

Hebrews 10:25-31 "Let Us Fall Into The Hands Of The LORD,
For His Mercy Is Great..."

Up to this point our writer has been encouraging the believers he was addressing to consider the awesomeness of our God and the salvation only He brings.

HEB 10:19-24 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

It's a call to faithfulness, to perseverance in the faith, to honoring our Lord and being there for the brethren to encourage them in their faith. But, what we're going to see next is a warning and a sobering truth regarding those who may profess with their mouths, Jesus as the Messiah, and yet whose lives demonstrate that the life of Christ is not a reality in their lives.

HEB 10:25-27 "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching. 26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

Verse 25 begins the contrast of those who demonstrate an abandonment of the truth with those who continue on in the faith. Normally, we see this verse as a warning to believers to stay plugged in to a church and not to try and go it alone or become lax in fellowshiping with the saints in a local body.

It is true that Christ makes it abundantly clear that we are to continue in the fellowship of the saints and not neglect the means for our growth in Christ, which includes being united to a local church and being a responsible part of that church.

In fact, we see this in the very early days of the forming of the church in ACT 2:42, 46-47 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

But there is more to our text in verse 25 which speaks of the danger of walking away, not just from a local church, but from the faith altogether. The NIV reads HEB 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,...."

The NAS puts it this way: "not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some." The obvious point would be that to place oneself outside of the Body of Christ, in a local setting, is detrimental to one's growth. But here in our text it goes beyond that to include the idea of forsaking the Body of Christ, as some had done, who were at one time actually identified with the body.

The original Greek word for "habit" could actually be translated custom. A.W. Pink in his commentary on Hebrews makes this point: "The Greek word for manner [or habit] signifies custom, and is so translated in Luk.2:42. This supports additional confirmation that the evil against which the Hebrews were [dissuaded] was no mere occasionally absenting themselves from the Christian churches, but a deliberate, fixed and final departure from them."

He goes on to say: "In Joh.6:66 we read that 'from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him'; John also wrote of those who 'went out from us, but they were not really of us' (1Joh.2:19); while at the close of his labors Paul had to say 'All they which are in Asia turned away from me' (2Tim.1:15). So here, some who had made a profession of the Christian faith had now abandoned the same and gone back to Judaism. It was to warn the others against this fatal step that the apostle now wrote as he did."

Again, we must also understand that this verse was designed to have an impact on true believers who may have been tempted to go back to Judaism or even tempted to leave the fellowship of the saints because of certain pressures their society was putting on them in the way of persecution, for example.

F.F. Bruce comments: "Under the various pressures which were being brought to bear upon them, to withdraw from the society of their fellow-believers was to court spiritual defeat; only by remaining united could they preserve their faith and witness."

Dr. Donald Guthrie points out that "The N.T. lends no support to the idea of lone Christians. Close and regular fellowship with other believers is not just some nice idea, but an absolute necessity for the encouragement of Christian values."

But to forsake the assembling of ourselves together is a much more serious matter from the standpoint of what that action speaks of. It speaks of turning one's back on, not only the institution of the church, which Jesus Himself brought about, but it also denies the importance of who Jesus Christ is and His personal involvement in one's life, especially as it relates to salvation.

This is a large part of what our writer is saying. And as we see from verses 26 to 31 there is a real danger of apostasy within the ranks of the church. But before moving on to verse 26 let's look quickly at the end of verse 25."but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

The contrast is clear. Instead of being tempted to forsake the body of Christ, it's vital to our own walk, as well as to the well-being of other believers, that we encourage one another. The word encourage in the Greek is *parakaleo* and it means to "call near" or "come alongside" with the express purpose of being there for the needs of others.

It's a very similar word which describes the Holy Spirit as our Helper, our Counselor, or as the KJV puts, it our Comforter.

JOH 14:16-17 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

We are to be there for one another to *parakaleo* each other; to encourage, to comfort, to help. This can't be done effectively, or as God has designed it, if we abandon or forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

But our writer adds an element of urgency when explaining that we must be about encouraging one another "as you see the day approaching, or drawing near." What day? Well, some

commentators believe this would include the days of destruction which took place in A.D. 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem.

If this were the case then it would be very important for all Jewish believers to be united and strong for one another in light of the fact that with this impending doom, which was seen coming on the horizon, they should not abandon their faith or each other as they came together to worship the Lord and be there for one another.

But it is certainly true that most Christians were taught that "the Day" was also speaking of the Day of Judgment for the world. Paul speaks of this in 1CO 3:12-13 "If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because *the Day* will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work."

And so the urgency being conveyed by our writer would include the fact that since the imminent return of Christ is close at hand and since He will ultimately judge the world, we must be found doing the work He's called us to do in extending His Kingdom, and not forsake each other in this time. But as we encourage each other the work goes forward, unity in the Spirit is maintained and Christ is magnified in our lives and in the life of His church.

If however, one thinks that you can just join "the club" and then continue to go along as if there is no connection to Christ, as you live for self, then there is a stern warning which speaks of judgment.

HEB 10:26-27 "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

This portion of scripture has confused and sometimes given Christians a lack of assurance of their own salvation. To be sure, it is meant to speak to the hearts of Christians and to warn them of the dangers of apostasy, but this section does not assume that these Christians, being addressed in Hebrews, have done this or are about to do this.

It is meant to be a wake-up call in a sense for true believers who might be tempted to be lulled into a life which doesn't consider walking after the Spirit and His truth in the word of God. But this is much more serious for the person who makes a deliberate choice

to leave behind what he has been taught of this truth, especially as it pertains to Christ's atoning work.

F.F. Bruce puts it this way: "The context suggests that something much more serious is in his mind than what Paul calls being "overtaken in any trespass" (Gal.6:1) -- after all, he has pointed out more than once that in Jesus Christians have a high priest who can (help) them when they are tempted, sympathize with them in their infirmities, and bear gently with them when they stray from the path through ignorance. (Heb.2:17; 4:15; 5:2)

..... What he has in mind is rather that "deserting the living God" of which he spoke in 3:12, that renunciation of Christianity against which he warned his readers in 6:4-8. To have received the knowledge of the truth and then reject it is to give up the only way of salvation. "No further sacrifice for sins is left" which can avail for those who have deliberately abandoned reliance on the perfect sacrifice of Christ."

This is further shown by the way in which this knowledge of Christ has been understood. In verse 26 it says, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,.... "

The idea of "receiving the knowledge of the truth" is much more than simply recognizing a body of truth about something. In the Greek language it suggests, as Pink points out, "to include an act of the mind in understanding it, an act of the will in consenting, and an act of the heart in embracing it."

This doesn't mean that there is necessarily a heart change, but an attitude of the heart and mind in understanding that outside of this truth there is no other reasonable alternative to one's salvation.

Many of the Jews of Paul's day were taught that Jesus Christ could be the only true fulfillment to what the Prophets of old spoke of. And yet many who once followed, decided that they would not continue on that path as they rejected this truth to go back to the ways of old.

You don't need to be an enlightened Jew to do this. I know of many people in the world today who have professed Christ and yet have blatantly turned away from the truth. This is the apostasy our writer speaks of and which people are warned against.

This does not teach that true believers can or will commit such a deliberate act of rejecting Christ. It simply teaches the sobering

truth that people do choose this path and all of us should be humbled and consider more earnestly our own walk with Christ.

What awaits those who deliberately choose the sin of apostasy against the One who came for their salvation?

HEB 10:27 "but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

Notice that those who reject Christ, after having been enlightened to the truth, are shown to be enemies of God. An enemy is one who is at war with someone. In Christ we are no longer at enmity or war with God because Christ has brought true peace as our relationship with the Father has been established.

But Jesus says "if you are not with Me, you are against Me". Those who reject Christ are at war with God and are therefore His enemies in that sense. As such they will receive the just punishment from God reserved for His enemies.

It may not be a popular teaching in or outside of the church today, but there's no way one can get around the clear teaching that there is eternal judgment for sinners who do not choose Christ. Jesus said in MAT 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

This eternal fire was prepared for Satan and his angels who rebelled against God, who apostatised and rejected the truth. Those who reject Christ join those angels forever in eternal judgment and separation from God.

What a contrast with those who embrace Christ by faith who have the promise from Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you." This place is reserved for His people. This place is eternal fellowship with God, ultimately on the new earth among the new heavens, or universe.

Paul touches on this in 1CO 2:9-10 "However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (Isaiah 64:4) 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."

Our writer of Hebrews now begins to show the sureness of God's judgment and how it has never changed. After all, as we're told in HEB 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and

forever." God hasn't changed. I know there's the tendency to think that when it comes to God's judgment in the O.T. it is now much different in the New, that somehow we've got a new kinder and gentler God when it comes to this issue of judgment.

First, let me say that God does not delight in having to dispense His judgment.

2PE 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

But God does not relinquish our responsibility to place our faith in Him. We are all responsible to Him to turn from self and turn to His Son alone for salvation.

But even in His judgment He is infinitely patient with people who are His enemies as they reject His Son.

ROM 9:22-24 "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath -prepared for destruction? 23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory - 24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?"

But God cannot overlook sin. It must be punished.

HEB 10:28-29 "Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?"

This is a comparison between Old and New Testament. Under the law anyone who willfully rejected God's truth was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This is in reference to the passage found in Deu.17:2-6.

But notice what our writer in Hebrews does. He draws upon an O.T. passage and then basically says, 'as horrible as that judgment was, as people were put to death when rejecting God as demonstrated in certain acts of rebellion, how much more severe will it be for those who reject Christ?'

HEB 10:29 "How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under

foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?"

Now here we see that this is in the context of what we saw in verse 26 when referring to people who had been enlightened to the truth and still rejected Christ. This doesn't mean that simply because someone has not been enlightened about Jesus Christ they avoid judgment.

Paul tells us that all people are still held accountable because they have been enlightened to the reality of the One true God by the very existence of God's creation. And on that alone people are responsible to seek this one true God. And the promise remains that all who diligently seek Him will find Him. God will make a way for all men everywhere who want to know the truth. The problem is that people are not interested in the truth. They want what they want. That's why people are judged by God.

