

Hebrews 10:26-31

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If we abandon our faith and choose to live sinfully, we will get a negative reward. We will lose our inheritance in the future kingdom.

We now come to what appears to be the core problem the Pauline Author has been addressing. It seems that the Hebrew believers receiving this letter have been sinning willfully, then performing animal sacrifices and saying “Okay, that sin is covered, so now I can sin some more.”

This is foolish. The Author alerts his readers: *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.* (vv 26–27). Here, the Pauline Author issues a warning.

If believers, who have the knowledge of the truth, *trample under foot* (v 29) Jesus’s sacrifice by considering Christ’s sacrifice as insufficient (by doing animal sacrifice), then *go on sinning willfully*, they can expect judgment from God. In the context of this chapter, the Pauline Author is not writing that we can lose our justification before God if we continue to sin. All believers still struggle with our sin nature in this life on earth. Here, and throughout this epistle to the Hebrews, the Pauline Author has consistently contrasted believers who endure with believers who drift away (Hebrews 2:1).

But these drifting believers have fallen in a ditch. Not only are they considering Jesus’s blood insufficient, they consider it *unclean*. *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?* (v 29).

This is amazing, because while they think their religious practice makes them clean, they are deliberately continuing in sin. It is no longer Jesus’s justification in which they trust. They are now justifying themselves.

In Hebrews 10:26-31, the Pauline Author is describing someone who has received *the knowledge of the truth*. This is clearly someone who believes in Jesus Christ, of whom the Pauline Author includes himself by writing *if we go on sinning*. This believer is one who truly believes in Jesus and has the gift of eternal life (justification in the presence of God) which nothing can undo.

But, here, the Pauline Author is making it clear that it is possible for believers to live in such a way as to essentially spit on Jesus’s amazing gift of grace. If this believer willfully and knowingly continues in sin, there will be a severe judgment on that person. We have been given a great gift, and with that gift comes responsibility. Jesus will hold us accountable for what we know.

The Pauline Author points to the *judgement and fury of a fire* for willful disobedience. This is the fire of judgment. When judgment fire pours out on adversaries, it consumes them. When God

pours out judgment fire on His people, it refines them. But it is still the fire of judgment. It is not something to be trifled with.

The Pauline Author is talking about when we deliberately rebel, when we neglect the New Covenant, the state of grace we live in through Jesus, and consciously sin. Willful sinning means we knowingly choose to sin, we want to do it and choose to do it. What's being condemned in this passage is to sin, then expect some sort of religious practice to "make us okay." In this case: ceremonial sacrifice.

When the Pauline Author says *there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*, he is speaking of the Levitical animal sacrifices that he continuously references in this section of Hebrews. If we sin willfully, God will hold us accountable no matter how many sacrifices we make. In fact, when we trust in a sacrifice instead of trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus, we are trampling Jesus. So there will be all the more accountability. By application, this could refer to any religious practice. God desires obedience from the heart. He will not be appeased with ceremony.

This kind of rebellion will lead to God's displeasure. The Pauline Author points out that believers with knowledge are held to a higher standard, since they know the truth. We are in the New Covenant, where we can go boldly to God for our needs. To abuse our grace in Christ has serious consequences.

To illustrate the seriousness, the Pauline Author reminds his readers of the *Law of Moses* (Old Testament law), specifically Deuteronomy 17:6, where the offense of idolatry was punishable by death: *Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses* (v 28). If *two or three witnesses* could testify to it, the offender would be put to death *without mercy*, which is as serious a punishment as it gets.

The punishment was severe because the crime was severe. This offense was counted as "transgressing his covenant" (Deuteronomy 17:2), a rejection of God and His ways. With that illustration, the Pauline Author asks his audience, how much worse do you think you'll be punished for rejecting this New Covenant, now that you know the truth? This is like a believer who has *trampled under foot the Son of God*, someone who walks on Christ like He's dirt. Someone who looks at Christ's sacrifice, which has sanctified us, cleansed us forever, and disregarded it as important. This is an insult to *the Spirit of grace*. This is a serious offense.

It is important to note that verse 29 makes clear we are speaking about someone who *was sanctified*. That means the Pauline Author is speaking to someone who is an actual believer. This warning is given to someone who has been sanctified by the blood of Christ. For a person who has been sanctified but has willfully decided to sin, God's grace still covers that sin. However, there will be consequences.

The Pauline author reminds us of the Lord's words of warning: *For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay."* And again, *"The Lord will judge His people."* (v 30) He follows the *vengeance is mine* quote with a part of Deuteronomy 32:36, *The Lord will judge His people*. Adding the immediate context from Deuteronomy 32:36 shows God's judgement of His people is their deliverance, "For the Lord will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their strength is gone." Like any child, we do not like the

thought of being disciplined by our father. But God, as a perfect Heavenly Father, has our best interest at heart. Yet, the discipline is real.

Every Christian struggles with sin. 1 John 1:8 attests to our struggle with sin: “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” This passage in Hebrews is addressing a Christian who sins with a willing heart. It seems the one sinning willfully is also justifying themselves, in this instance by pointing to a religious practice. “I did the sacrifice, so I am okay.” It is reasonable to conclude by application that this passage applies to someone who is sinning willfully as well as justifying their sin in some manner.

This concerns the drifting, the neglecting, the abandonment that the Pauline Author is diligently warning against throughout this entire book. He’s stressing to his readers that abandoning walking by faith for a life devoted to sin will earn God’s great displeasure. Verse 30 reminds us that God is the ultimate avenger and that He will judge His people, as an absolute certainty.

Verse 31 says even more plainly, *it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. There is no mention of Hell here, no mention of loss of justification before God. That is impossible. Jesus Himself declares our eternal security in John 10:28, “and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” But to abandon our faith and give ourselves over to sinful living will have severe consequences. In Romans 1:24, Paul tells us one way God’s wrath is poured out on unrighteousness behavior: God gives us what we want. God removes our inhibitions and “gives us over” to our own desires.

Based on the greater context of Hebrews, the consequence focused on here is the loss of reward, to miss out on what we could have had in the kingdom of Heaven. Hebrews 3:18 displays this: “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?” The Pauline Author used the example of the Israelites who rebelled against God after He had liberated them from slavery in Egypt. He was angry with them for forty years, which was their consequence. They were not allowed to enter the promised land of Israel, God’s rest, God’s reward, and instead died in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 2:16). For more, see our [commentary on Deuteronomy 2:16–23](#).

For us, who have been liberated from sin and death, to rebel against our new, better covenant will result in failing to inherit God’s rest and reward.

Likewise, in Hebrews 4:11: “Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.” This verse shows the two paths very clearly: those who are diligent in the faith enter God’s rest, and those who are disobedient fall away from God’s rest.

Christ’s objective for the New Covenant is spelled out back in Hebrews 2:10. It says Christ’s goal is “bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.” Jesus desires to reward with glory those who follow His example, and live a life of diligence, endurance, and faithful obedience in spite of suffering.

Those who endure will be raised from being children of God to receiving the reward of being “sons.” We saw this in Hebrews 1:5, where Jesus received the reward of “Son” for His faithful

obedience as a man. Through faithfulness, we can actually participate as inheritors of Christ's glory, of God's rest. This reward can also be lost by willful disobedience.

Biblical Text

²⁶ 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 fall into the hands of the living God.