

## *“A Terrifying Text”*

### **Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest**

Hebrews 10:26-31

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**Jeff:** Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day, and we're thankful for our time together. Lord, we recognize that were we left in our place in Adam, we would be outside of You and outside of hope. We would be outside of a group like this, a group that fellowships around Your word. And we would be lost. We would be in our sins, thinking that we would be delighting in the day-to-day experiences of them, and yet lost. Father, we're thankful for Your Holy Spirit who has opened our eyes to not only the odiousness of our sins, but the mercy that You have revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, we're thankful that You brought us into newness of life and into union with Your Son, the Lord Jesus, that we might have all of the spiritual benefits that flow from Him. Father, thank You that we see these things in the land of the living. Father, as we gather here and open Your word, Your word tells us of those benefits that are benefits for us now and benefits that will be consummated in the future. So Father, as we walk the day-to-day path even through the veil of tears, we ask that Your hand would be upon us for good. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would be in us, praying even when we know not what to pray.

And Father, that includes times like when we think of friends like Christina and Terri. We pray for them, lifting them up to you, asking that You will care for them in a way that only You can. Father, sometimes the way that You care for people, even those we love, is perplexing to us because we would have it differently. And yet in Your sovereign wisdom You have it the way that You will. And Lord, we would have it no other way. And yet, Father, it becomes difficult even to say that, because sometimes Your way deprives us of those we love. Father, we pray that Your hand would be upon these families, these people. We pray that Your hand would be upon these friends. Father, as we gather now, we remember them, as we also remember Your word, and ask that You will bless us in it, for we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Well, today I want us to turn to Hebrews chapter 10. And I want us to look at verses 26-31. Don, did you bring it with you today?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, when you get situated there, why don't you read it to us?  
Hebrews 10:26-31.

**Don:** Okay, here we go.

**Jeff:** All right.

**Don:** *“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 fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and who has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has*

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*outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The LORD will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** All right. Today I want us to think about four headings. I want us to obviously go through some introductory points. Then I want to ask a question. I want to ask a question that’s fairly obvious. I want to ask the question of why this text is so frightening. And then I want to talk about *the quandary of apostasy*, and then we’ll move on to a final point about *the hortatory nature of Hebrews*.

In this particular lesson I want us to draw down on some things that we’ve talked about a while ago. I think that in this lesson some of the things that we’ve thought about in the past really come together. So I’m going to try to do a little refreshing along the way. But hopefully some of these things will spark something in your memory that will help you draw down on some of them. If I remember correctly, there was a little controversy connected with some of them. So hey, controversy always helps you to remember. *(Laughter)*

So first of all, let’s look at the introduction. And I want us to remember that the interesting thing is that when you think about any text, you have to remember that that particular text, no matter how small you take it, actually fits into a larger chapter. And that larger chapter fits into a larger book, and that larger book fits into a larger testament, and so on. You have to remember that. And yet sometimes what you can do is take a text and you can say that I’m not sure that I want to deal with this in this way, and so on and so forth.

For instance, the temptation in this particular text today is to say, oh, this is really not what we all want to hear. I mean, who wants to hear at 6:30 in the morning about a frightening text that’s going to afflict us? You know, who wants to hear that. It’s easy to say, “Well, maybe I can finish out the rest of Hebrews chapter 10,” kind of put them together, you know? And you know, that’s possible. But there is a particular structure in the verses that we’re going to look at today that I want to show you that actually hangs together. And yet, though it hangs together, one of the things that you have to remember is that it has a context to it. And so the preceding context really gives rise to the warning that we’re going to think about today.

Now what’s the preceding context? It’s verse 25. And what does verse 25 say? It says, “*Encourage one another;*” (and then I’ll leave out some lines), “*as you see the Day drawing near.*”

Now why did they need to encourage one another? All you have to do is to think back a couple of weeks ago, and we talked about why that was. It was the case because some of them were deserting. Some of them were not hanging together, attending the assemblies. Why? Because they were departing for Judaism. And so there is a real context that gives rise to a real warning. And a real warning is what we’re going to look at today in light of this real life situation which is in verse 25 of our previous text.

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It says that the Day is drawing near. And because the Day is drawing near, you do not want to find yourself in the wrong place. And for them it would have been the place of Judaism rather than its fulfillment which is the Christian church.

So there is definitely a context here to what we need to think about. And I think it's an important one for us to remember, because the temptation will be, as we move into this text, to think that the warning passage could just be hypothetical. And I want us not to think that way. I want us to think that there's a real context that gives rise to a real warning. And we'll talk about that as we go along.

But what is the real warning? Well, the real warning for us is found in verse 26. And here's the warning. *“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 so on.

