

Hebrews 10:19-31 “Drawing near and holding firmly in an unwavering faith”

The author has spoken about what they have. They have Jesus, their high priest, who provides for them greater promises, and complete forgiveness. Now he moves to exhorting them. He is bringing the central section of Hebrews to a conclusion, first with a positive encouragement (10:19-25) and then with a warning (10:26-31), summarising the implications of the supreme sacrifice of Christ for the listeners. The final section of Hebrews begins in 10:32 with the call for faithfulness.

James Thompson – The location of the lengthy treatment of the high priestly ministry of Christ (5:1-10:18) between parallel exhortations (4:14-16 and 10:19-25) indicates that the author's concern throughout the “word” that is “hard to explain” (5:11) has been to re-establish the community's original commitment. After providing the “solid food” that will give them the nutrition for their health and vitality, he now explores the practical implications for this wavering community. Just as Paul appeals to his readers to respond to the saving work of Christ by conducting themselves “worthy of the Gospel” (Phil 1:27), the author urges his listeners toward the appropriate response to the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Hebrews 10:19-25

The author is building off all that has been said, which we see by **therefore**. He wants them now to respond to what they have. He calls them **brothers** for the first time since 3:1, he is showing them they have together as a family as a result of Christ's work. What they have is the basis for the exhortation “let us” in vs22.

They have 2 things (1) **confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus**, and (2) **a great priest over the house of God**.

1. **Confidence/Boldness.** The work of Christ, in His death and resurrection has open a way for them to follow Him into the presence of God, behind the curtain, into the holy of holies, since he has provided complete cleansing of sin. Because of this work, they now have confidence/boldness to enter the holy places.
 1. **James Thompson** says “This boldness is no subjective feeling but the right of access to God (cf. 4:16), a gift to maintain (3:6) and not throw away (10:36). In keeping with the sacrificial imagery, it is the right of **entrance** (*eisodos*) into the sanctuary by the blood of Christ.”
 1. *Eisodos* was a common term in Jewish literature for entry into the sanctuary (Philo, Josephus). It echoes the description of the entry of priests (9:6,12) into the levitical sanctuary and the ultimate entry of Christ into the heavenly tabernacle (9:12) when he offered his blood (9:13-14). Thus in the boldness for entrance **into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus** (10:19b), the community comes into the heavenly sanctuary, just as the Levitical priests once entered the earthly tabernacle.
 1. This entrance is made possible because he **opened for us a new and living way through the curtain** (10:20a).
 1. To “open” (*enkainizein*) literally to “dedicate” or “inaugurate” (Thompson). The term is used in 9:18 for Moses' inauguration of the first covenant. In the OT, it is used both for the dedication of a new house (Deut 20:5) and the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:63).
 1. **James Thompson** - Thus the image suggests that the heavenly high priest opened up a way that has been closed (9:8), accomplishing what the Levitical priests could not do. As the author has indicated earlier, at the exaltation, Jesus Christ went through the curtain into the heavenly world (6:19-20). The image of opening up the way also incorporates the author's earlier depictions of a people on the way following their pioneer (2:10) and forerunner (6:19-20) who opens up the way for others to follow.
1. In the second place, the community has a **great priest over the house of God**, as the author has already demonstrated in 7:1-10:18, indicating the role of the priest as the one who draws near to God to intercede for the people (7:25).
 1. Although the “house of God” may recall the author's description of the tabernacle, the community is also God's house (3:6; cf 1 Peter2:4-10). As partakers in a heavenly calling (3:1), they belong to “the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven” (12:23).
 1. Thus to have a high priest over the house of God is, although they see only the deprivations associated with the house church, to have the assurance that they have a heavenly sanctuary.
 1. **James Thompson** - This assurance is the basis for the next exhortations that follow in 10:23-25, for without the knowledge that the community has “boldness to enter the sanctuary” and a “great priest over the house of God”, the community would have no resource to prevent members from “fall(ing) away from the living God” (3:12; 2:1-4; 6:4)
 2. These people have a priest who has given them not only an open way, but a home, a refuge, a family.
2. In the three hortatory subjunctives in 10:22-25 (“Let us draw near... let us hold fast... let us consider...”) that follow the restatement of what the community “has” (10:19-21), the author challenges the readers to respond to the saving work of the exalted high priest with faith (10:22), hope (10:23), and love (10:24).

10:22, Let us draw near “Faith”

- **Let us draw near** (10:22a) is an invitation for the whole community to come into the presence of God (cf. 4:16 “to the throne of grace”) in the house of the great priest, doing what was once only the privilege of the high priest.
 - **James Thompson** – The community draws near in worship and prayer because the exalted one “is able to save always those who draw near” in order to intercede for them (7:25).

- The accompanying dispositions of those who draw near indicates that the author is addressing the temptations that now face the community.
 - Instead of the “evil unbelieving heart” that was characteristic of the wilderness generation (3:10,12), the community may now come before God **with a true heart**.
 - Unlike the wilderness generation, which did not enter the promised land because of lack of faith (3:12, 19; 4:2), the listeners may now approach God **in the full assurance of faith** (10:22b).
 - Furthermore, the listeners may now draw near **with hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and their bodies washed with pure water** (10:22c). Christians have not only had their bodies washed with pure water in baptism, but their hearts have been made pure through faith in the work of Jesus for them.
 - Thus because they have been made pure, body and soul, they can, unlike any person in the Levitical system, draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith.
 - The author seems to be pointing back to their conversions, like he means “You have Jesus as a high priest, you are God’s people, your sins are forgiven... now let us draw near”.
 - It is a response of faith, we have forgiveness, an open door, a refuge, let us draw near firmly confident in this.

10:23, Let us hold firm “Hope”

1. the second exhortation, **let us hold fast to the unwavering confession of hope** (10:23a)
 1. **James Thompson** - Although most translations render the word “unwavering” as an adverb, (ie. Let us hold fast... unwaveringly), the term can best be rendered as an adjective (“unwavering confession”), indicating the certainty of the community’s faith. The term *akline*, which appears nowhere else in the NT or the LXX, is a synonym for *bebaios*, a term used frequently in Hebrews and translated “firm” or “valid”. According to 6:19, the author assures his readers that they have a “firm and stable anchor of the soul”.
 2. Having described this “unwavering confession” in 7:1-10:18, the author now insists that the community “hold on” to the confession rather than slip away.
 1. This exhortation reaffirms the author’s earlier challenge for the community to “hold on to the boldness and boasting of hope” (3:6), “hold on to the firm beginning until the end” (3:14), to “hold fast to the confession” (4:14), and to “hold fast to the hope” (6:18).
 1. **James Thompson** - ...the author knows that only when people hold to a stable reality can they find stability for themselves. The “unwavering confession” offers the community a reality that the community can hold.
 2. Thus if the community is to avoid the present danger of drifting away (2:1) or falling away from the living God (3:12), it must “hold on” to the confession it has made.
 3. **For he who has promised is faithful** gives the reason that they can hold fast to their hope.
 1. **James Thompson** - The ultimate reason that the community can “hold fast” is that **the (God) who has promised is faithful** (10:23b), as the author has demonstrated in 7:1-10:18. In the saving work of Christ, the God who cannot lie (6:18) has “guaranteed with an oath” (6:17). Consequently, the promise to enter into God’s rest remains available (4:1-11) because the crucified and exalted Christ is the “guarantor of a better covenant” (8:6), enabling Christians to “receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (9:15). Thus, like Abraham, the community can hold on in the midst of alienation and estrangement, knowing that “the one who promised is faithful” (11:11). The faithfulness of the community is thus the response to God’s faithfulness.
 1. Thus because they have Jesus who has given them an open way and refuge they can respond now with great hope for the future.

10:24, Let us stir one another up “Love”

Having called the community to faith (10:22) and hope (10:23), the author encourages the community, **let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works** (10:24), suggesting that members of the community cannot hold on to their confession alone.

1. Having previously encouraged the readers to “consider Jesus”, he now invites them to “consider one another.” The author sees the assembly/church of believers as a family. And as with any family, love and encouragement is needed.
2. **Provoke** – The term *paroxysmos*, a medical term referring to a high degree of fever, normally has the negative sense of “irritation” or “provocation”, but can also have the sense of provoking someone to do good, as it does here.
 1. **James Thompson** – The author has recalled the earlier “work of love” exhibited by the community in the earlier days (6:9) as they “ministered to the saints.” Undoubtedly the “work of love” includes the community’s solidarity in response to persecution (10:32-34), when they “became partners” with those who suffered and showed sympathy for the prisoners. Now the author encourages them to reinvigorate the love that they had demonstrated in the past.
 1. Thus because they have a forgiven past, a glorious future, because of Jesus who loved them, they are called to respond with love for one another, and to encourage one another.

