

If We Sin Wilfully

by Anton Bosch

This sermon from Hebrews chapter 10 emphasizes the severe consequences of willful sin for believers who reject the sacrifice of Jesus, trample the Son of God underfoot, treat the blood of the covenant as common, and insult the Spirit of grace. The passage warns of a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation for those who turn away from Christ, highlighting the importance of holding fast to faith, enduring in obedience, and not forsaking fellowship with other believers to avoid falling away.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:26, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 10:30, Hebrews 10:31, Hebrews 10:38, Hebrews 10:39, Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, 1 Corinthians 11:31, Romans 3:23

Topics: "Consequences of Willful Sin", "Importance of Perseverance in Faith"

Description

This sermon from Hebrews chapter 10 emphasizes the severe consequences of willful sin for believers who reject the sacrifice of Jesus, trample the Son of God underfoot, treat the blood of the covenant as common, and insult the Spirit of grace. The passage warns of a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation for those who turn away from Christ, highlighting the importance of holding fast to faith, enduring in obedience, and not forsaking fellowship with other believers to avoid falling away.

Transcript

Hebrews chapter 10, and we'll read from verse 26 through the end of the chapter. Hebrews chapter 10 reading from 26 through the end. For if we sin willfully 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 in 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, countered the blow 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.

For 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 and 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 those who believe to the saving of the soul. Now we need to look at the context because verse 26 begins by saying, if we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth.

So who is he speaking about? Some people say these are people who were never saved, and others have other explanations, but the context again is clear. So in verse 19, remember he says, we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Verse 21, we have a high priest.

So these are believers, these are Christians. And so he says, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, speaking to believers. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

These are believers. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. These are Christians.

And then not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as is the manner of some. So clearly he is not speaking to people who are not saved, or people who are outside of the church, or who are half saved. And that maybe that's not a good term, but people who have some kind of profession of salvation but really are not saved.

But he is talking to believers. And notice then verse 26 begins, for, because. So the things that he has just said, we need to do.

Those three things we must do, and the one thing we must not do. The three things is, let us draw near. Verse 22, verse 23, let us hold fast.

Number 24, verse 24, let us consider one another and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. These things we must do. We must draw near.

We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, because. The word for, because. If we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

So why are these things important? They're important because they keep us from sinning willfully. That's the, that's the warning. You're not going to, you're not going to get into trouble, and you're going to see that this passage really is a tough passage to deal with, because this is a scary passage.

God is speaking through the writer, and he is giving really, really serious warnings. During the time of the Great Awakening on the East Coast of America, people like Jonathan Edwards preached fiery sermons, and one of the most famous of those sermons was Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. And some people have looked at that and said, well, you know, he takes pleasure in preaching those sermons.

People say the same thing about me. You seem to take some kind of perverse pleasure in preaching these hard messages. No, we preach them because of the reality of the dangers of falling away, the dangers of not making it on that day.

And so the writer is doing exactly the same, and he's going to use strong language, because he's trying to get their attention. These people are sitting on the edge. They are thinking about going back to Judaism.

They're thinking of forsaking Christ, and he's going to use strong, strong terms. And of course, we need to use those strong terms, because we live in the time, as I've said so many times, of the Great Falling Away. Many are falling away from the faith.

And so how do we not fall away? And I'm not going to make any apologies for that statement, because I know there are those who say, well, you can't fall away. Well, then you've got to tear this page out and throw it away, because this passage is clear. The warnings are clear.

But how do we not fall away? We don't fall away by doing the things he's just reminded us of, by drawing near to the Lord, of course, holding fast the confession of our faith, considering one another, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Those are the things that keep us in the faith. They keep us encouraged.

They keep us admonished. They warn us. Others are able to surround us and able to pray with us and for us, to encourage and to exhort us, so that we may not fall away.

So we must never forget the context. And so let's do those things, because if we sin willfully after we've received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of sin. Now I've spoken before in the book of Hebrews about willful sin.

