

IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD

TEXT: HEBREWS 10:26-31

Introduction:

1. There are five warning passages in the epistle to the Hebrews.
 - The first one is found in Hebrews 2:1-4, specifically verse 3.
 - The second in 3:7--4:13, specifically 3:7, 8, 15; 4:7.
 - The third is 6:1-12, specifically verses 4-6.
 - The fourth is here in 10:26-39.
 - The fifth and last one is 12:15-29.
2. Some Christians think these warnings teach one can lose his salvation.
3. However, that would contradict other Scriptures (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:37, 47; 10:27-29; etc.).
4. Others have taught that these warnings are for the lost, not for believers. However, the warnings are addressed to believers. Hebrews 10:26 says, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth..."
5. The word "For" (10:26) connects this warning to the previous verses, which are clearly addressed to Christians.
6. The preciousness of God's mercy and grace is best appreciated by those who have discerned the awfulness of His vengeance and wrath.

I. SINNING WILLFULLY (10:26)

1. Note the word "willfully" (10:26). In the Old Testament, God made provision for sins of ignorance, but not for presumptuous sin.
2. Those "that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses" (10:28). There was no provision for them. Under the law of Moses, they were stoned to death.
3. The application here in Hebrews 10:26 is that if one sins willfully and presumptuously today, in this dispensation of grace, his punishment will be far worse. What could be more severe than being stoned to death?
4. Eternal punishment in the lake of fire -- "judgment and fiery indignation" (Heb. 10:27).
5. Dr. M.R. DeHaan said, "What right has anyone to say that Hebrews 10:19-25 applies to believers and then suddenly at the following verse that it is to be applied to Hebrews professors who are not possessors? The writer includes himself and says, 'For if *we* sin wilfully after that *we* have received the knowledge of the truth...' Whatever our interpretation of the balance of the passage may be, we may be sure it

deals with God's children and constitutes a solemn warning against wilful, presumptuous sinning against better light and in the face of clear warning and admonition" (*Hebrews*).

6. Sin must be dealt with -- whether it is the sin of the unbeliever or the sin of the believer.
7. In many ways, the sin of the believer is far more grievous because the believer knows better (Heb. 10:26). He has been given more light.
8. This epistle was written to Hebrews Christians. Some of them were going back to Judaism, offering sacrifices in the temple, trying to keep the Mosaic Law, etc.
9. To them, God says, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (10:26b).
10. In other words, our Lord's vicarious death on the cross is meaningless to those who are trying to earn their salvation by keeping the law.
11. If a person rejects the finality of Christ's sacrificial, substitutionary death for sin, there is no other sacrifice for sin available. There is no other way to come to God (10:26).
12. This is not a case of carelessness, but deliberate sin -- "For if we sin wilfully" (10:26).
13. It is interesting to note that in Hebrews 10:29, the author (probably the apostle Paul) changes from the pronoun "we" to "he."
14. This indicates that a true believer could not be guilty of trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing (10:29).
15. And yet it does say, "wherewith he was sanctified" (10:29).
16. The word "sanctified" means "set apart." There is a sense in which lost people are sanctified, that is set apart, by certain Gospel privileges (cf. I Cor. 7:14).
17. Another possible explanation is that the pronoun "he" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord said in John 17:19, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."
18. Christ was set apart unto God the Father to be our eternal High Priest through the blood of the covenant.
19. The severity of this warning (Heb. 10:27, 29) does seem to indicate that the author is giving his warning to all those in danger of backsliding. Some backsliders were never really saved in the first place.
20. William R. Newell wrote, "In these verses we have a passage which, like Chapter 6:4-8, views apostates from the faith which they once professed" (*Hebrews*).

21. Hebrews 10:30b says, "The Lord shall judge his people." The book of Hebrews contains warnings for professed Christians -- some saved, and some not saved (cf. Heb. 10:39).

II. DOING DESPITE UNTO THE SPIRIT OF GRACE (10:29).

1. This literally means to insult the gracious Holy Spirit.
2. Christians can grieve the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 warns us, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
3. Christians can quench the Holy Spirit. First Thessalonians 5:19 says, "Quench not the Spirit."
4. Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3).
5. Our Lord said in Matthew 12:31, 32, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."
6. Matthew 12:31, 32 and Hebrews 10:29 are warnings about rejecting the Holy Spirit's testimony about the grace of Christ.
7. To do despite unto the Spirit of grace means to turn from salvation by grace and to attempt to be saved by works or by a mixture of grace plus works.
8. H.A. Ironside said, "The Holy Spirit delights to magnify Christ and to exalt His work. To refuse His testimony is to do despite unto the Spirit of grace" (*Hebrews*).
9. The book of Hebrews contains strong warnings to Hebrew Christians who had professed Christ but were in danger of returning to the dead Judaism.
10. By turning back to Judaism, they were turning their backs to the gospel of the grace of Christ and were trampling under foot the Son of God, were treating it as an unholy thing, and were insulting the Holy Spirit.
11. This is the only time in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of grace."
12. He is called the Spirit of grace in Zechariah 12:10. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

III. IT'S A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD (10:31).

1. Hebrews 10:30 is a quotation from Deuteronomy 32:35, 36a.
2. "To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge his people."
3. That was Jonathan Edwards' text when he preached his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
4. "For the LORD will judge his people" (Psalm 135:14a; cf. Hebrews 10:30a).
5. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

CONCLUSION:

1. Students of the epistle to the Hebrews have noted some similarities and some contrasts with the Book of Revelation.
2. It has been noted that the judgments described in the book of Revelation are awful in their character and in their solemnity.
3. However, in the book of Hebrews, God's vengeance has a peculiarly personal character.
4. That is because sinners are said to be walking all over the Son of God, considering His shed blood an unholy thing, and insulting the Holy Spirit (10:29).