

(26) For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 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. 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? 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.

(32) But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

(35) For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For,

“Yet a little while, and the coming One will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

(39) But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Think on these things:

- 1) V. 26 contains a dire warning to Christians. While Romans describes believers as “dead to sin,” (Romans 6:11-14), Hebrews indicates that some folks “deliberately” choose to continue sinning. It is a purposeful decision. Have you ever done this? Have you ever thought about and then done something you knew to be wrong because you believed that, ultimately, God would forgive you later when you genuinely repented? If so, you have deliberately sinned --- and presumed upon the grace of God! (And so have many other believers....) So, who is in danger? Look at these two passages to identify scenarios when believers may have pushed too far in presuming on God’s grace. Name the faulty thinking.

Romans 6:1-2 – **Every time I sin, God can demonstrate His grace and magnanimity by forgiving me. So I should go ahead and commit sin so God can get more and more glory by forgiving me.**

1 John 3:1-10 (ESV) – **This is less obvious. Essentially, some people believe that they don’t have to change by coming to faith in Jesus, i.e., I can continue to live like I always have because God forgives sin and I’m forgiven. I’m now a Christian, so I get to go to heaven.**

- 2) If we live a life of deliberately “practicing sin” (1 John 3:4, ESV), what do vs. 27 and 31 say we can look forward to instead of forgiveness from Jesus? Look at these warnings: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-7; Revelation 21:8 and 22:14-15.

V. 27 says we live in fear of God’s coming judgment and His all-consuming fire. V. 31 says it is a “fearful thing” to fall into the hands of the Living God! The other passages point out that the unrighteous will never inherit the Kingdom of God, spelling out several types of sins. While

some of us come from such pasts, God justifies, washes and sanctifies believers in Jesus' name through the work of the H.S. Unrighteous behavior is NOT from God, but our own sinful flesh.

- 3) Under the old covenant Law, capital offenses confirmed by 2 or more witnesses resulted in the death of the offender (v. 28). How does Hebrews describe the offensiveness of a Christian who practices a life of sinning in v. 29, deserving a "worse" punishment than that under the old Law?

"Trampling under foot the Son of God", "profaning Christ's shed blood of the (New) Covenant" --- the blood by "which we are sanctified", and "outraging the Holy Spirit!"

- 4) What do you think of the teaching from v. 31? Look up 1 Peter 4:17. Should this be a concern?

This verse confirms the fearful reality of falling into the hands of an angry, Living, Creator God at the time of judgment. Yes, it should terrify anyone who has trifled with his/her faith in life. 1 Peter indicates God's judgment (for rewards) will begin with Christians, and 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 adds that some believer's will barely enter heaven with nothing to their names.

- 5) V. 32 is a transition. Did you have this experience, becoming a Christian and then facing hardship because of your new-found life of faith (v. 33)? Perhaps even today, years after believing, you're facing challenges simply because you are a Christian. Would you mind sharing with the class?

Personal experiences may be shared....

- 6) It may not be true in our country, but in other countries of the world, the loss of home, property and job is a realistic consequence for becoming a Christian. V. 34 speaks of being "joyfully accepting" of this happening to you. Do you think you could be joyful in such circumstances? What does Hebrews point to as a way to cope with people doing these things to you (v. 34b)?

Many believers would find it hard to suffer such hardships as a consequence of coming to faith. "Acceptance" of this comes to those who value more their better and abiding heavenly possessions (rewards). Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21), and Jesus has prepared for us a place (John 14:1-3) with unimaginably good things (1 Corinthians 2:9).

- 7) See 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. What is a reasonable expectation for us when we go through times of hard struggles, reproach, afflictions and imprisonment (v. 34)?

2 Corinthians tells us that as God comforts us in our afflictions, we are to learn and grow from those experiences to comfort others encountering their own difficult times.

- 8) Vs. 35-39 contrast two common responses to Christian hardship and affliction. What are the two responses and outcomes identified in vs. 38-39? What is needed to receive the promised rewards (vs. 35-36)?

2 Responses? – Some "shrink back and are destroyed", while others demonstrate "faith and preserve their souls." God takes no pleasure in those who shrink back, but embraces the righteous who live by faith.

What we need? – We need "endurance" (v. 36) and to hang on to our confidence (v. 35).

People and situations I want to pray for this week: