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## *Into Thy Word* Bible Study in Hebrews

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### **Hebrews 10:26-39: *The Danger of Apostasy!***

**General idea:** The author pleads with his people not to waste their faith or throw it away, and he warns them of dire consequences. The benefits we have as Christians are extraordinary; we can go to heaven, and we can know God personally—all because of what Jesus did for us. If we continue to deliberately sin when we know the Lord, we waste what He did, and there will be nothing to look forward to other than God's disappointment and judgment. In the Old Testament, if people did not obey Moses, they could be put to death; when we disobey Christ, we are guilty of so much more. We insult Christ and enrage the Holy Spirit; why would we want to do that? God has the right to judge and hold us accountable, and we have the obligation to obey. We can do so because of His shed blood spilt for us. Never forget what Christ has personally done for you; hold on to this as a part of your faith. Realize what he has done and what he has led you from; trust in Christ as you have in the past and as you still can do. These people were exposed to immense public persecution, but not martyrdom, and accepted it with joy; now they are tired of it as we can all be. We must remain steadfast in Him and not waver. What waits for us in eternity is well worth anything we can face here for a short time. So, let us continue the faith and do God's will. As righteous people, we must live by faith and never turn away from Christ, for our salvation is assured when we are in Christ!

### **Contexts and Background:**

This previous passage and context give us five exhortations or calls from Jesus because of our reconciliation to the Father. These are responses we give of faith back to Christ for what he has done: 1. *draw near to God*. 2. *hold unswervingly to . . . hope, faith and love*. 3. *spur one another on*. 4. *do not give up meeting together*. 5. *encourage one another*. The point is that assembling as believers is essential for mutual growth and learning as well as faith and encouragement to be built up, something we all need—persecuted or not. Now the author transitions to what will happen if they seek to abandon their faith—and it is not pretty. We are responsible for our decisions and actions no matter what our circumstances are. At the same time, we have a God who, with outstretched hand, cares about us.

### **Commentary: Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *Deliberately/willfully keep on sinning*. This means intentional and continual sin, a person refusing to stop or repent; the warning is do not do this! This would be like knowing God and His principles, yet intentionally disobeying them and/or enticing others to do so too. This would also be abandoning the

care of a church fellowship, deserting the Church, and/or not going anywhere to worship as well as doing things contrary to God's will. This insults God, and causes Christ to be crucified again; His grace is still there, beckoning us back. But if we stray too far and too long, we will pay for it and will deserve it. It is grace that is offered—which we do not deserve. This is also a retort to those who think they are not sinning when they are, or rationalize it as OK. (Ex. 24:8; Num. 15:27-31; Lev. 4:2, 22; Mark 14:24; Heb. 5:2; 6:4; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 1:8; 2:1-2).

- *No sacrifice for sins.* In the Old Testament, there is no sacrifice available for someone who disobeyed or betrayed God on purpose. To some extent, the Day of Atonement was offered but was not good enough; so, if they went back to Judaism, there was nothing good awaiting them. If we abandoned our Faith and Savior, to whom would we turn? For the Jew, it is the sacrificial system that God pointed to as having been fulfilled in Christ, so one would be straying where there was no hope, purpose, or help.
- *Rejected/set aside the Law of Moses.* Means turning away from God to what is meaningless, such as idols. Also a warning against apostasy, which is the blatant disregard for God and His truth because we think God does not care, not taking our faith seriously, or the rejection of our faith commitment. This can also mean to reject the sacrifice and work of Christ for our sin, the only Way anyone can be saved (Deut. 17:1-7; Ex. 24:8; 19:15; Isa. 26:11; Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Heb. 9:20; 13:20)
- *The Lord will judge his people.* A quote from Deut. 32:35-36, God has the right and obligation to judge just as parents discipline their children so they do not fall into further harm and can make a healthy development. We will be held to account for what we did in this life; grace is given, but so is responsibility. In Judaism as well as in Christianity, we can't pick and choose what percepts we like and do not like. We are held to account, and have no right to rationalize away God's Word; thus liberalism, as well as arrogance, is strictly condemned (Deut. 13:6-11; 17:2-7; 32:35-36; Isa. 63:10-18; Matt. 7:6; 1 Pet. 4:17).
- *Fall into the hands of the living God.* This is both a statement of mercy and judgment: trust in His mercy and beware of His wrath (Ex. 30:12; 2 Sam. 24:14-16; 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Heb. 6:9-12).
- *Remember ... you stood your ground/ fight.* Greek word *athlesis* is where we get the word "athletics." They have tasted and seen that the Lord is good; they have produced Fruit and have changed lives. Even in judgment and warning, God is there with His hands stretched out with comfort and encouragement that "you can do it." So, do not be discouraged when life gets tough; hang on and in there. Jesus will get you through! Also, in context, is

the importance of mutual faith and support to build up one another and persevere through tough times (Psalm 34:8).

