

## **“For If We Sin Willfully ...”**

*“... after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversary ...”* (Heb. 10:26).

These are sobering words, calling to remembrance an earlier warning from 6:3-6 of those who were once enlightened and yet who fell away, that it was *“impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”* What is the significance of the warning here in chapter ten, and who are these to whom the warning is directed?

The writer speaks of sinning *“willfully.”* There is more involved in a willful sin than just doing wrong and knowing at the time one does it, that it is sin. Surely none would charge David with ignorance that his sin with Bathsheba and then his subsequent deeds, were all done by him in total ignorance. Nor would anyone excuse Peter’s denial of Christ as ignorance. Both men sinned yet were conscious at the time that that which they did was wrong. Both were “surprised” into sin, from which sins one can be restored (Gal. 6:1). To sin *“willfully”* means that we choose that course, rejecting the authority of Him who has declared our actions to be sin. Such was the case from Hebrews, the one who sins willfully who knowingly treads under his feet the Son of God. He holds Jesus in utter contempt. He (knowingly) regards the blood of the covenant he was once sanctified as being without power; he counts it no different than the blood of some animal who was killed by accident or by another animal or by man. He willfully does despite unto the Spirit of grace. Shameful indeed, and fearful the end for such a one! *“A man who hath set at naught Moses’ law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God ...”* (10:28f). The writer added, *“For we know him that said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb. 10:30f). Just who is this one who sins willfully? Does the apostle give any implication as to whom he had in mind? Indeed he does. He begins this fearful warning with the word *“For”*: *“For if we sin willfully.”* The word *“for”* tells us we must look back to the preceding verse(s) to identify the one whom the apostle speaks of as *“sinning willfully.”* What does the preceding verse tell us? *“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is ...”* (10:25).

The one who *“forsakes the assembling of our own selves together”* is not just the disciple who lets the cares of the world, the pleasures of life, or just

one who is weak and still a baby interfere with his assembling with saints. Ask some of those who miss week after week or ever cease to meet: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" "Do you still regard Christ as the only way to heaven?" Most of these will acknowledge their faith in Jesus and His way. These, too, are jeopardizing their future rest with God; they need to "awake" from the stupor which neglect, carelessness and being preoccupied with other things has cost them. While they yet have time, and before they reach a state in which they renounce all ties of faith with the Savior, they need to come home. For, mark it well, a hardened heart will someday bring them to a point of no return. When that day comes (and it will come if they continue in their indifference), there will remain no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fierceness of fire which devours the adversary. Oh sister, brother, why will we sell our soul for a "*mess of pottage*"?

Wake up, Christians, wake up to the eternal consequences of what neglect will bring to our souls. "When Jesus comes to reward His servants, whether it be noon or night. Say will he find us watching, with our lamps all trimmed and bright?"

Jim McDonald