

10:19–21 *The New and Living Way*

The Inner Tabernacle Is Faith.

Ephrem the Syrian: “Therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the sanctuary,” which is faith. In his blood he renewed for us the way of faith that the former priests had already. But since it had become obsolete among them, he renewed it for us at that time “through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.” Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.¹⁹

Come to Me!

Symeon the New Theologian: The people I am speaking about, whom I call heretics, say there is no one in our time among us who is able to keep the gospel commandments and become like the holy fathers. Such a person would be, first of all, one who is faithful and active—for faith is shown through works,²⁰ as the likeness of a face is shown through a mirror. Further, this person would be both the greatest of contemplatives and one who sees God, by being illumined, obviously, and receiving the Holy Spirit, and through him seeing the Son together with the Father. Well then, those who say that this is impossible possess not one particular heresy but all of them, if I may say so, because this one outdoes all of those and covers them with irreverence and excess of blasphemy. The one who makes this heretical claim overthrows all the divine Scriptures. I think this vain person is saying that the present reciting of the holy Gospel is in vain, and affirms solemnly that the reading of the writings of Basil the Great and the rest of our priests and holy fathers is in vain, or even that they were written in vain. If, then, the things which God says, all of which all the saints first practiced and then also wrote about and left for our instruction²¹—if these things are impossible for us to do in deed and to keep completely, why is it that those folks labored and wrote about them back then and they are now read in church? Those who are saying these things are shutting heaven, which Christ opened for us, and they cut off the ascending path to that place which he himself inaugurated for us. For even though God, who is above all,²² stands on high at the gate of heaven, as it were, and peers out and is seen by the faithful, and through the holy Gospel cries out and says, “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,”²³ these enemies of God, or rather, enemies of Christ, are saying, “This is impossible, impossible!” Discourse 29.4.²⁴

The Veil of Flesh Is Lifted Up.

Chrysostom: “For the entrance into the sanctuary.” What does he mean here by “entrance”? Heaven and the access to spiritual things. “Which he opened,” that is, which he prepared and which he began. For the beginning of using is thereafter called the opening, which he prepared, he means, and by which he himself passed. “The new and living way.” Here he expresses “the full assurance of hope.” “New,” he says. He is anxious to show that we have all things greater; since now the gates of heaven have been opened, which

was not done even for Abraham. “The new and living way,” he says, for the first was a way of death, leading to Hades, but this of life. And yet he did not say, “of life,” but called it indeed “living” namely, that which persists by God’s own command. “Through the curtain,” he says, “of his flesh.” ... And with good reason did he call the flesh “a curtain.” For when it was lifted up on high, then the things in heaven appeared. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 19.2.25

Uniting the Ancient People and the Gentiles.

Athanasius: If any of our own people inquire, not from love of debate but from love of learning, why he suffered death in no other way save on the cross, let them also be told that no other way than this was good for us, and that it was well that the Lord suffered this for our sakes. For if he came himself to bear the curse laid upon us, how else could he have “become a curse” unless he received the death set for a curse? And that is the cross. For this is exactly what is written: “Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree.”²⁶ Again, if the Lord’s death is the ransom of all, and by his death “the dividing wall of hostility”²⁷ is broken down, and the calling of the nations is brought about, how would he have called us to him had he not been crucified? For it is only on the cross that a man dies with his hands spread out. Thus it was fitting for the Lord to bear this also and to spread out his hands, that with the one he might draw the ancient people and with the other those from the Gentiles and unite both in himself. For this is what he himself has said, signifying by what manner of death he was ransom to all: “I, when I am lifted up,” he says, “will draw all men to myself.”²⁸ For the devil, the enemy of our race, having fallen from heaven, wanders about our lower atmosphere and there, bearing rule over his fellow spirits, as the devil’s peers in disobedience, not only works illusions by their means in them that are deceived but tries to hinder them that are going up. About this the apostle says, “Following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience,”²⁹ while the Lord came to cast down the devil and clear the air and prepare the way for us up into heaven, as said the apostle, “Through the curtain, that is to say, his flesh”—and this must be by death. Well, by what other kind of death could this have come to pass than by one which took place in the air, I mean, the cross? For only he that is perfected on the cross dies in the air. Therefore, it was quite fitting that the Lord suffered this death. For thus being lifted up, he cleared the air of the malignity both of the devil and of demons of all kinds, as he says, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,”³⁰ and made a new opening of the way up into heaven, as he says once more, “Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors!”³¹ For it was not the Word himself that needed an opening of the gates, being Lord of all; nor were any of his works closed to their maker; but it was we who needed it, whom he carried up by his own body. For as he offered it to death on behalf of all, so by it he once more made ready the way up into the heavens. On the Incarnation 25.³²

The New Way Is Always Recent.

