

**The Danger of Rejecting God's Son
Hebrews 10:26-31**

Let me ask you a question. In respect to God's future judgment of the unsaved, who will suffer the most?

Will it be the unsaved person who had never heard the gospel?

Will it be the unsaved person who had heard the gospel but who then quickly rejected the gospel?

Or will it be the unsaved person who initially gave the appearance of having embraced the gospel but who then later chose to reject it?

I believe the scriptures are clear: It will be unsaved person who initially gave the appearance of having embraced the gospel but who then later chose to reject it. It is this person who will suffer the most in respect to God's future judgment.

This truth I believe will come alive for us this morning as we once again return back to our study of Hebrews. And as this truth comes alive for us this morning I would hope that God would use this truth to challenge us, to be even more determined to hold fast to our confession of faith in the gospel of Christ, knowing that if we do not do so, not only will our lack of perseverance expose us as a false disciple of Christ but it will also result in a far more severe future judgment. So where are we now in respect to our study of Hebrews?

As you remember the Book of Hebrews was written to a group of struggling Hebrew believers, living in Rome, who under a great persecution, were in danger of turning away from Christ and returning back to Judaism.

And how did the author of this book counter this danger? The author countered this danger by focusing on Christ's superiority.

He first of all focused on Christ's superiority to prophets, then to Moses, then to angels and finally he focused on the superiority of Christ's priesthood over all other priesthoods, which concluded with a section that emphasized Christ's superior sacrifice.

After this, the author based on Christ's superior priesthood, as well as His superior sacrifice, began to string together in **Hebrews 10:19-25** three different exhortations, these three exhortations not only served as a capstone for what he had just said about Christ's superior priesthood and His superior sacrifice but also as a point of transition, from the former doctrinal emphasis of this epistle to a more practical emphasis. **So what are these three exhortations?**

The first exhortation is this: **"Let us draw near."** This exhortation can be found in **Hebrews 10:22**.

So what is the point of this exhortation **"to draw near"** to God? These readers were in danger of falling away from Christ and returning back to Judaism but this possibility did not have to become their reality. And why was this? It was because Christ the superior high priest, who had offered up His superior sacrifice, had made it possible for all those who had exercised faith in Christ to continuously draw near to God and to his throne of grace, so that they might receive grace to help in the time of their need. So what was their need? This question brings us to the second exhortation? And what is the second exhortation?

The second exhortation is this: **"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope."** This exhortation can be found in **Hebrews 10:23**.

So why did this author think that these struggling Hebrew believers needed to draw near to God to receive His grace? They needed to draw near to God to receive His grace so that they, rather than falling away, might be able to hold fast to their confession of faith in the Gospel of Christ, firm until the end.

And what would put these struggling Hebrew believers in the very best position to receive this grace from God, so that they, rather than falling away, might be able to hold fast to their confession of faith in the Gospel firm until the end? This question brings us to the third exhortation. And what is the third exhortation?

The third exhortation is this: **“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works.”** This exhortation can be found in **Hebrews 10:24.**

So how can we put ourselves in the very best position to receive God’s grace so that we might be able to hold fast our confession of faith, firm until the end? We need to be considering how to stimulate one another to love and good works, knowing that as we do this, and as more and more of our church members are actually becoming committed to these very things, we will of course be in a far better position, by the grace of God, to hold fast our confession of faith, firm until the end.

In **Hebrews 10:19-25** we have considered three different exhortations but though they are different they are all tied together. For each of these exhortations was given to help these struggling professing Hebrew believers to continue to hold on to Christ and His gospel so that in doing so they would not fall away to something else, which in this case would have been Judaism or at least some form of it. **So why was this so important to this author that they would not fall away from Christ and His gospel?**

MESSAGE

This question brings us to **Hebrews 10:26-31**, which is the passage that we will be examining this morning. So now let me read this passage for you and this is what it says, **“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a 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 (29) 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? (30) For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ (31) It is a terrifying thing to call into the hands of the living God.”** So do these verses answer the question of why it was so important to this author that his readers would not fall away from Christ and His gospel to something else, which in this case would have been Judaism or some form of Judaism? Absolutely! And I believe as we examine these verses this will all become clear to us. So now let us look more closely at these verses.

So what are these verses all about? Hebrews 10:26-31 is a warning against the sin of **apostasy**.

So what does apostasy mean? The Greek word translated “apostasy” (APOSTASIA) means defection, departure, revolt or rebellion.

So with this definition in mind what would constitute the sin of apostasy based on these verses that we just read? This would be the sin: When a professing Christian in essence departs from Christ and His Gospel, manifesting that departure by choosing a life of **willful** disobedience, that professing Christian is in the process of committing the sin of apostasy. And it is this sin that this author clearly has in mind in this warning passage even though he did not choose to use the specific word “**apostasy**” within this passage. So now let us take a closer look at these verses and see if this is not so. And we will begin with **verse 26**, “**For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.**” So based on this verse what do we learn about the sin of apostasy?

Based on Hebrews 10:26 the sin of apostasy cannot take place unless two basic components are present. So what is the first component?

The first basic component of the sin of apostasy is having received the **knowledge** of the truth (Hebrews 10:26b). So where do we find this first basic component? We find this first basic component in the middle part of **verse 26** where the author established for his readers the fact that before a person can leave something, and thus be accused of having committed the sin of apostasy, they must first of all have received something or at least have given the appearance of having received something. And what is this something based on the middle part of **verse 26**? It is “**the knowledge of the truth!**”

So what is this phrase “**the knowledge of the truth**” referring to? Let us first of all look at the word “knowledge.” The Greek word for knowledge (EPIGNOSIS) that the author used in verse 26 denotes full knowledge, understanding and discernment or in other words a sufficient knowledge.

So now we know what the author meant by his use of the word “knowledge.” He meant a full or sufficient knowledge of the truth. But what was the author referring to when he referred to “the truth?”

When the author spoke of “the truth” he was referencing the truth of the **gospel**. We know this because the scriptures are clear that apart from faith in the gospel of Christ, no one can be saved. What did the Apostle declare in **Romans 1:16**? **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”**

So once a person has received the knowledge of “the truth” or in other words has given the appearance of such, they are now in a position to commit the sin of apostasy.

So if you understand what I have just said and you agree with what I have just said, could an unbeliever who had never heard the gospel become an apostate? No! Could an unbeliever who had heard the gospel but who had never fully understood the gospel become an apostate? No! Could an unbeliever who had heard the gospel and understood the gospel but who had never, either through his words or actions, given the appearance of having received the gospel, become an apostate? No.

And why is this? Based on **verse 26** the only persons who could ever become guilty of the sin of apostasy; are those people, who have heard the gospel, who have understood the gospel, and who have through their words and actions have received the gospel or in other words who have through their words and actions have at least appeared to have received the gospel.

And why is this? Based on **Hebrews 10:26**, it is because an individual cannot leave the gospel or in other words the gospel message unless they have first of all received it or at least appeared to have received the gospel message or in other words **“the truth.”**

So based solely on this passage I believe that we can say the following: “Theoretically speaking based on **Hebrews 10:26** any person in this room this morning who is professing faith in Christ and His Gospel could very well become an apostate and that includes me.” This is because we have actually professed to have received something, which is “the knowledge of the truth,” which makes it possible for us to desert it.

But just because it is theoretically possible, based on **verse 26**, it doesn't make it so. And why is this? It is because in order to commit the sin of apostasy a second basic component must be present.

So what is the second basic component? The second basic component of what constitutes the sin of apostasy is **sinning willfully** after having received the knowledge of the truth (Hebrews 10:26a).

So now let us now go back to **verse 26** and see if this is not so and this is what it says, "**If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.**" So what is the second basic component of the sin of apostasy? It is this: sinning willfully after having received the knowledge of the truth.

Therefore, based on **verse 26**, if a person, after having heard the gospel, after having understood the gospel, and after having received the gospel or at least after having given the appearance of having received it, then chooses to go on to willfully sin, they would then have to be considered at risk of becoming what, according to this author? An apostate!

So now let us take a closer look at what this author meant by "sinning willfully." The word "sinning"(HAMARTANONTON) carries the idea of "ongoing." And the word "willfully" (HEKOUSIOS) carries the idea of **deliberate.**

So what did the author have in mind when he spoke of "sinning willfully?" This is what he had in mind: A deliberate sinful lifestyle of high-handed rebellion against the gospel or in other words the gospel message. This is what he had in mind.

So what didn't he have in mind? He did not have in mind a professing believer who may at times stumble into sin or a professing believer who may over time be struggling to live apart from sin. No! For all true believers, will most likely, at one time or another be guilty of each of these things. But this is not what he is talking about here.

Here he is talking about someone, who though professing to have received Christ, is choosing to live in willful sin and is okay with that; who rather

than fighting it, is very willing to give into to it with very little, if any resistance. This is the kind of professing believer that he is talking about here in **Hebrews 10:26**.

So how does this apply to his readers? These readers had received the knowledge of the truth. And yet in spite of this, they were actually beginning to contemplate, very consciously and willfully, acting in ways that would have clearly contradicted that very truth they had professed to receive. How would they have done that? They would have done that by returning back to Judaism or some form of it. So what does this mean for us?

If we are here this morning and we have heard the gospel, understood the gospel, and have received the gospel or at least have given the appearance of having received the gospel but then go on to **contradict the message of the gospel that we have professed to have received, through willful sinning, we are in danger, for we are in fact in the process of potentially becoming an apostate.**

Therefore, if we believe this what do we need to do? We need to fight sin! We cannot tolerate it in our lives. For if we tolerate it and we do not fight it and fight it effectively and it takes root in our lives we are very much in danger of becoming an apostate or in other words we are very much in danger through willful sinning of manifesting our rejection of the gospel thus proving that we never were born again or saved. Why? It is because born again people will fight sin and will invariably fight it effectively. How do we know this? Let me read for you **1 John 3:7-9** “**Little children, make sure no one deceives you, the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; (8) the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (9) No one who is born of God practices sin (willful sin), because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**”

So to make sure you are a Christian and that you are not in any danger of becoming an apostate then fight sin and make sure by the grace of God that you are fighting it effectively.

But just in case you need a little extra incentive let us go on to outline the consequences if we though professing then go on to prove ourselves to be

apostates through ongoing willful sinning. So what are the consequences for an apostate?

We do not have to guess for the author spelled out those consequences beginning at the end of **verse 26** going all the way through the end of **verse 31**.

So what would be the first consequence? For an apostate there no longer remains a **sacrifice** for sins (Hebrews 10:26).

And how do we know this? Let me read for you the end of **verse 26** and what does it say? It says this, “**there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.**” The gospel message is all about Christ’s superior sacrifice and how it was able to take away all sin. Therefore if a person after having received the gospel then manifests a turning away from that gospel by choosing a life of sin, they have in effect turned away from any possibility of salvation for it is only through the gospel that a person can be saved. So is this the only consequence for someone who commits the sin of apostasy? No!

So what is another consequence for someone who commits the sin of apostasy? For an apostate there is only a terrifying expectation of **judgment** and the fury of fire (Hebrews 10:27 cf. Revelation 20:11-15).

So now let me now read for you **Hebrews 10:27** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, “**but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.**”

So what is this referring to? When the author referred to this particular terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire he was referring to hell, which based on the word of God every unbeliever will ultimately be thrown into at the time of the great white throne judgment, which is described for us very graphically in **Revelation 20:11-15** and which will occur just subsequent to the millennial kingdom and just prior to the establishment of the new heavens and new earth.

Hell is not a place anybody would want to go but it is a place that certainly every unbeliever will go and that will most certainly include every apostate.

But the experience of an apostate in hell will be far more unpleasant than the experience of a typical run-of-the-mill unbeliever. Why? For an apostate there is a much **severer** punishment reserved for him in hell than for any other unbeliever (Hebrews 10:28-31).

So now let me now read for you Hebrews 10:28-31 and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, **“Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”** This statement is made on the basis of what is taught about the law in the Old Testament in **Deuteronomy 17:2-6** and **Deuteronomy 19:5** and then what does the author say next? Let me now continue to read for you **Hebrews 10:28-31**. And this is what he says: **“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.’ ”**

So based on these verses can we say that for an apostate there is a much severer punishment for Him than for any other unbeliever? Absolutely!

When an individual hears the gospel, understands the gospel, and then appears to have received the gospel and then, in spite of all this, chooses to manifest their rejection of the gospel by their willful sinning, they are in essence from God the Father’s perspective choosing to **“trample under foot the Son of God.”** They are choosing to **“regard as unclean the blood of the covenant.”** And they are also from God’s perspective choosing to **“insult the Spirit of grace”** or in other words the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

So if you are here this morning and are a professing believer but you are choosing to live in known sin and you are not particularly concerned about it. I am here to tell you that your attitude towards your willful sinning had better change. And where does this need to start? With confession acknowledging your sinfulness and then by the grace of God turning from it for if you do not do this then grave danger.

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For if we do not do this than be forewarned that there will be a far more severe punishment for you than for any other run of the mill unbeliever. For you have rejected what you have given the appearance of receiving... You have trampled under foot the Son of Man.... You have regarded as unclean the blood of His covenant.... And you have insulted the Spirit of Grace. And God will not forget this when it comes to the matter of your judgment.

TRULY AS VERSE 31 TELLS US: IT IS A TERRIFYING THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD. SO IN LIGHT OF THIS:

May God give us the grace as we continue to hold fast to our confession to live in a manner **consistent** with our confession thus giving evidence that we are truly one of God's children.