The heart of man is naturally hard and unwilling to know God. That's why the apostle could write in ROM 3:10-12 "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Psalms 14:1 -3; 53:1 -3; Eccles. 7:20)

But praise God our Lord is in the business of changing hearts and giving life where there was death. But that still does not negate the reality of God's judgment which is sure for those who reject Him.

But I would point out that this apostasy which our writer speaks of is heinous.

HEB 10:29 "How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?"

The picture here is of one who has no regard for Christ and in the process blasphemes the One, through word and deed, who came to give life eternal. The phrase, "trampled the Son of God under foot" is an interesting one. Notice that the name Jesus or the title Christ is not used here. Rather the "Son of God" which magnifies the majesty of the One being scorned.

It is the Son of the living God who is being trampled under foot. Pink points out: "The figure here employed is very expressive and solemn: to tread under foot is the basest use to which a thing can

be put. It signifies a scornful spurning of an object as a thing that is worthless, and is applied to swine trampling pearls under their feet. (Mat.7:6)"

The next phrase in verse 29 is "who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him,..."

Andrew Murray gives a very sobering observation concerning this. "When I come to water in which I wish to wash, and find it impure, I reject it; I throw it out. Christ calls the sinner to wash in His blood and be clean. (And yet) He rejects it as an unclean thing. Yes, the blood that speaks of the love of Jesus, and the remission of sins, and the opened heaven, is rejected and cast aside! Oh, what sin! If the rejecters of the blood of bulls and goats died without compassion, how much more -- the despisers of the blood of the Son of God!"

The last phrase which describes the despicable attitude of one who has known the truth and yet rejected the One true Savior is, "and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?" Once again, A.W. Pink sums it up best: "It is by the Spirit the Christian was regenerated, enlightened, convicted, and brought to Christ. It is by the Spirit the Christian is led and fed, taught and sanctified. What reverence is due Him as a Divine person! What gratitude as a Divine benefactor! How dreadful the sin then which treats Him with insolence, which scorns to attend unto His winsome voice, which despises His gracious entreaties!....."

..... While the grossest form of the sin here referred to is, malignity imputing unto Satan the works of the Spirit, yet there are milder degrees of it. O my reader, let us earnestly endeavor to keep from grieving Him and more completely yield ourselves to be led by Him along the highway of practical holiness."

Again, judgment is in the hands of God and those who would reject Him are not to be delivered from that judgment.

HEB 10:30-31 "For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," (Deut. 32:35) and again, "The Lord will judge his people." (Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14) 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

By this time we all might be saying, boy isn't this a light and wonderful and whimsical teaching. It may not be light but it is true and it should humble us all as we give thanks to the living God who has given us a way out from His judgment.

And this is the crux of the matter. When we talk about apostasy we are addressing those identified with the church who are not actually of the church. They are what Christ refers to as the “tares”, or the “goats,” wolves in sheep’s clothing.

A true believer cannot apostatize. And the reason has everything to do with the One who has given us life for the express purpose of bringing us home into His presence. This precisely what Jesus tells us in the gospel of John.

John 6:39-40 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

How many of God’s people will Jesus lose?

None. Why? Because Christ promises He will lose none, but raise them up on the last day. But just as true is this promise is, the promise put forth in our text that those who only pay lip service to Christ without true faith will not go unpunished especially when they reject Christ after having been exposed to the truth in the context of being part of a church body.

For a more complete treatment of this apostasy within the ranks of the Body of Christ you can refer back to my study on Hebrews 6:4-6 entitled, Are we Really Secure in Christ.”

But Dr. Guthrie rightly points out that "lest some should think that he has overdrawn the prospect of judgment, the writer turns his readers' attention to the character of the judge, which is the guarantee that the judgment will be just."

God does everything perfectly and rightly. He's not an ogre waiting to pounce on unsuspecting victims. There are no victims. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And the wages of sin is death. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God if you've rejected Him.

But for the believer who has seen his need for the Savior we have an assurance, not of doom and God's impending wrath, but of life and fellowship and we know that the hand of God is upon us, leads us, and comforts us and will one day embrace us in His arms as we come home to spend eternity with Him.

What this passage of scripture should show us is the heinousness of sin and what it produces as men reject the only way of escape. But it should also bring to mind that the wrath of God you and I deserve was poured out on the Son so that we might not have to pay our own penalty but have our Advocate, our Savior, pay it on our behalf.

Some would say if God were so loving why would He inflict such punishment? No, the question should be if a Holy God must punish sin, why then did He come into this world at all to give us life and a way of reconciliation? Because He loved us and desires our eternal fellowship.

When we see His love and grace for what it is in Christ then we should be able to say with David in 2SA 24:14 "Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great;.... "

Let me close with an exhortation from Andrew Murray. "Let us think in love on all who are still exposed to this judgment, until it stirs us to thanksgiving for our own redemption, to an infinite compassion for all who are in danger, to new fervency of prayer for their salvation, and to a consecration of ourselves to the one work of warning them of their danger and leading them to Christ."