

## Hebrews 10:26-31

*For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 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. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 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.*

The writer to the Hebrews (I slipped and wrote Paul yesterday, which is a possibility, but not a certainty) writes, "*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.*" Those are frightening words, are they not? I would not want them to apply to me. But do they? Have I sinned after having come to a knowledge of the truth? Have you?

In the church we can speak of penitent and impenitent sinners. Both are sinners, but there is a big difference between the two with everlasting distinction. A penitent sinner is sorry for his or her sin. A penitent sinner does not want to continue in his or her sin. A penitent sinner not only wants God's mercy, but His aid in his or her struggle against that sin and its temptation. A penitent sinner admits that he or she has done wrong, that sin is sin, and that he or she deserves punishment and to bear the consequences of that wrongdoing. A penitent sinner bears full responsibility for his or her transgression and owns up to it.

So what about an impenitent sinner? An impenitent sinner is not sorry for his or her sin, or is unwilling to struggle against it any longer, or no longer convinced that it is indeed a sin, or refuses to bear responsibility for it and to own up to it, won't acknowledge that he or she deserves punishment and should bear the consequences of what has been done.

A penitent sinner receives grace and mercy. A penitent sinner is absolved by the pastor and restored to the fold. A penitent sinner remains a saint of God and His dearly beloved child. A penitent sinner's faith is not only alive but active, leading them to confess and be forgiven.

What about an impenitent sinner? An impenitent sinner receives no grace and mercy. An impenitent sinner is not absolved. An impenitent sinner remains in his or her sin and under its condemnation. Should he or she die in such a state, an impenitent sinner is indeed lost and reprobate, sentenced to hell. What a tragedy! What a reason to pray for those who have lapsed or fallen. An impenitent sinner knew better, and that is what makes it so awful. It would have been better for that person never to have believed in the first place if he or she does not repent.

The writer to the Hebrews (Paul, Barnabas, or whoever it might be) is here speaking about the impenitent. We do well, then, to make sure that we are not among them. We know better. We know the treasure that is ours in Christ and, therefore, what we have to lose through willful and deliberate sinning. Such sinning is inconsistent with faith and sends the Spirit packing. What a frightening prospect it should be, then, and what care we should take to avoid even the prospect of such a downfall. We must be on guard, and even more, we must be ever in Christ. We must pray for strength in our weakness and search out words and promises of God to apply to our doubts and chinks in our armor.

The Son of God has shed His blood for you and made a covenant of grace with you. That is your confidence and peace. No one can rob you of that which He has secured for you without

your consent. Be stubborn in God's grace and resolute in the convictions His Spirit has worked in you through the Scriptures. God has placed eternal bliss and glory in His presence into your hands. Don't let go of it for that which perishes, spoils, and fades. Amen.