

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHURCH

How Can I Strengthen My Church?

Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.”

Willful repudiation of God’s beloved Son is a sin of immense magnitude. God will sit in judgment on all who are guilty of it. He has said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” (see Deut. 32:35). Vengeance in this sense means full justice. When used of God it has no thought of vindictiveness or of “getting even.” It is simply the meting out of what a person actually deserves. Knowing the character of God, we can be sure that He will do as He has said by repaying the apostate in just measure.

And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” God will avenge and vindicate those who truly belong to Him, but here in verse 30, the obvious reference is to judgment of evil people.

If it causes difficulty to think of apostates being spoken of as His people, we should remember that they are His by creation and also for a while by profession. He is their Creator though not their Redeemer, and they once professed to be His people, even though they never knew Him personally. What are your thoughts?

Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The abiding lesson for all is this: do not be among those who fall into God’s hands for judgment because it is a fearful thing.

Nothing in this passage of Scripture was ever intended to disturb and unsettle the minds of those who truly belong to Christ.

The passage was purposely written in its sharp, searching, challenging style so that all who profess the name of Christ might be warned about the terrible consequences of turning away from Him.

Hebrews 10:32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

In the remaining verses of chapter 10, the writer gives three strong reasons why the early Jewish Christians should continue steadfastly in their allegiance to Christ. 1. Their former experiences should stimulate them.

2. The nearness of the reward should strengthen them.

3. The fear of God’s displeasure should deter them from going back.

First of all, then, their past experiences should stimulate them. After they professed faith in Christ, they became the targets of bitter persecution: their families disowned them, their friends forsook them, and their foes hounded them. But instead of producing cowardice and fear, these sufferings strengthened them in their faith. Doubtless they felt something of the exhilaration of being counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name (Acts 5:41).

Hebrews 10:33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;

Sometimes their suffering was individual; they were taken out alone and publicly exposed to abuse and affliction. At other times, they suffered with other Christians.

Hebrews 10:34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

They were not afraid to visit those who were prisoners for Christ, even though there was always the danger of guilt by association.

When their goods were confiscated by the authorities, they accepted it joyfully.

They chose to be true to Jesus rather than to keep their material possessions. They knew that they had “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 1:4).

It was truly a miracle of divine grace that enabled them to value earthly wealth so lightly. What can we learn from this?

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

The second great consideration is this: the nearness of the reward should strengthen them. Having endured so much in the past, they should not capitulate now.

The author says in effect, “Don’t miss the harvest of your tears” (F. B. Meyer).

They were now nearer to the fulfillment of God’s promise than ever before. This was no time to turn back. What can we learn from this?

“Don’t throw away your trust now—it carries with it a rich reward in the world to come” (JBP).

Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

What they needed was endurance, the determination to remain under the persecutions rather than escape them by denying Christ.

Then after having done the will of God, they would receive the promised reward.

Hebrews 10:37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

The coming reward synchronizes with the Return of the Lord Jesus; hence the quotation from Habakkuk 2:3, “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.” In Habakkuk the verse reads, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

Concerning this change Vincent says: In the Hebrew, the subject of the sentence is the vision of the extermination of the Chaldees... As rendered in the Septuagint either Jehovah or Messiah must be the subject. The passage was referred to Messiah by the later Jewish theologians and is so taken by our writer. A. J. Pollock comments: The Old Testament passage and the altered quotation in the New Testament are alike verbally inspired and equally Scripture. The IT in Habakkuk refers to the vision—and deals with the coming of Christ to reign.

Then he continues in a more general vein: When an inspired writer quotes from the Old Testament he uses just as much of the passage quoted as suits the purpose of the Divine Mind, though never contradicting it; altering it often in order to convey, not the exact meaning of the Old Testament passage, but the fuller meaning intended to be conveyed by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament... Now no one but God could so treat Scripture. The fact that it is done, and done largely, is another claim to inspiration.

God is the Author of the Bible, and He can quote His OWN words, altering and adding to them to suit His purpose. But if any of us quote Scripture, we must do it with careful exactitude. We have no right to alter a jot or tittle. But the Author of the Book can do this. It matters little what pen He uses, whether it be Moses or Isaiah, Peter or Paul, or Matthew or John, it is all His writing. What are your thoughts?

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

A final incentive to steadfast endurance is the fear of God’s displeasure. Continuing the quotation from Habakkuk, the author shows that the life that pleases God is the life of faith: Now the just shall live by faith. This is the life that values God’s promises, that sees the unseen, and that perseveres to the end.

On the other hand the life that displeases God is that of the man who renounces the Messiah and returns to the obsolete sacrifices of the temple: But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.