Photius: He says, "recent,"³³ lest anyone say, "Then if it is recent, it too will cease; for it will age and grow old and it will also be destroyed like that of the old testament." Not in the least, he says. But since it is always recent, it remains new and will be "living," for it never receives death and destruction. Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.20.³⁴

The House of God.

Oecumenius: He calls the faithful "the house of God" in accordance with the passage of Scripture that states, "I will dwell among them and walk in their midst."³⁵ Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.21.³⁶

The True Tabernacle Is Christ.

Gregory of Nyssa: Taking a hint from what has been said by Paul, who partially uncovered the mystery of these things, we say that Moses was earlier instructed by a type in the mystery of the tabernacle that encompasses the universe. This tabernacle would be "Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God," who in his own nature was not made with hands, yet capable of being made when it became necessary for this tabernacle to be erected among us. Thus, the same tabernacle is in a way both unfashioned and fashioned, uncreated in preexistence but created in having received this material composition. Life of Moses 2.174.³⁷

Conversing in Another Fashion.

Isaac of Nineveh: But now, when He has poured out his grace upon the world through His own Coming, He has descended not in an earthquake, not in a fire, not in a terrible and mighty sound,³⁸ but "as the rain upon a fleece, and rain-drops that fall upon the earth"³⁹ softly, and He was seen conversing with us after another fashion. This came to pass when, as though in a treasury, He concealed His majesty with the veil of His flesh and among us spoke with us in that body which His own bidding wrought for Him out of the womb of the Virgin, even Mary the Theotokos. All this He did so that, on beholding Him Who was of our race conversing with us, we should not be smitten with terror by the vision of Him.

Wherefore every man has put on Christ when he is clothed with the raiment wherein the Creator was seen through the body that He put on. For the likeness in which He was seen by His own creation and in which He kept company with it, He willed to put on in His inner man, and to be seen therein by His fellow-servants.⁴⁰ Instead of a robe of honor and outward glory, He was arrayed in this. When rational and irrational creation beholds any man clad in this likeness, it worships him as master, for the sake of its own Master's honor, Whom it beheld clad and walking therein. For what creature does not feel reverence at the spectacle of a humble man? And yet until the glory of humility was revealed to all, this vision which is

filled with holiness was held in disdain. But now its majesty has dawned on the eyes of the world, and every person honors this likeness in every place where it is seen. In this mediator, creation has been counted worthy of receiving the vision of its Creator and Maker. Wherefore not even by the enemies of the truth is it despised; and even if he who has acquired it is the most impoverished of all creation, yet by it he is honored as though by the diadem and the purple. *Ascetical Homilies 77.*⁴¹

10:22 *Full Assurance of Faith*

Let Us Draw Near to Faith.

Chrysostom: “Let us draw near,” he says, “with a true heart.” To what should we “draw near”? To the holy things, the faith, the spiritual service. “With a true heart, in full assurance of faith,” since nothing is seen, neither the priest henceforward, nor the sacrifice, nor the altar. And yet neither was the Old Testament priest visible, but stood within, and they all without, the whole people. But here not only has this taken place, that the priest has entered into the Holy of Holies, but that we also enter in. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 19.2.⁴²

Water Purifies, the Spirit Seals.

Cyril of Jerusalem: For since a person’s nature is twofold, compounded of soul and body, the purification is also twofold, incorporeal for the incorporeal part, bodily for the body. For as the water purifies the body, so the Spirit seals the soul, that having our hearts sprinkled and our bodies washed with clean water, we may draw near to God. Therefore, when about to enter the water, do not regard it as mere water, but look for its saving power by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, for without both you cannot be made perfect. It is not I who say this, but the Lord Jesus, who has the power in this matter, says, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”⁴³ Neither does he who is baptized but has not been deemed worthy of the Spirit possess perfect grace; nor will one who acts virtuously, but does not receive the seal by water, enter into the kingdom of heaven. This may appear a bold saying, but it is not mine, for it was Jesus who pronounced it. *Catechetical Lectures 3.4.*⁴⁴

10:23–25 *Stir Up One Another*

Doing Has Greater Force for Instruction Than Speaking.

