

**Text:** Hebrews 10:26-31

**Title:** No Other Sacrifice

**Date/Location:** July 3, 2011 at FBC Morning worship

## Introduction

This is the fourth warning passage in Hebrews. The first three are 2:1-4, 3:7-19, and 6:4-12.

## I. General Approach to the Passage: Warning Against Apostasy

### A. Apostasy

1. I believe that v. 29 shows that *apostasy* is what Hebrews has in mind. The use of ideas like trampling the Son of God, counting His blood as unclean, and insulting God's Spirit make it clear that this is not a run-of-the-mill believer we are talking about. These things cannot be squared with a believing response toward Christ.

Apostasy means to renounce (stand away from) the Christian faith. It presupposes someone who has been sufficiently instructed in the faith to know about it, or even to have made a profession of allegiance to Christ at some point in the past.

I believe that if a profession of faith was made by such a person, it was not genuine, because one who is a true believer cannot leave the faith. Only one who *appears* to be a believer but is not truly one can leave the faith. Of course, there is a sense that a false believer cannot really *leave* what he never had, but the point is he leaves whatever connection he had to Christianity.

Note that apostasy does not have to be flaming atheism like Sam Harris or Richard Dawkins or Christopher Hitchens. It can be quiet rejection of Christ while continuing to live for self. "I'm good; I don't need Christ" may mark such a quiet unbeliever.

2. It also appears that final, fiery judgment is in view in v. 27 ("devouring the adversaries"), 29 ("worse punishment") and 30-31 (vengeance). This is not the future of a believer, which is free from condemnation (Rom 8:1) but rather sounds like the outcome for an unbeliever.

### B. Objections

#### Objection #1

The pronoun *we* suggests the readers are believers.

#### Answer #1

It is true that the readers were generally believers. The author is addressing believers to warn them about the danger of apostasy, and by so doing to keep them as far away from that sin as possible. Indeed, the warning will tend to keep us as far from all sin as possible, because we do not want to be associated with anything that is displeasing to God.

So, the text does *apply* to believers, but not in a way so as to say that a true believer can lose his salvation and be in danger of eternal punishment.

Furthermore, the author is speaking generically to the audience because it is probably not composed entirely of convinced true believers; there may be some who are wavering on the edge of making a decision for Christ or others who doubt whether they should do so.

#### Objection #2

The phrase “received the knowledge of the truth” in v. 26 indicates the person was saved.

#### Answer #2

There were phrases just like this in 6:4-5 that were difficult as well. We said there the preponderance of the evidence from the text was that the people had come “close” but not quite gotten saved. They had a near encounter with God, so to speak, but did not receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. They were perhaps like those of Matthew 7:21-22.

When the apostate was exposed to the Christian faith, he had a certain knowledge of the truth of the gospel. He knew what the claims of Christianity were.

#### Objection #3

The phrase in v. 29 “by which he was sanctified” indicates the person was saved.

#### Answer #3

I would handle this objection in the same way as the previous objection. The apostate knew that Christ died to make the sinner holy, but he rejected it. He *counted* (regarded, considered) the blood of Christ as worthless, just like the death of any other man.

False prophets do a similar thing in 2 Peter 2:1, “denying the Lord who bought them.” The Scripture has a number of passages like this where unbelievers are portrayed as rejecting a saving provision that is near at hand for them.

Though these objections are formidable, it is far more difficult to try to explain how a true believer can have a worse punishment than the death penalty and how he can be associated with adversaries of God, how he can trample Christ underfoot, how he can insult God’s Spirit, and how he can disregard the blood of Christ.

## II. There is No Sacrifice for Ongoing, Deliberate Sin, v. 26-27

### A. Background

Remember that there is no other offering for sin except that which Jesus made (10:18). If you reject that one, there is no other.

Remember that in verse 25, we were introduced to a group of people who forsook assembling together in the local church. In the worse scenario, these are people who walked away not only from the *church* but also from the *faith*. These would be the ones who “stand away from” the faith.