10:25, Not abandoning the assembly

- Here the author exhorts them negatively, not to do something, **not abandoning the assembly of yourselves together, as is the practise of some**. In other words “since you have boldness/confidence to enter... a great priest over the house of God... don’t do this...”

- Abandoning the assembly is placed as the direct opposite of responding to what they have in Christ with faith, hope, and love for one another. Since they have boldness to enter and a priest over the house of God, don't abandon the community but rather commit yourself to the community.
 - **James Thompson** – The author may be distinguishing between those who now “abandon the assembly” and those who have irrevocably fallen away (cf. 3:12; 6:4), suggesting that the abandonment of the assembly is a step toward the apostasy described earlier in the homily (2:1-4; 3:12; 6:4-6). The seriousness of abandoning the assembly is evident in the use of the word *enkataleipein*, which has the connotation of “leave in the lurch” (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, Jesus cry of abandonment, 2 Tim 4:10, “Demas has abandoned me”; Heb 13:5, “God will not abandon you”). To “abandon” the assembly is to reject the privilege of drawing near to God's sanctuary and to throw away the boldness (10:35) to enter the way opened up by Jesus, the high priest.
 - **James Thompson** - The term “assembly”, which is used in only one other instance in the NT (2 Thess 2:1), suggests that the author has chosen the word for the eschatological gathering of God's people, indicating that the gatherings in the house churches were nothing less than a gathering of a community that spans heaven and earth. Thus to abandon the assembly is to reject God's ultimate gift.
- Although he does not tell why “some” are no longer present in the assembly, the most likely reason is that many have become weary with the seemingly unending pilgrimage that has brought disappointment and resulted in alienation from the society around them (10:32-34), leading them to wonder if their commitment to the Christian confession was worthwhile.
 - **James Thompson** – In order to prevent this discouragement, the author once more calls on the members to **encourage one another** (10:25b) because the entrance into the promised land is not for isolated individuals but for communities whose members worship together and care for one another. Although the community might be discouraged by the apparently endless waiting, the author assures them that their motivation to encourage one another is founded not only on what they have already (10:19) but also on the fact that they **see the day approaching** (10:25c). Indeed, the need for mutual encouragement is **all the more** urgent because the day is drawing near. The promise is not in the indefinite future but is now coming nearer.
 - **James Thompson** – Like other early Christian writers, the author speaks of “the day” as an abbreviation for “day of judgement”. Like Paul in particular, he motivates his readers to intense ethical behavior by reminding them of the imminence of the final day. Although he does not say when this “day” will come, he reminds his readers on several occasions of the certainty of the day of judgement (2:1-4; 3:13-19; 10:26-31; 12:25-29), when they will either enter the promised rest (4:1-11) or be excluded from God's promises.

10:26-31, Deliberate sin

Here the author now turns to the warning. He has spoken about what they have in 7:1-10:18, and has asked them to respond with faith, hope, and love. He also showed negatively what this meant, not abandoning the assembly, in other words, being committed to the community. Now he is warning them, showing them the consequences of abandoning what they have been given in 7:1-10:18.

James Thompson – in 10:26-31, the author elaborates on the warning of 6:4-6, describing the consequences of refusing the saving work of Christ in terms drawn from the OT. The “deliberate sin” recalls the distinction between those who commit unintentional sins (Lev 4:1-5:13; Num 15:22-29) and those whose offences are committed “with a high hand” (Num 15:30-31). The later will be cut off from Israel because they “despised the word of the Lord”. This distinction is widely known in Jewish literature (he then goes on to quote from the “Dead Sea Scrolls” and “Philo of Alexandria”)... While Jewish tradition identified the deliberate sin with blasphemy against the Torah or the deity, Hebrews identifies it with abandoning the community where God's saving gifts are received.

10:26-27, Fearful expectation of judgement

The author warns them hear of the dangers of continuing to sin deliberately after receiving a knowledge of the truth. He says that there remains no sacrifice for sins, but only a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

1. The readers have 2 options. Since they have the sacrifice of Christ they now have two options. They either will draw near in prayer and commit themselves to the community, or they will **sin deliberately after receiving the full knowledge of the truth**.
 1. The author first warns of the consequences of rejecting the sacrifice of Christ by sinning deliberately (10:26-27) and then offers logical support for the warning (10:28-29) before offering scriptural warrant for his claim (10:30-31).
2. **The full knowledge of the truth** – is a reference to their conversion, when they were “enlightened” (6:4; 10:32), and the author has explored this truth in depth (7:1-10:18), ensuring them of their access to this extraordinary revelation.
3. To “**sin deliberately**,” therefore, is to refuse to “draw near,” to abandon the assembly where members encourage one another to love and good works and to fail to endure until the end (10:36-39, cf. 3:12 “the deceitfulness of sin”).
 1. **Craig Koester** – the warning is given in the first person plural to “we” who sin “after receiving knowledge of the truth” (10:26b)... by speaking of knowledge of the truth, the author precludes (prevents) the idea that he is speaking of sins of ignorance. If a person knows what is true, but does not do it, the problem lies not in knowledge, but in will – it is a case of “wilful” sinning (10:26a). (In other words, this is not a sin of ignorance, you know fully and abandon

that knowledge).

4. Why is there no longer a sacrifice for sins for those who sin deliberately? Quite simply because Jesus died once for all (10:11-14), **there is no longer a sacrifice for sins** (10:26b). The author has shown them again and again the inability of any sacrifice other than Christ's. Only Christ's can cleanse the heavenly, no earthly sacrifice can do that. To forsake the work of Christ for you, leaves you with no other sacrifice.
 1. **Craig Koester** – the conclusion that “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (10:26c) draws out the implications of the idea that Christ's self-sacrifice provides complete cleansing for sins, putting an end to other sacrifices (10:18). On the one hand, this was good news, since Levitical sacrifices had left the conscience defiled (9:8-10). On the other hand, if Christ's sacrifice alone is adequate, those who reject it have no other basis upon which to relate rightly to God.
5. The expectation of judgement and fury of fire that will devour the opponents goes back to 6:7-8. The land that after receiving rain from heaven and continually produced thorns and thistles was cursed was burned.
 1. **Devour** = to eat, to consume. Louw & Nida Greek Lexicon says this “(a figurative extension of *esthio* 'to eat,') to destroy, with the implication of doing away with all traces of an object. What will be destroyed?”
 2. **Opponents** = hostile, those who are hostile towards something. (2 Thess 2:15, Titus 2:8). Here it is those who after receiving the full knowledge choose to sin deliberately by not drawing near with faith hope and love but rather abandon the assembly of believers.
 1. In the same way that some people destroy their food, licking the plate clean, leaving nothing left, those who sin deliberately have a fearful expectation of judgement and fire where they will be consumed, destroyed, without even a trace left.
 2. **James Thompson** - Similarly, the author declares that his community stands before the choice of expecting the promised reward (4:1-11; 11:1-40) or **a fearful expectation of judgement and raging fire that will devour the opponents** (10:27). Just as ancient Israel stood before the choice of blessings or curses (Deut 27-28), the readers face the choice between God's reward and judgement. With images taken from the OT description of God's “fiery passion” (Isa 26:11; Zeph 1:18; 3:8) that will judge God's enemies, the author indicates that those who “sin deliberately” will place themselves on the side of God's enemies.

10:28-29, Those who have trampled the Son of God

Here the author goes to scripture to support what he said and logically shows them how this applies to them.

1. He recalls that those who turned to idolatry were put to death “on the evidence of two or three witnesses” (Deut 17:6; Num 35:30), he generalises this law to indicate that **anyone who rejects the law of Moses dies without mercy upon the testimony of two or three witnesses** (10:28).
 1. although this example is drawn from the ultimate rejection of the covenant in Deut 17:2-16, this passage lack any reference to “without mercy”, a phrase that is drawn from Deut 13:6-10, where the punishment of death is prescribed for those who tempt others to idolatry. This precedent becomes the basis for the conclusion that the draws.
2. Having consistently declared the superiority of the Christian revelation, he employs the argument from the lesser to the greater to ask **How much more severe punishment do you think will be determined for those who have trampled the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant in which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace** (10:29)?
 1. having demonstrated already that Jesus is greater than Moses (3:1-6) and has provided the great salvation, the author concludes that the greater the salvation, the greater the punishment for those who reject it.
 1. **James Thompson** - These three parallel phrases give graphic depictions of deliberate sin and indicate the seriousness of the offence of abandoning the assembly. The preceding argument indicates the horror of the offence, for the author has established that God has given the ultimate revelation “in a Son” (1:1-2), who now sits at God's right hand (1:3), becoming greater than angels (1:4-13) and Moses (3:1-6).
3. To “**trample the Son of God under foot**” is to respond to God's ultimate revelation in a Son (1:1-2) with contempt, the equivalent of “crucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt” (6:6).
 1. **Craig Koester** – God told the Son, “sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”. Therefore those who trample upon the Son act counter to the will of God by seeking to put the Son under their own feet in a show of contempt.
4. Having described the inauguration of the covenant through the blood of Jesus (9:15-22), the author now indicates that to abandon the community is to “**profane the blood of the covenant**” in which they were sanctified.
 1. Since only the blood of Christ, offered in the heavenly sanctuary, can cleanse the whole person (9:11-14), the ultimate disgrace is to treat it as ordinary.
5. In the parallel phrase “**outraged the Spirit of grace**”, the author is apparently referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. 6:4) which the community had received. A rejection of this gift would a supreme insult.
 1. **Craig Koester** – the Spirit is the means by which God's grace comes to the people (10:29d). Christ offered himself through the Spirit (9:14) and the listeners received the message of salvation through the Spirit (2:3-4; 6:4-5). Showing insolence toward the Spirit means rejecting the grace that the Spirit offers. By pronouncing a negative judgement on God's grace, the insolent invite God's negative judgement upon themselves.

