple was rent in sunder, and this was at the time of the evening sacrifice, and gave the people a surprising view into the holy of holies, which they never had before. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour; his death is to us the way of life. To those who believe this he will be precious.

III. He proceeds to show the Hebrews the duties binding upon them on account of these privileges, which were conferred in such an extraordinary way, v. 22, 23, etc.

1. They must draw near to God, and that in a right manner. They must draw near to God. Since such a way of access and return to God is opened, it would be the greatest ingratitude and contempt of God and Christ still to keep at a distance from him. They must draw near by conversion, and by taking hold of his covenant. They must draw near in all holy conversation, like Enoch walking with God. They must draw near in humble adorations, worshipping at his footstool. They must draw near in holy dependence, and in a strict observance of the divine conduct towards them. They must draw near in conformity to God, and communion with him, living under his blessed influence, still endeavouring to get nearer and nearer, till they come to dwell in his presence; but they must see to it that they make their approach to God after a right manner.

(1.) With a true heart, without any allowed guile or hypocrisy. God is the searcher of hearts, and he requires truth in the inward parts. Sincerity is our gospel perfection, though not our justifying righteousness.

(2.) In full assurance of faith, with a faith grown up to a full persuasion that when we come to God by Christ we shall have audience and acceptance. We should lay aside all sinful distrust. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and the stronger our faith is the more glory we give to God. And,

(3.) Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, by a believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls. They may be cleansed from guilt, from filth, from sinful fear and torment, from all aversion to God and duty, from ignorance, and error, and superstition, and whatever evils the consciences of men are subject to by reason of sin.

(4.) Our bodies washed with pure water, that is, with the water of baptism (by which we are recorded among the disciples of Christ, members of his mystical body), or with the sanctifying virtue of the Holy Spirit, reforming and regulating our outward conversation as well as our inward frame, cleansing from the filthiness of the flesh as well as of the spirit. The priests under the law were to wash, before they went into the presence of the Lord to offer before him. There must be a due preparation for making our approaches to God.

2. The apostle exhorts believers to hold fast the profession of their faith, v. 23. Here observe,

(1.) The duty itself — to hold fast the profession of our faith, to embrace all the truths and ways of the gospel, to get fast hold of them, and to keep that hold against all temptation and opposition. Our spiritual enemies will do what they can to wrest our faith, and hope, and holiness, and comfort, out of our hands, but we must hold fast our religion as our best treasure.

(2.) The manner in which we must do this — without wavering, without doubting, without disputing, without dallying with temptation to apostasy. Having once settled these great things between God and our souls, we must be stedfast and immovable. Those who begin to waver in matters of Christian faith and practice are in danger of falling away.

(3.) The motive or reason enforcing this duty: *He is faithful that hath promised.* God has made great and precious promises to believers, and he is a faithful God, true to his word; there is no falseness nor fickleness with him, and there should be none with us. His faithfulness should excite and encourage us to be faithful, and we must depend more upon his promises to us than upon our promises to him, and we must plead with him the promise of grace sufficient.

IV. We have the means prescribed for preventing our apostasy, and promoting our fidelity and perseverance, v. 24, 25, etc. He mentions several; as,

1. That we should *consider one another, to provoke to love and to good works.* Christians ought to have a tender consideration and concern for one another; they should affectionately consider what their several wants, weaknesses, and temptations are; and they should do this, not to reproach one another, to provoke one another not to anger, but to love and good

works, calling upon themselves and one another to love God and Christ more, to love duty and holiness more, to love their brethren in Christ more, and to do all the good offices of Christian affection both to the bodies and the souls of each other. A good example given to others is the best and most effectual provocation to love and good works.

2. *Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together*, v. 25. It is the will of Christ that his disciples should assemble together, sometimes more privately for conference and prayer, and in public for hearing and joining in all the ordinances of gospel worship. There were in the apostles' times, and should be in every age, Christian assemblies for the worship of God, and for mutual edification. And it seems even in those times there were some who forsook these assemblies, and so began to apostatize from religion itself. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a good means of steadiness and perseverance; hereby their hearts and hands are mutually strengthened.

