



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Sermon Notes

The Danger of Apostasy

Hebrews 10:26-31

January 10, 2010

“²⁶For 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, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and 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.”

- As many of you know, we record each sermon here at GRBC and post the sermons online on a website called SermonAudio.com. From this website, individuals may access our sermons from anywhere in the world.
- Also, individuals may make comments on the website or send emails directly to the church regarding a particular sermon.
- I do occasionally receive emails from individuals in different parts of the country commenting on recent sermons. Sometimes the emails are encouraging and sometimes individuals question something that I said.
- I recently received such an email back in April. I, then, exchanged emails with the individual explaining a point I had made in a previous sermon. In my sermon on April 19 of this past year, entitled *The Order of Melchizedek*, I made the following statement:

Yet, this is precisely why Jesus Christ, as the Perfect High Priest, is so far superior to Aaron. Because Jesus was perfectly righteous, and

without sin [and need no sacrifice for Himself], His high priestly work atoned for not only unintentional sins, but high-handed, openly rebellious intentional sins as well.

- ❑ This particular listener wrestled with this statement (as I have in the past as well), asking if it was truly biblical that believers are forgiven *premeditated, intentional sins*.
- ❑ In one of his response emails, the listener said:

Pastor Baggett,

I am not suggesting that genuine born-again believers CANNOT commit willful, deliberate, intentional - even pre-meditated - sins. On the contrary, I **know** that we in fact do intentionally sin! But I was under the assumption that ALL our sins were forgiven (past, present AND future) when we were first saved/converted. Is this not so?

My perplexity is with Hebrews 10:26-31. Clearly, it states that IF we continue on deliberately sinning (which we both know that we Christians do) then there remains NO sacrifice for sin! This seems to be in direct conflict with the concept that ALL our sins were/are forgiven (past, present AND future) when we are saved/converted.

Perhaps I'm creating a false dilemma. Is that possible? And perhaps this "deliberately sinning" does NOT mean what I assume it means, i.e., our continuing to commit intentional sins against the LORD thereby making his blood something common and profane.

And then there's the point of Jesus atoning for both unintentional and intentional sins. How does that play into the bigger picture? Hebrews 10:26 (in particular) **seems** to throw a proverbial monkey-wrench into the whole works! It appears to me that it is saying that **if** you continue to willfully, deliberately, intentionally sin, then ***all bets are off! and your punishment will be worse!***

In other words, Hebrews 10:26-31 is problematic.

- ❑ Clearly, this is someone who is inquisitive, and like so many of us here, he wrestles with ensuring that his beliefs are biblical and consistent.
- ❑ So, this morning we turn to the passage in question, **Hebrews 10:26-31**. This is the fourth and final warning passage in the Book of Hebrews. As the listener I spoke of mentioned; however, this may be the most *potentially* problematic of the warning passages because of the language, particularly, in Verse 26.

- I. **The Identity of the Apostates**
- II. **The Nature of the Apostasy**
- III. **The Consequences of Apostasy**

I. The Identity of Apostates

“²⁶For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth...”

- Those spoken of here are the same of the ones mentioned in **Hebrews 6:4-6**. They have “**once been enlightened...tasted the heavenly gift...shared in the Holy Spirit...tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come.**” Yet, they have still *fallen away*.
 - They are like the apostates of ancient Israel who experienced God’s power in the Exodus and His provision in the Wilderness wanderings. In this context [of Hebrews 6:4-6], the phrase “once enlightened” likely referred to the pillar of light that guided the Israelites in the wilderness at night. “Tasted the heavenly gift” probably refers to manna that came from heaven. “Tasting the goodness of the word of God” would certainly refer to the hearing of the Word of God through Moses. Finally, “the powers of the age to come” likely refers to all of the signs, wonders, and powers that God exercised in delivering His people from Egypt, such as the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire at night.
 - There is certainly a modern-day parallel within the Christian Church. There are those who have “tasted the heavenly gift” (possibly a reference to the Lord’s Supper). They have also “shared in the Holy Spirit” (through experientially sharing in the spiritual workings of the Holy Spirit [though not through regeneration]). Further, they have “tasted the goodness of the word of God” through the preaching of the Word, and in the first century, they experienced “the powers of the age to come” through the working of signs and wonders which accompanied the apostolic preaching of the Gospel.
 - To put more simply, the apostates referred to here are those who go to church, participate in all of the ordinances, ‘taste’ the blessings and gifts associated with the local church, and even possibly make personal professions of faith (for various reasons). From most outward metrics and appearances, they seem to be genuine believers. However, they have not been genuinely born-again and pressed true, saving faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Richard Phillips explains, “The warning, therefore, is that like those who left Egypt as part of Israel, we may have a very real experience of the phenomena of God’s saving power through our participation in the church. By virtue of our affiliation with the people of God, by being in their midst, we can have the very great privileges described in our text and yet not actually enter into salvation (our eternal Rest). We will be enlightened with knowledge, we will encounter and perhaps benefit from real spiritual

