

# Hebrews 10 (Part 3) :26–39 • The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

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We are in the third part of Hebrews chapter 10. We're picking it up in verse 26. I'm going to go ahead and read through those verses, and you follow along in your Bible as I do. It says:

*"<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup>but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup>Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>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? <sup>30</sup>For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." <sup>31</sup>It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. <sup>32</sup>But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, <sup>33</sup>sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. <sup>34</sup>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. <sup>35</sup>Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup>For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. <sup>37</sup>For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; <sup>38</sup>but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." <sup>39</sup>But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." (ESV)*

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, speak to us today. Lord, we thank you so much for your word and we thank you, God, that through your Holy Spirit, you teach and enlighten our hearts as to the good things and wise things of your word that we need to take hold of. And we pray that you would help us to do that today. We give our hearts to you. We give our spiritual ears to hear. And we ask, Lord God, that you would fill us up. For we ask it in Jesus' precious name, amen. Amen.

You probably noticed as we started reading these verses here in Hebrews chapter 10, that we came up to a pretty challenging couple of verses there that we kicked it off with. And I want to preface those just for a moment by saying that throughout the course of our study here in Hebrews, we've been emphasizing the fact that you've got to be careful taking verses of scripture out of context. And what I mean by that is being careful not to isolate a single verse or even a couple of verses in such a way as to cause the reader to misunderstand the real meaning.

So, that being said, and that's a genuine issue. That being said, I've also shared with you that there are some verses you can take out of context in the Bible. If somebody says to you, you can't take anything out of context, they're wrong. There's some things you can. The things you can take out of context are the things pertaining to God. His nature or His attributes because they're always the same.

I've made the point before, if you read in the Bible that God is love, He's always love regardless of the context. So anything related to talking about God and His attributes in nature are always going to be true. Now we come to these verses, and we begin to see that these cannot be taken out of context.

There's no way that they can be properly understood, and we hit these verses just smack dab first thing we begin to read. And those verses say, look with me again, verse 26. *"<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,"* what remains?

He says just the *"fearful expectation of judgment,"* coming down the pike. That's as good as it's ever going to get for you. And so there you go. Let's close in prayer and go home and weep and wail, I suppose. Let me just tell you something. This passage has caused untold angst in the hearts of many people who try to understand it apart from its context. You cannot.

I get asked a lot from verses just like this, 'Pastor Paul, explain to me what these two verses mean.' And I try to tell people I can't explain them without explaining the theme of the book of Hebrews. You need to understand the gist and the theme and the thrust of the book of Hebrews to be able to understand these verses. And people don't really want to put up with that.

'I don't want to go through a study of Hebrews, Pastor Paul. I just want to know what these verses mean.' No, they are tied to their context and without their context it is all doom. Because when you read these verses alone, they seem to

be saying that after you get saved, if you sin willfully, or as it says in the ESV here deliberately, that there's nothing you can do. It is just like you're, no hope, you're dead.

So you might as well close your Bible and go home and just wait for the judgment. Well, I'm going to explain that here in just a moment and why that's not the correct understanding. But let me just say here that when we talk about deliberate sins, the Bible also refers to them as transgressions.

A deliberate, willful sin is the same thing as a transgression. To transgress means to violate a known boundary. In other words, I knew it was wrong and I did it anyway. I knew what I was doing was against God's word, but I did it anyway. That's called the transgression. It's like when you tell your kids don't touch that, and they look at you and they go, right.

Have you ever had your children do that to you? Yeah. So that's a transgression. So here, we read in this verse that if you go on sinning deliberately, in other words, if you commit a transgression, what does the verse say? If you do that *"after receiving the knowledge of the truth,"* which believers have, *"there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,"* and you can see why people who just read these verses alone without understanding the context why they come away just absolutely horrified and thinking that they are dead.

And again, this passage has haunted many people who've read it and tried to understand it. If you just stop for a moment and think, and even frankly read through some of the great stories of the Bible, you will find that there are actually many Bible characters who committed transgressions. And then walked later after a time of repentance in the grace and goodness of God. And walked in the blessings of the Lord. Many. So that's the first thing that begins to tell you, now, maybe that's not the right interpretation. Then we have God's own testimony.

Do you guys remember when Moses was up on Mount Sinai and the Lord had just told Moses that he had found favor with the Lord (Exodus 33:17-23). So Moses was kind of built up in his confidence and he said, I want to see your face. And God said, well, you can't see my face and live. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll hide you in the cleft of the rock, and I will pass by, and I will allow you to see the trailing edge of my glory as I pass by.

That's as good as it's going to get for you, Mo. In fact, that alone will light up your face like a light bulb. I'm adding a little bit here, you can tell. But the Lord also, as He carried this out for Moses, holding him in the cleft of the rock,

shielding him from the very glory of the Almighty and passed by, the Bible says that God declared himself.

