

“OUR HOPE: JESUS WILL COME AGAIN”

Dr. John Allan Lavender

Hebrews 10:26-39

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, “but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, “partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.” ³⁴For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

³⁷For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. ³⁸But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

We come now to the beginning of the end of Hebrews. Our author’s monumental arguments for the superiority, supremacy and sufficiency of Christ are over. Because he is a seasoned teacher and recognizes the short-term nature of the average person’s memory span, he will yet reinforce

his argument with a few additional references to who Jesus was and what Jesus did, but, for the most part, his courtly comment on the unexcelled excellence of Christ is completed. Now he focuses our attention upon the everyday implications of this. His theme from here on out will be: the urgency of practicality.

A sensitive pastor, he will not neglect the “So what?” element in his teaching. He refuses to deal with doctrine in isolation from daily living. This has been characteristic of his style throughout. Instead of using a straight-line method of reasoning, he has followed a somewhat serpentine course. Interweaving the practical with the theoretical. Never failing to wed the two. On occasion, he has lifted us into the stratosphere of the Spirit with some soaring statement about the Saviour. But, before we become too other-worldly in our thinking, he has suddenly jerked us back to earth with a stunning rebuke or loving exhortation.

Along with being a seasoned teacher and a sensitive pastor, he is also a sound psychologist. To insure his words of warning have maximum impact, he uses an adaptation of the sandwich technique: compliment, correction, compliment. You will see this develop as we move along.

The opening sentence in his summation (10:19-25) blends together the three great Christian virtues of faith, hope and love. *“Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water”* (10:19-22).

According to the writer of Hebrews, faith is confidence to enter. To enter what? The Holy of Holies within our being; that is, our once dead spirit which has been quickened by Christ and where God through Christ chooses to meet us. *“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Faith perceives the incredible fact that God and the child of God are no longer two distinct

persons. Through Christ, you and He are one. God has become a part of your life as a Christian. You have become a part of God's life and action in life. The veil has been torn in two. There is nothing between. The implications of this in terms of daily living are staggering.

Many saved-sinners act as if the veil were still in place. They still think of God as a vague, oblong blur. A distant Being out there somewhere in space. As a result, they're lonely. Frustrated. Guilt-ridden. Despairing. They have no conception of the liberty and security which is theirs in Christ. They still think of themselves as people on probation who, if they work long enough and hard enough, will finally make themselves fit enough for fellowship with God. What they fail to realize is that their acceptability to Him and His accessibility to them does not depend upon any noble, but futile, effort of their own. The Christian's "*confidence to enter*" is "*by the blood of Jesus*" (10:19).

Christ has cut out all middlemen. As a result, even the most feeble saint can enjoy intimate and immediate communion with God through faith in who Jesus was and what Jesus did. Therefore, "*let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful*" (10:23). (Note the second great cardinal virtue.)

A Christian is not a glorified gambler who leans on the law of averages hoping for a better roll of the dice the next time around. Such comfort isn't Christian, it's pagan. More than that, it's cruel. It asks us to trust in chance. And, frankly, I don't have enough faith to believe in chance. Fortunately, ours is a solid hope full of power and promise, because it rests on the God who promises, believing with boldness, "He who promised is faithful."

Then, there is love. "*And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near*" (10:24,25). Our ministry of love as Jesus folk is to care, share and prepare. We are to care in the sense of being involved with our fellow Christians. Watching over one another. Studying how we may stir up, stimulate and incite

each other to love, helpful deeds and creative action.

We are to share by being aware of our interdependence. A Christian cannot be what Moffatt called “a pious particle.” A Christian in isolation, or selfish Christianity, is a contradiction of terms. To try to preserve love without sharing is to attempt the impossible.

“Faith and hope can be practiced by a solitary soul in a hermit’s cell or on a deserted island, but the exercise of love is possible only in community. It must have an object. Thus, the writer of Hebrews urges us to maintain our common Christian worship.”¹

This is very relevant today. It isn’t uncommon to hear people say, “I love Christ, but church is a bummer. It turns me off.” The book of Hebrews repeats to these twentieth-century pilgrims the same admonition given to those first-century folk who failed to see the importance of a loosely organized body of believers. The local church is not the Church for which Christ died, but it is a visible expression of that Church to the world in which we live.

Nowhere does scripture suggest God has abandoned the local church or declared it obsolete. Instead, we are clearly instructed not to neglect meeting together (10:25a). Because we care and share, we are to lovingly prepare each other for the coming of Christ with words of encouragement, enthusiasm and optimistic support. And, we are to do so “*all the more, as [we] see the day [of his return] drawing near*” (10:25b).

After this warm, rather reassuring word, our author makes a sudden shift from compliment to correction. He sticks in the middle portion of the sandwich. He confronts us with one of the most sober warnings in all of scripture. “*For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*” (10:26).

Few truths are more self-evident than that there are many Christians who don’t live like it. Nor, is any Bible teaching clearer than the repeated pronouncement that, sooner or later, spiritual dereliction will be dealt with. Some who have a stunted understanding of God’s love would have

us believe He winks benignly at the Christian’s waywardness, permitting it to go by unnoticed. Others, with an exaggerated emphasis on the Christian’s role in redemption, would have us believe saints who sin following their salvation are irretrievably lost and bound for hell.

Neither of these two extremes is true to scripture. Both are blatant heresies. Nowhere does the Bible even remotely suggest Christians can sin and get away with it. Nor does it teach that born-again children of God who do sin are, or can be, lost.

Like everyone else, a Christian is responsible for his own acts and attitudes. If these lead him into sin, he has two alternatives. One, judge himself, repent, meet Christ at the cross, by faith appropriate the forgiveness God offers, and get on with the business of growing into spiritual maturity. Or two, he can remain in his sin, put off confession to God, wait to be judged by Christ at the judgment seat and, in the process, suffer the dual loss of confidence in the Christian life on earth and reward from the Christian life in heaven. Depending on which of these alternatives we saved-sinners take, we anticipate the second coming of Christ (and co-incidentally, death) as either an occasion of joy or judgment.

In terms of sin and the principle of cause-and-effect, four things are true. 1. Everyone has a choice before the fact. 2. Everyone has a choice after the fact. 3. Consequences spring from those choices. 4. Looking backward and forward is a wise way to keep moving upward.

Everyone Has A Choice Before The Fact

It’s amazing how complicated some folk can make the plain, simple teachings of scripture. Hebrews 10:26 is a classic example. *“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”* What agony of soul and painful divisiveness have been spawned by those who fail to grasp the simple fact that all sin is deliberate, and God in His grace has provided for our willfulness.

When it comes to yielding to temptation, everyone has a choice before the fact. To sin or not to

sin is the universal option constantly open to us as Christians. It's true, as the Bible explains in Leviticus 4 and 5, that there may be an element of ignorance in our sinning; yet, when we think about it deeply, we must come to the inevitable conclusion that all sin is willful. At some point in the process, we become aware of what we're doing and choose to do it anyway!

We may be ignorant of the final outcome, the consequences. We may be ignorant of how diabolically clever the devil is. We may be ignorant of the fact hell is not nearly so nice as the road that leads to it. We may be ignorant of the devastating impact of guilt and a sense of guilt upon the psyche. We may be deluded into thinking some sins are not so sinful, and thus, be defrauded by Satan whose true power we do not fully realize.

But, in spite of these areas of ignorance, somewhere along the line in every act of sinning there is a moment of awareness in which we are awakened to the fact we are skating on thin ice.

However, despite the Spirit's warning, we deliberately choose to inch a bit closer to the edge.

It's just not possible to divide sin into two classifications: forgivable because done in ignorance, or unforgivable because deliberate. There is a willful element in all sin which can neither be denied nor disguised. The more honest, open, sensitive and Spirit-filled a Christian is, the more quickly he will recognize the deliberate nature of his wicked acts. That's why Hebrews 10:26 plagues so many. They take it seriously. And they should!

But, rightly divided, this word of truth will free us rather than frighten us. That right dividing begins by recognizing the verse is speaking of all sin. For all sin is in some sense deliberate.

There are many ways to sin willfully or “*fall away from the living God*” (3:12). Most commentators want to limit this sin of willfulness to apostasy. The deliberate denial of something once believed. But apostasy itself cannot be limited to the result of intellectual speculation when, in a state of agnostic skepticism, one throws it all over because the Good News boggles his mind.

What about the “falling away” which will not take a burden to the Lord and leave it there? Does

that not also involve abandonment of belief in God’s promises and His power to keep those promises? What about the deliberate decision not to tithe in the face of God’s clear instruction that the first tenth is holy unto Him? What about the refusal to take time to pray or discipline one’s mind in a searching study of the scriptures? What about the willful reordering of life’s priorities leaving God the last and least, instead of the first and best?

All of these attitudes are apostate to one degree or another. They involve lack of trust in God and create a cleavage between Father and child. As someone has declared, “Sin comes down to a refusal to meet God where He wants to be met, on the terms He Himself has set.”

When we sin willfully, as Christians, are we lost? Yes, for the moment, painfully so! But only from our perspective, not from God’s. The heavenly Father knows nothing can separate us from Him. He knows nothing can pluck us out of His hand. But in our fallen-away-ness we forget that fact.

Part of the pain sin inflicts on sinner-saints is that, in our shame and regret, we “*cast away our confidence.*” For in that moment we forget who we are and Whose we are. We forget why we’re here and where we’re going. In a most poignant, piercing, personal way, we are lost. We dwell in severe darkness of soul. Hope is all around, but we cannot see it. The shades of our mind, emotion and will are pulled. We do not permit the Light of the World to come in, in a commanding, dominating, darkness-dispelling way.

Everyone Has A Choice After The Fact

When it comes to sin and the principle of cause-and-effect, everyone has a choice before the fact.

Everyone also has a choice after the fact. “*For if we go on sinning willfully (which at the deepest level involves all sin) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*” (10:26).

Did you notice that between the admonitions at the beginning of chapter 6 (1-12), and the end of

chapter 10 (19-39), there is the tremendous development in chapters 6:13 --10:18, of Christ as high priest functioning in the true tabernacle of God? With our Lord's never-ending ministry of reconciliation in mind, the writer of Hebrews now declares, *“If we go on sinning ...there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”* (10:26).

In essence, he is saying, in Christ, God has done all He can do. There is no other Saviour to come and die for sinners. There is no other Jesus to seek and save the lost. So, when, as saved-sinners, we are guilty of anything which defiles the image of God in us, or denies the Lordship of Christ over us, there is only one thing we can do, and that is rush to the cross for the forgiveness God offers there and only there! There is no other sacrifice for sins!

To sin or not to sin is the universal option constantly open to Christians. To be forgiven or not forgiven when we sin is the urgent question each of us must answer for ourselves. In other words, like everyone else, we Jesus folk must assume responsibility for our sin and for doing something about it. The only thing we can do which has meaning is swallow our pride, do what does not come naturally from the psychological point of view (ego would still like to believe it can go it alone) and turn to the only Saviour for sinners, be they non-Christian sinners or saved-sinners.

The cross is ever and always sufficient for any who rest in it. Its only limitation is the one we set through lack of appropriation and application. God can do nothing more than forgive us. If we refuse to be forgiven, we must face a fiery purging at the judgment seat of Christ. The teaching of scripture is just that plain. *“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries”* (10:26,27).

People read these words and ask, “What do they mean?” I don't wish to sound flippant, but they mean exactly what they say! There is no mystery to the fact that, in a sense, at some point, all sin is deliberate. Thus, for Christians who sin following conversion, there is no other place to go for

forgiveness and cleansing but Calvary. If we refuse to do business with the gentle Jesus on His cross, we shall do business with Jesus, the Judge, on His throne.

These verses are not a call to faultless living. Only a mediocre person is always at his best! God is well aware of human frailty. And, the Good News is that He has done something about it. Hebrews 10:26,27 is a pronouncement of what He has done, a call to realize all sin defiles the image of God in us and must be dealt with swiftly, lest it harden into a lifestyle, effecting consequences of the severest sort.

Consequences Spring From Our Choices

Two things beg to be said about the inevitable and inescapable consequences which spring from the choices we make. First, for Christians who refuse to repent and accept Christ's sacrifice as adequate for their brand of sinning, there is something worse than stoning.

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:26-31).

If there is a passage of scripture anywhere which confronts us with the serious nature of Christian discipleship, it is this one. It's important for us to fully understand it. Among other things, we must see this as an announcement that some Christians will never repent of their rebellion as sons of God. As a result, they will be judged accordingly. That judgment is called a “*fury of fire*” (10:27a), in harmony with Paul's statement to the Corinthians regarding the test of fire to which the Christians' works will be put (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

But notice, the purpose of this “*fury of fire*” is not to destroy the sinner-saint, but “*to consume the adversaries*” (10:27b). It is the devil and his devilish work which the judgment fire will devour! Instead of turning His wayward children over to Satan, God in His grace purges us. He produces purified persons suitable for heaven. At the same time, He robs Satan, our adversary, of his intended victims.

Unfortunately, the Christian whose works are burned winds up tragically and sadly empty-handed. The recurring theme of judgment for Jesus folk threading through Hebrews relates to the Christian’s reward, as distinguished from his salvation. Our salvation is by grace, period. Our reward is the accrued and compound interest earned by faithfulness in service and self-giving. The judgment described as a “*fury of fire*” is not aimed at destroying the impenitent sinner-saint, but at purifying him while, at the same time, denying the devil another victim.

According to custom, violators of the law of Moses were condemned to death by stoning. However, there is something worse than stoning for saved-sinners who spurn the Lordship of Jesus. What is it? Having to live with the knowledge of their sin, and the fact there is no possibility of keeping it from Christ, no way of sparing Him the pain sin always inflicts upon Him and His body, the Church.

It is possible for someone, in a moment of weakness or loneliness, to break the marriage vow. If he or she handles that grievous sin redemptively at the cross, there is cleansing for the offender. And, if he or she handles it courageously, bearing the mark and memory of that sin alone out of love for his or her mate, the offended is protected from the pain, knowledge of the broken vow would produce.

But, in the case of our marriage relationship with Christ, there is no way we, His bride, can keep the fact of our willful waywardness and spiritual infidelity from Him. Therefore, when we remain unfaithful to Him, we bear a double pain. The pain a sense of guilt produces in us and the pain the fact of guilt inflicts upon Him. One who has even a scintilla of spiritual sensitivity finds this a

fate worse than stoning.

A further consequence springing from our persistent refusal as Christians to repent and accept the sacrifice of Jesus as adequate for our brand of sin is that God finally takes us at our word. Like the Israelites of old, He permits us to wander off into the wilderness and become “*castaways*” (1 Corinthians 9:27, KJV). The person involved is not eternally lost, though he has lost the confidence and joy of vital Christian living, and, that’s painful enough! But worse, his usefulness to God on earth is lost or, at best, limited.

This was the Apostle Paul’s great dread (1 Corinthians 9:27). What he feared more than anything else was not the loss of his salvation; he knew that was impossible. He was afraid of losing his confidence. His usefulness. His reward. Having proclaimed the Good News to others, he was fearful that, by some act of foolishness or faithlessness, he himself would become disqualified. One whom God had to retire from service until that day when he would be dealt with at the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul knew he would be saved until the end. Would be recognized as one of God’s redeemed. Would be made fit for heaven by the refiner’s fire. He also knew the wood, hay and stubble of any wasted years would go up in smoke, leaving him to face Jesus with empty hands. The very thought of it made his sensitive soul shudder. It should have the same effect on us!

When we sin and refuse to deal with it creatively at the cross, there is a fate worse than stoning, and we must live with the knowledge of what sin does to us and our Saviour. We must also face the peril of pushing God so far that He will finally disqualify us for further work here on earth.

A fact does not change because it is ignored. One inescapable fact is that Jesus is Someone whom all of us must meet, sooner or later (4:13). He would rather meet us as Saviour and Friend. If we refuse Him on those terms, we shall meet Him as Judge. I’m not trying to scare you, because it’s impossible to frighten anyone into the kind of loving relationship with Christ characteristic of

authentic Christianity. I am simply saying a personal encounter with Christ is inevitable. Sometime, somewhere, you shall meet Him.

A Cockney soldier put it this way. His theology may be a bit off, but his concern is correct:

There ain't no throne, and there ain't no books,

It's 'im you gotta see,

It's 'im, just 'im, that is the judge

Of blokes like you and me.

And, boys, I'd rather be frizzled up

In the flames of a burning 'ell,

Than stand and look into 'is face,

And 'ear 'is voice say, “Well?”

What a dreadful moment that will be! How miserably ashamed we shall feel if we miss the path that would have led to peace, joy and wholeness.²

The second thing begging to be said about the consequences of our choices is that no child of God need meet Jesus on the terms just described. For the saved-sinner who repents of his waywardness and receives God's forgiveness, there is something better than just getting by. There is hope born of the knowledge that God's justice is just.

“For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:30-31). This text has often been used in an effort to flog the unsaved into action. But remember, these words are found in a passage which refers directly and specifically to Christians! It is “*His people*” whom the Lord will judge (10:30). But the big news is that this is a word designed to draw you to God in confidence, not drive you from God in dread. For Christians who trust and obey Him, falling into the hands of the living God will be a glorious experience.

After King David had sinned in his numbering of the people, he was asked to choose between

three forms of judgment. His wise reply, based upon previous experience with the grace of God, led him to say, “*Let us now fall into the hand of the Lord for His mercies are great*” (2 Samuel 24:14). When that question is put to us, into whose hands would we rather fall? Those of our fellow humans? Or those of our God from whom no one can pluck us away?

Before whom would we rather stand in judgment? Our fellow man? Or the One who says, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay*”? While it’s true no flimsy excuse, or pleading of the fifth amendment will get us by on that occasion, one thing is sure: God’s justice is just!

This is our hope. Jesus will see us through. He not only knows what we do, but why. He knows those things which inhibit faith. He knows the glandular excesses which make some so nervous they just cannot rest in Him. He knows the physical deficiencies which make some so morose they cannot enjoy their walk in the Spirit. He knows the ebb and flow of bodily functions so characteristic of this complicated piece of fleshy plumbing in which our spirit dwells, a tidal cycle so violent at times we are wholly preoccupied with ourselves. He knows all of that.

I remember talking with a leading psychiatrist in Chicago. He had a beautiful office on the twentieth floor of a building overlooking a park and Lake Michigan. It offered a spectacular view of water, flowers and trees. As we chatted about the kind of helping ministry that might occur through a wedding of his discipline and mine, he commented on this turned-in-ness of people. “You know, John, there are some folk who, when they come in to see me, are so distressed, so preoccupied with themselves and their feelings, they can look out this window at this magnificent view and never even see it.”

How many times have you been so caught up in distress of soul you weren’t aware the sun was shining? Or the flowers growing? Or the birds singing? Well, our Lord, who knows the end from the beginning and everything in between, is aware of the factors affecting faith. He knows those childhood influences which so brutalize some people they are plagued by feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure and dread of life in general until it’s virtually impossible for them to

experience even a modicum of the joy and peace Jesus came to give.

I'm grateful the One who will judge me is Jesus. I'm glad it is God's hand into which I shall fall. For if there's anything I know to be absolutely certain, it's this: God's great longing is to be our Friend as well as our Father. If we come to Him by faith, claiming the cleansing He offers, falling into His hands, the hands of our living and loving Lord, will be a holy and healing experience.

Looking Backward And Forward Is A Wise Way To Keep Moving Forward

“But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 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 an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (10:32-39).

With what comfort and encouragement this admonition closes! Our author completes the sandwich: compliment, correction, compliment. As in chapter 6:9-12, he ends chapter 10 on a hopeful note. He is a Good News man.

He says to his struggling, fellow sinner-saints, “Remember the days of old. Remember your first love. Remember the absolute confidence you had that anything was possible through Christ. Rekindle your first love if it has grown cold. Remember the joy of your earlier years of sacrifice and service. Recall how you came through the severest tests with flying colors.

“Don't sell yourself short. Don't believe the devil's lie that the worst things about you are the

only true things about you. In the past, you met grievous challenge to your faith, stood firm and won. Your hope of heaven helped you then. Let it help you now. Throw off your current spiritual indolence. Get caught up in the growing process again. Be an imitator of those who through faith gained the golden crown. And you, too, will reap a harvest of inexpressible joy.”

The writer of Hebrews doesn’t stop with this appeal to a backward look. He urges them to take a forward look also. They are to be retro-spective. To remember how far they’ve come in Christ and to gain encouragement from that. But they are also to be pro-spective. They must remember where they are headed and be inspired by that. “Jesus is coming soon,” he says. “You’ll not have long to wait. In view of that fact, hang tough! Evaluate everything in the light of His coming. Keep your record behind you, your hope before you, and you will emerge from the tests through which you are now passing stronger and better than ever.

Need I point out the message in that for us today? Jesus is coming soon. I know some doubters argue that Christians have been claiming this for 2,000 years, and that two millennia ago Christ said He would come back soon and He isn’t here yet. They infer this promise cannot be trusted. But as God measures time, in which a thousand years are as a day, it’s been less than two days since Jesus said He would return shortly! He hasn’t broken His promise. Yet a little while and He will come. Keep that fact in mind. Look forward. Learn to live with eternity’s values in view and you’ll be liberated from the tyranny of the present.

While you’re looking forward, look backward. Remember where you were when you began the Christian life and how far you’ve come by the grace of God. Gain encouragement from that. Don’t throw away your confidence. Throw off your spiritual sluggishness. Keep the faith, and with it, confidence in Christ. Claim His sacrifices as wholly adequate for your sin. In this way, you’ll be able to anticipate His coming as an occasion of joy, not judgment.

When George Mallory, the famed mountain climber, failed to return from his fatal attempt at conquering Mount Everest, a group of newsmen asked the other climbers what had happened to

him. I was greatly impressed with their reply. They said: “When last seen, he was still going strong toward the top.” God grant that we may possess the grace of continuance so that when our days on earth are done, it also may be said of each of us, “He perished in the pursuit of his goal. He was pressing onward. His face was upward. His heart was set on conquering. And when last seen, he was still going strong toward the top.”

Notes

1. Theodore H. Robinson, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), p. 144.
2. From “Sorrows of God” by G. A. Studert- Kennedy, quoted in Pulpit Digest, February, 1956.