

## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of our study in Hebrews, we have pointed out that one of the primary themes of Hebrews is perseverance – our need to remain diligent in our faith. (Remember our 3 key “P” words for Hebrews: PREEMINANCE, PERSEVERANCE & PRIESTHOOD.)

Today we come to yet another passage highlighting our need for PERSEVERANCE. Last week’s passage gave us a stirring and practical challenge to DRAW NEAR, HOLD FAST & CONSIDER HOW TO STIMULATE one another, and the tone was positive and encouraging. In contrast, the tone of this week’s passage, though still a practical one, is somber and foreboding – twice using the word “terrifying.” It is yet another in the many Hebrew passages urging PERSEVERANCE. Today we receive a fearful warning.

## TODAY’S TEXT

**Hebrews 10:26-31** *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 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.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

## FRAMING OUR PERSECTIVE

When it comes to God, most folks prefer to hear the sweet side of God: His love and healing and mercy. Hell, punishment, judgment and wrath are not particularly popular devotional topics. Some avoid these subjects like the plague, believing that only good spiritual motivation comes from hearing about grace and love, not from hearing about wrath. And little by little we can let that view influence our perception of God Himself, until we have no tolerance or interest in, much less belief in, a God of wrath who would allow one of His creation to suffer vengeful punishment. Long and short, we prefer a “loving God” to a “terrifying God.”

And yet the author of Hebrews is relentless in telling us that God is both. And he will not be silent about the wrath of God toward sin. Oh the grace of God in this book, where chapter after chapter teaches us of the priestly ministry of a loving Jesus affording us an intimate relationship with the God of the universe. But like no other book in the New Testament, this book warns us about the dangers of carelessness in our Christian life. And the warnings are not only that we might lose a few heavenly rewards, but that we might face the fury of God’s anger.

We saw it in 2:3, *“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.”*

We saw it in 3:11-12, *“As I swore in my wrath, they shall never enter My rest. Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.”*

We saw it in 6:4,6: *“It is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened ... if they then commit apostasy.”*

Now at this point, I must reassure you that true believers enjoy eternal security. This is one of our foundational Biblical doctrines. But hiding behind this doctrine can cause Christians to minimize or even totally dismiss any Biblical warnings about judgment, consequence and fury of God aimed at them.

Let’s examine our passage with fresh and honest eyes, feeling what God wants us to feel and not just waving our eternal security to shield us from this passage. Let us be spiritually motivated by

fear - the fear of God. For both love and fear can be powerful motivators. Paul taught us in Philippians 2:12 to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” So as uncomfortable as it might make us, let us “work out” our salvation today.

### **PHRASES THAT INDICATE THIS PASSAGE ADDRESSES CHRISTIANS**

1. (v, 26a) “for if we go on sinning ...”
2. (v. 26b) “after receiving the knowledge of the truth ...”
3. (v. 29) “by which he was sanctified”
4. (v.30a) “for we know Him”
5. (v.30b) “The Lord will judge His people”

From the entire context of Hebrews we see that the author is addressing true believers. To think that this passage addresses “almost, but not quite” Christians doesn’t fit the book’s audience. That’s why I think it makes no sense to interpret this passage as referring to non-believers who are in danger of never being saved. Rather we as believers must interpret this passage as being for us.

### **THE WARNING (WHAT MAKES GOD ANGRY): (v. 26)**

1. Repeated willful sinning (v. 26a)
  - a. Repetitive (“go on sinning”)
  - b. Willful (“sinning willfully”)
  - c. Ignorant [ignoring truth] (“after receiving the knowledge of the truth”)
2. Nothing more God can do for us (“no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”)

Nothing “ticks God off” more than sin – rebellion against His person in missing the mark of His godly standard. Any sin angers God – He is probably angry with us more often that we would want to admit. But the sin verse 26 speaks of is repetitive, willful sin. Some sins burst out from our human sin nature, we are soon embarrassed, and we are contrite before God. But other sins are premeditated acts of rebellion. And when these willful acts of spiritual rebellion continue, God is particularly angry.

Yet, His love for His own children is continual. This is like the parent who loves the offspring ever, yet is angry with disobedience.

Ignorance and ignoring have the same root. The true meaning of ignorance is not that one doesn’t know the truth, but that he doesn’t respond according to truth’s revelation – in other words, he ignores it. That is what truly “ticks God off” – ignoring the truth He has clearly revealed.

### **THE DANGER EQUIVALENT TO: (v. 29)**

1. “Trashing” Jesus (“trampling under foot the Son of God”)
2. Desecrating the blood (regarding the sacred as common or unimportant)
3. “Dissing” the Holy Spirit (insulting the One who is our conscience for good)

None of us believers would say that we trample Jesus under foot, or regard the sacred as common, or insult the Holy Spirit. But we all know we sometimes, if not more than sometimes, repeatedly sin willfully. And the author equates this with essentially trampling the Son of God under foot, disregarding the all-sufficient blood of Christ as sacred, and insulting the Holy Spirit who is trying to convict us of our sin. Triple ouch!

### **THE CONSEQUENCE, part 1 (v. 27)**

1. Terrifying judgment to come (the legal picture)
2. Fury as by fire (the emotional picture)
3. Consuming of adversaries (the physical picture)

The “consuming fire” of verse 27 might make us think of the fires of hell. Yet the quote from Isaiah does not speak of hell’s fire in context. Rather it speaks there, and thus here, of devastating loss. God wants us to know that we never sin without losing something of value that can never be regained. That should be motivation to the wise.

### **THE CONSEQUENCE, part 2 (v. 30-31)**

1. Vengeance repaid (we reap what we sow)
2. Reward lost (at the believer’s seat of judgment – 2 Cor. 5:10))
3. Into God’s hands of wrath (terrifying!)

When God says in verse 30 (quoting from Deuteronomy 32:35) “I will repay” we are to know that every unconfessed and uncovered sin reaps a serious consequence of God’s vengeance repaid, reward lost and wrath unleashed. This is the direct consequence of the believer’s continual willful sin. And there is no “out.” BUT – these consequences CAN be avoided.

### **MY ONLY REFUGE**

1. Break the cycle of willful sinning (exercise my will)  
*(make the “if” of v. 26a a non-reality)*
2. Believe the truth of God’s rescue (exercise my mind)  
*(truly believe “the knowledge of the truth” – v. 29b)*
3. Embrace Christ’s sacrifice for my sins (exercise my heart)  
*(let Christ’s sacrifice for sins do its work in me – v. 26c)*
  - a. Contrition
  - b. Confession
  - c. Consecration

Fear (yes even terror) can be a highly motivating factor. And this is the motivation God has used in our passage today. Love is also a motivating factor. We prefer this motivation, from both earthly authorities and from God. In verses 19-26 of Hebrews 10 we received a loving challenge:

1. Draw Near by FAITH
2. Hold Fast to HOPE
3. Consider how to stimulate others to LOVE

But there is a time and place to motivate others by fear. As a child, I was not kept from running into traffic by the parental motivation of love. Nor as a teenager was I kept from doing many stupid things by the motivation of love. Fear kept me out of the street and kept me from doing many stupid things. My parents used both love and fear to protect me. And so does our loving God.

Let us heed this fearful warning from our Heavenly Father who loves us with a love as deep as the oceans and wide as the heavens, yet also hates sin with an equally deep and wide passion.

**This is a passage designed literally to “scare the hell” out of us. May we allow it to do just that, in our noble quest to know God more personally and intimately.**