You remember that He declared himself. What did He say? It's recorded for us in Exodus chapter 34:

**Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV)**

*The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . ."*

What is transgression? Violating a known boundary. Does God forgive it? Yeah, He does. We're not saying this so that you have this sort of license to go out and transgress. We're simply making a statement that is true. That tells us that a superficial interpretation of Hebrews 10:26-27 cannot be right.

Because God has declared it otherwise. He says, I forgive transgression. So the writer of Hebrews is obviously saying something else. Well, this is where context comes in as we ask ourselves the question, what is he saying then? If he's not saying one transgression after you get saved and you're dead, what is he saying?

Well, if you skip down a couple of verses down to verse 29, he tells you. He describes what he means by a deliberate sin. Verse 29, "<sup>29</sup>*How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who*" (and then he gives us three things) "*has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and*" (thirdly) "*has outraged the Spirit of grace?*" Good grief. Those are nasties, aren't they?

Three things that the writer of Hebrews says that such a person does. And so how do they do those things? How do you do those three things? Do you do it by falling into sin? Do you do it by making a mistake? Do you do it by getting angry at somebody and saying things that are horrible and hurtful? No, that's not how you do those three things. Do you do it by backsliding for a period of time in your life and falling back into your old lifestyle before you come back to the Lord?

No, that's not how you do those three things. You know how we know? We know that sin, the kind of stuff we do on a regular basis, we know that stuff is covered. We know it. We know it from the word because the Apostle John told us. Here's how we know:

**1 John 2:1-2 (ESV)**

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins...*

You probably don't use the word propitiation on a regular basis, and neither do I, but it's a word that means to take away wrath. Jesus Christ is the one who has removed the wrath of God on our behalf. How? By burying it for us, He bore the wrath of God on our behalf. Okay? Jesus bore our wrath. Our wrath. It wasn't His, it wasn't directed at Him. It was directed at us. He stood in the path of it, though, and He bore it. He consumed it, right?

So you see, this passage tells us that we're going to mess up, but when we do, God has made a plan. There's this thing in effect. It's the death of Jesus Christ that keeps on cleansing us from sin. So you see, it's not by sin and the things that we do every day, the mess-ups. That's not how we trample underfoot the Son of God.

So how in the world do you do those things? I mean, you look at him again in that verse, "*trampled underfoot the Son of God,*" that sounds pretty heavy, doesn't it? He says, "*profaned the blood of the covenant*" wow "*outraged the Spirit of grace?*" How do you do that if it's not just by your daily mess-ups? If that's covered in the blood of Jesus, how do you do this?

Well, what's the theme of the book of Hebrews? This writer is addressing this letter to people who had embraced the gospel of Jesus, but were now turning away. They were going back to the law. They were going back to depend on the law instead of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's how you do those things.

You do it by once experiencing the forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ. And then knowingly and deliberately rejecting that sacrifice. Literally coming to a place of saying, I don't believe Jesus died on the cross for anybody. I don't believe it. I reject it. I reject the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. That's how you do it.

Having once embraced it, but now you are rejecting it. In other words, it's turning from faith to unbelief. So you see, again, this isn't just a picture of sinning. We've all done that. We have a great tendency to do it and we will continue to mess up and fall down until the Lord calls us home.

The author of Hebrews is here talking about a determined decision, on the part of one who once embraced the gospel, to now reject the death of Jesus and to try to be acceptable to God by some other means, like the law. That's what these

people were doing. We're going to go through the law and have that be the way we become acceptable to God.

He says, no, you do that, you're going to trample underfoot the Son of God. You're going to profane the blood of the covenant. Wow. So in verse 30, he goes on and he writes, if you look with me in your Bible, <sup>30</sup>*For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."* <sup>31</sup>*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

Why is he saying this to believers? Because he's reminding them of the fact that if you reject the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, there's no other option but to stand in judgment before God for your sins. Listen here, the good news is Jesus took your punishment for you, but if you reject that sacrifice, there's nothing left but to pay those price, that price of your sin for yourself.

And you know what that is? The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). And we're not talking about just physical death. So he's saying here by these two verses 30 and 31, listen, God wasn't just blowing smoke when he said, I'm going to judge. There is a judgment coming. There is a judgment coming upon the world. God will judge sin. He's just, and He must judge it. But for those who are in Christ, that judgment is passed. The judgment is over. Jesus has been judged for us on the cross. This is a good time to say amen. Thank you. So, this is good news you guys. Our judgment is passed. Oh, thank you Jesus.

But judgment is coming. Now at this point in the letter, he begins to recall some of the junk that they've been experiencing related to persecution and difficulty because of their faith in Jesus. Look, in verse 32 again. He says, I want you guys to recall the some days gone by after you were enlightened, and by the way, that means after you got saved, okay?

