

The Strong Consolation

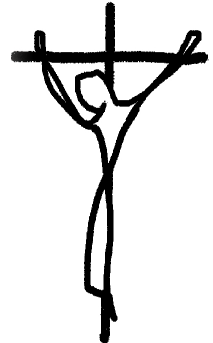
Hebrews 10,35-39. *Do not, therefore, throw away your confidence, for it carries a great reward. You need endurance (patience) in order to do God's will and win what he has promised. [For, in the words of scripture:] "In a very little while, the one who is coming will come; he will not delay; but my justified one will live by trust; but if he shrinks back my soul takes no pleasure in him." But we are not those who shrink back and are lost, but those who trust and are saved.*

Dear friends!

Success is the order of the day. Much current Christian preaching and literature seems to imply that we also need to be "good" successful Christians, living a "biblical" version of "the seven habits of highly effective people" or similar recipes. Even the above text can be read in this success-driven mode: "Make sure you have strong, committed faith, and you will be saved."

But, what if you are not such a success, in spite of your honest attempts at being a Christian? What if you are not the John Wayne of the Faith? Are you then one of "the lost", one of those who "shrink back" and in whom the "soul" of the Lord "takes no pleasure"? Is the text urging us just to jump higher, to shore up more brownie points, to make an even greater effort at "doing it yourself"? No! This is not the Christian message, is not the "full" Gospel! There is no consolation in it.

The strong consolation of the Gospel comes to us in a rather other way. When we hear the surprising message of our text from the letter to the Hebrews we have the **confidence**, of which it speaks (verse 19). This confidence comes from the message that through Christ's blood, we have free access to the throne of God's grace. Using the symbolic language of Hebrews, Christ Jesus has, by dying on the cross, made the supreme sacrifice that was needed for us to be reconciled to God, and the letter emphasises that this was done "once and for all", no repeats necessary, nothing that needs to be added, it is done. Our salvation has been accomplished. This is the cause for our confidence, and the letter urges us not to throw away this confidence, not to shrink back from this freedom, not to give up our trust in this amazing grace.



But how can one shrink back from "trust"? Well, there are two main ways of "shrinking back" from trust: