

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 The function of Heb 1:1-10:31 in relation to perseverance

Before summarizing what we discovered in our analysis of 10:32-13:25, we try to understand what is the function of 1:1-10:31 in relation to the theme of perseverance and how it is related to 10:32-13:25.

1. First of all, the major exhortations found in 1:1-10:31 (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-31) seem to set the tone of the whole passage and have a practical purpose to encourage the readers to persevere in their pilgrimage of faith. This theme of perseverance becomes much more predominant in 10:32-13:25. Especially 3:7-4:13 seems to set out the so-called "pilgrim motif,"¹ which gives a basic rationale for the exhortations. The readers are exhorted to reach the final goal called the "rest"² (4:1, 6, 9, 11) by persevering in their pilgrimage to the end.

From this perspective, the following phrases and sentences become more intelligible: "We must pay more careful attention ... to what we have heard, so that we must not drift away" (2:1); "how shall we escape if we ignore such a great

¹ For a detailed treatment of this "pilgrim motif", see Käsemann (1961, 5-39); Kim (1993, [1]-21, 48-83).

² This ultimate goal of believers are called by different names such as "homeland," "city," or "kingdom" later in chaps. 11-13.

salvation?" (2:3); "fix your thoughts on Jesus" (3:1; cf. 12:2, 3); "if we hold on to our courage and the hope" (3:6); "See to it ... that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God" (3:12; cf. 10:38, 39; 12:25); "so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (3:13); "if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (3:14); "let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it" (4:1; cf. 12:15); "Let us ... make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (4:11); "let us hold firmly to the faith we profess" (4:14); "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence" (4:16); "let us ... go on to maturity" (6:1); "it is impossible ..., if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance" (6:4-6); "We want each of you to show the same diligence to the very end" (6:11); "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (6:12; cf. 13:7); "he will appear a second time ... to bring salvation to those who are 'waiting for' (cf. ἀπεκδεχομένους) him" (9:28);³ "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (10:22); "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23); "Let us not give up meeting together ..., but let us encourage one another ... as you see the Day approaching" (10:25).

2. The fact that the readers are pilgrims who are still on the way helps us to understand the exhortations to perseverance

³ Even Jesus does "wait for" (ἐκδέχομαι) the consummation since his exaltation (10:12-13; cf. 1:13).

because temptations and sufferings, which tend to make pilgrims to fall back or shrink back, are inherent in the pilgrimage. To highlight the dangers inherent in the pilgrimage a negative example of Israel's wilderness generation who were not able to enter the promised rest because of their "unbelief" (ἀπιστία) (3:19) is given in 3:7-4:13. This warning also serves a positive purpose of encouraging perseverance on the part of the readers.

Temptations and sufferings inherent in the pilgrimage are introduced by the following expressions: "drift away" (2:1); "ignore" (2:3; cf. 12:25); "suffer death" (2:9, 14; 5:7); "suffering" (2:10; 5:9); "fear of death" (2:15);⁴ "being tempted" (2:18; 4:15); "a sinful, unbelieving heart" (3:12); "be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (3:13); "sin" (3:17; cf. 12:1, 4); "disobey" (3:18); "unbelief" (3:19); "disobedience" (4:6); "fall" (4:11); "our weakness" (4:15); "fall away" (6:6; cf. 13:9); "crucifying" (6:6); "public disgrace" (6:6; cf. 10:33; 13:13); "become lazy" (6:12); "give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing" (10:25; cf. 12:15).

3. In this tempting and dangerous environment it is imperative to have someone ready to help in the time of need (4:16). This help comes from Jesus who helps as the "great high priest" (4:14). The readers need to hold on to what they have in Jesus. The exposition on the high priesthood of Jesus in the central part (4:14-10:31) provides motivation to the exhortation to perseverance. Because we have such "a merciful

⁴ Cf. frequent references to "suffering," "death" and their related terms in 10:32ff., especially in chap. 11.

and faithful high priest" (2:17), we have all the reason to persevere in our pilgrimage until we actually receive the ultimate salvation at the consummation.

"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he [Jesus] is able to help those who are being tempted" (2:18). Jesus is able to "sympathize with our weaknesses" because he "has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin" (4:15). Because he suffered death and destroyed the power of death (2:9, 14), he is able to "free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (2:15).⁵ If we come to Jesus, we may "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (4:16; cf. 7:26).