10:30-31 Falling into the hands of the living God

1. Here the author gives scriptural support for the warning with words taken from the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:35-36), using the first line of each verse, which he separates with **again**.
 1. In the original context the passage spoke of God's vengeance on Israel's enemies and his judgement on behalf of Israel. The author cites the passage as evidence of God's judgement on the community that abandons God's gift.
2. The concluding statement, **it is fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God** (10:31) concludes both the warning and the central section in terms that are parallel to the ending of the first major section (4:13, "to whom we must give an account").
 1. **James Thompson** – The saving gift leaves the community (we) with only two options. They may either "draw near" to God's throne of grace with a clear conscience (10:19-25) or reject the ultimate gift and "profane the blood of the covenant" (10:29).

Hebrews 10:32-13:25 "on not refusing the one who is speaking"

Here the author starts the final section of Hebrews. This is his last chance to persuade the audience to take the right course of action, and summarise what he has said.

1. **James Thompson** – consequently, the author breaks no new ground but recapitulates what he has already said. The task now is to urge the wavering church to endure until it obtains the promise that the author has held before the community throughout the homily (4:1; 6:12, 17; 10:23).

Hebrews 10:32-39 "Remember the Faithfulness of Earlier Days"

the author's recalls how they "endured" at the beginning of their Christian existence before he declares that they "need endurance" (10:36) at the present. The appeal to memory was a means of motivating an audience. The author wants to remind them of their past to motivate them to maintain conduct in the future that is similar to their conduct in the past.

10:32-36 "The former days"

The author's appeal to **remember the former days (10:32a)** is the basis for the exhortation to reinvigorate that same conduct in the present (10:35-39). Just as they endured sufferings shortly after they had been **enlightened** (10:32b), they **need endurance** now (10:36a). They **welcomed the confiscation of their possessions** because they knew that they had a **better and abiding possession**.

- **James Thompson** – this possession is the equivalent of the heavenly rest (4:1-11), the hope that is now available (6:18-19; cf. 3:6; 6:11; 7:19; 10:23), and the promise (6:12, 15, 17; 8:6; 9:15). The author describes the possession with two adjectives that are central to the argument of the homily. It is "better" and "abiding". Although the readers could not see this transcendent possession (cf. 2:8), the knowledge that Christ is better (1:4) than any object of comparison and that he is abiding (7:3, 24-25) has motivated them from the beginning. The "abiding possession", like the "abiding city" that the community awaits (13:14), belongs to the transcendent world. The community overcomes the shame and alienation of this world because of its access to the heavenly world. This outlook corresponds precisely to the perspective of the heroes of faith in chapter 11, all of whom endured alienation by looking to "things not seen" (11:1).
- 2 Cor 5 is a good passage to read.

The imperative **Do not throw away your boldness, which has a great reward** (10:35), challenges the community to continue its past conduct.

- **James Thompson** – the "boldness", as the author has already indicated, is the right of access to God that has been made possible by Christ (10:19; cf. 4:16).
 - To "throw away" the boldness, therefore, is to fail to endure – the equivalent of "spurning the Son of God" and "profaning the blood of Christ" (cf. 10:29).
 - The "great reward" available for those who endure is the equivalent of the "better and abiding possession" (10:34) that motivated the readers in the past.... Here the author refers to the reward of the heavenly rest described in 4:1-11 and anticipates the description of Moses as one who "looked to the reward" (11:26) as well as the statement that anyone who comes to God must believe that God "rewards those who seek him" (11:6).

