

## Eternal Security, Security of the Believer, OSAS, and Hebrews 10:26-33

<sup>26</sup>For if **we sin wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

<sup>29</sup>Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden [trampled] under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, **wherewith he was sanctified**, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

People often refer to the above as an example of a Christian losing their salvation. The thought here is that if a Christian sins “wilfully” after having received “the knowledge of the truth” that they’ve lost their salvation because “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ...” Jesus only had one mortal life and so it’s impossible for him to die again on the cross. So for someone to accept his grace and then despise it by committing a willful sin, it can only mean that they’ve lost their salvation because *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*.<sup>1</sup>

This is further endorsed by the fact that the writer of Hebrews has identified himself as being one in the same with his reading audience. Note that he begins by saying “we” (26). So if the writer of Hebrews is saved, of which he most certainly is, and if he’s identified himself as being one in the same with his reading audience, then it would seem as though a Christian *can* lose their salvation. But let’s have a closer look.

<sup>26</sup>For if we sin **wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup>But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the **adversaries**.

The initial mistake in trying to understand this passage is reading into it a meaning that isn’t supported by the rest of the text. The assumption here is that having received “the knowledge of the truth” is the same as “having repented of one’s sins.” These are not the same. People who’ve “received the knowledge of the truth” are those who’ve heard and perceived the gospel but then made a conscience decision to reject it. So as a result, they’ve condemned themselves to an eternity in Hell and the Lake of Fire. So when Scripture says that “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,” what it means is that there’s no other plans of salvation available to them because Jesus is the only way (Jn. 14:6).

There are biblical examples of this. Cain knew that God existed, he knew God’s voice, he knew God’s will, and he knew how to please him, but he failed to repent and died unregenerate.<sup>2</sup> This was also true of Balaam: a man who obeyed God in many ways and even spoke true prophecies, but he too died unsaved.<sup>3</sup> Both these men had received “the knowledge of the

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<sup>1</sup> Using this same logic, many teach that a Christian who dies with unrepented or un-confessed sin or a Christian that once served God but has since made a conscious decision to turn away has also lost their salvation.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 4:1-16; 1 Jn. 3:12; Jude 10-11

<sup>3</sup> Num. 22-24, 31; Jude 10-11

truth” but had rejected it. And since there are no other plans of salvation that God recognizes, because there “remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,” then only judgment and fiery indignation remain (27). And unfortunately, “many” will follow in their footsteps.

**Mt. 7:21** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>**Many** will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup>And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

So again, knowing about God isn't the same as *knowing* him. *Knowing* in Scripture means more than just being aware. It essentially means *intercourse*, which is why we seldom read of a man and woman *getting married* in the Bible; rather, we read of them *knowing* one another. There's an intimacy and oneness that goes far beyond mere awareness. So when Jesus says that he never *knew* them, he's saying that they never repented of their sins thereby allowing the Holy Spirit to live inside of them, and so these people are spiritually unregenerate. Thus indeed, having a knowledge of the truth isn't the same as having *received* the truth.

But for many this will be difficult. As Matthew indicated, the Bible teaches that God allows false prophets and teachers to give true prophecies and perform miraculous signs and wonders. Scripture also teaches that we're not to chase after them, but to discern their message and doctrine.<sup>4</sup> If they're leading us toward Christ, then all is well. But if not, even though they've produced a miraculous sign or wonder or given a true prophecy, they're to be deemed false. Jannes and Jambres, for example, stood before Moses and their rods also turned into snakes. But Moses' snake ate theirs thus revealing whose God had the real power.<sup>5</sup> Caiaphas gave a true prophecy, but then conspired to kill Jesus (Jn. 11:49-53). God allows this to test our hearts to see if we're more interested in getting to know him for who he is or whether we're more interested in chasing signs and wonders. Unfortunately, most professing Christians are more interested in chasing signs and wonders instead of allowing signs and wonders to follow them.<sup>6</sup>

So once we've received the knowledge of the truth, once we've heard the gospel, if we fail to repent, there's no more sacrifice for sins because Jesus is our only and final sacrifice. *The entire book of Hebrews is premised on this one idea.*<sup>7</sup> So all that remains for those who've rejected the gospel is “judgment and fiery indignation.” These are then referred to as being “adversaries” and enemies of the cross (27; Php. 3:18-19). So this isn't teaching that a Christian can lose their salvation; it's teaching that there's no other method of salvation apart from Jesus Christ. There's nowhere else to go. Mohammed, Buddha, Vishnu, self, etc. can't save them, and so all that remains eternal damnation.

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<sup>4</sup> Dt. 13:1-5; 18:18-22

<sup>5</sup> Ex. 7:8-12; 2 Tim. 3:8

<sup>6</sup> Signs and wonders are to follow the believer: Acts 2:22, 43; Rom. 15:18-19; Heb. 2:3-4 etc.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. 9:12, 25-26; 10:10, 12, 14, 18 etc.