Remember that there's sacrifices for all sorts of sins in the Old Testament, but there is no sacrifice in the Old Testament for willful sin. Willful sin, obviously, is sin against your own conscience, when you know something is wrong and you still insist on doing it, or when you know you ought to be doing something and you refuse to do what you should be doing. And so if we sin willfully, do Christians sin willfully? Yes, Christians sin willfully.

Now remember, he's not saying if you just commit this one sin that you're going to lose your salvation. That's not the point. We don't lose our salvation over one willful sin.

But if we continue to harden our hearts, and remember that we started in chapter 3 of Hebrews. Today, if you will hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. And so how do we sin willfully? We sin by hardening our hearts, by knowing we should not be doing something, and we do it.

Now the problem is that that becomes a habit. It becomes a lifestyle. And I continue to do things I ought not to be doing, and I push away the Spirit of God.

I push my conscience under, and I continue to do what I want to do, knowing I should not be doing what I'm doing. And so, obviously, he's going to explain what the ultimate willful sin is, where it leads. And so any sin leads to greater sin, unless we repent of it.

So this is not speaking about one isolated sin, because we all sin. John is clear. If we say we are without sin, we lie.

We all sin, but we need to repent. We need to change. We need to turn away from that, and we need to move on.

So if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, in other words, after we be saved, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. A very, very strong statement. Now remember, he's looking at the Old Testament.

There was no sacrifice in the Old Testament for willful sin. Now he's saying, if we sin willfully. Now remember again, let me just emphasize this does not mean that we don't every day do things we shouldn't be doing, but as we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us.

So he's not talking about that. He's talking about a lifestyle of willfulness, which ultimately leads to rejecting Christ. That's where it goes.

So if we then have rejected Jesus, he says there is no sacrifice. Where are you going to find a sacrifice if you rejected Jesus? He's the only sacrifice. He's just spent ten chapters telling us that the sacrifices in the Old Testament were of no value.

We're not able to save. We're not able to wash away sin. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away sin.

Now if I reject the blood of Jesus, what is there? There is nothing. So this is a very logical statement he's making, but at the same time a very serious warning. And he's saying, if you go to that point, he says there's nothing that can bring you back.

There is nothing that will deal with your sin. But all that now remains is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. What a statement.

Now remember where I started. He's speaking to Christians. He's speaking to Christians.

I know when we read verses like this, we say, no, this doesn't apply to me. I'm a believer. This does not apply to Christians or to the church.

No, he's writing to a church. He's writing to Christians. And he says, if you sin willfully, there is no sacrifice.

And all there is, is a certain, not a maybe. You see, because that's what we trade on. We say, well, maybe God will be gracious.

Maybe I'll, you know, I'll duck the bullet. Maybe somehow I'll escape God's judgment. No, he says, if you've rejected the sacrifice of Jesus, there is only a certain, a definite, fearful expectation of judgment.

That's all you have to look forward to. What a way to live the rest of your life. And yet there are many who live in that state.

Now remember that the gospel says that we were under judgment, but we have been brought out of condemnation into the light of the gospel. And so Jesus took the judgment upon himself so that we can escape the judgment, so that we are not judged and sentenced. So he took it all so that I can go free.

But now having rejected the pardon, there is no offering, and there is no, nothing in the future except a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation. So here are the two aspects, the judgment and the sentence. We know that in any legal trial, any criminal trial, there are those two parts.

There is the first part, what do they call it? The conviction. We decide whether he's guilty or not guilty. And then there's the sentencing phase.

And then there is the serving of the sentence. Now in God's judgment, there's the judgment and then the sentence. The judgment is fearsome in itself, standing before a holy and a righteous God, and he opens the books.

And in fact, the one who will judge will be the very one that we have rejected. And after that, the fiery indignation. This is hell.

There's just no other way to describe it. The fiery indignation, meaning wrath, anger, God's fiery wrath, which will devour the adversaries. See, hell was not made for believers.

