

# Do Not Sin Willfully

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*The sermon emphasizes the dangers of willful sin and the importance of gratitude and community in maintaining faith in Christ's redemptive work.*

**Duration:** 1:29:26

**Scripture:** Hebrews 2:1-4, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:19-26, Hebrews 10:28, Hebrews 10:31-34

**Topics:** "Drifting"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses six warnings mentioned in the book of Hebrews. The first warning is about drifting away, the second is about hardening of hearts, the third is about becoming dull of hearing and sluggish, the fourth is about willful sin and shrinking back, the fifth is about resisting the discipline of the Lord, and the sixth is about refusing Him who is speaking from heaven. The speaker also refers to the pattern seen in the book of Judges, where the people of Israel sin, face judgment, cry out to God, and are delivered by a judge. The sermon emphasizes the importance of drawing near to God with a sincere heart, full assurance of faith, and a clean conscience, and warns against refusing the voice of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Hebrews chapter 10, For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually, year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered. For the worshippers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when he came into the world, he said, Sacrifice an offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, you had no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of me to do your will. O God, previously saying sacrifice and offering burnt offerings and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them which are offered according to the law.

Then he said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first that he may establish the second. By that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God from that time, waiting till his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering, he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us. For after he had said before, this is the covenant that I make with them. After those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds, I will write them.

Then he adds their sins and their lawless deeds. I will remember no more. Now, where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us through the veil, that is his flesh and having a high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near with the true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching. 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's law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

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. For we know him who said vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

And again, the Lord will judge his people. 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 of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

May the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his word. Let's turn our hearts and seek him together in prayer. Let's pray.

Our Holy Father, we come to you to meet with you at the mercy seat. Not the one made by human hands, but the one that you have erected in heaven. We come to meet you at a throne.

Not the kind that a man can make, but the kind that has always been and will endure forever, ages without end. Lord, we would be so reticent to speak to you, so unwilling to be honest with you. God, we don't mind church.

We don't mind a Bible reading. We don't mind listening to a preacher. But God, we would never have never had the courage to draw near to you.

Had you not told us that you dwell and rule on his throne of mercy. Mercy to cover our sin and grace. Grace to give us all that we need to do all your will in the present moment.

And Lord, you've commanded sinners to come. You've commanded us to come and find rest when we found rest in no other place, not in our sin and not in the law. You commanded us to come to a fountain, a fountain open to cleanse those who are unclean.

You command us to come to a feast when we don't have any money. And so, Lord, we don't bring you our pocket change. We don't bring you our IOUs and our good intentions.

We don't bring you, Lord, great promises and our determination to do better tomorrow. We bring our pleas to you, God. Lord, we plead the finished work of our savior.

We plead the work of your spirit within us. Father, we ask that you would continue to work in your children here tonight. To give them both the desire and the ability to do your good pleasure, to reflect you in our homes, in our workplaces, to stir up our hearts and turn our backs upon the whisperings of self and of the world.

Those things which have entangled us so often, things that have left us so empty and miserable and ashamed. But God, we come to you tonight. We come to you based upon the finished work of your son.

And we hope for tomorrow morning based on that same work. You who have begun a good work, God, carry it forward. We bring you our lives.

We lay them before you. You are the king and not us. And you are the savior and not us.

God, we know that you are the lawmaker and our lives have offended you. But you have paid for the offense and you've brought us near. Now, father, we ask that you would give us such an awareness of the superiority of what we've been given, that gratitude and love would flow, mingled throughout the rest of the days of our lives, that we would live not for ourself another moment, but for Prince Jesus, that we would depend upon him, live upon his supplies and for his glory.

Oh, God, we ask you help us. Will you remind us of things that we've heard before, but we've so easily forgotten. Will you show us things again this evening, things we've read and thought about before, but things that have lost their weight and edge.

We ask that you'd come in like hammer to break our hard hearts, like a fire to burn off the dross, deal with your children in such a way that you get great glory forever and ever. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

As we have become aware, we are dealing with these warning passages in Hebrew. I've chosen to work from a list of six I've already explained. It doesn't matter quite how the divisions occur.

Here is the essential thing that we need to begin with tonight. Ask this question. Why is it according to the first warning that some people drift away? Why is it according to the second warning that some people harden their hearts? Why is it according to the third warning that some become dull of hearing and sluggish? Why is it according to the warning that we're looking at tonight, some people willfully sin and shrink back? Why is it according to the warning that we're scheduled to speak about tomorrow night? That some resist the discipline of the Lord.

And why is it according to the sixth warning that some people refuse him who is speaking from heaven? I believe there's a common reason why these things occur. When you don't hold at a high level of gratitude and appreciation what Christ has done, then you run the terrible danger of violating God, violating any or perhaps all of these six warnings. The combination of the truth itself, the way the epistle is constructed, helps to bring that to the forefront of our thinking.

These passages, as has been explained, are warnings mingled with these incredibly wonderful doctrinal truths elevating Christ above all others. You are never in greater danger of violating God when you have sunk into a spirit of murmuring and complaining. Whenever there is any lack of gratitude in your heart, your danger increases dramatically.

While it is my intention on Sunday night to give you 12 ways by which you can move on perpetually with Christ clear until the end. A word of encouragement now, I believe, is appropriate. Keep the level of gratitude high in your life.

Feel increasingly your indebtedness to Christ for the wonder of his salvation and you'll not be moved in the direction of falling away from him. The warning that we have before us tonight is unusually severe. There is the danger of our reacting in a fashion to the warning that is extreme, for the warning is concerning willful sinning.

Is there anyone here who has not willfully sinned? If all willful sinning results in eternal condemnation, who would there be who had any hope at all? While it is not a major theme in Scripture, there is the theme of overmuch sorrow. There is a time for weeping and there is a time for laughter. There is a time for conviction of sin and there's a time for thanksgiving that you have been redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ.

So, I'm merely wanting to give a caution. Don't try to talk yourself out of the kingdom or to think yourself into a mood of blackness. If we pay close attention to this fourth warning, we will see that indeed it is a very real warning, but it is not intended to bring each of us to the very verge of defeat and to sweep out from under us all hope.

That most certainly is not the case. So, we're looking tonight at Hebrews chapter 10. We have read the chapter in its entirety, which of course is most appropriate, but the warning itself is basically between verses 19 and 39.

So, that's the portion that we will be focusing upon this evening. But it seemed to me appropriate to step outside of the realm of Hebrews for a moment or two and just give you a word of encouragement and a suggestion of hope. Over a period of several years, I have heard from a variety of sources that the likelihood of the next great revival in America occurring in our prisons was very strong.

Can you imagine that? A revival of true religion beginning not in our churches, but in our prisons. As I said, I've heard that mentioned a number of times. I had no basis on which to evaluate that.

Until March of this year, I had become acquainted with a man born in the Philippines who works for a ministry that some of you are acquainted with, a youth ministry, the Iwana Ministry. He began attending the church where I have been filling in and began coming to talk with me about spiritual things with some frequency. Then he asked if I would be willing to preach in a prison.

Well, I did some prison ministry 60 years ago, but I haven't been in a prison for a very long time. I wasn't really very keen on it, but you can lack keenness for a matter and still have willingness. So, when he pressed me, I said yes, I would be willing to go.

So, I spent three days in prison in the month of March at a prison that some of you have some familiarity with, Angola Prison in Louisiana. Now in a great deal of difficulty because floodwaters are troubling the situation, a prison with 5,100 and some inmates, 85% of whom are there on life sentence with no possibility of parole. It happens to be a state law in Louisiana.

A man with a life sentence has no hope of getting out. A movement has begun, and I'm mentioning this because I would like to urge you people to pray for this movement. A movement has begun called Malachi Dance.

You see, what has been discovered in Angola Prison and in many other prisons as well, men who are in prison on a life sentence in many cases had fathers who were in prison on a life sentence, and in some cases grandfathers. And the expectation is that the current prisoners who have children, and that's true of a very high percentage of the prisoners, their children will end up in prison for life. So there's a very vicious cycle that has been roaring forward in the nation.

So this dream came, is there some way we can break this vicious cycle? And so this movement called Malachi Dance, based on that scripture that some of you can recall, that he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children back to fathers. So I went there in March to speak to about 180 of the prisoners who have been converted to Christ and have joined the Malachi Dance movement. Now according to the warden, whom I talked with at length, some 2,400 prisoners have been converted in the last eight years.

