

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 10:26-31**

To better understand what repentance is and why it is needed.

Read the Text:

For 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. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For 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. (Heb. 10:26-31, ESV)

Study the Text:**When There's Nowhere Else to Go**

Hebrews 10:26-31 forms one of the most difficult passages to reckon with in the entire book. After explaining the importance of maintaining faith (Heb. 10:23) and consistently gathering with other Christians on the Lord's Day (Heb. 10:24-25), our attention is turned towards what happens when even after we have received the "knowledge of the truth," we "go on sinning deliberately" (Heb. 10:26). The author is going to argue that there is nowhere else to go but into judgment. Below is a breakdown of some of the key terms and concepts.

NO MORE SOLUTIONS

Verse 26 lays out a harsh but important reality: if you receive the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel and yet continue to live in your sin, thereby rejecting the Gospel, there is no longer any solution for your sin. Hebrews 8:1-10:18 has consistently demonstrated that only through the blood of the Son of God can a person be made right before God. Thus, to reject his substitutionary atonement is to reject the only real chance at redemption. It might be a bit scary for a Christian to read this passage and worry: "What if this applies to me? I still sin!"

Consider, however, some key details of this verse. First, the term “deliberately” is a callback to the Mosaic Law. The Law distinguishes between a “willful sin” (Num. 15:30-31) and an “inadvertent sin” (Num. 15:27-28). The willful sin is open, defiant, and unapologetic. That the term “deliberately” is a participle indicates an ongoing, repetitive action. In other words, this is speaking about someone who continually and willfully sins against God without apology. This, of course, describes any non-believer. But the context of Hebrews 10:26 is not merely a pagan, but one who has received “the knowledge of the truth.” This means that Hebrews has in mind someone who has had the Gospel clearly explained to them and who defiantly rejects it, insisting that their own way is better.

The conclusion is dire: “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26). Jesus Christ is the only solution to their guilt. All have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23), and therefore all have the penalty of guilt and death over them unless the blood of the Son of God covers them. Hebrews is explaining that it is not merely enough to “know” the truth. You must live by faith, for indeed, the righteous live by faith (Hab. 2:4). If not, only “judgment” and “a fury of fire” awaits the sinner (Heb. 10:27).

A COMPARISON

Verses 28 and 29 form a comparison to further illustrate this scenario. Under the old covenant, it was possible to receive a death sentence for a crime you committed, and all that was needed to verify your crime was two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6). This was the minimum evidentiary requirement, though often a judge was also expected to further investigate before sentencing. If found guilty, there was no mercy for the offender. In light of that, the author compares an offender in the new covenant. First, consider that while there is no mercy in the old covenant, there is mercy in the new covenant. It might be tempting to read this and wonder, “Why is there no mercy under Christ?” But there *is* mercy. This is what Hebrews has been arguing. We are not talking about an instance in which there is no mercy, but an instance in which mercy has been offered to and rejected by the willful sinner.

And if the punishment under the Mosaic Law was severe, how much more severe will be the punishment for the violation of the greater covenant? That’s essentially the question verses 28 and 29 are asking. Verse 29 lists three violations through three participles: “trampled, profaned, outraged.” Each is significant.

1. “Trampled Underfoot the Son of God” - The force of this participle communicates the idea of “disdain and contempt.” In other words, the offender treats Jesus, the Son of God, with great disdain. New Testament scholar George Guthrie writes, “The metaphor of “trampling on” someone was used in both classical literature and the Greek Old Testament as an image of utter disdain. Thus, those who have rejected the gospel have shown the lowest form of contempt not only for a set of teachings but for the very person of God’s Son.”¹
2. “Profaned the Blood of the Covenant” - Further, they have treated the precious blood of Jesus as a merely common or profane thing. The “blood of the covenant” refers to the inaugural blood of the Mosaic covenant mentioned in Exodus 24:8, which has already been connected to Jesus’s blood in Hebrews 9:19-21. Jesus himself connected his blood to Exodus 24 in his institution of the Lord’s Supper (Matt.

¹ George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry C. Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 357.

26:28). To defile the blood of the new covenant in any way shows not only a lack of belief, but again, contempt for the Son of God.

3. “Outraged the Spirit of Grace” - The term “outrage” is the Greek word ἐνυβρίζω (enybrizō), and it means “to insult or mock.” The claim that Jesus is the atoning solution to sin is a work that can only be attributed to God. Therefore, to hold Jesus in contempt and to profane his blood necessarily insults the Spirit of God as well. This is similar to the unforgivable sin that Jesus warned about in Mark 3:28-29, regarding the “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.” To attribute the clear work of God to anyone other than God is an outrageous and unforgivable transgression because it removes the only solution to your sin. If you remove the only solution, no solutions remain; thus, only judgment awaits.

REPENT OR PERISH

Therefore, Hebrews reminds us that God will have vengeance on his enemies (Heb. 10:30; c.f. Deut. 32:35-36), and that it is “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). A similar sentiment is expressed by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 33:14: “The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: ‘Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?’” God will not allow rebellion to continue forever. He will reject those who have rejected his mercy.

What About Now?

Perhaps the most pressing application of this text would be a deep, introspective look into your life, followed by hard questions: “Have I truly repented of my sin? Have I received salvation in Christ? Does my life reflect it?” Hebrews 10:26-31 reminds us that God is not only full of mercy, but also justice. Another takeaway would be the relief of knowing that non-Christians who have wronged you in horribly hurtful ways will be held accountable one day. No crime goes unnoticed. Justice will be accomplished.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Hebrews 10:26. What does it mean to “go on sinning deliberately?” What results in this?

2. Read Hebrews 10:27. What expectation awaits those described in the previous verse?

Day Two

1. Read Hebrews 10:28 and Deuteronomy 17:6. What is the main idea of this verse?

2. Read Hebrews 10:29. What are the three violations described in this verse? What do each mean?

Day Three

1. Read Hebrews 10:30. How does verse 30 apply to the previous verses? What two Old Testament verses are quoted here?

2. Read Deuteronomy 32:35. What does this full verse quoted in Hebrews 10:30 communicate?

Day Four

1. Read Deuteronomy 32:36. What does this full verse quoted in Hebrews 10:30 communicate?

2. Read Hebrews 10:31. Why is it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?

Discuss the Text!

Session 24 Discussion: Repentance

Hebrews 10:26-31 should strike the hearts of its readers, prompting a sobering look at whether they have truly repented of their sins. Talk as a group about what repentance is and is not, and whether you need to actually repent of your sin.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever stubbornly continued in the wrong direction even after someone warned you that you were going the wrong way? What happened?
2. What is repentance? How does repentance differ from regret or remorse?
3. According to verse 29, what does a refusal to repent reveal about a person's attitude towards the Son of God, the blood of Christ, and the Spirit of grace?
4. Is there a sin you have been excusing, concealing, or refusing to deal with? What would genuine repentance require you to do?
5. Kid Talk: Ask your child to imagine that your family is driving somewhere and realizes that the car is traveling in the wrong direction. Would it be enough for the driver to say, "I'm sorry we're going the wrong way," while continuing to drive that way? Explain that repentance is like making a U-turn: we admit that we have gone against God, ask him to forgive us because of Jesus, and turn from our sin toward him. Then ask, "What is the difference between saying 'I'm sorry' and actually turning around?"

Takeaways:

1. Those who deliberately reject Jesus Christ and his atonement only have judgment awaiting them.
2. True repentance is a crucial component to being born again in Christ.