

## Heb. 10: 25-31 Apostasy and Its Consequences

In this letter the author is writing to Hebrew Christians. He is presenting Christ, who is the fulfillment of all God's promises in the Old Testament. And throughout the letter, he is presenting Christ as the great high priest of God's people. Look back at vv. 19-22: **“Therefore, brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God let us draw near . . .”** And apparently, the author saw certain signs that maybe they were on the verge of falling away. And this is apparent because some of them had neglected to meet (“forsaking the assembling” KJV) together. And by not meeting together they neglected the means of God to in their sanctification. In v. 25, by not meeting, they gave up encouragement. They gave up the means as God uses his people to “stir one another up to love and good works” (v. 24). In not meeting together, they neglected the preaching/teaching of the Word of God, etc. I think that they knew a day of judgment was coming (particularly 70 AD). Yet, some of them persisted and turned back to the old system of worship under Moses.

Therefore, in vv. 26-31, he warns them against apostasy. And then, he tells them of the great judgment to come, which is the consequence of this apostasy. Let me read the passage (vv. 25-31). I have two truths that I will explain briefly and then I want to spend some time with some truths and applications for us today.

1. The Sin of Apostasy. Simply put, I believe the sin of apostasy is to know the truth about Christ, to know He is the Son of God, to understand what He came to do and what he accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection, and then turn away from these truths (Christian faith) to follow something else. And to turn away from Christ, who is the ONLY sacrifice for our sins, the ONLY means to be reconciled with God, the only way to have peace with God, the only way to have the wrath and judgment of God averted is to apostatize. And if we turn to anything else in this life, it is not sufficient. There is nothing we can do to cover our sins. Look at v. 26: **“For it we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins . . .”** And as we will see in a moment, if we do not receive Christ, notice the consequence in v. 27. **“but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”**

In order to emphasize the serious nature of apostasy, the author uses three phrases (word pictures) in v. 29. He says, **“How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of Grace.”** Let's look at these for a moment.

i. Trampled underfoot the Son of God. To reject the gospel is to “trample underfoot the Son of God.” Here, the emphasis is on the person of Christ, WHO HE IS. Whoever forsakes the gospel, whoever abandons the gospel, whoever leaves the gospel, disowns the SON, and sins against the SON. In this verse the author does not call him Jesus. He does not call him the Christ. He calls him the Son of God. Here, he emphasizes against WHOM such a heinous sin is committed, the

Son. The emphasis is on the infinite dignity of his person. And who is he? He is the **“heir of all things, the creator of the world.”** He is the **“radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”** He **“upholds the universe by the word of his power.”** He is the Son, the pre-eminent One who is greater than the angels. (Not the “first” one as our Mormon friends believe) Of the Son, the Father says, **“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”** The work of your hands will perish, but **“you remain,”** and **“your years have no end.”** (Heb. 1) As the Son of God, He is the same in essence as the Father. John Owen says, He is *“a divine constellation of all the blessed effects of infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace, yea, the whole divine wisdom, goodness, and grace of God, in the most glorious manifestation of them.”*

And since this is true, to turn away from Him is to turn away from God. And to turn away from him after knowing the truth about him, is to “trample him under your feet.” It is like a pig wallowing in the mud and dirt and then throwing the most beautiful costly pearl and leaving it there to never to pick it up or to care about anymore. In the same kind of way, when we deliberately ignore the claims of the Son of God and despise his commands, we tread his authority beneath our feet. And if we continue to do so without repentance, we are in danger of committing the sin of apostasy.

ii. **Profaned the blood of the covenant.** In this next phrase the author emphasizes sin against his work as high priest, particularly his sacrifice. He **“profanes the blood of the covenant.”** The word used here is “common.” It means to take something that is holy and make it unholy, to make it “common.” This is why the ESV translates it as “profane.” Could you imagine the people of Israel taking the lamp from the holy place in the tabernacle and using it at home as they would any other lamp. Or, taking the curtain between the holy place and the holies to their home and hanging over their window. Or, any other part of the tabernacle for common use. This is what the sin of apostasy does. It takes that which is holy, namely the sacrifice of Christ and treats it as common. Such are those who know the truth of the sacrifice of Christ and his work on the cross and treat it as common. Such are those who know that the blood of Jesus fulfills the old covenant and ushers in the new covenant with all its benefits. This is to commit apostasy.

iii. **Outraged the Spirit of Grace.** Our final phrase emphasizes the sin against the Holy Spirit. Not only does apostasy sin against the PERSON of Christ and the WORK of Christ, it is also a sin against the Holy Spirit. Look at v. 29 again: **“and has outraged the spirit of grace.”** What does this mean? A.W. Pink says this is the *“greatest aggravation of all”* because of the words of Jesus in Luke 12:10 where he says, **“everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”**

Let me try and explain what I think this means. Back in the OT, the prophets looked forward to a time when the Spirit of God would work in a particular way to highlight and reveal the Messiah. This is the great work of the Holy Spirit: to reveal and present and magnify the Son of God.

For example, Zechariah says, **“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn”** (Zech. 12:10). I believe this is the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. In John 16 Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit, saying: **“And when comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and**

**judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged . . .**” (John 15:8-11). The supreme work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the glory of God in the Son. And those who know Jesus is the Son of God, those who know what He did on the cross, those who know these things are true, and yet reject them, are the ones who commit this great sin of apostasy. Of course, the greatest example is the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. They saw his works. They heard him teach. They knew he was from God. Yet, they said, **“His works are of the devil”** (Matt. 12:24). At the end of the day, they knew He was from God, yet they rejected him. In the same way, with our context in Hebrews, to know He is the high priest and the fulfillment of God’s promise in the New Covenant, which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, and then to turn back to the old system and the Son of God is to commit apostasy. And this is the warning our author presents to those Hebrew Christians . . . And to us . . . in these very serious words. I will come back at the end and try and apply these truths. Let’s move on to our 2<sup>nd</sup> truth and the consequence of Apostasy.

2. The Consequence of Apostasy. The consequence of apostasy, of rejecting the Son of God, is judgment. We see this throughout this passage. Look at v. 27: **“a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”** Look also in v. 29: **“How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved . . .”** Look at v. 30 **“Vengeance is mine; I will repay.”** And again, **“The Lord will judge his people.”** And finally in v. 31: **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”** In my estimation it is hard to find a more serious combination of words on the subject of judgment than what we find here.

In this passage I believe the author is using OT Israel during the time of Moses to make his point. He quotes two verses from the Song of Moses, which is recalled right before the death of Moses and Joshua leads the people into Canaan. And this song of truth is about God, his mercy, his grace, and also his judgment and his wrath upon those who do not obey the words of his covenant. When we think about the Hebrews during Moses time, the great majority of their is spent wandering the dessert. Why? Because of disobedience! How? The people saw his great works with Egypt and Pharaoh as God delivered his people with great and mighty works. They saw the works of God. They knew and understood the words of his covenant. Yet, they disobeyed and rejected him. And what happened. That generation perished in the dessert! What a great judgment upon Israel!

And yet, our author says in v. 29: **“How much worse punishment”** do you think will be deserved for those who reject, NOT Moses and his words, but the VERY SON OF GOD . . . WHO He is, WHAT He did, and then to insult and outrage the SPIRIT of grace in the New Covenant? I think he is arguing from lesser to greater. In the Old Covenant, they rejected God. And they rejected his covenant. And they perished in the dessert. But, in the New Covenant, we have the FULL revelation of God to us in the Son. Look back at 1:1-2: **“Long ago, at many times and in any ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoke to us by his Son . . .”** And the first 10 chapters of Hebrews is about the Son, his person, his work, as He is the Promise of God, the COMPLETE fulfillment of the Old Covenant and the old system under Moses. He is the final sacrifice! He is the COMPLETE offering for the people of God. He is the true HIGH PRIEST, after the order of Melchizedek. Go back to vv. 19-23 which says, **“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of**

**Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”**

And for those who do not “hold fast” but instead reject the SON, I repeat the words from 2:3 **“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”** He is comparing earthly judgment with heavenly judgment. If the judgment of Israel in the dessert was severe, how much more severe must be the punishment of those who reject the Gospel of Christ. In the dessert, we see “capital” punishment. But, here we see “divine” punishment. Though mysterious, I believe there will be degrees of punishment in hell. As A.W. Pink says, *“Every despiser of the Lordship of Christ shall yet discover that a far hotter place has been reserved for him in Hell, than what will be the portion of lawless rebels who lived under the old covenant.”* Some people say that in the OT, we see a God of judgment, but in the NT we see a God of love. What would you say to this after seeing this passage? The only reason we are here now is because of the loving forbearance of God. Final judgment is coming.

Many people think judgment was worse in the OT than the NT. Some say the OT God is one of judgment, whereas the God of the NT is love, thus diminishing his judgment. But, there is no worse judgment than to neglect the Son of God.

Now, I would like to make some comments and applications for us today.

Truth: I believe these warnings are for Christians. And at the same time (See 6:9; 10:39;) I do not believe true Christians can commit apostasy. I certainly believe those who profess Christ can and will fall away. But, true Christians will not. I believe they are written to Christians because in all the warnings in Hebrews, this is the context. (See 3:1, 12-14; 4:1, 11; 5:11; 6:1). Also, the author often includes himself in the same warnings (See same verses.) Also look with me to 6:9: **“Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things— things that belong to salvation.”** Also 10:39: **“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”** We don’t have time this morning to recount all truths found in the Bible that teach that those whom God saves can never be lost. And we must interpret these CLEAR teachings to interpret those verses that are more difficult. I think of John’s words when he speaks of Judas: *““They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us”* (1 John 2:19).

I realize there are differing views on these warning passages with many saying a person can lose his/her salvation. Some say these words were written to a mixed community of believers and non-believers in the church, and only non-believers are the ones who fall away. And practically, this is certainly true as some of us, even here, may not be true Christians. Nevertheless, I believe these words are For Christians. Why?

Application: The warnings in Hebrews are one of the means God uses to keep his people from apostasy. They are like warning signs on the road. Curve ahead. Railroad crossing. Caution, slow down. They are like signs on the top of a cliff or the sign of a bridge out ahead. If you disobey

the signs, what will happen? You will suffer the consequences of disobedience. The warning of judgment is God's means to us today, as Christians. There is a "fearful expectation of judgment and fury of fire" for those who reject the Son. Therefore, do not reject him today!

Application: Therefore, We must take these warnings serious! Practically, this is the author's purpose for writing Hebrews. He is writing to warn! There are five main warnings in the letter. In 2:1: "**We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away.**" In 3:12: "**Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.**" In 5:11 ff. ". . . **you have become dull of hearing . . .**" In 12:25: "**See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.**" And then our current one in 26-39. These warnings must motivate us to godliness. These warnings must motivate us to tell other people. These warnings must motivate us to "stir one another up to love and good works."

Application: Apostasy begins somewhere, often with small sins, leading to big sins, leading to neglecting the meeting together of God's people, leading to total abandonment. Think of a healthy person who little by little neglects the means to health. Sin starts little and then leads to death, even spiritual death. The saying is true, "*Either you kill sin, or it will kill you.*" The seed of eternal death is in all of us (SIN). And it is only by God's means of grace that we continue and grow. Meet with God's people regularly as we preach/teach/pray/sing/ take the Lord's Supper, as we "stir one another up to love and good works." Read the Bible. Pray in your closet. Daily repent of your sins. Do not forget to "**work out your salvation with fear and trembling**" (Phil 2:12). Do not forget that you must "**confirm your calling and election sure**" (2 Pet 1:10). Do not be the person who has a "form of godliness" but denies the power of the gospel (2 Tim. 3:5). God is sovereign. And, we are responsible.

Application: The necessity of repentance. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven when a person is repentant. Let me read what A.W. Pink says in his commentary on these verses. "All around us are professing Christians sinning with a high hand against God, and yet suffering from no qualms of conscience. And why? Because while they believe that some 'millennial crown' or 'reward' may be forfeited should they fail to deny self and daily take up their cross and follow Christ, yet they have not the slightest realization or fear that they are hastening to Hell as swiftly as time wings its flight . . . Horrible blasphemy! Dear reader, make no mistake upon this point, and suffer no false prophet to cause you to believe the contrary, the blood of Christ covers no sins that have not been truly repented of and confessed to God with a broken heart." He goes on to say that presumptuous sins are not easily repented of, for they harden the heart and make it steel itself against God.

May it not be so among here at Grace. At the end of the day, we are great sinners. But Christ is a great savior! Let me end with the words from 1 John 1:9-2:1: "**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**"