power, and we may be influenced and blessed in many ways. That was the very situation with those who left Egypt in the exodus, but who fell away under hardship into rebellion and were judged by God so that they died in the desert.”

- F.F. Bruce writes of these individuals, “People are frequently immunized against a disease by being inoculated with a mild form of it, or with a related but milder disease. And in the spiritual realm experience suggests that it is possible to be ‘immunized’ against Christianity by being inoculated with something which, for the time being, looks so like the real thing that it is generally mistaken for it.”

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- In **Hebrews 10:26**, The idea of “sinning deliberately” echoes back to “sinning with a high hand” in the Old Testament in Numbers 15:30.

Numbers 15:30: “The person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people.”

- A. Barnes concurs, “In the Jewish law, as is indeed the case everywhere, a distinction is made between sins of oversight, inadvertence, or ignorance (Leviticus 4:2, 13, 22; 5:15; Numbers 15:24, 27-29: compare Acts 3:17, 17:30), and signs of presumption, sins that are deliberately and intentionally committed: see Exodus 21:14, Numbers 15:30, Deuteronomy 17:12, Psalm 19:13. The apostle here has reference, evidently, to such a distinction, and means to speak of a decided and deliberate purpose to break away from the restraints and obligations of the Christian religion.”
- The word translated “deliberately” is the word [εκουσιος] *hekousios*, which appears only twice in the entire New Testament. The other place is in 1 Peter 5:2, where it is translated, “not under **compulsion**.”
 - Richard Phillips writes, “In other Greek writings the noun form is used for those who serve as volunteers. What this verse describes is not believers who are struggling with sin, or even those who have besetting sins which plague their spiritual life and displease the Lord. Rather, this refers to those who reject God’s authority to tell them what to do, and who flagrantly continue in their sin.”
 - A.W. Pink writes, “‘For if we sin willingly,’ that is voluntarily, of our own accord, **where no constraint is used**. The reference is to a definite decision, where an individual deliberately determines to abandon Christ and turn away from God.”

- In other words, **these are no genuine believers who are struggling with sin in generally, or a specific sin. Rather, it is individual who continually sin with no remorse, guilt, or Christ-ward repentance.**
- Donald Guthrie states that these are individuals who sin “with their eyes wide open.”
- This is the type of sin that is **blatant, flagrant, and “in your face.”**
- These are precisely the types of individuals spoken of in Proverbs 2:13-15: “[those] who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.”
- Leon Morris writes, “It is clear that the writer has apostasy in mind. He is referring to people who ‘have received the knowledge of the truth’ ... The people in question, then, know what God has done in Christ; their acquaintance with Christian teaching is more than superficial. If, knowing this, they revert to an attitude of rejection, of continual sin, then there remains no sacrifice for sins. Such people have rejected the sacrifice of Christ, and the preceding argument has shown that there is no other.”
- The idea here is like those who have “deserted the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).
- These are individuals who have “received knowledge of the truth,” yet have still turned away.
- The reasons for them turning away are many; however, the point is, like we saw in Hebrews 6:4-6, they are not completely ignorant of the truth of the Christian faith.
- In the modern Christian Church, it is likely that many of them are those who outwardly embraced Christianity for the hopes of quickly gaining something from it [possibly because of the empty promises of another professing believer], only to realize that such promises were untrue.
 - Recently, Kimberly and I purchased an annual supply of an organic health food product that promises to make us healthy than we have ever been! However, when I was speaking to the representative selling us the product, I asked him if they offered a trial supply so that we could try it out before we bought it. He, then, said something that, whether or not it was true, was quite interesting. He said that they did not offer short-term trials of the product because in order to experience the lasting long-term results, we would need to commit to it long-term. In other words, he said, we would not necessarily experience quick results, because that is not what it

was designed for. Products that promised “quick fixes” or quick results were never provided lasting, long-term benefits.

- Yet, regardless of *why* these individuals apostatized, the fact is that they did. And, as a result, they rejected the only God-ordained means of salvation – Jesus Christ.

II. The Nature of Apostasy

²⁸“Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?”

- The author now employs an argument that goes from the lesser to the greater.
- He makes a reference to the Law of Moses that states that an individual who was within the covenant community of Israel and treated the Mosaic Law with contempt [as of no consequence] was to be stoned to death.
- To emphasize the just nature of this sentence, the Mosaic Law declared in Deuteronomy 17:6 that the individual was to be condemned “on the evidence of two or three witnesses.” This protected someone from being falsely accused.
- But, then the author uses the phrase **How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who...**
- The Mosaic Law was the shadow of what was to come – that is Jesus Christ.
- Now that the substance, the anti-type, has come, how much more will the punishment be for the one who rejects Him.
- Then, the author provides a three-fold explanation of the **Nature of the Apostasy** in question: (1) Spurning the Son of God; (2) Profaning the Blood of the Covenant; and (3) Outraging the Spirit of Grace.

○ Spurned the Son of God

- The word used here, translated “spurning” (καταπατεο, *katapateo*) literally means to “tread under foot, trample upon.” This vividly describes the sort of disgrace apostasy is in the face of the eternal Son of God.

- **Zechariah 12:3** (LXX, Septuagint) refers to Jerusalem as “a stone trampled on by all the nations; every one who tramples on her will utterly scorn her.”
- Furthermore, when one considers the view of the feet, especially the soles of the feet, in the Ancient Near East, and the modern Middle East today, it is clear that this is contempt of “the most flagrant kind.”
- In ancient Greek literature, the legendary poet Homer used the phrase to describe the flagrant offense of breaking an oath – “to trample oaths under foot.”
- Notice, as well, that the author describes the spurning of the “Son of God”, the second Person of the Trinity. May we never forget that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is a Person, and all sin is Personal in the face of Personal God.

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| ○ Profaned the Blood of the Covenant |
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- Next, the apostate “has profaned the blood of the covenant.”
- The Greek word translated **profane** [κοινον, *koinon*] literally means “common” or “unholy.”
- So the point, here, is that the apostate has treated the blood of Jesus Christ as **unholy** by regarding His blood as no different than any other man’s blood. That is, **the apostate has treated the blood of Jesus Christ as common.**
- I often hear people refer to Jesus Christ as though he was a very good man. In fact, when they do so, it is as though they believe that are honoring Christ as a “good man.”
- This is one of the applications of this Verse: to **profane the blood and the Name of Jesus Christ may not involve an outright condemnation of Him. Rather, it may simply involve the treating of Christ as a “great man” – even a “great man of God.”**
- Yet, **to refer to Jesus Christ as anything other than the eternal Son of God, whose blood was required to ratify the New Covenant, is to profane Him and His work.**

○ **Outraged the Spirit of Grace**

- Finally, the apostate in question here has “**outraged the Spirit of Grace.**”
- This amounts to the “unpardonable sin” of Matthew 12 (of which we spoke of last week).
- It is the “arrogant rejection of the Spirit through whose agency grace has come to man” (Donald Guthrie).
- In other words (again, as we saw last week), to outrage the Spirit of Grace, is to reject the **only means whereby God calls man to repentance and acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on their behalf.**
- Therefore, to outrage the Spirit of Grace is to reject the only means of Salvation: that is **by regeneration by the Spirit of Grace and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.**
- Without this, there is no salvation.
- However, notice the word choice of the author here. He states that the apostate “outrages” [Greek: ενοβριζειν, *enybrizein*] the Spirit. This is a word used only here in the New Testament. It means to cause outrage, insult, or show insolence towards someone. This clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit has a *personality* that can be outraged (for what *force* is ever “outraged”). Consequently, sin is a personal offense to the Person of the Holy Spirit as well.

III. The Consequences of Apostasy

“²⁶For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries...³⁰For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

- Finally, the author explains the consequences of apostasy.
- He states that for the apostate, “**there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries...**”
- NOTE: Even though it is impossible for believers to lose their salvation, warning passages like these exist for the benefit of believers, for they serve as one of the

God-ordained means of preserving believers. In other words, genuine believers will believe passage like these, take heed, and not reject Christ.

- However, this is not the case for the apostates – they have no fear of the coming judgment.
 - In fact, their very understanding of God is often times nothing like the biblical revelation of Him. **They do not fear judgment since “their” God would never judge.**
 - A.W. Pink writes *a century ago* concerning these individuals, “Alas, alas, Satan has, through the ‘Bible teachers’ done his work so well that, unless the Holy Spirit performs a miracle, it is impossible to ‘alarm’ such. The great masses of professing Christians of our day regard God Himself much as they would an indulgent old man in his dotage, who so loves his grandchildren as to be blind to all their faults. The ineffably holy God of Scripture is no longer believed in: but multitudes will yet find, to their eternal sorrow, that is ‘a fearful thing’ to fall into His hands.”
- Our author then states very explicitly that “**fire...will consume the adversaries [of Christ].**” We see in this passage the truth that God’s judgment – hell – is a reality (and a biblical – and logical – necessity).
 - **The very reason why so many people (even professing Christians) reject the concept of hell is because they do not view sin as repulsive and as heinous as it truly is.**
 - In fact, consider Clark Pinnock, a professing Christian of our day who used to teach at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary:

I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of tradition which needs to be changed...Everlasting torment is intolerable from a moral point of view because it makes God into a blood-thirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for victims whom he does not even allow to die.

- Yet, is Pinnock correct? Is the idea of a God who punishes sin “an outrageous doctrine...that needs to be changed?”
- Consider the words of J.I. Packer:

God’s wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. God is only angry where anger is called for...Would a God who did not react adversely to evil in His world be morally perfect? Surely not. But it is precisely this adverse reaction to evil, which is a necessary part of moral perfection, that

the Bible has in view when it speaks of God's wrath...This is righteous anger – the right reaction of moral perfection in the Creator towards moral perversity in the creature. So far from the manifestation of God's wrath in punishing sin being morally doubtful, the thing that would be morally doubtful would be for Him not to show His wrath in this way.

- Furthermore, God did not spare His own Son, but judged Him fully on behalf of the sin of His people. Notice the **fear** of Christ, the Son of Man, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prior to His crucifixion:

“‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ ...And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:42-44)”

- James Montgomery Boice comments on this passage:

This was not a man shrinking from mere physical death...It was the horror of the holy, eternal Son of God as he faced the experience of being made sin for us and of bearing the wrath of separation from the love of God in our place. He was delivered up so that we might be spared. He bore the wrath of God so that we might never have to bear it.”

- Packer concludes, by describing the horror of the crucifixion in terms of Christ's paying the penalty for our sins:

The physical pain, though great (for crucifixion remains the cruelest form of judicial execution that the world has ever known), was yet only a small part of the story; Jesus' chief sufferings were mental and spiritual, and what was packed into less than four hundred minutes was an eternity of agony – agony such that each minute was an eternity in itself.”

- This is why the Reformers, when explaining the Apostles' Creed, spoke of Christ's “descending into hell” as the crucifixion itself, not as an event subsequent to the crucifixion.
- Finally, Our author takes the phrase, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” from Deuteronomy 32:35 (The Apostle Paul also quotes from this passage in Romans 12:19).
 - All sin is ultimately a personal affront against God. Therefore, He is the only one who is righteous and can rightfully judge. Therefore, it is God's wrath that is towards the sinner, and He will repay.
- The next quotation is taken from Deuteronomy 32:36: “Yahweh will judge his people.”
 - In this original context, Moses is stating that those who are a part of the Israel, the covenant people of God, will be judged by Him if they do not

keep the covenant. Such apostates are those spoken of by Paul when he states, “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (Romans 9:6).

- F.F. Bruce writes, “The privileges which Israel enjoyed as God’s covenant people meant that their responsibilities were the greater and that retribution would be the more severe in their case if they gave themselves up to unrighteousness.”
- **Amos 3:2** states, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

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- We conclude with examining **Verse 26** once more:

“²⁶For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...”

- ❖ Herein lies the point of this entire passage: **There is no other effective sacrifice for sin than Jesus Christ. To reject Him is to place one outside of the realm of salvation.**
- ❖ Consider the words to the hymn: *Nothing But the Blood.*