

TERRIFYING EXPECTATION

Hebrews 10:26-39

Some passages of Scripture defy simple explanations.

Most difficult in Heb found in **26-31** *"If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, & fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of 2 or 3 witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the 1 who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, & has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, & has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

There's no simple detour around concerns passage raises.

Misunderstanding causes people to fear loss of salvation; to turn our focus away from what Christ has done for us & toward our own efforts.

That leaves us standing on a very shaky foundation!

Best way to resolve confusion: assure we understand *true* message.

It's hard work, but it's worth the effort.

If you don't want to work that hard, turn off your hearing aid for next 15 minutes.

I'll call you when it's time to come back.

Conclusion is what's important, but we must look at evidence to see how we got there!

So fasten your safety belt; let's go to work for a few minutes.

Hebrews speaks to *believers* who are about to give up and go back to Judaism.

It demonstrates that Judaism is bankrupt.

God is able to deliver them.

Turning back solves nothing, & will bring severe judgment,
So hang in there, & watch God work on our behalf.

Because of previous faithfulness in persecution,
he's confident they'll trust God & remain faithful.

His purpose is to help us see God's perspective; to encourage us
to hang in there.

He issues a stern warning concerning consequences of turning
back.

**Proper response for God's people based on Christ's
superiority. 10:19-13:25**

Trust God & remain faithful to Him.

Basis for faith 19-21

Better High Priest, with better ministry, is basis for our faith.

Call to faith 22-25 [Since that's true...]

Let us *draw near* to God. Let us *hang on* to our hope.

Let us *spur* one another *on*.

Warning concerning apostasy 26-31

Author explains **reason** we should trust God & remain faithful.

6 issues to be considered to understand warning:

1. Unity of exhortation => 19-39

Conjunctions in 26 & 32 show that this is *one* exhortation.

"For" in 26 introduces *reason* for preceding exhortations;

"But" in 32 presents *contrast* with warning.

Vss. must be dealt with as unit; not separated artificially.

1st & last section are addressed to believers;

middle section must be also.

2. Condition of readers:

Descriptions indicate they are Christians.

3:1 *"Holy brothers" "who share in a heavenly calling"*

6:9 *"in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things
–things that belong to salvation."*

10:34 *"You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one."*

12:5-7 *"Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ... God is treating you as sons."*

Author uses *"we"* to identify with them, even in warnings.

Content of warnings:

keep on going in your faith–don't turn back!

6:1 *"Let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ & go on to maturity."*

6:11 *"Show the same earnestness to have the same assurance of hope until the end"*

10:35 *"Do not throw away your confidence."*

10:36 *"You have need of endurance."*

Exhortations don't correspond to what *an unbeliever* must do to be saved.

Unbelievers aren't capable of doing these things.

4:14 *"Let us hold fast our confession"*

4:16 *"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace"*

10:22-24 *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith... Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering."*

3. Description of the sinner

The author includes himself among those who could commit this sin.

10:26 *"If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth"*

He isn't exempt from danger.

Therefore, the warning must be addressed to true believers.

10:26 The person who sins *has already received* the knowledge of the truth.

10:29 He has been sanctified by the blood of the covenant.

10:30 He is identified with God's people. God judges them as part of His people.

He clearly considers them genuine believers!

4. Description of the sin

Summary description presented in 10:26: *"if we go on sinning willfully"*

Includes himself as a possible offender

"Keep on sinning" indicates this isn't just a single deed; it's a process.

"Deliberately" refers to sin which isn't unintentional, but premeditated.

Development of argument based on Num. 12-15

Numbers shows parallels between this risk and the rebellion against Moses (12), sending of the spies (13-14), and attempt to go up after God closes the door (14:40-45 => Heb. 6).

Sacrifices are provided for redeemed people who sin unintentionally (15:1-29).

Num. 15:30-31 refers to a member of God's family who sins defiantly.

He's cut off from God's people because he takes God's Word lightly.

Judgment is physical—separation from God's people, and loss of blessing.

The Hebrews' situation is similar.

They know what God expects.

If they're rebellious & disobey, there's no sacrifice for them either; they'll be turning away from the only sacrifice that can do them any good.

Therefore, they're subject to God's discipline, to physical judgment.

Relationship of this sin to previous verses.

19-25 contains 3 exhortations to *believers*:

"Let us draw near to God" "Let us hang on to our hope"

"Let us consider how to spur one another on to love & good deeds rather than abandon the gathering of God's people"

10:26-31 explains **why** we should do this:

If we don't do it, we're sinning deliberately & face severe consequences.

Logical implications of this sin:

*"There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" **10:26***

He already showed OT sacrifices couldn't take away sins.

Only sacrifice that can take away sin is Christ's sacrifice.

O.T. looked forward to this sacrifice.

If they turn away from this sacrifice, what's left?

They have nothing.

In OT when just person sins unintentionally, sacrifices cover it.

When sin's *intentional*, no sacrifice is available.

They suffer consequences.

“He has spurned the Son of God.” **29**

Figurative expression can refer to lack of respect,
or to denial of Christ and His importance.

He “profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified” 10:29

“Unholy” (*koiné*) lit., refers to things which are “common” or
“ordinary”

He treats Christ's blood as common, ordinary blood.

By returning to Judaism, they make a statement that Christ is
the same as any other dead religious leader.

His death has no special value.

He has “outraged the Spirit of grace.” 10:29

Could refer to the persistent, merciful direction of the Spirit
they reject.

By rejecting His direction, they reject Him as well.

5. Results of the sin

“A fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire” **10:27**

Instead of the sacrifice for sins which gives confidence of
fellowship with God, they're left with a terrifying expectation
of judgment.

When God's people rebel, they *expect* to be judged.

Num. presents this picture in following section 16:25-35

Story of Korah presents a horrendous expectation of judgment
for those who deliberately rebel against God's plan.

It includes judgment by fire.

O.T. “*judgment by fire*” referred to (Is. 26:11), is normally a reference to destruction of a city resulting in the physical death of its inhabitants.

God can judge His people in the same way today.

He did that to Israel in A.D. 70.

(Cf. Acts 5; 1 Cor. 11; 1 John 5).

Vengeance and divine judgment **10:30**

While this could refer to judgment of those who sin, the quotation comes from Song of Moses in Deut. 32:35-36. God promises protection for his people.

The introductory formula in Heb. 10:30 indicates that this is another basis to trust the Lord and endure persecution: “*We know Him Who said this*”.

God promised to protect His people & repay adversaries.

“*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” **10:31**

This warning is not directly stated anywhere in the O.T., but it is everywhere true.

This is a two-edged sword.

For His people it’s promise of God’s protection from enemy, but also a declaration of judgment for sinners.

6. Relationship of passage to argument of Heb

Hebrews is *an exhortation* to ***continue growing in faith***.

Christ has obtained direct access into God’s presence.

Therefore, *draw near to God, hang on to our hope, and encourage one another.*

Israel failed to do that. They suffered severe consequences.

Vss 26-31 give reason why WE should obey:

If we don’t, we have God’s judgment to look forward to.

We will deserve worse punishment than Israel.

We know Him who can deliver us from persecution and give us victory.

For Israel, judgment occurred in A.D. 70 when Roman armies moved into city & wiped out unbelieving people of God.

Those who knew the truth but chose to identify with Israel, suffered with them in the judgment also.

They ALL died there!

If you turned off the hearing aid at the beginning, **it's time to rejoin us.**

I want to be sure we understand **main thought** in this passage.

The writer is addressing believers on the verge of giving in under the weight of persecution and returning to Judaism.

He exhorts them to endure by faith, for God is able to deliver them & Judaism can't help them.

Disobedience in the light of God's clear revelation solves nothing & will bring judgment.

This sin parallels the deliberate sin of Israel in the wilderness when they refused to trust God and disobeyed His voice.

There was no sacrifice. **It resulted in physical death** (cf. Num. 15:30-31).

Unbelief in the present situation, followed by throwing over their profession and returning to Judaism, will subject them to God's judgment on that generation, when Romans destroy city & wipe out the people in A.D. 70.

Therefore they should keep on striving and watch God work on their behalf.

Pentecost: By going back, “they would be re-identifying with a nation under judgment, and there would be no escape when that judgment fell. The apostle is not threatening them with loss of salvation; he’s warning them that the physical, temporal judgment that was to come on the adversaries of Christ and His followers would fall on them as well.”

**Faced with such affliction,
they have 2 alternatives:**

1. **Faith** They can **trust God** to save them in this situation
They can **keep going** in spite of the suffering.
2. **Unbelief** They can decide suffering costs too much.
They can decide to escape & return to Judaism.

10:26-31 He warns them of the *danger of unbelief*.

10:32-12:27 He shows the *importance of faith*.

[His] EXPECTATION OF [their] FAITH 10:32-39

They’ve already suffered for Christ 32-34

Because of their previous faithfulness in persecution,
author’s confident they’ll trust God & remain faithful.

**They ought to keep going with faith & patience
10:35-39**

His purpose is to remind us, help us see God’s perspective, and
encourage us.

He wants us to see affliction from perspective of eternity, & stand
firm.

***How significant will our present affliction seem
when we look back from the perspective of eternity?***

What lessons should we learn from passage?

FOR THEM:

What's the application for Hebrew readers?

Trust God and wait for His deliverance.

Those who refuse to trust God—who refuse to wait for His deliverance—will return to Judaism & **die in judgment of Jerusalem** in A.D. 70.

That risk is unique to *their* situation.

Those who trust Him will be delivered from judgment.

FOR US: *What's lesson for us today?*

Like them, we trust Christ for salvation, but not *just* for salvation.

We trust Him daily, especially for help in times of affliction.

Danger of unbelief: *Those who refuse to trust Him can expect severe consequences.*

God disciplines His children when we don't obey.

That's as true for us as it was for readers in that day.

We could suffer physically.

We could even *die* physically. Cf. 1 Cor. 11.

We know *you can't play games with God & walk away unharmed*, but we don't often see it happen.

People who take God's Word lightly & bring His name into disrepute can expect severe consequences, even physical judgment & death.

Trust Him & obey exhortations He addresses to us as God's children (12:5): "*God is treating you as sons.*" 12:7

Hang in there; trust Him, even when we walk in the dark!

God tells us to trust Him in the dark.

Darkness may seem long and hard. But He is trustworthy.

Hang in there! Don't throw in the towel!

Trust Him; wait to see His solution!

We can expect victory in the end!

We're called to trust Him and patiently endure,
while we wait to watch God work.