Now that's the warning, and I want us to return to that in just a minute. But before we start talking about the warning that's in the text, I want us to think about why it is that we're just going to deal with this particular section, chapter 10:26-31. Why just those verses? Well, like I said, when a writer writes, especially an ancient writer, when he writes he oftentimes does certain things that help to rope off certain sections of his text because remember, they didn't have copies of the New Testament that they could just pull out where everybody says, “Just turn to chapter 10, verses 26-31,” and everybody does it. What they did was that they wrote for an oral audience, an audience that was just going to be able to hear and remember as much as they could. And so they would put in devices in order to help them to remember what they were reading. And here I think we find one of those devices.

One of those devices is what's called an *inclusio*. And oftentimes there would be an introduction. Sometimes there would be a conclusion to it. It always has a context. But what an *inclusio* is is that it's a book ending with some important information. And the book ending is usually a phrase or a word, and sometimes even a concept, an idea that comes at the beginning and then at the end.

I think that the *inclusio* structure is built on the word *fear*. Or *terrifying* is another way to translate it. And so you have verse 26 as the warning, and then the *inclusio*. In verse 27 you find the word *fearful*. And then in verse 31 the same word is repeated—*fearful*. And I think that what you have then is this really succinct, small section arising out of verse 25 that produces this warning, and this little section wherein the author tells us that hey, this is really important. It's a frightening thing and you ought to take heed. You've got to pay attention to it. And so this is what we're going to look at. Yes?

**Participant:** Does this relate to Hebrews 6:4, the passage where it is impossible?

**Jeff:** Yes, I think that it relates to all of Hebrews. Why? And we're going to get to this. I think it relates to Hebrews because it is part of this hortatory epistle, which is an encouraging epistle. So here he's encouraging. In fact, if you look in verse 25 again, notice what he says. He says, “Encourage one another all the more as the Day draws near.” And that encouragement runs throughout the book.

So do you remember what we said? We said, look. Here's this guy, this pastor. And one of the things that he does is that he always demonstrates a pastoral way about him.

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He thinks better of his audience, right? So he says, “I think better things concerning you,” even though in chapter 6 he gives them another stern warning. He says, “I think better concerning you.” So there’s always a pastoral exhortation, a “come stand beside me” way about it, when you think of it that way.

So yes, it does relate to that. But it really relates to the whole epistle and how the epistle unfolds as a hortatory or an exhortative or an encouragement type epistle, to continue on pressing on. But there are real warnings. If you stop pressing on, then that says something about you. And we’ll talk about what it says as we go. But yes. It’s the long way around the barn for the answer to that question. *(Laughter)* But yes.

All right. So that’s the structure. What’s the point? Well, the point I want to make really comes from some of the things we’ve just said. And that’s this. We need to understand that this is a real warning. And therefore, it isn’t emotional manipulation. You know, there is so much emotional manipulation that you see going on today. This is not that.

And one of the things that I want you to understand is that this is not manipulation. This is explanation. In other words, what you find the Preacher doing is that he’s saying this. He’s saying, “Look. If you forsake the assembling of one another, and so forsake the culmination of all the covenantal offerings that God has offered in the covenant of grace, then let me explain something to you.” So it’s not emotional manipulation; it’s really explanation. He’s just explaining to them the nature of the warning itself. And I think that’s important to keep in mind.

The other thing that I think is important in terms of an introduction is the pastoral aspect that you find here in the text. I don’t know about you, and I don’t know if you’ve heard this sort of thing before, but I used to do it. I was with a couple of guys who were older than me in the ministry, who got hold of me. And they said, “This is what you ought to do,” and I did it. Have you ever listened to the preacher who stands up there and says all the time, “You, you!” *(Laughter)* You know, he’s always talking about you and never about himself or us.

One of the things that I came across, especially as I studied the epistle to the Hebrews, is how oftentimes he doesn’t use “You,” but he uses the inclusive, “we.”

**Participant:** Yins. *(Laughter)*

**Transcriber’s Note:** Yins: Pittsburghese. Plural of you.

**Jeff:** Yins includes the we. *(Laughter)* All right. So it’s not *you*, if you go on sinning. It’s “if we go on sinning.” And I don’t know about you, but I think that doesn’t lose an edge at all. I think there’s a pastoral aspect to that. It says, look. We’re all in this together.