4. Jesus is the "author" or "initiator" (*ἀρχηγός*) of the salvation of the readers (2:10; cf. 12:2) as well as the "source" (*αἴτιος*) of eternal salvation (5:9). He is the "forerunner" (*πρόδρομος*) (6:20) who went first and then expects his people to follow him. He is the Firstborn (1:6) who is the head of "the church of the firstborn" (12:23). He is "heir of all things" (1:2) who makes it possible for us to "inherit salvation" (1:14; cf. 6:12; 9:15; 10:34). He is exalted to the right hand of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 9:11; 9:24; 10:12; 12:2; cf. 4:14; 7:26) and "now crowned with glory and honor" (2:9). As the exalted Son of God, he will "bring many sons to glory" (2:10), that is, he will "bring salvation to those who are waiting for him" (9:28) at his second coming (9:28; cf. 10:25, 37). Jesus is "one who is holy" (7:26), who "makes men holy"

⁵ Note references to the resurrection in 6:2; 11:35; cf. 11:19; 13:20.

(2:11; 10:10, 14; cf. 13:12).

Jesus has obtained "eternal redemption"⁶ (9:12; cf. 7:25) and has become the guarantee and mediator of "a better covenant"⁷ (7:22; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) which is based on "better sacrifices" (9:23) and "better promises" (8:6) and thus gives "better hope" (7:19). It is evident that the believers, like faithful men of old, did not yet reach the ultimate goal of our pilgrimage (cf. 11:40). Nevertheless, we can follow him confidently because in him we have "something better" (11:40), which encompasses everything that is described above with an adjective "better."

Jesus not only sets up the goal for which we should strive and initiates our pilgrimage of faith, but also guarantees that this pilgrimage can be successfully finished by first reaching the goal himself. Furthermore, he provides us with "something better" so that we may have a ready help from him and be encouraged in our pilgrimage.

5. Jesus remains the same (1:11-12; 7:4, 16, 24-25; cf. 13:8). Specifically he is shown to be faithful (2:17; 3:2, 5) as God is (10:23; 11:11; cf. 13:5). His faith in God (2:13; cf. 12:2) is shown to be the key to his faithful perseverance. As we have seen in our previous analysis (10:32-13:25), "faith" is the ground and means for perseverance. The importance of πίστις is well underscored by frequent references to it (4:2, 14; 6:1,

⁶ Cf. "eternal salvation" in 5:9 and "eternal inheritance" in 9:15.

⁷ Cf. "eternal covenant" in 13:20.

12; 10:22; cf. 10:38-39; chap. 11; 12:2; 13:7)⁸ and its counterpart ἀπιστία (3:12, 19). In 6:12 πίστις once occurs together with the word "patience" (μακροθυμία).⁹

6.2 The reasons for the call to perseverance

1. "Why do the readers have to persevere?" The answer is, simply put, because they have not yet reached the ultimate goal of their pilgrimage. They are still on the way. To reach the goal of the pilgrimage, which is expressed in many ways in Hebrews (e.g., "rest" in 3:7-4:13, "a city" in 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14, "a homeland" in 11:14, 16, "an unshakable kingdom" in 12:28), they must persevere to the end.

Using a different metaphor, the readers are reminded that they are involved in an athletic contest (cf. 10:32-34; 12:1-4, 11-13).¹⁰ This athletic metaphor may be related to the imagery of pilgrimage in the sense that people are engaged in activities requiring perseverance to achieve definite goals. The implication is that the readers are still in the race or fighting, which can be won only by overcoming impediments through perseverance.

2. However, why didn't God make the readers reach this

⁸ Cf. πιστεύω in 4:3.

⁹ Cf. μακροθυμέω in 6:15; ὑπομονή in 10:36; 12:1; ὑπομένω in 10:32; 12:2, 3, 7; καρτερέω in 11:27.