Chrysostom: “For he who promised is faithful.” “Promised” what? That we are to depart from here and enter into the kingdom. Do not then be over-curious nor demand reasonings. Our religion needs faith. “And,” he says, “let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day

drawing near.” And again in other places, “The Lord is at hand; have no anxiety about anything.”⁴⁸ “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”⁴⁹

What is, “not neglecting to meet together”? He knew that much strength arises from being together and assembling together. “For where two or three,” it is said, “are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them”;⁵⁰ and again, “That they may be one, even as we are”;⁵¹ and, “They were of one heart and soul.”⁵² And not this only, but also because love is increased by our gathering together, and, because love is increased, the things of God must follow. “And earnest prayer,” it is said, was “made by” the people.⁵³ “As is the habit of some.” Here he not only exhorted but also blamed them.

“And let us consider,” he says, “how to stir up one another to love and good works.” He knew that this also arises from “meeting together.” For as “iron sharpens iron,”⁵⁴ so also association increases love. For if a stone rubbed against a stone sends forth fire, how much more will soul mingled with soul! But not unto emulation, he says, but “unto the sharpening of love.” What is this? It means to love more, and to be loved more. “And good works,” that so they might acquire zeal. For if doing has greater force for instruction than speaking, you also have in your number many teachers who effect this by their deeds. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 19.2–3.⁵⁵

Love Is a Highway That Leads to Virtue.

Chrysostom: This then let us “confirm” toward each other. “For love is the fulfilling of the law.”⁵⁶ We have no need of labors or of sweating if we love one another. It is a pathway leading of itself toward virtue. For on the highway, if one finds the beginning, he is guided by it and has no need of one to take him by the hand. So is it also in regard to love. Only lay hold on the beginning, and at once you are guided and directed by it. “Love does no wrong to a neighbor”⁵⁷ and “thinks no evil.”⁵⁸ Let each person consider how he is disposed toward himself. He does not envy himself. He wishes all good things for himself. He prefers himself before all. He is willing to do all things for himself. If then we are so disposed toward others also, all grievous things are brought to an end; there is no enmity; there is no covetousness, for who would choose to overreach himself? No one. On the contrary, we shall possess all things in common and shall not cease assembling together. And if we do this, the remembrance of injuries would have no place, for who would choose to remember injuries against himself? Who would choose to be angry with himself? Do we not make allowances for ourselves most of all? If we were thus disposed toward our neighbors also, there will never be any remembrance of injuries. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 19.4.⁵⁹

Exercise Improves Strength.

Chrysostom: Christ asks nothing impossible, seeing that many have even gone beyond his commands. Who has done this? Paul, Peter, all the company of the saints. Hardly. If I say that they loved their

neighbors, I say no great matter, but they have loved their enemies. They have loved them even more than those who would think like themselves. For who would choose for the sake of those like-minded, to go away into hell when he was about to depart for a kingdom? No one. But Paul chose this for the sake of his enemies, for those who stoned him, those who scourged him. What pardon then will there be for us, what excuse, if we shall not show toward our friends even the very smallest portion of that love which Paul showed toward his enemies?

And before him too, the blessed Moses was willing to be blotted out of God's book for the sake of his enemies who had stoned him. David also, when he saw those slain who had stood up against him, said, "I, the shepherd, have sinned, but these, what have they done?"⁶⁰ And when he had Saul in his hands, he would not kill him but saved him—and this when he himself would be in danger.⁶¹ But if these things were done under the old covenant, what excuse shall we have who live under the new covenant and do not attain even to the same measure with them? For if, "unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will never enter the kingdom of heaven,"⁶² how shall we enter when we have even less than they?

"Love your enemies," he says.⁶³ Love your enemy, therefore, for you are doing good not to your enemy but to yourself. How? You are becoming like God. One whom you love has no great gain, for he is loved by a fellow servant; but you, in loving your fellow servant, have gained much, for you are becoming like God. Do you see that you are being kind not to him but to yourself? For he appoints the prize not for him but for you.