He's talking to Christians here. He says, you remember how hard of a struggle you guys had it when you came to the Lord and all the sufferings you went through. Some of you were publicly exposed to reproach and affliction. And if you weren't personally, you were partners with those who were, you stood by those people. He says in verse 34, you even expressed your compassion to those in prison.

Do you understand that when people got put into a Roman prison, particularly, do you know that the Romans felt no compunction to take care of those people, feed them or clothe them? You're in prison because you violated the laws of the empire. You want to eat. I hope you have some friends. You need clothes. We're not going to give you clothes. You're a prisoner.

Do you understand what happens when believers go to prison under that system? It's the other believers who risk their own sort of freedom to go to those people and say, I'm here to bring food for so-and-so, I'm here to bring clothes for so-and-so. That's what he means when he says, you stood in compassion with those who were being so treated and imprisoned. It's quite a prison system, huh?

He says, but you guys did that. You stood with those people. In fact, he says, "*you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property,*" can you imagine? Because you are a believer, somebody come in and just taking your property. Stuff that belongs to you legally, they just come and take it. Why? Because you're a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. But he says, you know what? I remember you guys. You joyfully accepted that, and here's why. Because you knew that you had a better possession, one that could never be taken away, kept in heaven.

Now here comes the exhortation, and I want you to pay attention to the wording. The language is important. Verse 35. "<sup>35</sup>*Therefore do not throw away your confidence,*" stop there for just a moment. Let me remind you of something. The word confidence is another word for faith. When you put your confidence in God, it's the same thing as saying, I'm putting my faith in God. Okay? My confidence is in Him.

What is he saying here? Do not throw away your faith. He says, "*which*" by the way, "*has a great reward.*" <sup>36</sup>*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*" Don't throw it away, he says. By the way, I want to just stop you there for a moment if I could, because you might even highlight those words in your Bible or underline them. Or just highlight them in your brain at least, because those are very important.

Don't throw away. People ask me all the time, Pastor Paul, do you believe you can lose your salvation? I'm like, you mean like lose your keys? No. And you can't sin your way out of the Kingdom. God made a provision for that. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. He keeps on cleansing us.

But I'll tell you what I do believe, according to the Bible, I believe you can throw it away. You can choose by an act of your own personal volition to say, I don't believe this anymore. Now I know that there are wonderful Christians who disagree with me on this point, and they would vehemently defend their position. They don't believe that a born again Christian can throw away their faith.

Well, I'm sorry, the word of God seems to differ with that opinion. Because he says here to these believers, *"do not throw away your confidence,"* which is your faith. And by embracing the law as a means of sanctification and acceptance before God, they were throwing away their faith in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross.

And I personally believe that's the only way that a person can go from stability and assurance in their salvation to a place of instability and so forth. It has to be a work of their choice. So he says, don't throw it away. Don't do that. Why would you do that? Why would you throw it away?

And then he ends the chapter this way, verse 37, *"<sup>37</sup>For, 'Yet a little while, and the coming one will come' speaking of the coming of Jesus 'and will not delay;'"* he's saying, the church, by the way, has always believed that the return of Christ was imminent always. And we still do.

And God wanted us to do that. He wanted it. It doesn't mean that the believers back then were wrong by believing the coming of Christ was imminent. God has always wanted us to believe that the coming of Christ could happen at any time because it changes the way you live. But he's saying, I want you to remember that the coming one will come and will not delay.

Jesus is coming back, but he says in verse 38, *"<sup>38</sup>but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back,"* and that's another phrase that is important to note. Shrinks back is really the same thing as throwing something away, *"if he shrinks back,"* he says, *"my soul has no pleasure in him."* And what we've read here in this letter is kind of a loose quote from the Old Testament book of Habakkuk, but again, he's emphasizing, don't throw away, don't shrink back.

Instead, have faith. The righteous will live by faith. Guys, we live by faith. We start by faith. We end by faith. And it's faith everywhere in between. And do you know that's the answer to all of our problems: Have faith in God. We might say it and somebody go, gee, that's such a trite thing to say when I'm going through a hard time.

No, it's exactly what you need to hear. Have faith in God. Put your faith in God. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6)."* Have faith in God from first to last (Romans 1:17). The last breath you draw on this earth should be a breath of faith. And so don't shrink back.



And he ends with kind of an encouraging remark, verse 39. *"<sup>39</sup>But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."* So the message is clear. The path to heaven is not made by being a good person. The world thinks it is.

If you go out and just pull people on the street, the man on the street, the woman on the street, and you say, how do you get to heaven? They're going to say, well, if they believe in heaven, they're going to say, well, you got to live a good life. That is fundamentally false. The Bible never says that. The Bible says that we go to heaven because we're forgiven.

And we're forgiven because Jesus bore our penalty on the cross. Period. Exclamation point. If I can double up on my punctuation. And see, that's the point. That's how we get to heaven. Is to embrace and to accept and receive the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross. Here's my question to you. Have you received the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross?