

# Studies In Hebrews #7

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Alex Ogden

## Willful Sin (10:26-31)

As he has done before (2:1-4; 3:7-19 and 5:11-6:8), the writer sounds out a warning. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (10:26). The context of these words suggests something much more serious than what Paul called being "overtaken in any trespass" because such a person as that was to be restored (Gal.6:1). He has already shown that Christ, as our High Priest, can "succor them that are tempted", sympathize with them in their infirmities and "bear gently with the ignorant and erring" (2:17f; 4:15f; 5:2). What the writer has in mind is that "falling away from the living God" he spoke of in 3:12, that apostasy against which he warned his readers in 6:4-8. If one knows the truth, and then knowingly and willingly turns and rejects that truth, there remains no sacrifice for them to appeal to. They are left without a sacrifice to be benefited from since they rejected the "once for all" sacrifice of Jesus (10:10,12). All that remains for such an individual is a "fearful expectation of judgement" (10:27).

Rejecting the Mosaic law resulted in sore punishment. "The soul that doeth aught with a high hand...the same blasphemeth Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Num.15:30). They were to "stone them to death with stones" (Deut.17:2-7). They were to die since they had blasphemed Jehovah in rejecting His laws. Such sinners died "without compassion" (10:28). The wilful sinner under Christ can expect "much sorer punishment" since by their sin they had "trodden under foot the Son of God...counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (10:29; see again 6:4-6). Those who willingly turn their back on the law of Christ to engage in sin show contempt for God's only begotten Son, show they regard "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet.1:19) as powerless and insult the Holy Spirit. "Sorer punishment" surely awaits such sinners. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31; cf.Matt.10:28).

Verse 26 began with the simple word "for". The word connects what was before with what follows. Our author had just addressed the custom some had of forsaking the assembling of the saints together (10:25). He then

says, "for if we sin wilfully..." As we consider 10:26-31 we must not miss a point he is making--"forsaking our own assembling together" is one example of sinning wilfully. Such shows contempt for God's Son who died for us. It is as if your only son died saving your neighbor from a fire and then that same neighbor skips the funeral to satisfy selfish desires. Such forsaking shows disrespect and contempt for the one who gave his life for others.

We can draw near to God with confidence (10:19-22), or we can fall into His hands terrified (10:26-31).

### The Need To Persevere (10:32-39)

As he did with the stern warning of 6:4-8, so the warning of 10:26-31 is followed with words of encouragement. He knows the strong words he has been giving could tend to discourage them if left alone. Since this would defeat his purpose (13:22), he continues with words to reassure and encourage.

They are first reminded of their endurance and faithfulness in "former days" (10:32-34). They were made to endure "a great conflict of sufferings" shortly after they were "enlightened" with the truth of the gospel (cf. 6:4,5). In all likelihood the persecutions of Acts 8:1 are referred to. Some had endured "being made a gazingstock...by reproaches and afflictions" while others became "partakers with them that were so used". Those who had not been made a public spectacle in this persecution had compassion and offered help to those who were persecuted, even though such put them in a position where they also could have been "made a gazingstock". Out of love they had "ministered unto the saints" (6:10). They also "took joyfully" the spoiling of their physical possessions. Because of their faith in Christ and their support of those who were made a gazingstock, they suffered loss of the things of this world. They endured such losses "joyfully" because they knew a possession was awaiting them which was both "better" and "abiding" (see also Matt.6:19-21). The words of Jesus may also have been on their mind, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Lk.6:22,23). Because of their faith in Christ they suffered persecutions. They are commended for their endurance of such persecutions.

Having commended them for their faithfulness and endurance in "former days" the Hebrew author now encourages them to maintain their boldness and develop patience (10:35-39). Earlier in this epistle the author said, "but Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (3:6). He

encouraged them to maintain boldness to be identified as God's house. Here he tells them maintaining that boldness will bring "great recompense of reward". Note again the words of Jesus in Luke 6:23: "Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven". This boldness had helped them before to endure persecutions and it would prove helpful for such in the future.

They needed to be patient to be able to fulfill the will of God and in the end "receive the promise". Earlier he told them to be "imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6:12). He said of Abraham, "having patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (6:15). Abraham, through his descendants, received God's promised rest. The Hebrews needed to maintain their boldness and develop patience so they could receive the promised rest yet remaining (cf.4:1). They needed to understand "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (11 Pet.3:9). Habakkuk 2:3,4 is used to encourage them to be patient: "yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry." In using this passage the Hebrew writer apparently has in mind the coming of Jesus in judgment upon the nation of Israel (see 12:25-27; Matt.24; Rev.22:7,20), which coming occurred in 70 A.D. In their patience they are to live by faith, not turning back to the old ways. He expresses confidence in his readers when he says, "we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition: but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul." He expresses confidence in their living by faith and in so doing encourages them to continue steadfastly in the life of a Christian.

In closing the chapter he spoke of those who had "faith unto the saving of the soul." In chapter 11 he gives numerous examples of those who lived by faith and in so doing illustrates to the Hebrews, and to us, what kind of faith we must have to save our soul. Such examples will prove very useful in encouraging the Hebrews to remain faithful unto Christ.

Alex Ogden

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