What if he is evil, you say? So much greater is the reward. You ought to feel grateful to him for his wickedness, even if he continues in his evil despite receiving ten thousand kindnesses. For if he were not exceedingly evil, your reward would not have been exceedingly increased.... That he is evil is the very reason for loving him. Take away the contestant, and you take away the opportunity for the crowns. Do you not see how the athletes exercise when they have filled the bags with sand? But there is no need for you to practice this; life is full of things that exercise you and make you strong. Do you not also see that the trees, the more they are shaken by the winds, become ever stronger and firmer? We then, if we are longsuffering, shall also become strong. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 19.4–5.⁶⁴

They Do Not Permit Any Fault.

Photius: "Let us stir up one another," concerning those things whose meddlesomeness and inquiry and observation sharpen us in love and edification. And they do this who do not permit any fault concerning one another but receive everything (even whatever things seem to be worse) for the good and the better. Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.24.⁶⁵

The Comfort of the Assembly.

Photius: “But encouraging.” Whom? ⁶⁶ “Their gathering together,” that is, one another. For that is how “the gathering together” is commonly understood. And the comfort of the assembly becomes for them a way to be eagerly renewed and in a short space of time. Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.25.⁶⁷

10:26–27 A Fearful Prospect of Judgment

Yet Another Chance of Repentance.

Clement of Alexandria: So a person who has received pardon for sins must refrain from future sin. For in the light of the first and only repentance of sins—sins committed earlier in a person’s first, pagan life, I mean, a life led in ignorance—repentance is immediately available to those who are called, and it cleanses the region of the soul from anything discordant to provide a foundation for faith. The Lord, “who knows the heart,” ² and foreknowing all that is going to happen, has a foreknowledge from the very first of human instability and the devil’s crooked villainy. [The Lord has knowledge] of how the latter is jealous of the forgiveness of human sins and, by his mischievous calculations to induce them to share in his fall, will introduce other occasions for God’s servants to sin.

So in his great mercy he gave yet another chance of repentance to those who, despite their faith, fall into some form of disharmony, so that if anyone should, after their calling, fall into temptation and be forced or tricked into sin, they may have one more chance of “a repentance that brings no regret.” ³ “For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries.” Continual and repeated repentance for sins is no different from those who have once and for all turned away from faith, except alone in the consciousness of sin. I do not know which is worse: deliberate sin, or, after repentance for sin, offending again.... To repeat an action repented is a deliberate accomplishment of an action already condemned. Stromateis 2.13.56–57.⁴

A More Wrathful Judgment.

Basil the Great: Each one should conciliate, as far as he is able, anyone at variance with him. He should not hold past wrongs against the repentant sinner but from his heart should pardon him. ⁵ He who says that he repents of his sin should not only feel remorse for the sin which he has committed but should also bring forth fruits befitting repentance. ⁶ If he who has been corrected for his first sins and has been deemed worthy of pardon again falls, he prepares for himself a more wrathful judgment. Letter 22.⁷

No Longer Refers to Christ's Sacrifice.

Chrysostom: At this place we are again assailed by those who take away repentance as well as by those who delay to come to baptism. The one says that it is not safe to come to baptism, since there is no second remission. The other asserts that it is not safe to impart the mysteries to those who have sinned, if there is no second remission. What shall we say then to them both? The Lord does not thrust away or cast down those who are fallen into despair. Nor does he take away repentance or the propitiation itself through an act of repentance. He is not thus an enemy of our salvation. But what means "no longer"? He takes away the second washing. For he did not say that no more is there repentance or no more is there remission, but "no longer" is there a "sacrifice"; that is, there is no need for a second cross. For this is what he means by sacrifice. "For by a single offering," he says, "he has perfected for all time those that are sanctified,"⁸ unlike the Jewish rites. For this reason he has so consistently shown, concerning the sacrifice, that it is one, and one only. This calls us to be more steadfast. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 20.2.⁹

He Does Not Destroy the Possibility of Repentance.

Oecumenius: He did not speak of people who have sinned, but he addressed the reckless and desired to admonish those who wish to remain in sin until the end. Hence it is especially clear that he does not destroy the possibility of repentance. Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.26.¹⁰

10:28–29 Outraging the Spirit of Grace

A Different Dispensation.

Origen: According to the law, "the adulterer and the adulteress were put to death."¹³ They could not say, "We seek repentance and we pray for mercy." There was no place for tears, and no opportunity was granted for any correction, but in every way it was necessary for those who had contravened the law to be punished. This was observed in certain individual offenses for which the death penalty was ascribed. But among Christians, if adultery has been committed, the precept is not that "the adulterer and adulteress" be punished by the destruction of the body. No power was given to episcopal authority to sentence an adulterer to immediate death, as had happened earlier according to the levitical law who gave this power to elders. What does this mean? That while the law of Moses takes adultery seriously enough to punish it unmercifully, the gospel of Christ through gentleness frees the adulterer to go from bad to worse? It is not so. For this reason, we brought forth the word of Paul, saying above, "How much worse punishment will be deserved by one who has spurned the Son of God," etc. Hear, therefore, how neither was the law cruel then, nor does the gospel now appear dissolute because of the abundance of

mercy, but in both instances the benevolence of God is held in a different dispensation. Homilies on Leviticus 11.2.4.¹⁴

Considering the Gospel to Be Equal.

Ephrem the Syrian: And who have “outraged the Spirit of grace,” which is in us? These are the people who consider the gospel to be equal to the law of Moses. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.¹⁵

Old Reproaches Return.

Origen: But if you sin again, the old reproaches return again against you and all the more so, since it is a much greater crime “to spurn the Son of God and to profane the blood of the covenant” than to neglect the law of Moses. Homilies on Joshua 5.6.¹⁶

10:30–34 A Hard Struggle with Sufferings

Think Lightly of Wealth and Honor.

Chrysostom: Knowing then these things, let us be patient when we suffer evil and forthright in offering kindness. This is all the stronger if we think lightly of wealth and honor. He that has stripped himself of those affections is of all people most generous and wealthier even than he who wears the purple. Do you not see how many evils come through money? I do not say how many through covetousness, but merely by our attachment to these things. Just think of one who loses his money and leads a life more wretched than any death. Why do you grieve, my friend? Why do you weep if God has delivered you from excessive watching? Better that you come before God in fear and trembling. Again, if someone might chain you to a treasure, commanding you to sit there perpetually and to keep watch for other people’s goods, you are grieved, you are disgusted. But would you, having been bound with these chains, grieve when you yourself are delivered from the slavery? On the Epistle to the Hebrews 20.5.¹⁷

The Devil Causes Losses to Impel Us to Blasphemy.

Chrysostom: These things I say to the overreaching, and it is well to say them also to those who are overreached. Bear their overreaching generously; they are ruining themselves, not you. They indeed defraud you of your money, but they strip themselves of the good will and help of God. And he that is stripped of that, though he clothe himself with the whole wealth of the world, is of all people most poor, just as he who is the poorest of all, if he has God’s help, is the wealthiest of all. For “the Lord,” it is said, “is my shepherd, and I shall lack nothing.”¹⁸ Tell me now, if you had had a husband, a great and admirable man, who thoroughly loved you and cared for you, and then you knew that he would live always and not die before you and would give you all things to enjoy in security as your own, would you then have wished

to possess anything? Even if you had been stripped of all, would you not have thought yourself the richer for this?

Why then do you grieve? Because you have no property? But consider that you have had the occasion of sin taken away. Or do you grieve because you had property and have been deprived of it? But remember that you have acquired the good will of God. And how have I acquired it, you say? He has said, "Why do you not rather suffer wrong?"¹⁹ He has said, "Blessed are they who bear all things with thankfulness."²⁰ Consider therefore how great a good you will enjoy, if you show forth those things by your works. For one thing only is required from us, "in all things to give thanks"²¹ to God, and then we have all things in abundance. I mean, for instance, have you lost ten thousand pounds of gold? Give thanks unto God, and you have acquired ten times ten thousand, by that word and thanksgiving.

For, tell me, when do you account Job blessed? When he had so many camels and flocks and herds, or when he uttered that saying: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away"?²² Therefore also the devil causes us losses, not that he may take away our goods only, for he knows that is nothing, but that through them he may compel us to utter some blasphemy. So in the case of the blessed Job too, the devil did not strive after this only to make him poor but also to make him a blasphemer. At any rate, when he had stripped him of everything, observe what he says to him through his wife, "Curse God, and die."²³ And yet, O accursed one, you had stripped him of everything. "But," he says, "this is not what I was striving for, for I have not yet accomplished that for which I did it all. I was striving to deprive him of God's help... This is what I wish, the other is nothing. If this be not gained, he not only has not been injured at all, but has even been benefited." Do you see that even that wicked demon knows how great is the loss in this matter? On the Epistle to the Hebrews 20.7–8.²⁴

After Discouraging Them.