A very high percentage of them have been enrolled in Bible classes. Several hundred of them have graduated from a four-year Bible college in prison. Some 200 are at the present time enrolled in a three-year theological seminary course.

I talked with 30 life sentence prisoners who have become pastors of churches in the prison. The prison has been changed from the most treacherous place in the nation to one of the safest places in the nation. I was assured that I could walk anywhere in the prison and be safer than on any street in New Orleans.

But God is doing an incredible work. I'm currently scheduled to return there in July for a long teaching session with these men. I want to encourage you to pray.

That movement, which began in Louisiana, is now occurring in 30 prisons across the nation. This month, hundreds and hundreds of the children of these prisoners in Angola are being brought to the prison and several hundred Christian people from churches around the nation are gathering there to help. Fathers are being released from their cells and from their normal work duty to have the whole day with their children in

the hopes that those prisoners who have been completely separated from their children will indeed build once again a relationship.

And this terrible cycle of crime will be broken. As I said, I had heard often the statement that it was likely the next great revival would begin in prison. I didn't have any confidence in that statement until I was there.

I was the major outside preacher, but four of the prisoners spoke, and I had not heard more sound biblical preaching with greater passion and insight into the human heart. I thought to myself, I'd like to take these four guys and put them in the churches across the land. I think something marvelous would take place.

So I've shared that with you because I think encouragement is appropriate. God is at work. He is doing a new thing.

It is not unreasonable that an incredible movement of the Holy Spirit beginning in prison could spread across the land. The people who have asked the question, why is this happening in prisons, have come to this conclusion. These men are broken.

They are absolutely without hope. They have a life sentence, as I've said. They will never be released.

In their brokenness, having hit the bottom, they have reached out toward Christ who has been reaching out to them. There might be some of the thousands who have appeared to have been converted who will fall back. It's certainly possible.

But in our churches, it is indicated that somewhere around 90% of all of those who profess to be converted are nowhere with Christ two years after their professed conversion. So if some of the prisoners fall away, the likelihood is there will be far fewer that are falling away in the churches. Is it too much to hope that some of you will begin to pray for a mighty work of God to continue and to expand in the prisons? And if indeed it's within the providence of God that I spend time with them in July, I shall be sharing with them things like I have shared with you over the years and things that we've looked at together this week.

Well, let's come then directly to the text. And as I said, it is a very severe word. And yet, indeed, when taken with careful prayerful consideration, it is in no way a destructive word, but a very helpful word.

And as long as we maintain a deep spirit of gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not going to turn aside in willful sin. But the problem of willful sinning has become an incredibly large problem in the church. It is sometimes illustrated by well-known characters.

Some of you who've been here over the years know that in addition to the privilege that I have of preaching in many places, Maggie, my wife, and I operate a bookstore in Wheaton, Illinois. And it is a bookstore that deals primarily with old books. And that means then that we acquire libraries when pastors die, when theological seminaries close, when colleges merge, we often end up with these huge collections of books.

I mention that because it's relevant to what I'm going to say. There are, as I said a moment ago, notorious cases of those who seem to have been walking with Christ who have fallen away. Having lived in Wheaton, Illinois, for 35 years, I've become at least somewhat familiar with the history of that city.

Wheaton was at one time called the Evangelical Vatican or the Holy City. At the time we moved there some 35 years ago, there were 60-some Christian organizations that had their national and international

headquarters there. Youth for Christ, which following the Second World War was a very strong movement, began in Wheaton.

I want to mention the names of four men who were connected with Youth for Christ. Billy Graham would be the best known of the group, Robert Cook, who was for many years president of King's College, Torrey Johnson, and Charles Templeton were the four major men who brought that organization into being under the providence of God. And many young people were reached for Christ during the years of Youth for Christ.

The best preacher of the four was conceded by all to be Charles Templeton. But Charles Templeton sinned willfully and departed from the faith. But because he had a strong friendship with the four men that I mentioned, he sent autographed copies of the books that he wrote to these men.

Not too long ago we acquired the library of Torrey Johnson, and in that library were copies of all the books that Charles Templeton had written, all of them inscribed to Torrey Johnson and autographed by Charles Templeton. It was very sad for me when I assembled that row of books in chronological order. The first one was very spiritual, but less and less so.

And the last book he wrote was practically a pornographic novel, a filthy piece, disgusting. I hope you understand that there is a pattern that regularly accompanies falling away, hardening the heart, becoming dull, sinning willfully. A person begins in what appears to be a right relationship with God, but they harbor some secret sin.

They refuse to put that secret sin away. God brings them under some kind of remedial judgment, but they do not repent. They persist in this secret sin that normally results in the withdrawal of God's manifest presence from their life.

But they don't normally immediately abandon Christianity. Rather, they tend to lapse into some kind of formalism. If they're involved in the church, say as a pastor, it's very common for them to have candles put in the church and various kinds of vestments, and they themselves are very likely to begin to wear a turnaround collar and other clothes that distinguish them from people regularly.

They become much more formal in their approach to Christianity. The besetting sin, which they did not put away, gains strength in them. Ascendancy, in many cases, the besetting sin becomes the most prominent feature of their life.

Gradually, they abandon attendance at Christian worship. They cease all personal Bible reading, and eventually, for many of them, they hold Christianity in contempt, and they speak wickedly against God and Christ, and even in the case I've mentioned to you, write pornographic literature. That's a pattern.

Now, we have a similar pattern to that in the book of Judges. I recall pointing this out to this assembly years ago. In the book of Judges, we have a pattern that is seven times repeated between chapters 3 and 16.

The people are in right relationship with God, but they sin and do not repent. God brings them under some form of a righteous judgment. When the judgment is beyond their ability to endure, they cry out to God, and a judge deliverer is raised up.

Now, that pattern, as I said, is repeated seven times. But if you've studied the history of Israel, you know that over the passing of the decades, their hearts grew harder and harder. It took them longer to come to repentance.

It took more of a judgment from God to disturb them and to cause them to cry out to God, and eventually, it was too late. They were simply cut off. So, the pattern of which I've just spoken is both biblical, and we see it often in those around us who at one time appeared to have warped in Christ.

Now, let's come directly to the passage. Let me point out first that in the passage, verses 19 to 25 provide the specific background of the warning itself, and we need to carefully weigh the statements of these several verses. It begins with two realities that are to be considered.

The reality of access. Notice in verse 19, Sense therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus. Every believer has access to God through Jesus Christ.

Then he adds in verse 20, this access is by a new and a living way, which he inaugurated for us through the veil that is his flesh. Now, if I may take just a moment to relate that to the subject of gratitude with which I began this evening. When you realize who you are, and who God is, and the incredible gulf that exists between you, a rotten, no good, miserable, depraved, filthy, self-righteous sinner, and Christ, and it dawns on you, here I am in all my rottenness and corruption, and I have been given access to the living God.

Tremendous sense of gratitude wells up as you face that reality. And then you remember those around you who, in many cases, are far more righteous than yourself. People who haven't stooped to the level of filth that you have.

People who haven't even had the opportunity of knowing right from wrong to the degree that you've known it. And you realize they are completely apart from Christ. They have no known access to the Father.

They don't even begin to know how to draw near to God. And I do. Again, the spirit of gratitude wells up.

Christ has made for me a way of access to the Father. I have this privilege beyond description of knowing the living God, of walking with Him. And this access was made for me, not by some righteous cause that I advance, but by the righteous one Himself.

Gratitude springs up. And as long as that gratitude is prominent in the heart, the thought of willful sinning is an abomination to you. You would rather make a meal of horse manure than to sin against the God who has made access for you.

It's when you lose the spirit of gratitude that the temptations of the flesh become so attractive. And you're drawn with such force to turn away from that which is truly precious. So, that fact must be chased.

Then, four responsibilities are spelled out. The new and living way is ours, verse 21, because we have a great high priest over the house of God. And in the light, then, of those incredibly marvelous facts, four responsibilities mentioned.

In verse 22, let us draw near with a sincere heart. Now, how could you possibly be willing to draw near with an insincere heart when you have understood the access that has been provided for you at the price that Christ paid in order that you might be one with God? So, draw near. As long as you keep gratitude

high, then you see what an incredible privilege it is to draw near.

And you have protection against these warnings. You have no inclination. You'd rather be sick and die suddenly than to depart from the living God.

And we are instructed to draw near, first, in full assurance of faith. Secondly, in having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. And thirdly, having our bodies washed with pure water.

That's an obvious exposition of what it means to draw near with a sincere heart. You don't come before the Lord cherishing your filth. You come before the Lord grateful that your filth has been removed, that you have been washed clean, that you can enter the presence of the Holy God.

And you have this longing to draw near to him. Therefore, we observe constantly in the church one of the first signs of backsliding that we see in people is their unwillingness to keep participating in the prayer meeting. Over and over, I have watched people who at one time were zealous to be part of the prayer life of the church, who gradually lost all appetite for prayer meetings.

And when you confront them, and this, of course, I'm speaking out of experience. When you confront them, they have an incredible array of excuses. Why they haven't been able to come.

For many, many years, I led an early morning prayer meeting in my office in Wheaton. It was never large, but we'd have maybe 20 or 25 pastors and Christian workers in the area. And I kept track of all those that came.

Well, we had a man come for a little over a year, came faithfully, prayed fervently, and then suddenly he wasn't there. So, I checked up on him and asked him why he had dropped out. Because when he had come, he had said he was there for the duration.

The Lord had called him to join us in prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So, when I confronted him, he said, oh, well, it's not that I don't want to be there, but you see, I've had a number of men in my church that I have to spend time with personally. And the only time I could meet with them was that morning of prayer.

But I thought it was a lie. But I didn't know for sure, so I let it go. But he assured me he would be back, and he didn't come back, so I sought him out again.

He told me a totally different lie. The third time when I confronted him, he said, he started to tell another lie, and then he turned white. He said, I don't think I dare tell you another lie.

He said, the truth of the matter is, I came under terrible conviction in the prayer meeting. It became very clear to me I had to repent. I'm not willing to repent.

So, I've simply said that an indicator of a movement away from Christ is often seen by one's irregular attendance at the prayer meeting. So, the first command, draw near with sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, having our bodies washed with pure water. The second responsibility stressed, verse 23, let us hold fast to the confession of our hope, and hold fast without wavering, because he who promised is faithful.

But again, when you lose the spirit of thankfulness, then you begin to be uncertain about the faithfulness of God. You no longer have that same confidence in him, and you set yourself up for the very realistic

possibility of a fall. The third responsibility introduced in verse 24, let us consider how to stimulate one another, both in love and to good deeds.

And again, it's quite clear, when you are full of a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving, you want to share what God is doing for you. You're quick to encourage others to get in on the blessing of God. But when you lose the spirit of gratitude, when something in your world, something in the flesh, becomes an allure to you, and your attention is drawn away from it, then you're no longer faithful, or consistent, or even useful in stimulating others to love and good deeds.

And finally, verse 25, let us not forsake our own assembling together, as the habit of some is, but encouraging one another, and all the more increasingly, as you see the day approaching. Now let me tell you what I consider one of the most remarkable things that I have ever seen in all my life. Here, as a nation, we are on the verge of destruction.

Many of the soundest people in the nation are saying, we have less than ten years as a democracy. The nation is in a self-destructive mode. Erwin Lutzer, pastor of the Moody Church, has written a very searching book on what happened to Germany under Hitler.

And there's an amazing parallel. Germany was destroyed from within by allowing a man to do the very things that are happening to us as a nation. But now I mention that, not to throw stones at politicians, but to say some of us have become so dull that we don't even see the day approaching.

We're not even alert to the peril of the nation. We're not sensitive to it. And we began forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

Well, that's the background that this warning passage is set in. So again, I simply urge you to maintain an incredibly high level of gratitude. And clearly, one of the great purposes of Hebrews is to elevate our level of gratitude by showing us how marvelous Christ is and how infinitely above all else He truly is.

But now, the horrible danger of willful sinning. We focus now upon verses 26 to 31. If we go on sinning willfully, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severe punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the spirit of grace? For we know him who said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Now, I read those several verses together because if you isolate that first verse, verse 26, from the rest, you may very well worry yourself into deep apprehension. I frequently speak with people.

Just this last week, a woman came to me in tears using this statement, fearing that she had sinned away all possibility of grace. If you don't keep the matter in perspective, if, as I just said, you isolate verse 26 from the rest, you might gain a false conclusion. So this is specifically speaking of those who go on sinning willfully, deliberately, voluntarily, continually, and do so knowing what they're doing.

Now, let me mention an incident. Some time back when I was preaching in one of the major cities in Texas, a man came up to me after the service and was obviously very deeply troubled. He said to me, I'm in a very great predicament.

He said, I hold the highest paying position in city government in this city. But I realized tonight that I am in a huge danger of sinning willfully. He said, the truth is I got this job in city government by falsifying my resume.

I did not have any of the qualifications that the job called for. I made up qualifications and submitted them, and they were accepted. At the time, I was not aware of my wickedness.

I was so determined to get ahead. But tonight, I know if I go on, it's willful sin. So I said, what are you going to do? Well, he said, I'm weighing it.

What I need to do is to call together the city fathers and confess to them that I completely falsified my resume. But if I do, I may end up in prison. I certainly will lose my position, and it will be impossible for me to get another one.

So what are you going to do? He said, I don't have any choice. First thing in the morning, I'm calling the city council together, and I'm declaring what a reprobate I am. So I prayed with him and encouraged him, and he went, and he did it.

He came back the next night all aglow. He said, the inconceivable happened. I told them what a liar I had been, and submitted my resignation.

They asked me to wait. Well, they met. They called me back, and they said, actually, you've been doing a splendid job.

And now it's our decision to give you a raise. They said, we trust you now to a degree we never have before. Now, it doesn't always happen that way.

But what if that man had said, no, it's too great a price. I'm not going to do it. In his case, because the Spirit of God had convicted him deeply, I didn't even know him, let alone know about his falsified resume.

Certainly, there was no way I could bring that matter before his conscience, but the Spirit of God did. And by the grace of God, the matter was cleared in a way that was honoring God. No, I'm not suggesting that we have a group of people here tonight who have falsified their resumes and are in danger of losing their position.

But I do want to ask, has the Spirit of God convicted you about anything in your life that's displeasing to him? If he has, and you have not responded in obedience to him, then this warning passage must be faced by you with very great care. For we read very plainly in verse 26, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin. God is not going to make a second provision for willful sinners.

If you're not willing to do things God's way, there's no hope because he's not making another way. He's made a way, a wonderful way, a way that can embrace all of us. But we're going to have to go his way, not our way.

So, willful sinning must be taken, as I told you earlier, in the context, look at the 27th verse, of certain terrifying expectation and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversary. So, God is not going to make

another way. If a person repudiates the only way that God has made, and when you deliberately choose to live in sin, you are repudiating the only way.

In the old covenant, there was a provision for repeated sin in a fashion. But nobody can go back to the old covenant because it's dead and gone. In the new covenant, we turn our life over to Christ, and we do things his way.

Now, not perfectly. All of us here have sinned after we believed. But this passage is not talking about incidental sin.

This is talking about people who repudiate the way that God has made. People who face realistically the truth. This is wrong.

God forbids it. I must turn from it. I will not turn from it, they say.

That is truly a very, very treacherous position. Now, anyone who's been around me any length of time knows that I regularly distinguish between what we call root, R-O-O-T, root sins, and fruit sins. And I'd like to urge you to think on that for a moment tonight.

There are root sins. There are fruit sins. Now, the book of Jude, in a very powerful passage, in verses 5, 6, and 7, in addition, verse 8, sets forth some truth about root sins, a very great consequence.

And it singles out three root sins. It describes Israel in verse 5, and it says that Israel's root sin was unbelief. It describes the fallen angels, and it makes it clear that the sin of the fallen angels was stubbornness, rebellion.

It describes Sodom and Gomorrah, and again makes it clear that the root sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was pride. Now, think about those three root sins. Unbelief, stubbornness, rebellion, pride.

Let's go back to the real illustration I have cited of a man who had falsified his resume. Suppose, after coming under the profound conviction of the Holy Spirit, and I assure you it was profound conviction, no man would have risked the highest paying job in his city just on some frivolous whim. He knew he had to deal with this sin.

But suppose he had said, no, not now at least, maybe later. What would that have represented? Well, it would have represented pride. It would have represented stubbornness, rebellion.

God tells me what to do, and I say, well, no, not now anyway. And it surely would have represented unbelief. Because when we talk about belief, we're not just talking about the positive things of Christ having come to die in our place.

We're talking about the negative things like this passage that warns us if you go on sinning willfully. If that man had said, I will not, he would have acted in unbelief, and he would have been in extraordinary danger. Now, as I said already, we're not people, for the most part, who have falsified our resumes.

