



No Easy-Believism Allowed

Hebrews 10:26-31

We've been going through the heights of glory as we've been seeing the great majesty of Jesus, and then last week was such a practical and powerful text, applying the majesty of Jesus to our daily lives. We saw that if we believe on Jesus, then we are called to **draw near to God, hold fast to the gospel of Jesus, assemble with and exhort one another**. These commands are given to us so that we would grow in following Jesus and living as a testimony of Jesus' worth to the world!

But, just like in any study of the Scriptures, we can be guilty of listening to commands and not applying them. The apostle James' analogy comes to mind. We're like people who wake up in the morning, look at our disturbing morning selves in the mirror and yet we walk away having done nothing to fix our looks or hygiene. The author has a keen awareness of how we *don't* apply the Truth; so, while he focuses on the glory of Jesus and the application, he then presses the application by essentially saying, "Will you actually follow through on this?"

Now, to some of you, you might find the words in this passage too harsh. Some might find the words joy-squelching. But, the fact of the matter is that this passage is extremely practical. Hopefully I can give an illustration to help us in seeing just *how* practical this passage is for us. This past week, I was watching a YouTube video of a guy that had some speakers and a couple microphones (one for him and one for whoever would come up to the microphone). I believe it was on a college campus. The man who set all this up ended up talking with a college student who took the other microphone. The college student was talking about his beliefs and when asked about believing Jesus, the college student said something like, "Well, when I was a kid, I trusted Jesus; but now I don't have time to think about him. I have other things I need to do." In hearing more of the conversation, I could hear that this student wasn't following Jesus *today* nor did he seem to care about following Jesus. Let me give another story. This past week, I was meeting with a few pastors in Holland, and one pastor told a recent scenario where someone close to him used God's name in vain and the pastor responded to that person that he ought to be careful with his speech. He is going to meet Jesus someday. To that, the person said something like, "Oh right, I'm going to see him someday! Well, I got saved when I was younger. I'm good!"

Two scenarios where people say they were saved way back when and felt a security in that *past* scenario. How many of you have had conversations that goes somewhat similar to this? Maybe it's with a family member or an old friend. Maybe it's with someone you just met and you're talking about Jesus, and you get the feeling that they're just wanting to shut down the conversation so they say something like, "Yeah, yeah, I prayed a prayer ten years ago." I have had conversations with some of you at times about my beliefs and thoughts about these statements. This is an emotionally charged conversation-piece. And it's so charged because we know that Heaven and Hell are on the line.

And because of the significance of this, we need the Bible to help point us to how we should relate to these scenarios. And praise God, he does give us insight – and some insight is right here in Hebrews 10. Go ahead and turn there in your Bibles – and after I pray, I will read verses 26-31 for us.

²⁶ 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. ¹

Now, I’ve couched this passage in terms of how you relate to *other* people. And while this passage addresses others, this passage is also explicit in seeking to address each one of us. Listen, I know how it goes when listening to a sermon. When the conviction gets going, we start thinking about how badly we wish someone else was paying attention. Well, those could be well-intentioned feelings, but please do not only apply this to others. I believe this passage is written to Christians as a warning. The main point of this text is: **Do not walk away from Jesus!**

The author has just stated the application of Jesus’ superiority. If we truly believe Jesus is superior over all and has given us access to God then 1) draw near to God, 2) hold fast to the gospel of Jesus, and 3) assemble with and exhort one another. Don’t pick and choose which one you’ll obey. When you do that, you’re not following Jesus, you’re following yourself. But we know we can all be tempted to drift. Or, I imagine that there can be times in your life when you’re like a little kid with folded hands and an angry look saying, “Why do I have to do this?” or “What if I don’t do this?” We press the limits yet God graciously responds tells us what happens if we don’t follow Jesus. What we see is that Heaven and Hell are on the line. Do you believe truly on Jesus or do you just have an empty belief (an easy-believism) that doesn’t lead to following Jesus?

The author explains more by giving us a case study.

Case Study: A persistent and willfully disobedient Christian.

Look at verse 26 again: ²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth. . .² I think I ought to say from the outset that there are at least three common views of the kind of person being addressed here. The first is that this is a person who made a profession of faith and then walked away at some point, never to return. That’s referred to as someone who apostacizes. Another view is that this is a person who was a genuine believers, but then turned from Jesus and forfeited (or, lost) their salvation. The third view is that this is a hypothetical. In other words, *if* this happened, this is what would take place *if* it could happen.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:26–31.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:26.

I personally hold to the hypothetical view. I argued for this back in chapter 6, and I think this view fits here as well. If you look at chapter 6, he uses phrases that talk about genuine salvation and says that if you spurn all of this, then it's impossible to be restored to repentance. Then he says that he's confident this won't happen because they're saved! Here in this passage, he comments on things that can only happen in a believer, and then says that if a believer does these things, they'll be punished severely. But then in verse 32, he says, "But recall the former days," and he goes back to the faith in their lives that worked itself out. In other words, he again says that this hypothetical situation *won't* happen to a person who genuinely follows Jesus. In addition, I think this is hypothetical because he starts with the word "if." And, I believe he's talking about a Christian because he uses the word "we" here as well as talking about God judging "his people" in verse 30. And, he speaks of people who were sanctified by Jesus' blood. Then in verse 26, he talks of someone who received the knowledge of the truth. I think that means they actually embraced the gospel.

Because of these reasons, I don't believe he's talking about someone who seemed like a Christian and then walked away. Nor, do I think he's talking about someone who once was saved and lost that salvation. He's talking about someone who was saved by Jesus and then persistently willfully persists in denying Jesus.

Now in saying this, you could then say, "But if a Christian can't lose their salvation, and if this is hypothetical, then these verses don't matter!" And that's absolutely untrue. These words are a genuine warning to Christians. Think of it this way. My family lives right next door, and we live on road that has cars going 60 miles an hour. That can be scary when you have five children – and we've had our scares. But there have been times when we've taken chalk and drawn a line. Then we say to our children that they cannot cross the chalk. We explain to them in fearful terms what could happen if they go to the road and cross that line. Why are we warning? For their protection. But we also are warning because we hope that they have brains enough to grasp a hold of the significance of what we're saying!

With a Christian, the warnings *will* inevitably work. Jesus himself said that his sheep hear his voice, and so I believe that his followers *will* heed the warnings. God has promised that his children won't shipwreck, and God has ordained the means of warnings to get our attention! So, if I can say it this way, Christians will heed the warnings here. But, if you persist obstinately in not listening, you're not his sheep.

Look at the words used here in this text. The tense usage in the Greek is probably quite important here. It's in the present tense and we have the phrase "go on sinning." The idea isn't simply that you sin everyday, but it seems to have the idea of a settled course. You could probably say it like, "For if we persist obstinately." But there's another descriptor here. Not only is there a settled course in sinfulness, but there's also the word "deliberately." The idea is that you know full well what you're doing and you want it. So, this is a person who knows full well and continues with deliberateness in this trajectory. This type of living is contrary to the life of a disciple of Jesus. Yes, we sin. And yes, there can be seasons where we persist in sin. But we cannot remain. If you're stuck in one of those seasons now, heed the warning!

But again, you could be like an immature child and say, "Why? This drifting is fun. Who cares how I behave, I'm set for eternity. I prayed the prayer!" This type of mindset is what the author confronts. There are seasons where we can be tempted to believe this, and when we're tempted to believe that lusting after money, food, cars, women, men, toys, games is better – let's remind ourselves of the reality of the salvation Jesus has given to us.

The author here gives us some theological realities which are to function as loving warnings to keep us on the straight path. I love this because sometimes people say, “Don’t give me theology. Give me something practical.” But theology is so practical. Read the book of Hebrews and you see how powerful theology is to life. Essentially, the author says that if you’re a Christian and you’re going down this path, you’re not living in theological reality. And, if you’re going to repent, you need to *see* reality. So, in the following verses, he emphasizes four theological realities we must grasp. These realities should cause a Christian in sin to repent and it should also function as guardrails for all of us as Christians when we’re tempted to go off-track embrace sin.

The first theological reality is that **If you persist obstinately in willful sin,**

Theological Reality #1: There is no sacrifice for your sins (v. 26b).

The end of verse 26 says that if you are this kind of person, then “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. . .”³

From chapter 7 through chapter 10, the author has used the phrase “once for all” to refer to Jesus’ sacrifice. Meaning that Jesus’ death on the cross has reconciled people to God and forgiven all the sins of all who trust Jesus. One death for all sins of all who trust Jesus. If his death is so glorious then the end of verse 26 makes sense. How can Jesus save again someone who was already saved? His death cannot cover the sin of deliberate persistence in sin after having received the gospel. It’s impossible to forgive that type of living because Jesus’ death actually guarantees that those who trust him will be saved forever because his death was once for all!

So, a Christian who says that his persistence in sin doesn’t matter obviously doesn’t understand the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus – and they’re getting dangerously close to the 60 MPH road. But actually, it’s much worse than a 60 MPH road. Verse 27 gives us the second theological reality:

Theological Reality #2: There is only punitive judgment awaiting (v. 27).

Verse 27 states that those who live this way only have “a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”⁴ Christian, if you reject Jesus, you only have a fearful expectation of judgment. The word for “fearful” in the Greek is the word *phoberos*. Do you hear a word in there? It’s the word from which we get “phobia.” It can be translated “terrifying.” Some of you here might like to be terrified. You like being scared. But you like to be scared when the situations aren’t really scary. You can get out of the scenarios and you’ll be fine. But what if the situation is actually terrifying because you cannot escape?

Verse 27 says that it’s a fearful *expectation*. In other words, because there’s no sacrifice for your sins, you have only to expect judgment. It is guaranteed! You rejected Jesus, who took the judgment that your sins deserved – and so you yourself are going to take the judgment in yourself. And that’s a fearful thing. It’s terrifying. Can you ponder this? Sometimes I think we get a picture of terrifying judgment when we hear Jesus saying that someday, in the judgment, he will declare “Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.” Can you imagine the sorrow on the day that people are sent to Hell? Verse 27 gives

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:26.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:27.

a horrifying picture as well. He says that those who deny the gospel only have to expect “a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.” First, notice the phrase “the adversaries.” I think the idea is that no matter who you are and no matter what your past, if you do not embrace Jesus, then you are his adversary. So, for a person who says they prayed a prayer a couple decades ago, but they don’t care about Jesus now – they need to be warned! Don’t trust yourself and your prayer. Trust Jesus! And, if they truly did trust Jesus, they will heed the warning at some point!

But an enemy of Jesus is an enemy of Jesus – no matter what they may have looked like before. Therefore, all enemies of Jesus experience “a fury of fire that will consume.” Fire often is an image that describes God’s judgment. And one commentator writes, **“the fire of judgment, which, with its blazing flames, appears like a living being intent on devouring God’s adversaries”** (BDAG as quot. in Longman, pp. 139-140). Can you imagine the belch of Hell as it welcomes the terrifying horror of myriads of people who embraced their sin?

Christian, if you’re headed away from Jesus, and you’re moving towards living in sin, wake up to reality! And notice here that Hell is punitive judgment. That means, Hell doesn’t exist in order to change or modify behavior. In this world, God has given people the gracious opportunity to turn to him for mercy and grace. But there is a final judgment after death. And that judgment is declarative for all eternity. There is an eternal punishment, and Revelation tells us that the Lake of Fire will swallow Hell. Do you hear the words? Like a loving Father, God is warning you of the dangers of sin. If you persist obstinately in sin, all you have to look forward to is eternal separation from God. This awaits all who don’t trust in Jesus.

And, by the way, if you’ve never turned to Jesus for rescue, will you turn to him now? Jesus took the eternity of wrath so you would be set free to know and love God. Would you turn to Jesus? OH, if not, all you have is a fearful expectation. But I know, I know. Some might say, “I’m not afraid. Why is he saying that if I don’t trust Jesus, I’ll be terrified?” He’s not saying that everyone who doesn’t trust Jesus is terrified. What he’s saying is that everyone who doesn’t trust Jesus faces a terrifying reality of judgment. It is terrifying whether you experience it now or not. But I pray you’d experience the reality. With greater intensity than a parent wanting their children to know the reality of a 60 MPH speed-zone, I want you to know the reality of judgment! And, I pray you don’t judge God. He’s the Judge. He’s given you this life. He’s given you a brain with which you’re judging him! Turn to Jesus now.

This past week I came across two stories of men who defied Jesus. One of Voltaire who boasted that Christianity would be no more. And yet, at his death, the physician stated that Voltaire cried out, “I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months’ life. Then I shall go to hell and you will go with me.” Then there was the story of Thomas Paine. He was an American author and spoke out against Christianity in the late 18th and early 19th century. During his final moments of 1809, he wrote this: “I would give worlds, if I had them, that *Age of Reason* had not been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! O God, what have I done to suffer so much? But there is no God! But if there should be, what will become of me hereafter? . . . If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one” (as quot. in R.K. Hughes, p. 270).

Will you spurn the warning of God? But maybe you hear the warning and you simply want to convince yourself that God’s not like that or that you refuse to believe a God like that. And, by the way, just because you believe something doesn’t make it true. But in case you’re still tempted to think, “Well, God’s a God of grace. I’m good,” the author continues with more warning. And I pray you’d listen. In verses 28-29 we see a third reality:

Theological Reality #3: There is greater punishment under the new covenant than under the old covenant (vv. 28-29).

In verse 28, the author acknowledges the punishment that one could have received under the Old Covenant. In Deuteronomy 17:2-7 speaks of those who break the covenant and in verse 6, we read, “⁶On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.”⁵

No mercy for the one who broke covenant with God under the Mosaic system. There is punishment outside of God’s covenant. But the old covenant was inferior. That makes sense there would be no mercy. There was so much death and there really wasn’t forgiveness of sins under the old covenant. Yet, the Old Covenant still had dangers associated with it! That means the Old Covenant was valuable. It could do something – even though it was limited.

But the author moves on and says in verse 29: 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? ⁶

How much worse punishment will be *deserved* by someone who once embraced yet now rejects the gospel? As I think about this statement I want to share two things with you. First, Charles Spurgeon once wrote, **“Think lightly of hell, and you will think lightly of the cross.”** What did Jesus save people from? The answer is God’s just punishment for sin. Where is God’s punishment expressed fully? Hell. Therefore, if you have diminished view of Hell, you have a diminished view of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. The New Covenant emphasizes the strength of Hell more than the Old does.

Do you believe this? But I think many simply don’t take this seriously. Christians are wandering in sin thinking it’s no big deal. And, it reminds of children relating to their parents. How many of you grew up with your parents counting “1, 2, 3?” I had that growing up. And I will confess my dad was consistent. He didn’t slow down. He didn’t count “1, 2, 2 ½, 3, 3 ½.” If he counted, he was calling my brain to wake up and shape up! But some of us may have also experienced that slower counting. A parent who counted in halves or quarters. And, if that was consistent, then you learned to not take that counting seriously. It no longer woke your brain up to think about what you were doing. So you ignored it.

I wonder if people think this way with God. You look around at all the kindnesses you have. You haven’t experienced much pain from your sins. You’re seeming to do fine. You’ve got things under control, so you think. And so, when you hear a gospel warning, you think God’s being unreasonable (or he’s just not going to do anything). But do you understand what Romans 2 tells us? God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. He’s not counting in quarters or halves, but he is saying that he is patient, not willing that any should perish but all should come to turn to him for grace and mercy! Will you turn to Jesus for forgiveness? Will you see that you have loved others things and yourself more than you’ve loved him? Will you run to him for rescue? There is a real hell that Jesus really saved people from! Don’t think lightly of the cross. It’s there that you can find eternal hope.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Dt 17:5–6.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:29.

But, if you are a Christian who willfully persists in sin, the author wants you to see precisely what you're doing. The punishment actually is greater than for someone who has never heard the gospel. Notice he says "how much worse punishment." I know I've said this before, but it needs restating. Jesus himself teaches that there are degrees of punishment. When Jesus spoke to the religious leaders in his day, he said their punishment was going to be worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah – and the reason is because they had Jesus standing right before him and they rejected it. The more *light and truth* you've received and rejected, the greater the punishment.

So, someone who embraced and then denied would receive the greater condemnation in Hell. Why? Well, look at what they've done. First, the author says they've "trampled underfoot the Son of God." The punishment is deserved because **you profaned the person of Jesus**. The phrase Son of God in the book of Hebrews is a significant one referring to the great majesty of Jesus. He is God in the flesh, the superior Priest and King! Yet, you've profaned him. Like pigs trample pearls because they find them no use; so, if you reject and spurn Jesus, you've treated as useless the One of Superior glory! Since Jesus is superior in glory and is the King and Priest, how can you trample on the Ruler of the Cosmos and not be punished for treason?

The second reason the punishment is deserved is because **you profaned the work of Jesus**. You have profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified. The word "sanctify" refers to being set apart – and specifically set apart to God for his service. Jesus' death sets people apart unto God for God and his service. If you reject Jesus, you've rejected your only hope for reconciliation with God.

But the third reason for deserved punishment is that **you outraged the Spirit of grace**. Think of the phrases used here. The point is not on how mean God is. The point is on how foolish you are because *you've* rejected the Son of God who came in the flesh to take your punishment. And, you've rejected the Spirit of grace! What saddens me at times is when I hear people talk about God's punishment and they think he's so mean. And then I think of the cross where Jesus took the eternity's worth of punishment for sinners. And, I wonder, "God is mean?" Who else has that much love and patience? Isn't it adding greater insult when you talk of God's meanness *knowing* how much love he's expressed? And, to add to this, the Spirit has been ministering *grace upon grace to you* – revealing God's kindnesses to you. Yet, you're spurning him.

Notice here that the author says if you received the gospel and then reject the gospel, you're not only grieving the Spirit, but you're outraging the Spirit of grace. It's an outrageous thing to do. To look on such eternal kindness and to spit in our Triune God's face. It's appalling. And I think many of us ought to understand this. Have you ever had a scenario where you tried hard to give something very kind to someone and they treat it tritely? Haven't you ever been upset by that? And there are times when it is understandably upsetting. Even I, with my children, still teach them on gratitude and how they ought to receive kindnesses. Why? Because responding to kindness with disdain is particularly ugly to us. It's arrogant. It's a horrifically sinful trait. How much more in the face of the gospel?

Therefore, the author says ". . .**the old covenant brought *physical* death, while rejecting Christ brings *spiritual* death**" (R.K. Hughes, p. 273).

In hearing all of this, it can almost be unbearable, and some people (maybe even people here today) might be feeling like squirming or self-justifying. Others of you will say, "Well, I've got time. I'm fine." Still others will respond, "I don't believe that version of God." Again, you can choose to believe

whatever you will. But please at least consider that the Bible means what it says and may this fourth theological reality awaken you.

Theological Reality #4: There will be a day when God will exact perfect justice (vv. 30-31).

Verses 30-31 say, “³⁰For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.⁷

The two quotations come from the same chapter in Deuteronomy. But the author highlights them to show forth God’s judgment. Listen, your judgment of yourself really doesn’t matter in the end. You can think you’re fine, but what does God think? Going back to that college student, when asked what his response to God would be at the judgment, he said he hoped God would consider what he accomplished.

Maybe that’s you today. You’re trusting you and your works – and as a result, you’re spurning Jesus and his work. You’re not seeing sin and the devaluing of God in your thoughts, will, emotions and actions. Therefore, you think you can *do* to impress God. But God is God. He’s the Creator and Ruler over all. Everything belongs to him. And to defame the King leads to the defamation of his creation that he created to shout his good glory!

Therefore, someday, everyone will face God in the judgment. And it doesn’t matter what I say about me or what others say about you. What will matter in that day is what God says. *Every single person* will be judged. Are you trusting Jesus?

To make the application of the author here, he’s talking to Christians who are tempted and have been wavering. He’s shown them again the glory of Jesus – and maybe their hearts have been singing at the renewed knowledge of Jesus. But the author wants to ensure they have counted the cost. Do they genuinely value Jesus? Do they understand what would happen if they rejected Jesus?

In verse 31, he says that it’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. And the reason he says that here is because he wants to awaken them to the *fact* that there will be a judgment. There’s not some imaginary being that we talk about that’s going to judge. There is a God who *will* judge. He is alive – and his judgment will cover every single person, including his own people.

What will he say of you, Christian, if you rejected Jesus? As I think of this stern warning, I’m reminded of other passages of Scriptures that call us as Christians to repent of our lethargy. I think the warning of Hebrews leads us to consider these other statements. Like Paul in Romans 13 when he says that now is the time to wake up from our sleep. Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light!

Remember, this is how the warning is to function. Look at the danger and may your Spirit-filled mind cause you to turn from drifting and to pursue Jesus with zeal. **Draw closer to God, Grow in the Gospel, Assemble with and Exhort one another.**

Will you live this way? If you are Christ’s, you will. Because here’s the reality the author has been telling us. We have a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul. We have a confident hope because Jesus atoned for our sins once for all! Therefore, as the author wrote in Hebrews 6, “⁹Though we speak in this way,

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 10:30–31.

yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.”⁸ And someday, Jesus will come again. The Day approaches! And we know that we will grow in being more like Jesus until that day. How do we know that? Philippians 1:6 says, “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”⁹

Therefore, we have hope! Do not walk away from Jesus. Do not embrace a so-called “easy” or “bare” believism. Live in the realities of the gospel’s greatness. Let faith in Christ cause you to heed the warnings and then look to Jesus all the more as your confident trust to follow him until you see him face to face!

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⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Heb 6:9.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Php 1:6.