In order to avoid throwing away their reward (10:35), the community needs endurance (10:36), the quality they demonstrated in the past (10:32), for only through endurance can they **do the will of God and receive the promise** (10:36b).

- **James Thompson** – this hope anticipates the author's description of the heroes of the faith, who were "heirs of the promise" (9:15 cf. 11:9) and greeted the promise from afar (11:13). Thus the "better and abiding possession" (10:34), the reward (10:35), and the promise all refer to the ultimate salvation. Only those who endure (10:32, 36) rather than "throw away the boldness" (10:35) will attain the promise.
- **Craig Koester** - the expression refers not to the word of promise, which the listeners had already received, but to the substance of the promise, including a share in God's rest (4:10) and a place in the heavenly city (12:22-24). The heroes of the OT experienced a partial fulfilment of the promise (6:15), but complete realization comes through Christ (11:13-19, 39-40).
 - **James Thompson** – just as the author had previously combined the warning of dire consequences, the memory of earlier days, and the promise of salvation (6:1-12) to motivate his community to endure, he once more motivates

the readers by combining these severe warning of punishment (10:26-31) with the memory of former days (10:32) and the hope for the future reward (10:34-39).

- **James Thompson** – Reward and punishment play a central role throughout the homily. Like Joshua, who summoned the Israelites to choose between life and death, the author places two choices before the readers. The “great salvation” (cf. 2:3) made possible by the exalted Christ poses stark choices. Those who fail to enter God's rest (3:12-19), and thus they will stand under the judgement of God (10:29-31), while those who endure will inherit the promises (10:34-36).

10:37-39 “Living by faith”

in 10:37-39, the author assures his community that their time of waiting is not unlimited. He contemporizes the citation drawn from Isa26:20 LXX and Hab 2:3-4, as he has done with other passages, indicating that it addresses his weary readers, promising that the time of waiting is **a very little while** and that **the one who comes will come and not delay** (10:37).

- Although the passage in the original context referred to the coming of God's justice, in the author's adaptation it refers to the return of Christ (cf. 9:28), which is drawing near (10:25). The focus of the citation is the assurance that **my righteous one will live by faith** rather than **shrink back** (10:38). As the transition from “boldness” (10:35) and “endurance” (10:36) to “faith” indicates, the author employs these three words in overlapping ways.
 - Faith then is the opposite of “shrinking back”.
- **Craig Koester** – That is the message from the book of Habakkuk. Hebrews uses it; Paul uses it. Why would the author be drawn to Habakkuk? Why is this a lens through which you read the entire Old Testament? Habakkuk does not register as the favorite for many people, but it is an extraordinary book for it takes up the question of the ways of God. The prophet Habakkuk ponders many questions. Why is it that life is so often unfair? Why is it that people who are so often trying to live a good life often don't come out on top? Why do the wicked seem to do just fine? The book does not give a pat answer but instead the prophet Habakkuk offers a way of life; that faith is a way of life that doesn't necessarily answer all your questions but allows you to live in the face of those questions. It allows you to face those questions with honesty and integrity. This is what the author of Hebrews goes. He wants people to face the future with ambiguity, uncertainty, and the drabness with a sense of hope and integrity. The author moves right into chapter 12 with a definition of faith.

The assurance, **we do not belong to those who shrink back to destruction, but to those who have faith for obtaining life** (10:39), like the earlier recollection of the community's past endurance (10:32), is a motivation for the readers.

- **James Thompson** – echoing the distinction in the citation between those who “shrink back” and those who have “faith”, the author expresses confidence that they will conduct themselves in the future as they have in the past. Despite the frequent warnings, he concludes that the readers will make the right choice and inherit the promise.

What is going on here?

1. What the readers need desperately is endurance. Our author brings up their past record to try to encourage them again to endure. Their motivation previously had been in the hope of a better possession. The author exhorts them to take the same attitude again and not throw away their confidence. God was faithful in the past and was ready to sustain them again.
2. The bottom line is that the readers needed endurance to do the will of God (vs36). The author quotes Hab2:3-4 to drive home his point. It begins by referring to the second coming of Jesus which will end the persecution of the righteous. It indicates that the righteous must live by faith. It ends by showing God's displeasure towards those who shrink back.
3. The author encourages the reader by telling them that they are not those who shrink back, but are of those who have faith and are saved. The readers have been given every reason to press on, the alternative is the displeasure of God and destruction.