You know, one of the things that I used to hate about that is that when you preached that second person like that is that you always created a division between you and your congregation. And when you create that division, guess what happens. If the congregation starts to think that you’re the bar, and then they realize that you’re not reaching your own bar even though you’re preaching to them, and they know they’re not reaching the bar that you’re not reaching, they begin to hide from you because you think you’re self-righteous. You know, it’s a terrible circle to be involved in. It’s just a horrible thing. I digress. *(Laughter)*

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All right. So I think it's very pastoral in terms of learning the feel. You know, I think that in one sense, if you study a letter like this one, the great thing about it is that you not only learn about what the letter is saying, but you learn how it is that the Preacher is saying it, especially with an epistle like this one, a letter like this one, or a sermon like this one. Here's this guy who is preaching to this crowd. And he's preaching to them in such a way that we all of a sudden say to ourselves, “Oh, that's what preaching ought to sound like. That's what preaching ought to be like.”

And as a preacher, you know, it's an important lesson. When you go through the book of Hebrews I'm not only asking myself what does this text say, and how can I say it to my people? But I'm really asking myself how does he say it? And that's a vital thing. I think that it's vital for me, especially as I think about a text like this one.

But the point is that here we have a situation that's not a hypothetical situation. It's a genuine real-time situation. There's a danger of them going back to Judaism. And that gives rise to the warning. And so the warning is not hypothetical. It's not “Hey, I know you're once saved, always saved, and this is just hypothetical. I'm just warning you just in case you think that there may be this possibility, you know, that you can lose your salvation. You really can't, but I'm going to warn you anyway.” So it's not hypothetical. It's a real-life situation and a real-life warning that is here in the text. So does anybody have any questions about that or those aspects? Yes?

**Participant:** Well when they talk about truth, are they always talking about rejecting Christianity and going back to Judaism?

**Jeff:** Are you talking about that later reference to the truth, or where are you—

**Participant:** In verse 26, where he's saying, “knowing the truth.”

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** Is the truth in that case rejecting Christianity for Judaism? Or is it applicable to us—

**Jeff:** That's a great question. So the question is, what is the truth referring to in verse 26? Is truth referring to the rejection of the culmination of Christianity and so returning to Judaism? Or can you extrapolate beyond that? Now here's what I would say to you. I think this is a really valuable question, an important question. I think that in the text what he's saying is that if you reject Christ to go back to the shadows and types, then you've rejected the truth. I think that's what he's saying in the context of the text.

Now that leads to another question. How much does one need to know about Christ to begin with? You know, I'll give you an illustration. I think I may have mentioned this to you. In 2017 there was a controversy that blew up that had always been there. It had been there for a long time. It was a controversy over the Trinity, and it's still ongoing. But what was pointed out by Liam Gallagher, who is now the pastor of Tenth Presbyterian where Boice was the pastor, he wrote an article that was posted on one of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals websites, pointing out some evangelicals who did not affirm and even rejected some important aspects of Trinitarian theology. And that just blew things up.

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And I won't go into all the details. But one of the things that was said at the Paideia Conference that I attended about two weeks ago in Florida, where it was warmer,--I'm digressing again. *(Laughter)* Anyway,--

**Participant:** Was that the Friday you couldn't be here? *(Laughter)*

**Second Participant:** Not again!

**Jeff:** Yes it was, okay? *(Laughter)* Carl Trueman was at that conference, and he made this observation. He's a church historian who is now teaching at Grove City. He made the observation that as a professor, if I deny the inerrancy of Scripture, or if I deny the inspiration of Scripture, if I deny something like that I'll never get a job again in an evangelical or Reformed school. I'll have committed professional suicide. And he said, "I shouldn't deny that and I never would want to deny that. But if I denied that, that's what would happen to me."

He said this. How is it? How is it that someone can deny the Trinity, or not affirm something essential in Trinitarian theology and still teach in an evangelical seminary? How is it that that can possibly happen?

And I'll tell you why I think that can happen. I think that happens because Trinitarian theology is thought of as so speculative and so non-practical that it doesn't matter what you actually think about it, as long as you said the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There's no real practicality to it. It's so abstract, so speculative, so we'll just let it go.

But think about it. The Bible and inerrancy and infallibility are so much living topics for us that if you're in snipping distance of someone who denies that, you're wanting to go, "Whoa, wait a minute! Let's talk about this."

And so I was mentioning this to my congregation just after I got back. And I had someone come up to me and ask me this question which relates to this question being asked. How much does a person need to know about the Trinity in order to join a church? And so that seems to be the question, at least in part, that we can ask here. How much does one need to know about Christ? How much does one need to know about the unfolding nature of the covenants and Christ as their fulfillment? How much does one need to know about the Person of Christ or the work of Christ, right? That's the question.

Now here's what I'm going to say. I'm going to say that the person actually needs to know very little. I mean, all you have to do is think about Simon Magus and the thief on the cross. Although they knew quite a bit and affirmed quite a bit, they didn't know much, right? And so I think that the doctrinal bar is fairly low to come into a living experience with Christ. But once you come into a living experience with Christ, you have to grow.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And if you reject what the Bible says, then what happens to you is the same thing that happened to Simon Magus. You're in the church. You're baptized one day and you're excommunicated the next, right? You know, "take your money and let it perish with you," and that sort of thing, right?