It was made for the adversaries, for the enemies, for the devil and his angels. But in having rejected the offer of salvation, having rejected Jesus, there's nothing left except to be countered with the enemies of God and that judgment and fiery indignation. Now he's going to use an illustration or an argument to prove his point, and he's using an argument which we've seen many times and I've spoken of before, from the lesser to the greater.

In other words, he's using something and saying if this is true in this small environment, then it is also true in a bigger environment. And so the small picture that he's looking at is the law in the Old Testament, and he's saying if that happened there, then what will happen in the New Testament in the presence of God? So let's see how he develops this. Anyone who has rejected Moses's law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

The book of Deuteronomy goes into great detail, various sins, and if there are witnesses, and it's very specific, one witness does not do it, at least two or three witnesses. If the charge is correct, that the man has disobeyed the law, has broken the commandments, now notice he says, who has rejected Moses's law? The commandments tell us what we must not do and what we must do. Now if you don't do that, notice what he is saying.

You have rejected the law. We speak about breaking the law, but here's another aspect. You've rejected the law.

In other words, you're saying the law doesn't apply to me. I don't recognize the law. I don't have to keep the law.

So the law is nothing. Now we know that we have a word for that in our common language. We speak about people who are scoff laws.

In other words, they scoff at the laws. They are lawless. They just do whatever they want to do.

Speaking about government law, civil law, criminal law, and so there are people who say, no, I don't care about the law. I'll do what I want to do. We see that happening all the time, every day.

Now, so he is saying, if you broke the law under Moses, what you are in fact doing is you're rejecting the law. You're saying, no, I don't care about the law. The law doesn't apply to me, or I don't recognize the law.

You're rejecting the law. Now remember that idea. He's going to come back to that.

If you did that, he dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses, and the law is very specific. He is to be taken to the outside, the city, to the gate, and those who testified against him must

cast the first stone. Remember Jesus, they came to Jesus with a woman and caught in adultery, and Jesus says, well, if you're without sin, let him cast the first stone.

He's referring to this law, which says that they must cast the first stone. The reason for that was very logical. It's simply that if you know that you're going to be the one who's going to have to throw the first stone, remember we're not talking about pebbles.

We're talking about rocks that crush people's bones and heads and kill them. If you know you're going to have to be the first one who's going to have to throw that rock at that guy, you better be sure of your testimony. Today people make frivolous accusations, and we have frivolous lawsuits all the time.

Oh, he did this, he did that, and there's no truth, because there's no consequences to that. So the witnesses throw the first stones, and then the rest of the congregation has to stone them. Now we say, well, that's a very harsh thing.

Well, God is showing how seriously he views sin. We say, well, it's just nothing. It's no problem.

But God says, no, sin is a terrible thing, because it was sin that caused all the trouble to begin with, beginning with Adam. And all the trouble we have today in our relationship with God and in our society and in our communities is because of sin. And God says sin needs to be eradicated.

Unfortunately, we seem to accumulate sin. We seem to create an environment in which sin proliferates and grows and continues. And we say, well, it's no big deal.

No, God sees sin as a terrible thing, because he is holy. And if you're holy, like God is holy, you cannot tolerate sin. That's just, you can't be holy and tolerate sin.

Remember, Paul writes to the Romans, and he says, you point the finger at everybody else's sin, but you do the same things. And he says, you take pleasure in these things. You take pleasure in sin, and in talking about sin, and seeing what other people are doing, and those kinds of things.

God does not take pleasure. God hates sin, and sin must be eradicated. You can't, there's just no way you can play with it.

And that's the problem, because we play with it. We say, oh well, you know, I've got my pet sin, you know, like my pet cat. And, you know, I feed it, and I stroke it, and I, you know, I like it.

No, God says sin is hateful, and so he establishes that sin in the Old Testament has to be dealt with. If an animal can die for the sinner, then the animal dies. If the animal cannot die, then, or if there is no, if it is willful sin.

In other words, and the examples he uses in Deuteronomy have to do with blasphemy, have to do with worshiping an idol, have to do with idolatry. These are things, adultery, sorry, these are things that are prescribed in the law. So no Israelite can say, I didn't know I can't have another man's wife.

I did not know that I cannot worship idols, because everybody knew. God made sure that everybody knew. So there was no sacrifice, and that's why they die, because there was no animal that could die before willful sin.

So he says then, if that happened in the Old Testament, of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot? So can you see he's going from the one, and he's saying, if rejecting Moses's law required death, how much worse is it when you reject Jesus Christ? Remember where Hebrews began. We've got to keep our minds together. God, who at different times and different ways spoke to the fathers, has spoken to us through his Son.

God spoke through Moses in the Old Testament. God has spoken through his Son. If you reject Moses, you died.

If you reject his Son, how much worse is that going to be? And of course, the answer is obvious. And he's saying to them, think about it. Of how much worse punishment do you suppose, think about it, he says.

Will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot? Now he's going to deal with three things here. The first is the Son of God, the second is the blood, and the third is the Spirit. Of course, this is not the Trinity, but these are three things that in rejecting the Son, we do.

And I want you to see how graphic he is putting it. And this is really the reality. This is not hyperbole.

He's not over-dramatizing this. He says, of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot? You see, in order to sin willfully and not repent, what he's saying you've done is you've walked all over Jesus. That's that's the language.

And folk, I think that sometimes people in their willfulness, all they can see is what they want to do, and yet Jesus is standing in the way, and he's saying don't go there. But in order to go there, what we do is we push him down, and we walk over him as we go to do whatever we want to do. What a terrible place to be.

Can you understand why he is saying there is no forgiveness? There is no way back. There is no sacrifice, because Jesus, the Son of God, is to be high and lifted up. We are to worship him.

We are to adore him. We are to fall down at his feet. And yet in rejecting him, what we're doing is we're walking over him.

We're stepping on him. We're treating him as common dirt. What a place to be.

Now I want you to understand, he's writing to Christians, and he's saying don't go there. Don't not draw near. Don't not consider one another.

Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, because this is where you can end. Now I know there's a whole teaching that contradicts everything I've just said, and yet that is exactly what the Word of God is saying here. And that's exactly what I've seen over and over in my 48 years of preaching.

People who willfully reject the Word of God and ultimately get to this place where they just trample underfoot the Son of God. What a terrible, terrible thing. And then the second thing is countered the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified.

Notice they were sanctified. They were saved. They were washed.

A common thing. The blood is nothing. It's just Jesus is nothing.

Just walk over him. His blood is nothing. It's common.

And yet we sing those hymns, O precious is the flow that washed me white as snow. No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus. How precious is that blood of the Lord Jesus that cleansed us and washed us.

And we say, well I could never get to a place where I would regard the blood as a common thing. He would not give us this warning. You see, because here's one of the things that people say about this, because whenever we faced with these hard passages, people try and find ways out of them.

They try and find ways to say, well it doesn't really mean what it says. And no, it means exactly what it says. And we say, well I could never get there.

Why then does he give the warning? Is he just talking and saying, well you know, I want to scare you into the kingdom. I want to scare you to not be in church. You need to be in church.

Don't forsake the assembly of yourselves together. I know there are preachers who do that, but this is not the preacher. This is the Word of God.

And he's saying, don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, because you can end up in a place where you trample the Son of God underfoot, and where you regard the blood of the covenant, obviously the new covenant by which you were sanctified, a common thing. And the third thing is, insulted the spirit of grace. Insulted the spirit of grace.

So he's reminding us that in order to be there, the spirit has been ministering the grace of God to us. The spirit has been drawing us. The spirit has been convicting us.

The spirit has been speaking to us, and calling us to draw near, calling us to hold fast, as the book has been doing. But in order to get to that place, we reject the spirit. We insult the spirit.

We say, I'm not interested in what the spirit has to say, obviously the Holy Spirit. But he's the spirit of grace, because he is convicting me. And he's convicting me not to condemn me, but he's convicting me to save me.

He's convicting me to draw me into the presence of God. He's convicting me in order that I not be condemned with the world. Remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

And so the question simply is, if that was how they were dealt with in the Old Testament, how much worse is it going to be in the New Testament? You see, here's one of the problems, and we're going to see this later in Hebrews chapter 12 again, where he compares the severity of the Old Testament with the severity of the New Testament. Because our common thinking is that the Old Testament was severe, but the New Testament is easy. God's gracious.

God's just loving. Yes, he is gracious, and he is loving. But here's the point.

If we have rejected his love, if we've rejected his grace, where do we end up? There is no sacrifice for sin except a worse punishment. All right, verse 30. For we know him who said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

And again, the Lord will judge his people. I'm going to end up on this verse tonight. Now we know he's quoting the Old Testament.

Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Now we normally quote that verse in the sense, well, somebody did me wrong, but I'm not going to take vengeance, because the Lord said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Now of course that's true.

Vengeance is God's. It's not our prerogative to take vengeance. It's not our prerogative to get even.

God will take vengeance. That's his. But the writer here is quoting it in a different way.

He is not speaking about getting even. He's speaking about the judgment of God, because notice the end of the verse, the Lord will judge his people. Now remember that he also says in Hebrews that if judgment begins, sorry not Hebrews, in Peter, that if judgment begins, judgment must begin at the house of God.

And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where will the unbeliever be? And so vengeance here is in the context of the Lord judging his people. And obviously those who are believers, those who are saved on that day of judgment, there's no vengeance, there's no wrath, there's no judgment on them. They have passed from condemnation into life.

The judgment doesn't touch them. But those obviously who have rejected, they end up in judgment. And so why does he say vengeance is mine? What is he going to take vengeance on? Well again, we need to look at the context.

What have they done? They trampled the Son of God underfoot. And God says, I will avenge my son. I will take vengeance for the blood that you've counted as nothing.

I will take vengeance on the Holy Spirit that you have poo-pooed and thrown away. So this is a terrible thing. So not only are they going to be under God's judgment because they are sinners, but remember where we began.

They began with a knowledge. They began as believers. And so those who never came into contact with the gospel will be judged.

But of how much worse punishment will we be under who have known the truth? And that's the problem. Anyone who is here this evening, anyone who watches the video on livestream or watches the YouTube at a later stage, has no excuse. Has no excuse.

And if you end up in this kind of place, God says, I will take vengeance because I gave you my son and you took him and you walked all over him. Father, these are scary things. And Lord, we look at them and we say, well, I could never be in that place.

And yet, Lord, many have said they could not end up there. And yet they have. I pray, Lord, that you'd help us to believe your word.

Lord, as we as we look at this passage, I know that there are many who find ways to excuse this passage, who literally tear this passage out by giving meanings to it that's just not there. Lord, help us to just take your word at face value, to believe you because you're speaking through your son and through your spirit. And Lord, that we may take heed, that we may take heed, lest we fall.

Lord, that we may be those who do not harden our hearts, but Lord, who are soft before you, that may hear your voice, that will respond to that spirit of grace that is wooing us and calling us and joining us. Lord, I pray that if you speaking to someone here this evening or someone who's watching, Lord, I pray

that that we may not silence the spirit, but Lord, that we may obey him, because if we sin willfully. So, Lord, I pray that even tonight, we may hear the voice of the Savior, we may hear the voice of the spirit, and we would obey him and worship and give Jesus his proper place.

Help us, Lord, to understand. Help us, Lord, to be those who are diligent in doing the things that we ought to be doing, lest we end up in this terrible place. And so, Lord, we do pray for your grace.

We pray for each one of us, Lord, that we would not live in fear, but also at the same time, Lord, that we may not be careless about your great grace with which you have saved us. Help us to understand, Lord. Help us to believe.

Help us to live. I ask in Jesus' name. I pray that you'd go with us, keep us, and protect us.

Bring us together again safely someday, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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