



26: A Warning To Motivate

The writer of the book of Hebrews has made his case: what we have in Jesus is better than anything that went before. Now he's spelling out some of the implications of what he's taught us.

In verses 19 – 25 he's given us a summary of the main conclusions he wants us to draw from what he's written previously and listed five things that we ought do in response, Now, in the rest of chapter 10 he's going to give us another of his very strong warnings. It's calculated to motivate us to do those five things.

"For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 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? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 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. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

"For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
Now the just shall live by faith;
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him."

But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

Hebrews 10:26 – 39

The word "for" at the beginning of verse 26 introduces us to the writer's answer to the question, Why should we do what you've said?" What's about to come is a stern warning but, as with other warnings he's given, we'll see that he balances sternness with words of encouragement. It's a method we would do well to learn from.

Keep It In Context

"If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."

Hebrews 10:26

If ever there was a verse that must be kept in it's context it's this one! So remember what the writer has just been talking about. He's been reminding his readers about the new and only way by which we can draw near to God. He's been urging them to hold on to their hope in Jesus and to help one another to keep holding on to that hope. The wilful sin he's talking about is the sin of deliberately rejecting Jesus: deliberately turning back to the old ways of Judaism, denying that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and separating from Him and from His church. If anybody goes down that road there's no sacrifice left that will cover his sin.

Hasn't so much of the book so far been making that very point? Jesus sacrifice is the only one that works. So when the writer says, "if we sin wilfully" what he has in mind is deliberate and total rejection of the Lord Jesus. The kind of people he has in mind are those who although they may at one time have received the gospel — the truth — eagerly and obeyed its call, they now go against its teaching. They have abandoned their Christian faith. They have trampled Jesus underfoot, counting His blood worthless. They have insulted the Holy Spirit — the Spirit of grace — in the worst possible way (verse 29). All that they have to look forward to is certain judgement and punishment — a point that the writer backs up with quotations from Deuteronomy 32 and drives home with the words, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (verse 31).

- ◆ *Why do you think the writer calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of grace here?*
- ◆ *The book of Hebrews was written, we think, to people who had been brought up as Jews but who were now followers of Jesus. They were being persecuted because of their new faith — maybe by friends and neighbours and maybe even by members of their own families — and they were coming under intense pressure to reject Jesus and go back to what they formerly believed. These words were a strong warning to them but what kind of people do you think these words are a warning to today?*

Words Of Encouragement (verses 32 – 34)

But the writer not wanting to drive his readers to despair reminds them of how they did respond to the gospel when they first heard it. He reminds them of how they've persevered, following Jesus in spite of persecution. They've endured a great struggle. They've suffered for Jesus and they've stood with others who were suffering, not least the writer himself. They've gladly accepted the loss of their possessions, knowing they have far better things to look forward to in Heaven. Their struggling and perseverance have deepened their fellowship, increased their compassion, demonstrated their resilience and brought their priorities into sharper focus.

- ◆ *What kind of things might put you in a position where you would be tempted to turn away from your faith in the Lord Jesus?*

Press On In Faith (verses 35 – 39)

And so the writer encourages them to continue to hold on to their confidence in Jesus: to persevere and to continue to endure hardship, looking forward to the reward that's promised to all those who do. Once again he backs up what he's saying from the Old Testament, this time quoting a selection of verses from the book of Habakkuk. In the late seventh century BC, distressed and wearied by godlessness and disobedience in Israel, Habakkuk cried to God for help. God told him that he must be patient and that's the message the writer is delivering to his readers.

"The just shall live by faith."

Hebrews 10:38

He's about to move on to talk at some length about what it means to live by faith, but first there's a statement of confidence in his readers:

"We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

Hebrews 10:39