

MOVING TOWARD MATURITY

Willful Sin

TEXT: Heb. 10:26-39

INTRODUCTION: On Saturday, May 11, 1985, 11,000 football fans had gathered to watch a soccer match in Bradford City, England. The score was 0, 0, and the game uneventful. In their boredom, somebody dropped their still burning cigarette between the footboards of the stadium seats into the accumulated litter below. Five minutes before half time that day a small fire was noticed at the back of the right side of the stands. The play was continuing, but the fire was also spreading. The commentator mentioned the fire but then resumed commentary on the match, oblivious to the seriousness of the situation. People were simply being moved away from the area of the fire, and fire fighting equipment was requested, but everything else seemed calm. About 30 seconds later the fire was growing and the people at the end of the stands where the blaze was had started to move onto the field and finally the game was stopped. The people at the other end of the stands simply sat where they were, unaffected by what was happening.

Within a short time the roof of the stadium had combusted into flames and the people at the other end of the stands suddenly began to panic. People were unable to get onto the safety of the field in time, 56 people lost their lives and 265 were taken to hospital with serious injuries. Many of the dead were the young and elderly, crushed in the stampede to get to safety. Others died in the flames.

Several videos of the scene are on the internet. One thing that struck me however was the efforts of one police officer. He had been near to the area of the fire and had realized the seriousness of the situation. He could be seen near the start of the incident, frantically trying to wave people towards the field, towards safety. However, people didn't seem to be listening to him, it was as if they felt safe in the crowd that they were in. Some did listen, they went towards the field, and they were saved. But many others ignored the warning too long and perished in the flames.

[\(Story adapted from original by Mark Holdcroft\)](#)

I wonder how many of you here this morning will ignore the warning and wait too long. What warning, you say. The warning in the text of Hebrews God brings us to today. A warning that speaks of fear, judgment, fire, and punishment.

Some of you are thinking right now, oh I just hate fire and brimstone sermons. This is not one. This text is not about hell, indeed it is not even addressed to lost people. The words we read today are to the saved, the born again but who are in danger of

fearsome judgment, even of death, because they have too long been ignoring the warning that comes from the Word of God.

The text we examine today is a frightening and sometimes misunderstood text. Consequently, you do not hear it read often, and do not hear it preached often. But when you study through a whole book, you don't pick and choose from the words God sends as if the Bible were the Golden Coral Buffet. So stand and give careful heed to the word of the Lord in

Hebrews 10:26-39 (NKJV) ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*"* says the Lord. And again, "*The LORD will judge His people.*" ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. ³² But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: ³³ partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; ³⁴ for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. ³⁵ Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ³⁷ "*For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*" ³⁸ *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*" ³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

I. WHO IS THIS MESSAGE TO?

A. Some say it is to Christians who fall away from Christ

and now, having lost their salvation, can never be saved again.

1. This would be contrary to the promise of our Lord that those in His hand will never perish and have eternal life.

John 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

2. This would be contrary to the promise recorded in Hebrews that the Lord will never leave or forsake His children.
3. The promise of Scripture is that Christ keeps those the Father gives to Him through faith. For a Christian to fall away, Christ would have to fail.

B. Some say it is to Jews who came close to being saved, but they never were.

Now, if they reject the gospel, they can never be saved.

C. The text itself demonstrates this message is to Christians, to born again believers.

1. **The whole letter to the Hebrews is written to born again Christians.** Just quickly walk with me through the pages of Hebrews we have studied so far and glance at some of the verses. Anyone can see clearly that the author of the book, obviously a born again believer, also considers the recipients he is addressing as genuine Christians. Look with me.
 - a. **holy brethren - 3:1** Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,
 - b. **partakers of Christ - 3:14** For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,
 - c. **we who have believed – 4:3** For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "*So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'*" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.
 - d. **we have a great High Priest...Jesus the Son of God – 4:14** Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.
 - e. **by this time you ought to be teachers – 5:12** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
 - f. **beloved – 6:9** But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.
 - g. **we have this hope as an anchor of the soul – 6:19** This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil,
 - h. **we have a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne – 8:1** Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
 - i. **how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience – 9:14** how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
2. Now let's look at the very chapter of our text, Hebrews 10.

The immediate context of the passage we are examining is also clearly written to born again Christians.

- a. **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all – 10:10** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.
 - b. **the Holy Spirit witnesses to us – 10:15** But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,
 - c. **brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ... let us draw near – 10:19-22** ¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - d. **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience – 10:22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - e. **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope – 10:23** Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.
 - f. **after you were illuminated – 10:32** But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:
 - g. **you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven – 10:34** for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.
 - h. **we are not of those who draw back to perdition but of those who believe to the saving of the soul – 10:39** But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.
3. **The author of Hebrews includes himself in the possibility: “if we sin willfully...”**
- a. **If the author were saying, “If you deliberately turn away from trusting Christ now after coming so close, then you will not be saved.” then he would have said “you” and not “we.”**

II. WHAT IS WILLFUL SIN?

A. Willful sin is not a sin committed in ignorance.

Willful sin is not sin one did not knowing it was wrong.

Willful sin is not a one time sin committed in a moment of weakness.

B. Willful sin is voluntary and deliberate.

C. A detailed translation would read, “if we keep on sinning deliberately...”

Now, let’s reread the first part of this warning from God:

Hebrews 10:26-39 ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

III. WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT SAYS, “... there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

A. In the O.T., there was no sacrifice to be made for willful or presumptuous sin.

Num. 15:27-31 ²⁷ 'And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. ²⁸ So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. ²⁹ You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them. ³⁰

'But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹ Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *shall be* upon him.'"

1. If the sin was unintentional, a sacrifice could be made and the temporal penalty for the sin was alleviated.
2. If the sin was intentional, willful, then there was no sacrifice and whatever the penalty was for that particular sin had to be executed.

B. This passage in Hebrews is saying that when a Christian deliberately and willfully continues in sin, there is nothing to alleviate the temporal consequences that God brings upon His wayward child.

C. This does not mean that forgiveness is not available when he repents.

D. It means that while he continues in sin, he ought not think that because Jesus died for him on the cross, that there will be no consequences for his continuing disobedience. Such a teaching is a perversion of grace.

1. The same sacrifice that secured our ultimate and eternal redemption
2. Also made us part of God's family, and
3. The Heavenly Father chastens those of His children who continue in willful sin.

IV. WHAT IS THE WARNING?

A. Christian, when you continue in deliberate sin,
 expect a fearful, burning judgment from your Heavenly Father,
 in this life,
 sent with the intention of bringing you to repentance
 and back into fellowship with the Lord.

10:26-27 ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

B. By continuing in deliberate sin, you are

1. trampling the Son of God underfoot
2. counting Jesus' shed blood as trivial and unimportant
3. insulting the Holy Spirit of God Who has dealt with you in grace.

C. The chastening that God brings upon those in continuing willful sin may be ferocious. 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

D. On occasion, this chastening judgment from the Lord includes death.

10:28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead to death*, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading to death*. There is sin *leading to death*. I do not say that he should pray about that.

CONCLUSION: Christian friend, are you continuing in willful, deliberate sin?

I am not talking about occasional, unintentional sins that overtake you at a moment of weakness, but then you repent and forsake it.

Is there sin about which you have said, "I know it's wrong, but I'm going to do it anyway." Then this text is for you. Do not trample the Son of God more, do not despise the blood of your Lord, do not insult the Spirit of Grace.

Today. Right here and now, repent. Fall on your knees before God, and utterly forsake your sin. Do not make the Lord cause His fiery trials to fall upon you to bring you back to Himself. If that burning judgment is already upon you, repent and call upon the mercy of the Lord.