And so I think that when we think about what it was that's true here, the truth is at least that Christ was the culmination of all the covenants. And if you reject Christ and go back to Judaism, you're in danger of this threat, this warning.

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Now I think that then opens up the question. Can you apply this aspect of truth beyond this particular text? And I think you can. But then you have to be very careful, because I think that once you move beyond the text itself to start talking about what it means to reject the truth in other ways, in other areas, well obviously to reject the truth is never a good thing. But as always, when you apply a particular text, you have to be careful to remain consistent with the teaching of that text in the application of it. Go ahead, Don.

**Don:** Yes. I get what you’re saying. But I think that there might be a temptation for some people to think, well, okay. We’re not in that situation today. None of us here are tempted to return to Judaism, so we can kind of just slough it off. You were talking about that a little bit earlier. But I don’t think that you can do that. There must be a warning for us to consider too, right?

**Jeff:** Well, I think that the warning for us to consider is the rejection of any truth, right?

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** That has to be the case. Let’s put it like this, though. Let’s think about the Westminster Confession for a minute. And let’s think about how sin is carried on from Adam to his posterity, and from one generation within the posterity to the next.

Some people will say, “Well, that’s traducianism. Traducianism is the way in which that’s passed down.” In other words, there’s some sort of physical way in which sin is passed from one generation to the next.

Whereas another group would say, “No. Creationism is the explanation for that, in the sense that God imputes to the soul the original sin of Adam upon the coming into existence of that child.” And that’s the way to understand the passing on of sin. And maybe somebody would say that there’s a third way to understand this. And there are people who would say that.

But my point is that I don’t think that you can raise those kinds of things to the level of truth where you say that I’ve rejected the truth. So I’m a creationist and you’re a traducianist. And I say to you, “Well, you know what? You’ve rejected the truth in your traducianism.”

And why do I say that? Well, you know how people are, right? They connect the dots. So what do I do? I take this secondary, maybe even this tertiary doctrine that explains how sin is passed on, and what do I do? I start connecting the dots until I get to Christ. And once I get to Christ and say, “This is how your doctrine affects Christ,” now all of a sudden that raises this tertiary doctrine up to an essential doctrinal level. And I say that on that basis I can exclude you. This warning applies to you. Does that make sense?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay. Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** You know, it seems to me that he’s saying not so much rejecting the truth as going on and sinning deliberately.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** Sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth.

**Jeff:** Yes.

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**Participant:** Especially if you know it’s deliberate sin. If you don’t know it’s sin, then it’s a different situation.

**Second Participant:** Oh absolutely, if you know you’re sinning deliberately.

**Jeff:** See, I think that as we go we’re going to get into some things. And I hesitate to open them up now because we haven’t even gotten to the first point! (*Laughter*) But that just goes to show you how I think a text like this one really does open up a lot of questions. And I do think the next point is going to open up some of those questions. So let’s look at it.

*Why a frightening text?* Well, the first thing that I want to mention to you is *the unity of the Bible itself*. Now I want to remind you. We talked about it the last time when we were together a couple of weeks ago. Remember how we looked at Abraham. And we noticed that this new and living path that Jesus walks, this freshly killed, not yet decomposing living way, the death and resurrection of Christ, that path that He walked reminds us of the path Abram walked when he divided the animals and then fell asleep. And God passed through and said, “I’m going to take upon myself the covenant of your blessedness.” And we see that fulfilled in Christ. There’s a unity to the Bible that we’ve got to catch and that we’ve got to see.

Now I’ll tell you what that means. That means that you can’t reject the fulfillment of what the Bible teaches and go back to the shadows and the types of the past. But it also means—and this is vital,—it also means that the shadows and the types of the past can still teach us something about the One who fulfills them. And that’s why you study the Old Testament, right? The Old Testament contains the New. The New Testament reveals what the Old taught. And so there’s a sense in which you have to study the Old if you want to understand the New in all of its fullness.

Now what is the New Testament lesson that I want to take you to in this particular section? Well, it’s a New Testament lesson that I’ve mentioned to you before. And it’s a lesson that we learned from Leviticus and from Numbers and from the Pentateuch really—the first five books of Scripture, but a couple of them in particular. And it has to do with the question of what was the Old Testament ceremonial system meant to cover in terms of its atoning work?

Some of you may remember us talking about that in the past. I want to raise that here. And I argued one time before that the Old Testament ceremonial atoning system was designed to cover unintentional and inadvertent sins on a day-to-day basis in the main.