<sup>28</sup>He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: <sup>29</sup>Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden [trampled] under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Moses' Law was actually God's Law that Moses penned as he moved upon him by the power of his Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21). In our earthly bodies, if we commit a crime worthy of the death penalty, we should be put to death – saint or sinner – by the mouth of two or more witnesses. This is bad. But the punishment spoken of here is one of physical death (28).<sup>8</sup> But the punishment for rejecting the gospel message is far worse: spiritual death (29). Jesus is our final sacrifice for sin (Jn. 14:6). So if someone rejects the message of the gospel, then all that remains is judgment. But these two verses begin to reveal the depth of that judgment. If we thought being put to death for committing a crime against man was severe, how much worse shall it be for committing *the willful sin* against God?<sup>9</sup>

God's laws are expressions of his holiness. So when they're broken, an offense has been committed not only against the law, but God as well because the law is an expression of his Divine nature, and so all that remains for the sinner is judgment. And as punishment, the law demands spiritual death: eternal separation from God and torment in the Lake of Fire. So while breaking any one of God's laws on any occasion in the slightest degree in thought or deed is bad enough – and we all have (Rom. 3:23) – then rejecting his plan of salvation is exceedingly worse. And since his plan of salvation is fulfilled in the person and work of his Son, Jesus, then to reject so great a salvation is to also reject the *person* and work of Jesus, which is even made worse by the fact that it's the *person* of Jesus that comes to live within us when we've repented of our sins (via the Holy Spirit). And since Jesus is God, then to reject all of this is to reject God. And so what we're given in these verses is a measure of the depth of sin against a holy God. So when people reject the gospel, they've in effect reckoned the blood of Christ as being no better or worse than that of any other – man or beast. For them, the blood that Jesus shed and the life that he gave are reckoned unto them as being an unholy thing – something of little or no value. For these people, Jesus is something other than what he claimed to be, and so their damnation is just. This is what the writer of Hebrews is asking his readers to consider.

<sup>30</sup>For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense [repay], saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. <sup>31</sup>*It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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<sup>8</sup> There are biblical examples of this. King Saul was a saved man who later fell on his sword (see author's lesson, "Was King Saul Saved?"). Samson pulled the pillars down on his head. Many assume this was God answering his prayer, but he wasn't. God doesn't need Samson to kill Philistines. What Scripture reveals was that his strength had returned but he didn't know it. So when he pulled down the pillars, he was taking a gift of God and misusing it (Jdg. 16:18-31). But as odd as it may seem, he's listed as one of the "heroes" of faith (Heb. 11:32).

<sup>9</sup> *The willful sin, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and the unpardonable sin* are different terms all used to express the same thought. There's only one sin that Jesus didn't pay for on the cross and that's rejection of him as Saviour. God's people commit willful sins all the time, but in context, this is THE willful sin.

Having rejected God's provision, it's more than just righteous judgment and indignation, its vengeance. As the verse says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." In our limited understanding, and apart from revelation from God, we just don't realize how sickening our sin is against him, nor do we realize the bitter hatred that he has towards those who've persecuted those who've come to trust in him.

**Dt. 32:43** Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people.

But in having discussed those who've rejected Christ, the writer of Hebrews now reverts to his reading audience.

<sup>32</sup>But [you] call to remembrance **the former days**, in which, **after ye were illuminated**, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; <sup>33</sup>Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. <sup>34</sup>For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. <sup>35</sup>**Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.** <sup>36</sup>For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. <sup>37</sup>For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

The Jewish believers were suffering persecution and were considering returning to Judaism. The Jews as a nation weren't being persecuted nor were their religious leaders. But in having become Christians, these now Messianic Jews began to look back at Judaism as a means of escape. And so the author of Hebrews is trying to encourage them by reminding them of the judgment they'd escaped and the persecution they'd endured for the sake of the gospel. He's trying to encourage them to set their eyes forward rather than allowing themselves to focus on their immediate trials and tribulations. They'd earlier endured this persecution and had helped themselves by banding together with other believers (...became companions of them that were so used.); but evidently, they'd grown weary and began to lose focus on the hope that had been set before them.

The writer of Hebrews then goes on to explain how their faith was evidenced by their works. They cared for his personal needs even though their personal property had been confiscated ("spoiling of your goods"). But in having endured so much, their confidence was being shaken and so the writer of Hebrews is reminding them of the rewards they'll reap if they "faint not", including the return of Jesus (37; Gal. 6:9-10). Until then, they're in need of patience, which God will surely grant them.

But did you notice? The writer of Hebrews is asking them to remember the time *before* they were saved ("the former days... after ye were illuminated"). He's asking them to remember what it was like for them when they first heard and perceived the gospel ("received the knowledge of the truth") and their subsequent acceptance of it. What he's doing, then, is defining the "we" in v. 26 as Christians who'd repented of their sins at the hearing of the gospel *before* they were Christians. But what of those who choose not to repent?

<sup>38</sup>Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. <sup>39</sup>But we are **not of them who draw back unto perdition; but [we are] of them that believe to the saving of the soul.**

Christians are to live by faith, but if their faith wavers – if they “draw back unto perdition” – it would seem as though they’re in danger of losing their salvation. This would seem to support the case for a Christian losing their salvation, but it must be remembered that the context of the passage is one of contrast between those who heard and repented versus those who heard and did not, which is again demonstrated in these two verses.

Christians do live by faith – as supplied by God (Eph. 2:8-19). But those who “draw back” are those who’ve heard and rejected the gospel. Note the contrast in Verse 39. Those who’ve heard and rejected the gospel have “draw[n] back unto perdition” while the saints have heard and believed unto “the saving of the soul.”

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<sup>26</sup>For if **we sin wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

But what about the “we” in v. 26? Verse 32 has defined who the “we” are. The “we” that the writer of Hebrews is referring to are the saints, but he’s talking to them about themselves at a different time in history. These are now saved people, but he’s talking to them and asking them to recall their experience when they first heard the gospel when they were unsaved. He then draws a contrast between their response to the hearing of the gospel and those who heard but didn’t repent. Same people, but at a different time in their lives. Here’s how to tell.

To begin, “we” doesn’t specifically have to refer to the audience that’s being written to; it can be used of people in general. In other words, the writer of Hebrews doesn’t even have to be talking about these saved people, he’s just using “we” to make the story more personal. Second, the distinction has already been made between having a *knowledge* of the truth and *accepting* the truth. This alone sets the context of the entire lesson and so everything must be interpreted accordingly. Third, and since the above is true, those who’ve heard the gospel and rejected it are now called “adversaries,” which is in *contrast* to his reading audience. Fourth, notice that the writer of Hebrews didn’t say “they” would be devoured, only those who are called “adversaries.” Fifth, in v. 29, the writer asks them (“suppose ye”) what they think ought to be done with those who’ve counted the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing. This again denotes a *contrast* between his reading audience and the adversaries of the gospel. Sixth, in helping to define the context of the story, v. 32 reveals that the writer of Hebrews is asking his saved listening audience to remember “the former days” when they were unsaved and the decision they made concerning the gospel “after” they’d been “illuminated” by it. They repented. Verse 32 then reveals that they were persecuted both individually and corporately as members of the Body of Christ for having made this decision, which is obviously done in contrast to those who rejected the gospel, which is the subject of vv. 26-31. Seventh, in v. 35, the writer of Hebrews is warning them of casting away their confidence, not their salvation. These Messianic Jews were undergoing persecution and so their ability to trust him on a *daily*

basis was being challenged – not their eternal status. And eighth, from v. 37, they were in need of patience, not repentance unto salvation.

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<sup>29</sup>Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden [trampled] under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, **wherewith he was sanctified**, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

And what of the past tense phraseology used in v. 29? It seems that these Christians *were sanctified* (past tense) but had since become “unsanctified.” Again, the context is that of unsaved people who’ve heard the gospel and rejected it and not Christians who’ve lost their salvation, as demonstrated. Jesus’ death and resurrection provided salvation for everyone who was *willing* to accept it (Rom. 5:8). Thus in context, these unsaved people “were sanctified” in that salvation had already been provided for them. Furthermore, salvation is the first step in the sanctification process, and so the terms are somewhat interchangeable. And not to be overlooked, the last part of the verse notes that they’d done “despite unto the Spirit of grace”. Grace is extended to both the unsaved for salvation and God’s people in working out, not working *for*, their salvation (Php. 2:12-13). But in the context of this passage, it’s referring to grace unto salvation and so this is again speaking of the unsaved. Selah.

Concluding, God is the Creator of everything and so there’s nothing that we could give him as payment for our sin debt – except our hearts. (He actually owns that, too.) But because he loves us, he gives us the ability to choose whether we want to serve him or turn our backs on him, forever. After all, we didn’t ask to be born, and so it only seems fitting that we be given a choice, and we have. But though we may be willing to give him our hearts, there’s still a sin debt present. We’ve broken God’s law and so a penalty (i.e. sin debt) must be paid. But what could we possibly offer?

Payment for sin can only come from God because there’s nothing in this world that man can give that wasn’t already created by God.<sup>10</sup> Jesus paid our sin debt by allowing himself to be offered up in our place as our innocent substitute. Were it not for Jesus, we’d have to die for our own sin. The work of salvation is a spiritual matter and not an earthly one, even though the decision to accept or reject Christ is made on this earth. Both Adam and Abram learned this. But for some reason, in his carnality, man often believes that he has something to contribute to his salvation other than just a decision (Jn. 6:29). This is the sin of teaching that a Christian can lose their salvation; it’s teaching that man can add or subtract to what Jesus alone has done. It’s robbing him the glory and honor due his name for the salvation that he provided on his own apart from man’s intervention. Selah.

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<sup>10</sup> Since this is true, this is also teaching that Jesus is God because he came from God to pay for our sin debt; Jn. 3:2; 8:42-43; 16:27-28.