

## QUESTIONS ABOUT CHURCH

# How Can I Strengthen My Church?

**Hebrews 10:26** For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Now the writer introduces his fourth grim warning. As in the previous cases, it is a warning against apostasy, here described as a deliberate sin.

As has been indicated, there is considerable disagreement among Christians as to the real nature of this sin. The problem, in brief, is whether it refers to: 1. True Christians who subsequently turn away from Christ and are lost. 2. True Christians who backslide but who are still saved. 3. Those who profess to be Christians for a while, identify themselves with a local church, but then deliberately turn away from Christ. They were never truly born again, and now they never can be. No matter which view we hold, there are admitted difficulties. We believe that the third view is the correct one because it is most consistent with the over-all teaching of Hebrews and of the entire NT.

Here in verse 26 apostasy is defined as sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth. Like Judas, the person has heard the gospel. He knows the way of salvation; he has even pretended to receive it; but then he deliberately repudiates it.

For such a person, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. He has decisively and conclusively rejected the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Therefore God has no other way of salvation to offer to him.

There is a sense in which all sin is willful, but the author here speaks of apostasy as a willful sin of extraordinary seriousness.

**Hebrews 10:27** but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

Nothing remains but a certain fearful expectation of judgment; there is no hope of escape. It is impossible to renew the apostate to repentance (6:4). He has knowingly and willfully cut himself off from God's grace in Christ.

His fate is a fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. It is pointless to haggle over whether this means literal fire. The language is obviously designed to denote punishment that is dreadfully severe.

Note that God classes apostates as adversaries. This indicates positive opposition to Christ, not a mild neutrality.

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

The doom of the lawbreaker in the OT is now introduced to form a backdrop against which to contrast the greater doom of the apostate. A man who broke Moses' law by becoming an idolater died without mercy when his guilt was proven by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:2-6).

**Hebrews 10:29** 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?

The apostate will be counted worthy of much worse punishment because his privilege has been much greater.

The enormity of his sin is seen in the three charges that are leveled against him: 1. He has trampled the Son of God underfoot. After professing to be a follower of Jesus, he now brazenly asserts that he wants nothing more to do with Him. He denies any need for Christ as Savior and positively rejects Him as Lord.

In Japan there is a crucifix which was used by the government in days of persecution. It was placed on the ground, and everybody had to tread on the face of the Crucified. The non-Christians did not

hesitate to tread on His face; the real Christians refused and were killed. The story goes that the face of Jesus was worn down and marred by people trampling on it.

2. He has counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing. He counts as useless and unholy the blood of Christ which ratified the New Covenant. He had been set apart by this blood in a place of external privilege. Through his association with Christian people, he had been sanctified, just as an unbelieving husband is sanctified by his believing wife (1 Cor. 7:14). But that does not mean that he was saved.

3. He has insulted the Spirit of grace. The Spirit of God had illuminated him concerning the good news, convicted him of sin, and pointed him to Christ as the only Refuge of the soul. But he had insulted the gracious Spirit by utterly despising Him and the salvation He offered.

**Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.”**

Willful repudiation of God’s beloved Son is a sin of immense magnitude. God will sit in judgment on all who are guilty of it. He has said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay” (see Deut. 32:35). Vengeance in this sense means full justice. When used of God it has no thought of vindictiveness or of “getting even.” It is simply the meting out of what a person actually deserves. Knowing the character of God, we can be sure that He will do as He has said by repaying the apostate in just measure.

And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” God will avenge and vindicate those who truly belong to Him, but here in verse 30, the obvious reference is to judgment of evil people.

If it causes difficulty to think of apostates being spoken of as His people, we should remember that they are His by creation and also for a while by profession. He is their Creator though not their Redeemer, and they once professed to be His people, even though they never knew Him personally. What are your thoughts?

**Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

The abiding lesson for all is this: do not be among those who fall into God’s hands for judgment because it is a fearful thing.

Nothing in this passage of Scripture was ever intended to disturb and unsettle the minds of those who truly belong to Christ.

The passage was purposely written in its sharp, searching, challenging style so that all who profess the name of Christ might be warned about the terrible consequences of turning away from Him.

**Hebrews 10:32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:**

In the remaining verses of chapter 10, the writer gives three strong reasons why the early Jewish Christians should continue steadfastly in their allegiance to Christ. 1. Their former experiences should stimulate them.

2. The nearness of the reward should strengthen them.

3. The fear of God’s displeasure should deter them from going back.

First of all, then, their past experiences should stimulate them. After they professed faith in Christ, they became the targets of bitter persecution: their families disowned them, their friends forsook them, and their foes hounded them. But instead of producing cowardice and fear, these sufferings strengthened them in their faith. Doubtless they felt something of the exhilaration of being counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name (Acts 5:41).

**Hebrews 10:33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;**

Sometimes their suffering was individual; they were taken out alone and publicly exposed to abuse and affliction. At other times, they suffered with other Christians.