

“Call To Remembrance”

“But call to remembrance the former days in which after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of suffering; partly, being made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly becoming partakers with them that were so used. For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession, and an abiding one. Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb. 10:32-34).

This lengthy quotation begins with these words: *“Call to remembrance the former days.”* We are called to remember things: how we look (Jam. 1:26); the suffering of Christ (1 Cor. 11:24); the poor (Gal. 2:10); and the words of Christ (Acts 20:35). Here, as noted already, the Hebrews were called to remember the *“former days.”* These *“former days”* were *“after they had been enlightened.”* To have been enlightened meant simply they had come to understand. The writer does not specify what they had come to understand -- such would have been redundant. Their enlightenment was the full discovery and appreciation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since the letter was to Hebrews (Jews) and apparently to those of Jerusalem, the former days would be direct allusion to the days of the early church, recorded (at least in part) by Luke in Acts 2-8. What a glorious, exciting time it must have been to have been a part of those early disciples who perhaps heard Peter’s grand Pentecost sermon and witnessed the daily additions to the church (Acts 2:47).

Amid those warm and happy memories of the early days and rapid growth of the church were other memories; memories which brought stabs of pain by calling them to mind. For amid the “heyday” of the rapid advance of the gospel were those recollections of how quickly Satan -- our great adversary -- had brought suffering and trials to those first Christians in Judaea. Many years later Jesus would unveil, through John, similar memories to the churches of Asia. As the Lamb opened the seven seals, the first seal was a white horse, whose rider had a bow and who came forth *“conquering and to conquer”* (Rev. 6:2). As the Hebrew letter recalls the gospel as it was first preached in Jerusalem, so John records the spread of the gospel through Asia, primarily through the tireless efforts of the Apostle to the Gentiles. The opening of the second seal revealed a red horse whose rider took peace from the earth, and had a great sword with which he slew mankind (Rev. 6:4). Satan never takes lightly the spread of the gospel. He has many weapons in his arsenal: opposition, compromise, complacency, and he does not shrink to use any of them in his war against the Lamb. Early Christians, both in

Jerusalem and Asia, experienced one of his first weapons of opposition: tribulation and suffering.

Hebrew Christians were to remember they had endured a great conflict of suffering: they had been made a *gazingstock*, partly by reproaches and afflictions. A "*gazingstock*" means one who has become publicly displayed in a demeaning way: such is Satan's tactics. Shame and embarrassment cause both discouragement and sometimes abandonment. These tools Satan easily used, first on the apostles, then later on the disciples. The phrase "*reproaches and afflictions*" spells out the growing intensity of pressure placed on the brethren. The apostles were first threatened, and when that failed to stop their preaching, were beaten (Acts 4:21; 5:40). At this time persecution seemed to have been confined to the apostles: the authorities hoped to intimidate the multitude by giving them a silent warning of what might likewise happen to them. It was not until it was apparent that the apostles had no intention of ceasing their preaching that the fury of the authorities turned upon the disciples. With the death of Stephen (Acts 7) a great persecution arose against the church which was in Jerusalem. The Hebrew writer's exhortation to call to remembrance the former days brought floods of memories of those persecutions and the dispersion of disciples throughout the region. A natural thought after the lapse of many years would be, "Was it worth it?" Would not Satan's nagging, jarring whisper be, "Of course not. You suffered needlessly." He whispers the same to us today. Oh Christian, heed not his voice. It is worth it. The inviting, open door of heaven, with its invitation of rest and peace, tells us "Heaven will surely be worth it all."

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