Ephrem the Syrian: Then, after he discouraged them from sinning, Paul returned to talk to them about the first topic, that is, that of the joy which was at the beginning of their discipleship. "Recall," he says, "the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings." Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.²⁵

He Did Not Say "Temptations" but "Struggle."

Chrysostom: The best physicians, after they have made a deep incision and have increased the pains by the wound, soothing the afflicted part and giving rest and refreshment to the disturbed soul, proceed not to make a second incision but rather soothe that which has been made with gentle remedies and such as are suited to remove the violence of the pain. This Paul also did after he had shaken their souls and pierced them with the recollection of hell and convinced them that he who does insult to the grace of God must

certainly perish. After he had shown from the laws of Moses that they also shall perish ... and had said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," then, lest the soul, desponding through excessive fear, should be swallowed up with grief, he soothes them by commendations and exhortation and gives them zeal derived from their own conduct. For, he says, "recall the former days, when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings." Powerful is the exhortation from deeds already done, for he who begins a work ought to go forward and add to it. It is as if he had said, when you were brought in to the church, when you were in the rank of learners, you displayed such great readiness, such great nobleness. But now it is no longer so. And he who encourages thus especially encourages them from their own example.

And he did not simply say, "you endured a struggle" but a "hard" struggle. Moreover he did not say "temptations" but "struggle," which is an expression of commendation and of very great praise. Then he also enumerates them particularly, amplifying his discourse and multiplying his praise. How? "Sometimes," he says, you are "being publicly exposed to reproaches and affliction." Reproach is a heavy weight and calculated to pervert the soul and to darken the judgment. The prophet remembers those who "say to me continually, 'Where is your God?' " ²⁶ ... For since the human race is exceedingly vainglorious, it is easily overcome by this. And he did not simply say "by reproaches," but that even with greater intensity, being "publicly exposed." For when a person is reproached alone, it is indeed painful, but far more so when in presence of all. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 21.1.27

Shame Taken Away by Baptism.

Ephrem the Syrian: Now "exposures to abuse and persecutions" they had to endure, because the law imposed on them the requirement to reveal their sins over their offerings. However, these exposures to abuse discouraged people from revealing their sins. These difficulties, he says, that you had in revealing your sins, and the shames that prevented you from revealing them, these fumes of the consciousness, which were like fierce pains and great sufferings of bitterness—all these have been taken away from you through the baptism of the waters and with the single expiation that you received. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.²⁸

As Noble Wrestlers You Stood.

Chrysostom: I cannot say, he says, that you suffered these things indeed and were grieved, but you even rejoiced exceedingly. He expressed this by saying, "You became partners with those so treated," and he brings forward the apostles themselves. Not only, he means, were you not ashamed of your own sufferings, but you even shared with others who were suffering the same things. This too is the language of one who is encouraging them. He said not, "Bear my afflictions, share with me," but respect your own.

“You had compassion on those who were bound.” You see that he is speaking concerning himself and the rest who were in prison. Thus you did not account “bonds” to be bonds, but you stood as noble wrestlers. For not only did you need no consolation in your own distresses, but you even became a consolation to others. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 21.2.²⁹

10:35–37 *Do Not Throw Away Your Confidence*

These Things Bestow Confidence on Us.

Photius: “Do not throw away your confidence,” your boldness based on your works, based on your faith, based on your periods of testing, based on your endurance. For these things bestow great confidence on us, that we will obtain the promise. Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.35.³⁰

Do Not Fret Over Losing What Does Not Need to Be Held Fast.

Chrysostom: In the next place, having praised them, he says, “Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.” What do you mean? He did not say, “you have cast it away, and recovered it.” Rather he tended more to strengthen them when he says, “you have it.” For to recover again that which has been cast away requires more labor, but not to lose that which is held fast does not. To the Galatians he says the very opposite, “My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you,” and he says this with good reason, for they were more indifferent and needed a sharper word. These, however, were more faint-hearted, so that they rather needed what was more soothing. “Therefore do not throw away,” he says, “your confidence,” so that they were in great confidence toward God. “Which has,” he says, “a great reward.” “And when shall we receive them?” someone might say. “Behold! All things on our part have been done.” Therefore he anticipated them on their own supposition, saying in effect, if you know that you have in heaven a better substance, seek nothing here. “For you have need of endurance,” not of any addition to your labors, that you may continue in the same state, that you may not throw away what has been put into your hands. You need nothing else but to stand as you have stood, that when you come to the end, you may receive the promise. “For,” he says, “you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.” You have need of one thing only, to bear with the delay, not that you should fight again. You are at the very crown, he means. You have borne all the combats of bonds, of afflictions; your goods have been spoiled. What then? Henceforward you are standing to be crowned. Endure this only—the delay of the crown. Oh, the greatness of the consolation! It is as if one should speak to an athlete who had overthrown all and had no antagonist and then was to be crowned but could not show up for the ceremony in which the president of the games comes and places the crown upon him. Instead, he is so impatient that he wishes to go out

and escape, as though he could not bear the thirst and the heat. He then also says, so as to hint in this direction: “Yet a little while and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry.”³² For lest they should say, “And when will he come?” he comforts them from the Scriptures. For thus also when he says in another place, “salvation is nearer,”³³ he comforts them, because the remaining time is short. And this he says not of himself but from the Scriptures. But if from that time it was said, “Yet a little while and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry,” it is plain that now he is even nearer. On the Epistle to the Hebrews 21.3.34

The Will of God.

Photius: “The will of God” is to believe sincerely in him and to do virtuous deeds and to contend for them even to the point of blood when the time calls. For such people “receive what is promised.”³⁵ Fragments on the Epistle to the Hebrews 10.36.36

10:38–39 *Live by Faith*

The Soul Becomes Just by Sharing in the Better One.

Augustine: “Faith working through love,”⁴² comes not so much by fearing punishment as by loving justice. Still, as the soul does not become just except by sharing in the better one who justifies the ungodly—for what has it that it has not received?⁴³—it ought not to glory as if it had not received it, by attributing to itself what comes from God. That is why it was said to him, “Be not high-minded, but fear.” And that fear is also commanded for those who live by faith and are heirs of the new covenant, being “called to freedom.” Letter 140.21.44

Clad in Justice.

Augustine: “No man living is righteous before you,”⁴⁵ yet “the righteous one lives by faith.” The saints are clad in justice,⁴⁶ one more, another less; yet no one lives here without sin. In this also, one more, another less, but he is best who has least sin. Letter 167.13.47

Founded on Faith.

Augustine: What is closer to your ears than a heart that is penitent and a life founded on faith? Confessions 2.3.5.48

The Just Believe What They Cannot See.

Augustine: Will there be any of us bold enough to say, “I am just”? I assume, after all, that “I am just” amounts to the same thing as “I am not a sinner.” ... Here we are with people who have been justified from their sins. We can’t deny it. There remains, however, the struggle with the flesh, there remains the struggle with the world, there remains the struggle with the devil. When you are struggling, you

sometimes hit, sometimes you get hit; sometimes you win, sometimes you're done for; it remains to be seen how you leave the stadium. Because "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 49 Again, if we say we have no justice at all, we are telling a lie about God's gifts. You see, if we have no justice at all, we have no faith either; and if we have not faith, we are not Christians. But if we do have faith, we already have at least some justice. Do you want to know how much that "some" is? The just live by faith. The just, I repeat, live by faith, because they believe what they cannot see. Sermon 158.4.50

Until They Are Brought Face to Face.

Augustine: This justice is the grace of the New Testament, by which the faithful are just while they live by faith until, by the perfection of justice, they are brought to the face-to-face vision, as they are also equally brought to immortality of the body itself by the perfection of salvation. Hence, in another place the apostle says, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." And then he adds, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin"—that is, a sacrifice for sin, for in that law offerings made for sins were called sin—"so that in him we might become the righteousness of God," 51 that is, in his body, which is the church, of which he is the head, that we may be the justice of God. Letter 140.30.52

We Have Faith Instead.

Ephrem the Syrian: The just one lives when endurance and faith are found in that one. But if somebody is oppressed by doubts and scruples, because the rewarder did not appear, "my soul has no pleasure in him" on that day.

But we are not victims of scruples, which destroy our path to heaven and "bring us to perdition"; we have faith instead, through which we obtain "the salvation of our soul." Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.53