But I ask you again, has the Spirit of God convicted you about a sin in your life? If you refuse him who speaks, look at what the passage says. Verse 28 again. Anyone who set aside the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Now, this is the same truth that I focused upon on Sunday morning when I introduced this subject of these warning passages to you. In the first warning, chapter 2, verses 1 to 4, we were told very plainly what happened to Israel. And then it was pinpointed as clearly as a matter could be pinpointed.

Don't you dare think that you can get away with what Israel could not get away with. Now, that is a huge issue in our American society. The bulk of the churches are actually teaching that God has grown up.

He's gotten control of his disposition. He is now no longer a God of anger and wrath, but he is so overwhelmed with loving kindness that you can get away with anything. But that is simply a grievous, wicked falsehood.

And so the question is very clear here. If those in the old covenant could not get away with anything, but if there were two or three witnesses against them, they had to pay the penalty. So, verse 29, how much sorer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace? Let's look at those words with care.

Take them one by one. Has, number one, regarded the blood of the covenant as unclean? Now, how can you stoop to more grievous sin than despising what Christ has done? Treating with contempt the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, while none of us, I expect, would consciously do that, the tragedy is that we're not very conscious often of what we are doing.

And it's simply got to be said, if you deliberately choose to sin, you are treating with contempt the blood. So, the warning, dear, dear people, don't let that happen. You're trampling underfoot the Son of God.

You're treating the covenant, the blood of the covenant by which you're sanctified as unclean. And you're insulting the Spirit of grace. Now, that's one I must focus upon.

The great trust of the American church is grace, grace, grace, grace. Always talking about grace, grace, grace. Well, there is incredible grace, but grace cannot be abused.

And whenever we choose willfully to sin and to live therein, we are abusing grace. I don't believe that I've ever met anyone who deliberately started out saying, I am going to abuse God's grace. No, no, we don't start out thinking that way.

We commit a sin. We begin to love that sin. We cultivate it.

We nurture it. We won't let it go. And before we know it, we're insulting the Spirit of grace.

So I'm simply trying to say, dear friends, this passage is not describing someone who has set their heart to live all out for Christ. But you were sorely tempted and you fell flat on your death. We could wish that never happened.

But it does. But you haven't insulted the Spirit of grace when you have realized you have sinned and then you've fallen on your face and cried out to God for mercy. You've declared your dependence upon grace in that.

And this passage is not talking about those who are dependent upon grace, but those who in pride, in unbelief, in stubbornness, rebellion, simply pay no attention to what God says. So he speaks plainly about a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, of fury, of fire that will consume adversary. Hopefully this does

not need saying.

But everyone who deliberately chooses to sin should know for certainty what's going to happen to them. God will not allow the blood of his Son to be trampled underfoot. God will not allow anyone to treat the blood of the covenant as an unclean thing.

God will not allow anyone to despise the Spirit of grace. So the picture simply, you've caught it I trust, but let me simply state it again just in the hopes that no one will miss the truth. This passage, extremely severe, is a warning.

Don't ever lose the spirit of gratitude at all times. Remember the splendor of Christ made available to cleanse you from your sin and to enable you to live as a child of God. Don't ever let slip that high view, that treasured view of what Christ has done.

Because if you do, then the probability is you will turn aside to sin. And then you can anticipate the terrifying fall into the vengeance of God, into the judgment. So verse 31, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But the lovely thing about this passage, as severe as it is, the words that introduce it and the words that follow it are wonderfully encouraging and helpful. So let's focus now on verses 32 to 34. Remember the former days when after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of suffering, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and you accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. We'll not take long on that, but it's a reminder of things that we've already considered. I told you when we began the series something of the background of the epistle and something about the people to whom the epistle was written.

I told you about Nero's garden parties and burning people on crosses at these garden parties. I told you about the systematic looting of their homes by mobs that were sent out to try and destroy Christianity by bringing the people themselves into grievous circumstances. So the exhortation, verse 32, remember the former days.

And it's appropriate for me, speaking now to those here who are true believers, it's appropriate for me to remind you of the joy that you felt when you first came to Christ, of the incredible sense of relief from the burden of your sins, of the glorious prospect of walking with God the rest of your days. So after warning us with great severity, we are encouraged to remember how we once felt about Christ, how deeply stirred and moved we were, how resolute we were to follow Him at any cost. It's when we forget that our danger increases so greatly.

So remember all that Christ has done for you. You were, according to the last verse of this section, verse 34, you were held by an incredible hope. The hope of a better possession and an abiding one.

So just thinking in terms of the young believers to whom this was written who had their home systematically looted. He's saying to them, look, be realistic. What did they steal from your home? Well, the only thing they could steal was what you had by way of possessions.

But why should you get agitated and concerned about the loss of those when you've got all of God's glory as yours, when you are a joint heir with Jesus Christ? Why should you be all worked up and disturbed by the loss of something which you're going to lose anyway? None of us are taking anything with us to glory. So if we lose it a few years before we get to glory, God is certainly more than able to replace anything we lose. Any price that we pay for being loyal servants of Christ is as nothing in comparison with the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

Well, we come then to the final portion. Verses 35 to 39. An urgent call to appropriate action in the light of all that's been said in this warning.

Verse 35. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. Let that sink in.

I plead with you, don't throw away your confidence. It has a great reward. Every true believer has confidence in what's coming.

I think one time when I was here, I gave a series of messages on Hebrews 11. And if I didn't, shame on me. But I remember saying, take the word faith and let each letter in the word convey real meaning and consequence.

The first letter, F. And I urged at that time, Hebrews 11.1, F, facts, in focus. Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for. The evidence of things not seen.

And that's exactly what it's talking about here when it talks about confidence. When you have faith in Christ, the eternal becomes more real and demanding than the temporal. All the things that are hoped for, Christ and eternal life and heaven itself and the throne of God and eternity with the saints, all of the things hoped for gain tremendous reality with faith.

So, if it costs you something to follow Christ, goodbye, tale of woes. I'm on my way to glory. I've got a better hope.

I'm going to live with my mind and heart set upon what's before me in Christ Jesus rather than groaning and complaining about what I have lost in this lifetime. So, he urges this confidence. Don't throw it away.

It carries with it great reward. In verse 36, he urges endurance. You have needed endurance so that when you've done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Now, some of you young people, it looks easy now, but I will tell you very plainly, there can be some mighty tough days ahead. Every aged Christian that I know has passed through the fire. We know something about the storms, the conflicts, the difficulty.

But I want to tell you, endurance is worth it. There's a little song some of us know. I have decided to follow Jesus.

No turning back. No turning back. Here's the call for endurance.

Say to your heart right now, I don't care what it costs. I am determined to follow Jesus. And you'll not be sorry.

There is an incredible reward at the end for those that endure. Then in verse 37, the place of assurance. Yet, in a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay.

If you want something to send shivers up and down your spine bone, think about the day I mentioned last night when the great host of angels assembled and the blast of the trumpet is heard in the sky and you see the Lord Himself returning. My word, I can't imagine anything like that. And to know when He comes that He's come for you and that you're on your way to the eternal glory.

You keep that hope in mind. And when you're tempted to grumble, to complain, when you're saying, I wonder if the Lord even remembers I'm here. When you're lacking peace and confidence and assurance, remind yourself of what's coming and glory in it.

Start to praise the Lord for what's ahead instead of murmuring about what's here at the moment. And then He moves in the next verse, verse 38, to the necessity of ongoing faith. My righteous one shall live by faith.

And if He shrinks back, my soul shall have no pleasure in Him. I think there's wisdom in having specific goals. I believe it's very much in order to have the personal goal in your life that the Savior Himself will take pleasure in you.

I want to live in such a way that my Savior is full of joy. I want to live that way not just today, but all the tomorrows of my life. Enduring faith.

Enabling me day after day, year after year, decade after decade to live in rejoicing expectation that my Savior is pleased and will soon be coming to welcome me back to the place of eternal inheritance. And it ends with the simple words of verse 39. We're not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Now, I only get to come here occasionally, but my memory is still pretty good. And I remember some people from the last time I was here who are not here tonight, who have indeed turned aside. I find that very grievous.

At the same time, I see many who have been here every time. And my heart leaps with joy. Can I say concerning this entire group, we are not of those who turn back.

We are of those who persevere to the salvation of their soul. Let that be our goal. Let that be our determination.

No matter what comes, we are going to hold fast. But these passages, as I pointed out, have both a personal application and a corporate application. So be on the watch constantly for those around you in the fellowship.

And encourage one another. And by the grace of God, live with a view to the day of glory.

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