Now that is not to say that the ceremonial system did not cover high-handed rebellious sins. But we’re going to talk about that in just a minute, okay?

So, for instance, Leviticus 4:2 says, “*If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them, then let him offer to the LORD*”, and so on.

Now it’s not just there. But the same kind of things are in Leviticus 4:22, Leviticus 4:27, Leviticus 5:15 and Leviticus 22:14.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Leviticus 4:22, NKJV. “*When a ruler has sinned, and done something unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD his God in anything which should not be done, and is guilty.*”



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Leviticus 4:27. *“If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing something against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and is guilty.”*

Leviticus 5:15. *“If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring to the LORD as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering.”*

Leviticus 22:14. *“And if a man eats the holy offering unintentionally, then he shall restore a holy offering to the priest, and add one-fifth to it.”*

**Jeff:** But it’s not just there. If you want to go here, you can go to Numbers with me, Numbers 15. In Numbers 15 we find essentially the same sort of thing. In Numbers 15:22 we find this. *“But if you sin unintentionally and do not observe all of these commandments that the LORD has spoken through Moses.”* And then 24. *“Then, if it was done unintentionally.”* And then 25. *“And the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the people of Israel and they shall be forgiven, because it was a mistake”,* or unintentional. Verse 26: *“All the congregation of the people of Israel shall be forgiven, the stranger who sojourns among them, because the whole population was involved in a mistake”,* or an unintentional sin, which is the way it ought to be translated. 27: *“If one person sins unintentionally.”* 28: *“The priest shall make atonement when he sins unintentionally”,* and so on. And 29 as well.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Numbers 15:29, NKJV. *“You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them.”*

**Jeff:** Now my point is that the ceremonial law was designed to forgive unintentional, inadvertent sins. Why is that? Well I’ll just say it now and I’m going to return to it in a minute, because there was an expectation, even in the Old Testament, that people who actually believed the promise of the Messiah to come would grow, would become more sanctified. That was the expectation.

Now I want you to notice something. I want you to notice how Hebrews 5:2 sort of parallels all of this.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Hebrews 5:2, ESV. *“He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.”*

**Jeff:** In Hebrews 5:2 Jesus is a High Priest. Why? Because *“He can gently deal with the ignorant and misguided.”*

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** Isn’t that interesting! So this parallels all that we’ve been saying about these unintentional sins. But listen to Numbers 15:30. *“But the person who does anything with a high hand, that is in a rebellious way, whether he is a native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among His people.”*

Now listen to Hebrews 10:26. *“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.”*

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Do you see the unity of the Old Testament structure, where on a day-to-day basis sacrifices were to deal with unintentional and inadvertent sins? And so too is life in Christ dealing with the ignorant and the misguided.

But all of a sudden then, in 15:30 of Numbers, for this high-handed sin you excommunicate him. You cut him off from the people. And all of a sudden in Hebrews 10:26 there's this warning that parallels that. If you deliberately keep on sinning, there's no longer a sacrifice that remains.

Now there are two points that I want you to consider. First of all, this. First of all, Leviticus 16 is the Day of Atonement sacrifice for high-handed sins. And that was what we learned about in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 3.

**Transcriber's Note:** Hebrews 10:3, ESV. *“But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.”*

**Jeff:** Remember when it said that we were reminded of sins once a year? That's the Day of Atonement! And so Hebrews 10 is telling us, actually in the very beginning, that there is coverage in Christ not just for the ignorant and misguided, but for the high-handed sins of rebellion that would cut us off from Christ! And so these sins are forgiven whether they are misguided and inadvertent and unintentional, or they're high-handed and rebellious. They're forgiven in Jesus Christ.

But here is where we have to be careful. As the church we're sinners. We sin in word, thought and deed daily. We want to affirm that because it's true. But we're not rebels. Those sins that we commit in word, thought and deed daily ought not to be murder and adultery, and on and on and on. But they ought to be like those unintentional, misguided sins that we trap ourselves in and get caught up in on a day-to-day basis.

You know what? There's a huge difference. You all know what I'm talking about. If you have two children, and one of them is a good kid, not a perfect kid, and the other one is a rebel, you know the difference between a faithful but not perfect kid, and a rebellious kid. And sometimes we have a tendency to think that the church is made up of all rebels. We're all that rebel kid. And nobody's growing, right? And that's not true.

When you look at the Old Testament pattern of the sacrificial system, and hold it in light of the book of Hebrews, that's not what you find. What you find is that we are supposed to be children who are faithful and not perfect.

There are some brothers in the congregation who are like the rebellious child. And they are the ones being warned here. If you deliberately keep doing this, what you're showing is—here's what he's really saying,—it's not that you'll lose something that you had. It's that you will show that you never had what you claim to have had.

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** You see, that's the idea. In other words, one who is in the midst of the congregation who is high-handed and rebellious, well he's the one who had better put an end to his high-handed rebelliousness and confess it to God in Jesus Christ, and then bring his life around. And when he brings his life around, he'll show himself to be one of us. We can put our arms around him and say, “I know, brother. I had one of those same situations.” You know what I mean?

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But if he says, “You know what? Forget you guys! I’m in Jesus and I’m going to continue to do this.”

And you say, “Whoa, wait a minute! That’s deliberately sinning after you’ve received the knowledge of the truth. You’re rejecting what Christ has done on your behalf in the way you’re living. And it can’t be.”

So that’s the idea. Does that make sense? Yes?

**Participant:** Would you say then that that particular discernment that you’re talking about is lacking in the church, because we have many people out there that I know, friends that are believers, that apparently don’t know how to discern a true profession that is made from a false one, because this person taught Sunday school or made a profession of faith, and now he’s living like the devil. He sins as a rebellious Christian.

**Jeff:** Yes. I think that’s a fair statement.

**Participant:** I mean, we’re not to judge the maturity of somebody’s soul.

**Jeff:** Look, here’s the deal. It is never right for us to say about an individual who is a member of a church that he or she is not a Christian, because we have just taken upon ourselves as individuals what doesn’t belong to us.

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** You say, “Well then, how does that ever happen?” That happens when in Matthew 18 you tell it to the church. And then the church excommunicates, and then you treat him as an unbeliever or a tax collector. Why? Because the church has said that he or she is now an unbeliever, or at least living like an unbeliever.

So it’s the court of the church that declares excommunication, that has been invested with the keys of the kingdom to make that kind of judgment. And yet they’re not even judging the heart. They’re saying that by their actions they’re not producing the fruit of repentance. And so therefore they’re giving every indication that they’re unbelievers. Now they may well be believers. But we can’t discern that by their actions, and so we’re going to put them out of the church until they repent. But that belongs to the courts of the church, the leadership of the church, to make that final determination.

**Participant:** That’s right.

**Jeff:** And when that doesn’t happen, then the temptation is for individual believers to say, “Well that’s not happening, so I’ve got to make my own determinations about who’s a believer and who is not a believer,” right?

**Participant:** I like that. But also, is that right that he says, “Correct one another?” As individuals, we want to encourage one another.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** We want to stimulate men and women towards Christ. And maybe they haven’t made that jump to salvation quite yet. They may believe only in the sense that yes, I see who Christ is. But they haven’t arrived at faith where the Lord changes their hearts.

**Jeff:** Well, let’s say that we’ve got a professing believer, and you know that he’s living in sin, okay? And so he’s coming to church regularly. Nothing is happening to them, and it’s kind of a well-known thing. Well, I think that what is incumbent upon you is the same thing that was incumbent upon these believers in this text. These believers were coming

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to church. Everybody knew that they were thinking about deserting and going back to Judaism. You know, our tendency is to stay away from them, right, to put distance between us and them. And I think what the Pastor is saying is no, Stir them up.

And I love the way he uses that word. I said to you that it appears two other times in the New Testament, always in the negative. What he is saying is that you go to him and say, “Brother, are you thinking about leaving Christ and going back to Judaism?”

Now the Pastor is saying that’s going to stir them up, and maybe it’s going to have some negative consequence to it, at least in terms of the outcome of this conversation for the time being. But that needs to happen because that’s what it means to encourage them, to *paracoleo*, to call them alongside of yourself. What you’re doing is, you’re saying, “Don’t go there. Come, stand here,” right? That idea. Does that make sense?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Second Participant:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Participant:** One of my concerns is that along with what Kirk is saying is that I get to the point where I use the thief on the cross as the way out.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** And say look at that example. So you don’t have to do anything other than at the last minute you could come to a decision that Jesus is the Christ.

**Jeff:** You know what? I want you to think about the thief on the cross, though. The thief on the cross really does more works than many people think, right? I mean, when you think about it, what does this man do? He affirms the sinless nature of Christ. He publicly puts his faith in Him. He rebukes someone who is beside him, right?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Jeff:** I mean, there are a number of things that this thief on the cross does that give evidence that the faith he professes is a genuine faith.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** So those are just three things off the top of my head. Yes?

**Participant:** I just intended to use that as an example to say—

**Jeff:** No, no, because that’s what people do.

**Participant:** Yes. I think we’re quite as well thinking about that, you know, we’re in the faith, we’re following Christ, we’re growing. And that’s such a great example, as opposed to, oh, it’s okay.

**Jeff:** You know, another one that people use is Lot, right? Look at Lot. But you know, when you think about Lot, he was probably living in Sodom and Gomorrah and God saved him, right? But I want you to think about what Peter says about him. Peter calls him “*righteous Lot*” three times. And if you actually look at the evidence, one of the things that you find is that he’s the guy that sits at the city gate. Who sits at the city gate? Rulers, moral leaders.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** He’s sitting at the gates of Sodom and Gomorrah. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah say to Lot when he talks about what they ought to do with the angels, they say to him, “*Who made you a judge over us?*” All of a sudden a different picture grows up

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with Lot. Here’s a guy who maybe didn’t make the best decision about going into Sodom and Gomorrah and living there. But he’s actually a righteous man trying to bring some sort of moral conformity as a leader in the community to the community.

And I think that once you look at the New Testament in light of the Old Testament, all those things change for these excuse people that we give all the time, because they are. Lot is the excuse for me to do this, that or the other. No, when you look at the evidence, Lot was a pretty righteous man. In fact, Peter says it three times, that he was a righteous man.

**Participant:** In the New Testament it says that it “*vexed his righteous soul*”, the actions of Sodom.

**Jeff:** Yes. I think that’s in Peter, isn’t it?

**Participant:** 2 Peter.

**Jeff:** 2 Peter? Yes. Well, what I want us to do is that I want us to really quickly go through this next section, because I really want to say some things about the end here real quick. You know that *apostasy* is to stand apart from. He says in the text that if rejecting Moses would lead to death, how much more will rejecting Christ bring judgment upon you? That’s the idea.

And there are three things here that the apostate does. *The apostate tramples the Son of God underfoot*. And you know, when you just remember the identity of the Son that we’ve been studying, this is the Son of God! And to trample on the Son of God is a horrible thing.

*The apostate disregards the blood of the covenant*. And that is by his turning to the shadows and the types of the past. And then *the apostate insults the Spirit of grace*. Remember in 9:14 that it was “*through the eternal Spirit*” that the Son offered up the blood of the covenant. So that’s where the insult of the Spirit of grace arises. So the danger then is a real danger that arises from 10:25.

Now let me talk to you about *the hortatory nature of the book of Hebrews* for just a minute. I want you to remember something vital. First of all, we need to remember *union with Christ*. This text is not for you to go home and say, “Now let me do an existential, experiential check list of all my sins and focus on those sins, and find out which ones that I’m doing that will expel me from the presence of God,” and then beat yourself up about them. That’s the wrong way to do this. You never want to inspect yourself apart from your knowledge of the fact that you are in Christ.

Now I want to give you an example of this. Look, I don’t know how many hands will go up at this point. But I’m just curious. There’s my man; he’s going to raise it before he even knows the question. (*Laughter*) *Pilgrim’s Progress* yet, everybody? I get head shakes, but not hands. Okay. All right, let me give you an example from *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

In *Pilgrim’s Progress* Christian leaves the City of Destruction. Remember that Pliable and Obstinate follow him. And Obstinate turns back, Pliable goes with him. And Christian and Pliable end up in the Slough of Despond.

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Now what is the Slough of Despond? The Slough of Despond is something that could appear anywhere along the Christian path. It is the doubt that one experiences. It is the guilt that one experiences that arises from reflection upon their sins. Okay?

Now when you think about genuine repentance, the Slough of Despond and what Evangelist says to Christian after he pulls him out of the Slough makes a ton of sense, because if you think about genuine repentance as remembering and recognizing the odious nature of sin, with an apprehension of Christ’s mercy and then an endeavoring to turn from it, Evangelist makes a ton of sense.

Why? What does Evangelist say? Evangelist says this to Christian. He says, “You were in the Slough.”

“I know I was. I was looking at my sins and I was doubting and I was despairing.”

And Evangelist says, “You know, there are steps in there.” (*Laughter*) “You just walk along the steps. You just follow the steps.” Remember? And I think Faithful follows the steps through the Slough of Despond. He gets out of it without the help of Evangelist.

What are the steps? The steps are the promises, the apprehension of God’s mercy. And so being in the Slough of Despond is the guy who is going, “Oh, my sins are so bad and I’m so bad, and it’s terrible!” What begins to happen is that he begins to think his sins are greater than God’s grace, because he doesn’t look to the promises revealed in Jesus Christ which are the steps leading out of the Slough.

So even though we want to look at this warning as a serious warning, we want to remember that this warning is to us in Christ. And if we be in Christ, there are steps leading out of the Slough. So that’s first.

The second thing is that there’s *an indication of faithfulness* that I’ve already talked about, and you see that here. And then finally there’s the question I want to ask as I leave you. And that is *are you faithful?* That’s a question you have to ask yourself. Are you faithful, or are you unfaithful? When you think about the children, are you a faithful child—not perfect, faithful,—or are you a rebellious child? And that’s really the question that’s being put to us in this text. What are you? What child are you? And you answer that question by reflecting upon your life in Christ, not apart from it.

**Participant:** We all continue to sin.

**Jeff:** That’s right. Faithful, not perfect. And that “not perfect” means that sometimes I commit high-handed sins that I need to be forgiven for in Christ. And there is atonement for that because Hebrews chapter 10 tells me there is. Okay? Any final questions? Yes, Don?

**Don:** The second point that you raised where it says, “*profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified.*”

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don:** In what sense, if he was not really a believer to begin with, was he sanctified? Also “*outraged the Spirit of grace.*” Is this the unpardonable sin?

**Jeff:** You know what? When we talk about the Spirit there, I think that the insulting of the Spirit could very well be the unpardonable sin that one could be in danger of. But I want you to notice this. I knew somebody was going to ask this question. Don, good for you. Who was sanctified there? Is it the person who is in danger? Is he the one who was

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sanctified? Because it would read that way, wouldn't it? *“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?”* What is the antecedent of *he*? Is it the person who is about ready to apostatize?

Well, I want you to reflect on something. I actually think that it's Jesus there, because in John 17:19 it says, *“And for their sake I consecrate Myself”* Jesus says, *“that they also may be sanctified in truth.”* That they also may be sanctified in truth. Now Jesus is sanctified in the truth. We receive all of the blessings of the *ordo salutis*,--justification, sanctification, adoption, all those,--because Christ first secured them on our behalf. And so I think the One sanctified in the truth there in Hebrews is talking about Christ. It was Christ who was sanctified in the truth, not the person who is about ready to apostatize. Okay?

**Participant:** Wow!

**Jeff:** I knew somebody was going to ask that question. I was waiting for it. All right. Yes?

**Participant:** Didn't these Jews have an advantage of being in the Old Testament and knowing the law? They taught the law. And so when the Hebrews writer gave his arguments concerning Christ, and that He fulfilled so many different things, they've already taught on it. Isn't that a danger right there? You know that was who it was leading up to begin with. Christ is the fulfillment. That is who God was bringing forward. You know this is true. You've seen it yourself or heard about it. And we are eyewitnesses of this. Now you want to go back and pull away from the promises of the Old Testament.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** So is that a picture of apostasy? They don't necessarily believe, right?

**Jeff:** Yes. You know, I think, though, that he is talking to people who are in the church who profess to believe, right? So they're in the Christian church in this story, right? So I get what you're saying. And for the Jews this is supposed to be the culmination point, right? But I do think that practically speaking these are people who have already professed to recognize the culmination.

**Participant:** But those who have professed, if they pull away,. They're only showing that they never really were—

**Jeff:** Yes, yes. Yes?

**Participant:** This might be kind of limited, but I'm kind of wondering—and I guess you would probably have to dig into the Greek on this,--but how do you get that *he* is the Son of God?

**Jeff:** Yes. Do you want to take that up the next time we get together?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Jeff:** And at the head of that I can. You know, this just goes to show you. The last time we were together the bishop said to me, “We need to deal with that Day drawing near.” *(Laughter)* And so I did. Now you're going to make me go back a verse and deal with this. I get it, I get it. *(Laughter)* What you're saying is that I'm not doing enough. *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

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**Participant:** In the following passages is it possible that *sanctified* is a Biblical sanctification, so that person was set apart in the church visibly? Do you see what I mean? Not necessarily sanctification in the salvific process, but that they were sanctified, set apart for the visible activity in the church.

**Jeff:** Oh. Well, just a quick answer to what you’re saying then. You’re right. The second part is that you could say that. And that’s what I *would* say, that they’re set apart like in chapter 6. They’re receiving the promises and hearing the gospel preached, those kinds of things, maybe even taking the sacrament, right?

One of the reasons that I would say what I’m saying about this is that the previous antecedent for *he* would be *Son of God*. In other words, the last One mentioned is not the apostate, but the Son of God. And so the *he* I’m tying back to the Son of God as the antecedent to that. That would be the quick answer. Did you get that from Bill? *(Laughter)* I see him over there shaking his head. I mean, you know, we need to bring Noah to keep you in line and to keep him in line. *(Laughter)*

**Transcriber’s Note:** Referring to seven-year-old Noah’s father, Caleb and Bill McCoy.

**Bill:** One thing you didn’t tell him was that you have to try harder. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** All right, let’s pray. Father, thank You for the day, for the time You’ve given. Lord, bless us. Lord, we ask and pray that You will continually open our eyes to the riches found in Your word. Father, we’re thankful for it. We pray that You’ll bless it to us that we might know Christ better today even than we did yesterday, for we ask it in His name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*