- *Face of suffering/endured hard struggle/afflictions/contest/conflict.* This is set in athletic language as you are just about to finish a race but before it ends, you give up, when you could have made it and even won. *You can do it!* The original readers seemed to have more faith during their Christian infancy than now as seasoned Christians. As they also faced the same persecutions before, this was a warning to not let go or allow themselves to be fed up. When we face challenges, we need to look back and see what God did for us before as further motivation, and hold on to what He is yet to do as a part of our perseverance of faith.
- *Publicly exposed/insult/gazing stock.* This is where we get our word *theater*, *theatrizo* in the Greek. This meant imprisonment and the shame of loss of face in the community and being kicked out of their social and faith fellowship—even the loss of family and property. Possibly happened under Roman Emperor Claudius 49AD and his rampages, seizing Jewish as well as Christian businesses and properties; he then evicted all Jews from Rome without compensation (Tobit 1:20; 2:7-8, non-canonized book; 2 Cor. 8:2).
- *You sympathized/had compassion.* In other words, you used to have faith and give encouragement; why not now? We need to remember that our good times and our bad times are both temporary. Enjoy it when they are good and hold on when they are bad, for things are temporary and will get better.
- *Better and lasting possessions.* This refers to our eternal inheritance, what we have in Christ now—a secured faith—and what He has for us when we are called home—heaven (Matt. 5:11-12; 6:19-21; Rom. 8:18; Heb. 11:10-16; 12:27-28; 13:14).
- *Your confidence/great reward.* An encouragement to see what is important, which is what we have in Christ and not what we lost or could have had.
- *Persevere/patience.* Meaning to have endurance and not give up (Luke 8:15; 21:19).
- *Done the will of God.* What we do for God does indeed count, but we can't just rest on our laurels and/or past accomplishments, and then do nothing else. We are called to follow Jesus as He moves us forward, for he came to do God's will and sets for us an example of faith (Heb. 8:10; 13:21).
- *Receive what he has promised.* Through our faith in Christ, we receive our salvation and eternal inheritance. Our proof of salvation is the exercise of our faith by allowing our profession of faith to continue in action and not step back or withdraw (Gen. 12:1-3; Heb. 11:8-19; 2 Pet. 1:10).

- *My righteous one will live by faith.* A quote from Habakkuk. Effective faith is about our focus on the One who creates, gives, and empowers us, and that is Christ. By faith, we receive Him and can continue to grow in Him. By apostasy, we gain nothing but bad consequences and despair (Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14; Isa. 26:20; Hab. 2:3-4; Rom. 1:17).
- *If he shrinks back.* This is the polar opposite of "believe and be saved." If we do not persevere in our trust and worship of Christ, we will not persevere when life gets hard and will eventually fall into sin and reap the consequences of it. This does not mean that we lose our faith or our salvation; rather, what we lose out on is our reward and opportunities. In context, this is Apostasy—a blatant disregard for God and His truth. To the Jews, it was called "apostasy" if a person wandered from the Law and faith. This is not a simple infringement of a precept we said we would follow, but an all-out betrayal of what it means to be a Christian (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:7; 26:2-4; 28:14; 46:3; Ex. 29:45-46; 2 Sam. 7:9; Isa. 40:10; Mal. 3:1; John 1:14; 4:22; Gal. 3:8-16; 26-29; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 6:9; 7:10; 13:20; Rev. 7:9; 21:1-3).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Just as loving parents warn and discipline their child so he or she can grow up well, so God does with us. We still have responsibility toward the privilege we receive as Christians, even though it is free and grace. To grow and experience this changed life, we have to trust and obey; there is no other way! We are accountable for learning His precepts and call and putting them in our life, encouraging others to do so too by example—and even words when necessary! If we do not do this, we will miss out on so much and even suffer the natural consequences, perhaps even judgment. And, when we do grow, we need to keep at it; God does not like us rebelling and backsliding. We will be held to account.

Christ gave us His ultimate sacrifice and merely asks us to receive Him and carry out His will, which is to know Him more and make Him known to others more. Our status is changed in Christ. We were sinners; now we are people of His Way. We are united to Him, reconciled to God, and filled with the Spirit. Now, we are in the process of continued blessings, and dedication to Christ because of His work, so we can respond by faith, worship, and spiritual formation. This is what sanctification is all about—growing in Christ. It is the Christian's life-long process of discipleship and spiritual growth that builds our faith and knowledge in Him as well as our confidence, maturity, character, and spiritual formation. We become changed when we receive Christ and we keep growing. If not, there is something fundamentally wrong (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 5; Heb. 12:14).

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

***Additional Questions:***

1. Have you ever pleaded with someone not to waste his/her faith, life, job, or school—or? How did you feel? How did they respond? Were there any consequences? How were they handled? How is this like what God does with us?
2. What is the difference in being presumptuous and being assured? How does this affect your faith? How will being arrogant with faith cause a person to fall, backslide, or sin? How will confidence in Christ grow you in faith and Christian maturity?
3. What does it mean to you to live by faith and never turn away? Can you list the benefits you have as a Christian? How are they extraordinary?
4. What has happen in your life when you disobeyed Christ? How can you always remember what Christ has personally done for you? How can your faith grow if you can hold on to this as a part of your faith?
5. How are you responsible for your decisions and actions no matter what your circumstances are? How are you comforted that at the same time, you have a God who cares, who has His hand out to you? How does this improve your faith formation?
6. Have you or have you seen someone else intentionally continue in a sin? What do you think can be done to help him/her to stop or repent? What happens when the church does not take this seriously and thus does not warn its people? How is this like a parent who executes no discipline, but allows his/her kids to go wild? What are they like when they become adults?
7. Have you, even at times, not taken your faith seriously or rejected your faith commitment? What did it take or what would it take for you to accept it with joy?

8. How have you been fed up, weary for Christ, or felt tired of it, as we can all be at times? What does it take to remain steadfast in Him and not waver?
9. How is eternity well worth anything we might face here for a short time?
10. No matter what we go through from persecution or loss, we could never glimpse what Christ gave to us with grace. How does this help you in life's challenges?
11. When you face challenges, what do you need to look to? How can looking back, and seeing what God has done for you before, help your perseverance of faith?
12. What would cause you to deliberately sin when you know the Lord and know better? How can you be on guard against this? What is your weak link and how can you protect it? Who can help you?

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