¹⁰ For example, see the references to "contest" (ἄθλησις) in 10:32, "publicly expose" (θεατρίζω) in 10:33; "run" (τρέχω) and "race" (ἄγών) in 12:1, "struggle" (ἀντικαθίστημι) and "resist" (ἀνταγωνίζομαι) in 12:4, "train" (γυμνάζω) in 12:11. Also 12:1-3 and 12:12-13 are full of terms fitting for the race: e.g., ὄγκος, κάμνω, ἐκλύω, παρήγημι, παραλύω, ἀνορθόω, τροχία, ὀρθός, χωλός, ἐκτρέπω.

ultimate goal in Jesus? Ultimately, the answer can be found only in the divine plan. "God has planned ... so that only together with us would they [the faithful men of old] be made perfect" (11:40). The readers are still on the way like the faithful men of old even though they now enjoy "something better" (11:40). God left the readers as "aliens and strangers on earth" (11:13) as the patriarchs were. The divine plan is to make perfect all his people throughout the redemptive history only at the consummation. Even the believers living after Christ's first coming have the ultimate goal (which is called "the promise" in 10:36) only in the form of the promise.

3. Another reason for the necessity of perseverance is that temptations and sufferings, which may easily detract the pilgrims and make them fall away, are inherent in the pilgrimage.¹¹ To overcome these temptations and sufferings, the readers are in need of perseverance.

First, the readers may become weary and aimless in their journey (cf. 12:3, 12-13) and lacking in "confidence" (*παρρησία*) (cf. 10:35). Perhaps this symptom could be caused by the delay of the parousia (cf. 10:37). Or their initial enthusiasm for Christianity may be simply flagging as time goes on (cf. 10:25). Exhaustion under persecution may be another factor. We do not know the exact reason, but it seems certain that they may suffer from moral lethargy in their pilgrimage. They should be awakened from this malaise to persevere in their pilgrimage.

¹¹ Cf. 12:5-11 where suffering is considered to be an inherent part of the believers' sonship.

Second, besides this moral lethargy the readers may possibly be drawn to external cultic provisions based on the old covenant regulations. From that perspective we may more easily understand why the author deprecates the old covenant in absolute terms¹² (7:11-12, 18-19; 8:5, 7, 13; 9:9-14, 10:1-4, 11-12, 18; 13:9-14) while he emphasizes the benefits and privileges of the new covenant.¹³ The negative exhortations¹⁴ seem to be better understood under the assumption that the readers are inwardly pulled toward the cultic provisions of Judaism.¹⁵ However, we may find little concrete clue (except a hint at 13:9) to whether there is any external coercion to

¹² Cf. Lehne (1990, 103), who seems to rightly comment that attempts to explain away the author's deprecating treatment of the old covenant "simply as a foil for the writer's theological exposition" are not adequate. He continues that explanations only in terms of waning faith are "not sufficient to diagnose the predicament of the addressees nor to explain the author's mode of reply" (1990, 121).

¹³ Note that these are expressed in the same old covenant cultic terms. It is confidently affirmed that they have a heavenly sanctuary, a great high priest, an altar and sacrifices, all of which belong to a different order.

¹⁴ For example, exhortations "not to shrink back" (*ὑποστέλλω* in 10:38 and *ὑποστολή* 10:39), "not to refuse God who speaks" (*παραιτέομαι* in 12:25), "not to turn away from God" (*ἀποστρέφομαι* in 12:25), "not to apostatize" (*ἀφίστημι* in 3:12), "not to fall away" (*παραπίπτω* in 6:6), "not to be carried away by various strange teachings" (*παραφέρω* in 13:9); cf. "not to drift away" (*παραρρέω* in 2:1), "not to ignore" (*ἀμελέω* in 2:3), "not to be strengthened by [ceremonial] foods" (*βεβαιῶ* in 13:9), "not to fall short of" or "lack" (*ὑστερέω* in 4:1; 12:15). These may refer to moral lethargy, but the context of their occurrences seems to suggest that the readers may be in danger of turning back to Judaism.

¹⁵ For the detailed treatment of this hypothesis, see chapter 2 on rhetorical situation of the readers.

Judaism from the Jews¹⁶ or conservative Jewish Christians¹⁷ (either within or without their community).

Third, inner moral lethargy and possibly, temptation to return to Judaism seem to be intensified because of suffering and persecution coming from outside. The fact that the readers are under extreme pressure of persecution may be inferred from the emphasis on "death" and its related concepts.¹⁸ One of the underlying themes of chaps. 11 and 12 is that faith even conquers death.¹⁹ As already hinted at in 10:38, 39 (ζῶω and περιποίησις ψυχῆς) it is again emphasized later that suffering would not bring death, but life (ζῶω in 12:9) to those who "endure hardship as discipline" (12:7), fixing their eyes on

¹⁶ Cf. Lehne, who thinks that Jews may have accused Christians of "atheism, based on the absence of visible cultic institutions, officials and symbols" (1990, 120).