3. To exhort one another, to exhort ourselves and each other, to warn ourselves and one another of the sin and danger of backsliding, to put ourselves and our fellow-christians in mind of our duty, of our failures and corruptions, to watch over one another, and be jealous of ourselves and one another with a godly jealousy. This, managed with a true gospel spirit, would be the best and most cordial friendship.

4. That we should observe the approaching of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence: *So much the more, as you see the day approaching*. Christians ought to observe the signs of the times, such as God has foretold. There was a day approaching, a terrible day to the Jewish nation, when their city should be destroyed, and the body of the people rejected of God for rejecting Christ. This would be a day of dispersion and temptation to the chosen remnant. Now the apostle puts them upon observing what signs there were of the approach of such a terrible day, and upon being the more constant in meeting together and exhorting one another, that they might be the better prepared for such a day. There is a trying day coming on us all, the day of our death, and we should observe all the signs of its approaching, and improve them to greater watchfulness and diligence in duty.

V. Having mentioned these means of establishment, the apostle proceeds, in the close of the chapter, to enforce his exhortations to perseverance, and against apostasy, by many very weighty considerations, v. 26, 27, etc.

1. From the description he gives of the sin of apostasy. It is *sinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, sinning wilfully against that truth of which we have had convincing evidence. This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls; they have been ready to conclude that every wilful sin, after conviction and against knowledge, is the unpardonable sin: but this has been their infirmity and error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ, the only Saviour, — despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier, — and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this after they have known, owned, and professed, the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously. This is the great transgression: the apostle seems to refer to the law concerning presumptuous sinners, ^{<CH53>}Numbers 15:30, 31. They were to be cut off.

2. From the dreadful doom of such apostates.

(1.) There remains no more sacrifice for such sins, no other Christ to come to save such sinners; they sin against the last resort and remedy. There were some sins under the law for which no sacrifices were provided; but yet if those who committed them did truly repent, though they might not escape temporal death, they might escape eternal destruction; for Christ would come, and make atonement. But now those under the gospel who will not accept of Christ, that they may be saved by him, have no other refuge left them.

(2.) There remains for them only a certain fearful looking for of judgment, v. 27. Some think this refers to the dreadful destruction of the Jewish church and state; but certainly it refers also to the utter destruction that awaits all obstinate apostates at death and judgment, when the Judge will discover a fiery indignation against them, which will devour the adversaries; they will be consigned to the devouring fire and to everlasting burnings. Of this destruction God gives some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful foreboding in their own consciences, a dreadful looking for it, with a despair of ever being able either to endure or escape it.

3. From the methods of divine justice with those who despised Moses's law, that is, sinned presumptuously, despising his authority, his threatenings and his power. These, when convicted by two or three witnesses, were put to death; they died without mercy, a temporal death. Observe, Wise governors should be careful to keep up the credit of their government and the authority of the laws, by punishing presumptuous offenders; but then in such cases there should be good evidence of the fact. Thus God ordained in Moses's law; and hence the apostle infers the heavy doom that will fall upon those that apostatize from Christ. Here he refers to their own consciences, to judge how much sorer punishment the despisers of Christ (after they have professed to know him) are likely to undergo; and they may judge of the greatness of the punishment by the greatness of the sin.

(1.) They have *trodden under foot the Son of God*. To trample upon an ordinary person shows intolerable insolence; to treat a person of honour in that vile manner is insufferable; but to deal thus with the Son of God, who himself is God, must be the highest provocation — to trample upon his person, denying him to be the Messiah — to trample upon his authority, and undermine his kingdom — to trample upon his members as the offscouring of all things, and not fit to live in the world; what punishment can be too great for such men?

(2.) They have *counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing*; that is, the blood of Christ, with which the covenant was purchased and sealed, and wherewith Christ himself was consecrated, or wherewith the apostate was sanctified, that is, baptized, visibly initiated into the new covenant by baptism, and admitted to the Lord's supper. Observe, There is a kind of sanctification which persons may partake of and yet fall away: they may be distinguished by common gifts and graces, by an outward profession, by a form of godliness, a course of duties, and a set of privileges, and yet fall away finally. Men who have seemed before to have the blood of Christ in high esteem may come to account it an unholy thing, no better than the blood of a malefactor, though it was the world's ransom, and every drop of it of infinite value.

(3.) *Those have done despite unto the Spirit of grace*, the Spirit that is graciously given to men, and that works grace wherever it is, — the Spirit of grace, that should be regarded and attended to with the greatest care, —

this Spirit they have grieved, resisted, quenched, yea, done despite to him, which is the highest act of wickedness, and makes the case of the sinner desperate, refusing to have the gospel salvation applied to him. Now he leaves it to the consciences of all, appeals to universal reason and equity, whether such aggravated crimes ought not to receive a suitable punishment, a sorer punishment than those who had died without mercy? But what punishment can be sorer than to die without mercy? I answer, To die by mercy, by the mercy and grace which they have despised. How dreadful is the case when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance!

4. From the description we have in the scripture of the nature of God's vindictive justice, v. 30. We know that he has said, *Vengeance is mine*. This is taken out of ⁽¹⁹¹⁾Psalm 94:1, *Vengeance belongs unto me*. The terrors of the Lord are known both by revelation and reason. Vindictive justice is a glorious, though terrible attribute of God; it belongs to him, and he will use and execute it upon the heads of such sinners as despise his grace; he will avenge himself, and his Son, and Spirit, and covenant, upon apostates. And how dreadful then will their case be! The other quotation is from ⁽¹⁵²⁾Deuteronomy 32:36, *The Lord will judge his people*; he will search and try his visible church, and will discover and detect those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan; and he will separate the precious from the vile, and will punish the sinners in Zion with the greatest severity. Now those who know him who hath said, *Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense*, must needs conclude, as the apostle does (v. 31): *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. Those who know the joy that results from the favour of God can thereby judge of the power and dread of his vindictive wrath. Observe here, What will be the eternal misery of impenitent sinners and apostates: they shall fall into the hands of the living God; their punishment shall come from God's own hand. He takes them into the hand of his justice; he will deal with them himself; their greatest misery will be the immediate impressions of divine wrath on the soul. When he punishes them by creatures, the instrument abates something of the force of the blow; but, when he does it by his own hand, it is infinite misery. This they shall have at God's hand, they shall lie down in sorrow; their destruction shall come from his glorious powerful presence; when they make their woeful bed in hell, they will find that God is there, and his presence will be their greatest

terror and torment. And he is a living God; he lives for ever, and will punish for ever.

5. He presses them to perseverance by putting them in mind of their former sufferings for Christ: *But call to mind the former days, in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions*, v. 32. In the early days of the gospel there was a very hot persecution raised up against the professors of the Christian religion, and the believing Hebrews had their share of it: he would have them to remember,

(1.) When they had suffered: *In former days, after they were illuminated*; that is, as soon as God had breathed life into their souls, and caused divine light to spring up in their minds, and taken them into his favour and covenant; then earth and hell combined all their force against them. Here observe, A natural state is a dark state, and those who continue in that state meet with no disturbance from Satan and the world; but a state of grace is a state of light, and therefore the powers of darkness will violently oppose it. Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

(2.) What they suffered: they *endured a great fight of afflictions*, many and various afflictions united together against them, and they had a great conflict with them. Many are the troubles of the righteous.

[1.] They were afflicted in themselves. In their own persons; they were made gazing-stocks, spectacles to the world, angels, and men, ~~400~~1 Corinthians 4:9. In their names and reputations (v. 33), by many reproaches. Christians ought to value their reputation; and they do so especially because the reputation of religion is concerned: this makes reproach a great affliction. They were afflicted in their estates, by the spoiling of their goods, by fines and forfeitures.

[2.] They were afflicted in the afflictions of their brethren: *Partly while you became companions of those that were so used*. The Christian spirit is a sympathizing spirit, not a selfish spirit, but a compassionate spirit; it makes every Christian's suffering our own, puts us upon pitying others, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. Christians are one body, are animated by one spirit, have embarked in one common cause and interest, and are the children of that God who is afflicted in all the afflictions of his people. If one member of the body suffers, all the rest suffer with it. The apostle takes particular notice how they had

sympathized with him (v. 34): *You had compassion on me in my bonds.* We must thankfully acknowledge the compassions our Christian friends have shown for us under our afflictions.