- B. There are two keys to interpreting this verse. They are the word *willfully* and the present tense of the verb *sin*.
1. If the verse said “For if we sin after we have received the knowledge of the truth...” then we all would be in big trouble. There would be a contradiction with other passages that teach us that true believers do sin (1 John 1:8-10, etc.).
  2. Rather, the verse says, “For if we go on sinning willfully” or “if we continue in deliberate sin.”
  3. Ongoing sin is not the mark of a true believer (1 John 3:6-10). A believer is one who sins less and less (not one who is *sinless*!) and whose life is marked by an increasing pattern of obedience. No one can credibly claim to be saved who lives just like they did before they were saved!
  4. Willful sin is also not a mark of a true believer. This is sin that is deliberate and intentional. It is the equivalent of the high-handed sin in the OT for which there was no sacrifice. There is a persistence in attitude against the Lord in this sin.
  5. Now, to be sure, all sin involves the will or the want of the person. Whether lust or anger or something else, the sinful will is involved. What Hebrews is talking about here is ongoing intentional sin that has at its base the intention of ignoring and repudiating the sacrifice of Christ. The person has no struggle against his sin but is rather in full league with it.
- C. For this kind of sin, there is no forgiveness.

In other words, if you sin in this way and reject Christ, then He will oblige you. The problem is, once He does so, there is no other way for your sins to be handled properly other than fiery eternal punishment that was designed for the devil and his demons (Matt. 25:41). No sacrifice = no forgiveness.

## II. The Explanation of Eternal Punishment, v. 28-29

- A. The explanation of verse 27 is a justification for why such a strong punishment is reserved for those who reject Christ this way. God has explained it to us in a “lesser to greater” form.

The lesser is what happened in the OT: Moses’ law was rejected and resulted in physical death.

The greater is what happens today: Christ’s sacrifice is rejected and results in eternal spiritual death.

- B. The Old Testament Situation: The Lesser

A number of sins in the OT were capital offenses:

- Sabbath violations (Exodus 31:14-15; 35:2; Num. 15:32-36);
- Idolatry (Lev. 20:2, Deut. 17:2-7);
- Blasphemy of God’s name (Lev. 24:16);
- Rebellion against parents (Exodus 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9);
- Kidnapping (Exodus 21:16);
- Murder (Exodus 21:12, Lev. 24:17, 21, Num. 35:16-31);

- Not restraining a dangerous animal (Exodus 21:29);
- False prophecy (Deut. 13:5, 18:20);
- Adultery and incest (Lev. 20:10);
- Homosexuality (Lev. 20:13);
- Bestiality (Exodus 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16);
- Spiritism, occult, necromancy (Lev. 20:27);
- Unauthorized priestly or tabernacle work (Num. 1:51, 3:10, 18:7);
- Presumptuous, defiant, or high-handed sins (Num. 15:30-31).

### C. The New Testament Situation: The Greater

Here is how the apostate rejects Christ:

1. He tramples the Son of God underfoot. This is an extreme kind of disregard and disrespect that amounts to utter contempt. Think of putting an American flag on the ground, stomping on it, and burning it. Sound like an American thing to do on this Independence Day holiday? Neither would a Christian ever do such a thing to Christ. The ironic thing is that Christ's enemies will be put under his feet (1:13, 10:13). Here, the Christ-rejecter is supposing he will have the upper hand against the Lord and acts as if the Lord is under *his* feet!
2. He regards Christ's sacrificial work (the blood of the New Covenant) as a common thing. That means it has no special value, it is just a death like any other man's death. This is how the apostate thinks.
3. He insults the Spirit of grace. The Spirit of God graciously convicts of sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come. He does not *have* to do that, but He does. He wants to dwell in people and give them new spiritual life. The apostate person rejects all that and essentially says what the Spirit offers is useless.

The glorious Christ that has been presented in the previous 10 chapters makes the rejection all the more insulting. This rejecter is an arrogant person. He is setting up the conflict as in "me versus God, and I'm going to win." What foolishness!

### III. The Character of God, v. 30-31

The author reminds the readers that they know God is the One who said in Deuteronomy 32:35-36 that vengeance belongs to Him and that He will judge His people.

God's character is such that He cannot look on sin. By nature, He deals with sin harshly because it is morally repugnant to Him.

As a result, everyone ought to have fear of falling into God's hands for judgment.

### Conclusion

Falling *away* from God's salvation (Heb. 6:6) means falling *into* His judgment (10:31).

If you take the opposite tack as the unbeliever in this passage, you will be on the right road.

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