¹⁷ Cf. Lehne (1990, 103-104), who thinks that it is plausible that certain Jewish Christians "are hoping for (or already practicing) a kind of visible replacement of the Levitical cult" arguing from the OT that "Christianity continues the Levitical heritage." He further explains that this kind of pressure from certain Jewish Christians may have caused the author "to meet these opponents on the same ground and presents his own (prior) convictions about the Christ event by appealing to the OT and portraying Jesus as a priestly covenant mediator."

¹⁸ Cf. Gordon, who comments: "The 'fear of death' evidently was regarded by the author as a sizeable obstacle to a continuing commitment on the part of readers" (1991, 435).

¹⁹ Cf. ἀποθνήσκω in 11:4, 21, θάνατος in 11:5, νεκρῶω in 11:12, νεκρός in 11:19, 35, τελευτάω in 11:22, "the mouths of lions" in 11:33, "the fury of flames" and "the edge of the sword" (στόματα μαχαίρης) in 11:34, "torture" (τυμπανίζω) in 11:35, "stone" (λιθάζω), "saw in two" (πρίζω), "murder by the sword" (φόνος μαχαίρης) in 11:37, "cross" (σταυρός) in 12:2, "blood" (αἷμα) in 12:4, and "suffer" (πάσχω) in 13:12; cf. "destruction" (ἀπώλεια) in 10:39, "destroy" (ὀλοθρεύω) in 11:28, "drown" (καταπίνω) in 11:29, "destroy together" (συναπόλλυμι) in 11:31; also note the related concept of "not fearing" [death] (οὐ φοβέομαι) in 11:23, 27; 13:6.

Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (12:2).

Another condition of the readers which the author wants to address may be that of social alienation. Both the readers' previous example of persevering sufferings in 10:32-34 and the examples in chap. 11 who gladly accepted the status of aliens and strangers on the earth (11:8-10, 13-16, 24-27, 37b-38; cf. 13:13-14²⁰) appear to have their intention in encouraging the readers not to evade but to accept the same suffering and alienation²¹ as sojourners on the earth. Jesus is the supreme example of perseverance who accepted suffering for the joy set before him (12:2-3). He set the pattern of the pilgrimage, that is, the principle that the crown (exaltation) comes only after the cross (humiliation).²² As there is no glory without the cross, so there is no reaching the goal without persevering suffering and alienation.

6.3 The motivations for perseverance

²⁰ The cultic context of 13:9-14 supports Lehne's comment: "In fact, he [the author] assures them [the readers] that they can view their shame and abuse as cultic service in light of the shameful sacrifice of Christ (13.12-13; cf. 12.1-4)" (1990, 121). Then Christian sacrifices will include "praise," "good works and fellowship," and "shame and abuse suffered for Christ's sake."

²¹ See the references to "abuse" (ὄνειδισμός) in 10:33; 11:26; 13:13, "persecution" (θλίψις) in 10:33, "prisoner" (δέσμιος) in 10:34; 13:3, "prison" (φυλακῆ) and "bonds" (δεσμά) in 11:36, "confiscation" (ἀρπαγῆ) in 10:34, "endure hardship with" (συγκακουχέομαι) in 11:25, "mistreat" (κακουχέω) in 11:37; 13:3, "release" (ἀπολύτρωσις) in 11:35, "release" (ἀπολύω) in 13:23, "jeering" (ἐμπαιγμός) and "flogging" (μάστιξ) in 11:36, "go about" (περιέρχομαι), "be in want" (ὑστερέω) and "persecute" (θλίβω) in 11:37, "wander" (πλανάω) in 11:38, "shame" (αἰσχύνη) in 12:2, "opposition" (ἀντιλογία) in 12:3.

²² Cf. 2:9; 2:14-15; 5:7-10.

1. Both positive and negative examples are given to motivate the readers to persevere in their pilgrimage. The author employs the positive examples of the readers' own positive behavior (6:10-12; 10:32-34). He also employs positive examples of the faithful men of old (11:1-40; 12:1), Jesus (12:2-3) and the leaders of the community (13:7, 17). The author exhorts the readers to persevere until they reach the ultimate goal by remembering and considering²³ what those exemplars did and thus imitating²⁴ their faith and perseverance²⁵ shown in their lives.

Negative examples are also used to encourage perseverance by underscoring the serious consequences of apostasy (12:15-17, 25; cf. 3:7-4:13). In view of such dire consequences the readers are exhorted to do the opposite of those negative examples.

2. The future expectations²⁶ which will be the results of perseverance serve as a basic motivation for perseverance. The ultimate goal, which is both heavenly and future, is described

²³ For example, exhortations to "remember" (ἀναμιμνήσκομαι in 10:32 and μνημονεύω in 13:7), "consider" (ἀναλογίζομαι in 12:3 and ἀναθεωρέω in 13:7), "fix one's eyes on" (ἀφορᾶω) in 12:2. At the same time the readers are exhorted to think about God's faithfulness, power and encouraging word: "consider" (ἡγέομαι) in 11:11, 26, "reason" (λογίζομαι) in 11:19, not to "forget" (ἐκλανθάνομαι) in 12:5.

²⁴ Cf. "imitate" (μιμέομαι) in 13:7; also μιμητής in 6:12.

²⁵ Cf. "faith" (πίστις in 10:38-39; chap. 11; 12:2; 13:7; cf. 4:2; 6:1, 12; 10:22; πιστεύω in 11:6; cf. 4:3), "perseverance" (ὑπομονή in 10:36; 12:1; ὑπομένω in 10:32; 12:2, 3, 7; καρτερέω in 11:27).

²⁶ Cf. "earnestly seek" (ἐκζητέω) in 11:6, "look forward to" (ἐκδέχομαι) in 11:10, "look for" (ἐπιζητέω) in 11:14; 13:14, "long for" (ὀρέγομαι) in 11:16, "look ahead to" (ἀποβλέπω) in 11:27.

in a most positive way so that the readers may be motivated to persevere in pursuing that goal. The knowledge²⁷ of this glorious ultimate goal (cf. 10:34) will motivate them to persevere. This ultimate goal that the readers will achieve at the end of the pilgrimage²⁸ is described as "reward" (10:35; 11:26; cf. 11:6), "a city" (11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14), "a homeland" (11:14), "an unshakable kingdom" (12:28; cf. 1:8), "joy" (12:2; cf. 10:34; 12:11; 13:17), "a better and lasting possession" (10:34), "the promise" (10:36; 11:13, 39), "life" (10:38-39; 12:9), "a better resurrection" (11:35b; cf. 13:20). This is also called "rest" (3:7-4:13; cf. Matt 11:28), that is, "rest" from suffering and "desert works" or "good works."

Furthermore, the Day when Jesus will come again and the ultimate goal will be a reality is not far away and is sure to come. The Day is approaching (10:25). In just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay. He will appear a second time ... to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him (9:28).

The certainty that the readers will reach the ultimate goal of their pilgrimage is also a motivation for perseverance. This is underscored by the terms describing Jesus such as *μεσίτης*²⁹ (8:6; 9:15; 12:24), *ἔγγυος* (7:22), *ἀρχηγός* (2:10), *αἵτιος* (5:9), *πρόδρομος* (6:20) and *ἀρχηγός καὶ τελειωτής τῆς*

²⁷ This includes both the perception of the future hope and the perception of the invisible reality, which are made possible by faith.

²⁸ This will correspond with "Christ's second coming" (10:37; cf. 9:28; 10:25).

²⁹ Louw & Nida (1988, 368) comments that *μεσίτης* has an "implication of guaranteeing the certainty of agreement."

πίστεως (12:2). Jesus is not only the mediator and the guarantee of the new covenant, but is he also the author and source of eternal salvation. He is our forerunner. He is the initiator and perfecter of faith. All these terms imply that Jesus the great Shepherd will surely bring his sheep to glory in due time if we keep our faith. Jesus is the model to follow, but he is more than that. He is the source and ground of all believers' faith. The certainty of reaching the ultimate goal encourages the readers to respond to Jesus in faith and motivate them to persevere in their faith-race.

3. The benefits and privileges realized in Jesus serve as a motivation for perseverance. To motivate the readers to persevere in their faith-race, the author reminds them of the benefits and privileges and urges them to hold³⁰ what they have. Because of what Christ has done on the cross, the readers who believe have "something better" (11:40) than the faithful men of old. Confident and direct access to God³¹ is now available through the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus. They are now free from a guilty conscience since their sins are forgiven once and for all.

These benefits were elaborated in the central part of Hebrews, which is framed by exhortations to draw near to God (4:14-16; 10:19-25). The readers have a heavenly great high

³⁰ For example, see the exhortations to "hold fast" (κατέχω in 3:6, 14; 10:23, or κρατέω in 4:14; 6:18) - "confidence" (παρρησία), "assurance" (ὑπόστασις), "hope" (ἐλπίς) and "confession" (ὁμολογία); also "we have" (4:14-15; 6:19; 8:1; 10:19, 21; 13:10).

³¹ Cf. προσέρχομαι in 4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:22, or ἐγγίζω in 7:19.

priest (4:14-15; 7:26; 8:1; 10:21; cf. 13:10), and a better covenant (7:22; 8:6; cf. 12:24; 13:20), which is inaugurated by "a better sacrifice" (9:23; cf. 12:24). This christology of Hebrews gives ample motivation to persevere, and as such, it is the author's response to the readers' situation which requires perseverance. If they do not understand the uniqueness and the accompanying privileges of the new covenant community, they will sooner or later neglect or even abandon their unique position as a new covenant community.

4. Because of these realized benefits it can be said that the readers indeed have come to the ultimate goal of their pilgrimage proleptically in worship (12:22-24, 28; 13:15). They come to worship collectively as a community. This community is a new covenant community, which is still a cultic one like that of the old covenant. Because of Christ's sacrifice which inaugurated the new covenant, they are now a community which is cleansed, washed and made holy. As 12:22-24 clearly shows, the new covenant community is a cultic community and will remain as such until the consummation. As Johnsson aptly summarizes, they are an eschatological "cultic people, purged by the blood of Jesus, on the way to the city, now experiencing proleptically the joys of the worship amid the cultus of heaven" (1978, 246-47). In their worship they give thanks (12:28) and praise (13:15) through Jesus. There is every motivation to remain in this cultic community and persevere until they actually reach the ultimate goal.

5. These greater benefits and privileges which the readers now can appropriate and enjoy are accompanied by greater

responsibilities. The ultimate goal becomes their possession only if the readers persevere to the end. If not, there remains only an expectation of judgment³² instead of reward. The only alternative to reward is judgment. This negative aspect (fear of God) also serves as a motivation to persevere (2:1-4; 3:7-18; 4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31, 38-39; 12:14-17, 23, 25, 29; 13:4, 17).

6. Another motivation to persevere comes from the fact that suffering and persecution are the evidence of God's love towards his sons. The readers are sons of God, not in spite of, but because of suffering and persecution (12:5-8). The more trained through suffering and persecution, the more they will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace (12:11) and eventually share God's holiness and life (12:9, 10). As the Son also "learned" (*μανθάνω*) obedience from what he suffered (5:8) and was then exalted to the right hand of the throne of God (12:2), so also sons must be "trained" (*γυμνάζω*) (12:11) through what they suffer and then share the glory of the Son (2:10). The readers are given a motivation to endure hardship as "discipline" (*παιδεία*)³³ (12:7) because discipline comes from God who loves his sons (12:4-11).

6.4 Means of perseverance

1. One of the means of perseverance is to pay attention to

³² Cf. 6:2, 8; 9:27; 10:27, 29-31; also references to "account" (*λόγος*) in 4:13; 13:17.

³³ Cf. *παιδεία* in 12:5, 7, 8, 11, *παιδεύω* in 12:6, 7, 10, *παιδευτής* in 12:9, "rebuke" (*ἐλέγχω*) in 12:5, "punish" (*μαστιγῶ*) in 12:6.

the word of God³⁴ and combine it with faith (4:2). Remembering and heeding to the word of God (specifically, both the promises and threats) will enable the readers to persevere. The negative example of the wilderness generation and most of the positive examples of faithful men of old as well as many quotations are from the Old Testament. For example, the quotations in 10:37-38, 12:5-6 and 13:5-6 surely encourage the readers to persevere when faced with suffering and temptation. Also in 12:5 the readers are implicitly rebuked and urged to remember "the word of encouragement" (cf. 13:22) as written in the Old Testament but reinterpreted within a Christian context, so that they may endure hardship as discipline (12:7).

The readers can also persevere by giving heed to the exhortations given by the author. In 10:32ff. we find many exhortations to perseverance which include the followings: "Remember those earlier days" (10:32); "do not throw away your confidence" (10:35), "You need to persevere" (10:36); Do not "shrink back" (10:38-39); "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked for us" (12:1); "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus" (12:2); "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men" (12:3); "Endure hardship as discipline" (12:7); "strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees" (12:12); "Make level paths for your feet" (12:13); "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy" (12:14); "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and

³⁴ This word of God is actually the gospel word as spoken in Jesus Christ (cf. 1:1-3; 2:1-4; 4:2, 12; 12:24-27; 13:7).

that no bitter root grows up" (12:15); "See that no one is sexually immoral, or godless like Esau" (12:16); "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks" (12:25); "let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (12:28); several practical exhortations in 13:1-5; "Remember your leaders ... Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (13:7); "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings" (13:9); "Let us go to him outside the camp" (13:13); "let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise" (13:15); "do not forget to do good and to share with others" (13:16); "Obey your leaders and submit to them" (13:17). Taking heed to this "word of exhortation" (13:22) will help the readers to persevere in their faith-race.

2. The best means of perseverance is to fix eyes on Jesus (12:2-3; cf. 3:1) and come to him by faith to receive mercy and grace to help the readers in time of need (4:16; cf. 10:22; 13:6). He is the only one who can equip them with everything good for doing the will of God. Only when he works in the readers, can they do what is pleasing to God (13:21). Jesus is the Son who is exalted to the right hand of God and also the great (merciful and faithful) high priest who "always lives to intercede for them" (7:25).

If expressed otherwise, it can be said that the readers can persevere by means of holding fast to the christological confession. As we have already seen when we studied the macrostructure of Hebrews, the central part of Hebrews (4:14-10:31), which emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood and serves as the basis for the exhortations, is surrounded by

a ring composition.³⁵ The parallel passages (4:14-16 and 10:19-23), which form a ring around the second main part, explicitly exhort the readers to hold fast to the "confession" (ὁμολογία) they already made. "Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess" (4:14). "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23).

3. There are only a few references to faith before 10:32, but when faith is introduced in relation to perseverance in 10:32-39 and expanded in chap. 11, it reveals its significance as the foundation and means of perseverance. Faith is the underlying basis for perseverance. Faith makes possible or produces perseverance. Faith is to be worked out (or demonstrated) in the real life through persevering actions, which involve obeying God's will and thus pleasing God and receiving his attestation. Faith concretely expresses itself in perseverance. So only those who live out their lives by faith (that is, act upon faith) persevere in their pilgrimage because faith enables the readers to overcome the impediments in the pilgrimage by making the invisible visible and at the same time makes the future present. In short, perseverance is made possible by faith and on the basis of faith.³⁶

The ultimate ground of faith is God, his power to fulfill his promises (cf. 11:10, 16, 19; 13:6, 20) and his faithfulness in fulfilling his promises (cf. 10:36; 11:6, 11, 40; 12:22-24, 26-27; 13:5). Above all, God proved his faithfulness in sending

³⁵ The details can be found in chapter 3.

³⁶ See the excursus on "faith of Jesus" in chapter 5, where it is maintained that faith is the basis of even Jesus' perseverance.

his Son for his people. The fact that Jesus demonstrated his faith in God by persevering even the cross and achieved the goal of his faith-race (that is, the session at the right hand of the throne of God) confirms the faithfulness of God. The same God will make sure believers' entering the rest and their receiving the promise at the second coming of Jesus.

Faith in Jesus (who first showed his obedience to God by doing the will of God and thus pleased God) is not explicitly developed, but is assumed throughout Hebrews. Jesus who remains the same (13:8; cf. 1:11-12; 7:25) is the source of eternal salvation (5:9) and is the initiator and perfecter of faith (12:2). He makes our faith possible. Faith in Jesus is developed starting from the faith of Jesus in God (who made it possible for Jesus to become the initiator and perfecter of faith). Faith in Jesus is necessarily entailed by faith in God.

4. Even though the readers are still walking on earth, they proleptically participate in the coming city through worship. This proleptic participation, which was realized in Christ (12:22-24), is not only a motivation for perseverance as we have already seen, but also a means of perseverance. By giving thanks (12:28) and offering a sacrifice of praise (13:15) through worship, they are enabled to persevere in their pilgrimage of faith. By gathering together in worship they can persevere. That is why the author exhorts the readers not to give up meeting together (10:25).

The importance of worship and prayer as a means of perseverance is also underscored by the ring composition surrounding the second main part (4:14-10:31). The readers are

explicitly exhorted to "approach" (προσέρχονται) the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace in time of need (4:16 and 10:22).

5. The readers are still on the way to the future ultimate goal which is described as "rest," "city," etc. It has already been pointed out that the ultimate goal serves as a motivation for perseverance. Recognizing, looking forward to, looking ahead to, looking for and longing for this ultimate goal becomes an active means of perseverance.

The readers could persevere because they knew that they had "a better and lasting possession" (10:34). Abraham could persevere, "for he was looking forward to the city with foundation" (11:10). The patriarchs could persevere admitting that they were "aliens and strangers on earth" (11:13) because "they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one" (11:16). Moses persevered "because he saw him who is invisible" (11:27) and "because he was looking ahead to his reward" (11:26). "Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection" (11:35). Jesus also endured the cross "for the joy set before him" (12:2). Believers can go to Jesus "outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (13:13) because they "are looking for the city that is to come" (13:14).

6. In their pilgrimage to the ultimate goal they can persevere by doing things which will please God. These may be called "desert works" or "good works." By demonstrating their faith by the concrete expressions of "doing good" (εὐποιία) and

"sharing" (κοινωνία) (13:16),³⁷ they can not only persevere in their own pilgrimage, but also contribute to the perseverance of the whole community (cf. 10:33-34; 13:1-3). This emphasis on the practical working out of faith³⁸ in the community life (that is, the God-pleasing lifestyle of the believers) is pervasive in 12:14-13:17. These are the sacrifices with which God is pleased. God is pleased when they actually do his will.³⁹ Doing good works (6:10-11; 10:24; 13:1-6, 16) in the worshipping community is indeed an active means of perseverance.

In summary, the author does his best to persuade the readers to persevere by faith in their pilgrimage to the ultimate goal. Perseverance is made possible by faith. The readers can persevere: 1) by paying careful attention to the word of God as well as "the word of exhortation" of the author and combining them with faith, 2) by coming (or going out) to Jesus (who is the initiator and perfecter of faith) in faith

³⁷ Cf. "partner" (κοινωνός) in 10:33, "sympathize" (συνπαθέω) in 10:34, "fellow prisoners" (συνδεδεμένοι) in 13:3; also cf. ἔργον and ἀγάπη in 6:10; 10:24.

³⁸ Note the exhortations not to "forget" (ἐπιλανθάνομαι) in 13:2, 16; also the exhortations to "pursue" (διώκω) in 12:14, "be thankful" and "worship God acceptably" in 12:28, "continue" (μένω) in 13:1, "remember" (μιμνήσκομαι) in 13:3, "let ... be" ([ἔστω]) in 13:4-5, "offer to God a sacrifice of praise" and "'praise' (ὁμολογέω) his name" in 13:15, "imitate" (μιμῆομαι) in 13:7, "be equipped with everything good for doing his will" in 13:20; cf. holiness 12:10, 14-16; 13:4-5; peace 12:11, 14; also cf. Lehne's comment that the proleptic participation of the readers in "an utterly new, heavenly cult ... empowers them to concrete expressions of communal confession/prayer and neighborly acts of service, endurance and suffering" (1990, 124).

³⁹ Cf. θέλημα in 10:36; 13:21; cf. 10:7, 9, 10; also εὐαρεστέω in 11:5, 6; 13:16; εὐάρεστος in 13:21; εὐαρέστως in 12:28; εὐδοκῶ in 10:38; cf. 10:6, 8.

and holding fast to the christological confession, 3) by gathering together for worship to give thanks and offer a prayer and a sacrifice of praise to God, who is the ultimate ground of faith, 4) by recognizing, looking forward to and longing for the ultimate goal of the faith-race, 5) by actively doing good works in the worshipping community, which is made possible by God through Jesus Christ.