(3.) How they had suffered. They had been mightily supported under their former sufferings; they took their sufferings patiently, and not only so, but joyfully received it from God as a favour and honour conferred upon them that they should be thought worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. God can strengthen his suffering people with all might in the inner man, to all patience and long-suffering, and that with joyfulness, Colossians 1:11.

(4.) What it was that enabled them thus to bear up under their sufferings. They knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Observe,

[1.] The happiness of the saints in heaven is substance, something of real weight and worth. All things here are but shadows.

[2.] It is a better substance than any thing they can have or lose here.

[3.] It is an enduring substance, it will out-live time and run parallel with eternity; they can never spend it; their enemies can never take it from them, as they did their earthly goods.

[4.] This will make a rich amends for all they can lose and suffer here. In heaven they shall have a better life, a better estate, better liberty, better society, better hearts, better work, every thing better.

[5.] Christians should know this in themselves, they should get the assurance of it in themselves (the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits), for the assured knowledge of this will help them to endure any fight of afflictions they may be encountered with in this world.

6. He presses them to persevere, from that recompense of reward that waited for all faithful Christians (v. 35): *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.* Here,

(1.) He exhorts them not to cast away their confidence, that is, their holy courage and boldness, but to hold fast that profession for which they had suffered so much before, and borne those sufferings so well.

(2.) He encourages them to this by assuring them that the reward of their holy confidence would be very great. It carries a present reward in it, in holy peace and joy, and much of God's presence and his power resting upon them; and it shall have a great recompense of reward hereafter.

(3.) He shows them how necessary a grace the grace of patience is in our present state (v. 36): *You have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise*; that is, this promised reward. Observe, The greatest part of the saints' happiness is in promise. They must first do the will of God before they receive the promise; and, after they have done the will of God, they have need of patience to wait for the time when the promise shall be fulfilled; they have need of patience to live till God calls them away. It is a trial of the patience of Christians, to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for the reward till God's time to give it them is come. We must be God's waiting servants when we can be no longer his working servants. Those who have had and exercised much patience already must have and exercise more till they die.

(4.) To help their patience, he assures them of the near approach of Christ's coming to deliver and to reward them (v. 37): *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*. He will soon come to them at death, and put an end to all their sufferings, and give them a crown of life. He will soon come to judgment, and put an end to the sufferings of the whole church (all his mystical body), and give them an ample and glorious reward in the most public manner. There is an appointed time for both, and beyond that time he will not tarry,
Habakkuk 2:3. The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over.

7. He presses them to perseverance, by telling them that this is their distinguishing character and will be their happiness; whereas apostasy is the reproach, and will be the ruin, of all who are guilty of it (v. 38, 39): *Now the just shall live by faith, etc.*

(1.) It is the honourable character of just men that in times of the greatest affliction they can live by faith; they can live upon the assured persuasion they have of the truth of God's promises. Faith puts life and vigour into them. They can trust God, and live upon him, and wait his time: and, as their faith maintains their spiritual life now, it shall be crowned with eternal life hereafter.

(2.) Apostasy is the mark and the brand of those in whom God takes no pleasure; and it is a cause of God's severe displeasure and anger. God never was pleased with the formal profession and external duties and services of such as do not persevere. He saw the hypocrisy of their hearts then; and he is greatly provoked when their formality in religion ends in an open apostasy from religion. He beholds them with great displeasure; they are an offence to him.

(3.) The apostle concludes with declaring his good hope concerning himself and these Hebrews, that they should not forfeit the character and happiness of the just, and fall under the brand and misery of the wicked (v. 39): *But we are not*, etc.; as if he had said, "I hope we are not of those who draw back. I hope that you and I, who have met with great trials already, and have been supported under them by the grace of God strengthening our faith, shall not be at any time left to ourselves to draw back to perdition; but that God will still keep us by his mighty power through faith unto salvation." Observe,

[1.] Professors may go a great way, and after all draw back; and this drawing back from God is drawing on to perdition: the further we depart from God the nearer we approach to ruin.

[2.] Those who have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past have reason to hope that the same grace will be sufficient to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience, even the salvation of their souls. If we live by faith, and die in faith, our souls will be safe for ever.