

The Talmid



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

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STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

“The New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed.”—Augustine

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they

spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. (**1 Peter 1:10–12**)

1 Peter 1:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries,

¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

Luke 24:22-27 (NASB)

²² "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,

²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.

²⁴ "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to

enter into His glory?"

²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

The prophets searched. Angels longed to see. And the disciples didn't understand. But Moses, the prophets, and all the Old Testament Scriptures had spoken about it—that Jesus would come, suffer, and then be glorified. God began to tell a story in the Old Testament, the ending of which the audience eagerly anticipated. But the Old Testament audience was left hanging. The plot was laid out but the climax was delayed. The unfinished story begged an ending.

In Christ, God has provided the climax to the Old Testament story. Jesus did not arrive unannounced; His coming was declared *in advance* in the Old Testament, not just in explicit prophecies of the Messiah but by means of the stories of all of the events, characters, and circumstances in the Old Testament. God was telling a larger, overarching, unified story. From the account of creation in Genesis to the final stories of the return from exile, God progressively unfolded His plan of salvation. And the Old Testament account of that plan always pointed in some way to Christ.

The tension between doctrine and experience is common in the Christian life. What we believe and know as fact doesn't always match up with what is happening in our lives. Objective truth often conflicts with subjective experience. More often than not our experience becomes more credible than our doctrine, and this creates the tension in our hearts. This tension extends even to the Scripture, which are the source of everything we believe and the rule of everything we are to do. We believe the Bible is God's Word. We believe that it is a living Word that is **"powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword"** ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).

But notwithstanding that confession of faith, Christians far too frequently read the Bible and get nothing from it. Apart from a few familiar stories or a few favorite verses, the majority of the Bible, even for believers, seems irrelevant. Few know anything of what David experienced when he confessed God's Word to be more **"desirable than gold, yes,**

than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" ([Psalm 19:10 NASB](#)).

This disconnect between confession and experience regarding Scripture is nowhere more evident than in the Old Testament. For various reasons, the Old Testament is a closed book for many Christians today. There is something about the Old Testament that corresponds to Peter's assessment of Paul's epistles as containing some things hard to understand ([2 Peter 3:16](#)).

[2 Peter 3:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ **"As also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."**

From [Genesis](#) to [Malachi](#), the reader encounters hard sayings, obscure details, unfamiliar and enigmatic expressions, forgotten customs, and family trees with unpronounceable names, and detailed laws that have no immediately discernible application or relevance to modern life. Much of the Old Testament seems to have no apparent value or purpose, and much seems to be outdated both theologically and culturally. The Old Testament provides a lot of hard reading without a lot of blessing—or so it seems.

Frustrations with the Old Testament often drive Bible readers to more familiar and more obviously devotional texts. Familiar and devotional texts are good, but when believers ignore the Old Testament, they are ignoring the majority of God's revelation and missing the blessing of finding nuggets of truth that are just as vital for modern Christians as they were for Old Testament saints. Indeed, that God's Word is compared to silver and hidden treasure suggests that the prize is not always lying on the surface.

Part of the problem in most Bible study is that unless the message is on the surface, the average reader moves on in his reading, kicking up dust until coming across an obvious surface lesson. Shuffling along does not typically result in discovered treasures; sometimes we have to dig. [Proverbs 2:4-6 NASB](#) says that

"if you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵Then you will discern the

fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God. ⁶For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.”

Even the digging becomes profitable and enjoyable when we realize we are handling the very Word of God—the Word without which we cannot survive. From [Genesis](#) to [Malachi](#) to [Revelation](#), the Word of God reveals changeless and eternal truth. We should keep our Bibles open and not give up until we discover the truth, because we know that God rewards those who diligently seek Him. He promises that when we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)). That is the truth.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB)

¹³“**You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.**”

The Bible says that “**all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness**” ([2 Timothy 3:16 NASB](#)). Faith believes it to be true. Faith in the inspiration of Scripture affirms the Bible’s authority, infallibility, sufficiency, and effectiveness. If experience concludes it to be without purpose, irrelevant, outdated, or in some other way without profit, experience is wrong. Faith ought to stop us short every time we are tempted to skip through or over any portion of God’s Holy Word just because we are not immediately blessed. Before giving up on the passage, we should ask ourselves this question: Why, of all the possible things that God could have said, did He say this? By faith, we know why He said it “**so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work**” ([2 Timothy 3:17 NASB](#)). It remains for us to learn, understand, and apply what He said. The Scripture is the means by which God reveals, not conceals, truth.

Yet even here we must be realistic. To assume that we will understand everything in Scripture with equal ease is to reduce the Bible to a document that is less than ordinary and to set ourselves up for more frustration when we do not immediately get the point.

The statement of the Westminster divines is a good and comforting reminder:

“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.” (**Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.7**)

God has made enough of His Word so crystal clear that only blind and blatant disbelief will not understand. He has made enough of His Word so deep that even the most faithful must depend on His enlightenment rather than their intellect. There is no book like the Bible—clear enough to speak to the layman, yet challenging enough to keep the scholar humble. Neither layman nor scholar should ever tire of this special revelation but should endeavor to increase the sphere of knowledge necessary to understand more and more. There is always more blessing to enjoy.

The key that unlocks the meaning and all the blessing of Scripture is the Lord Jesus Christ, the principal theme of the entire Bible. The overriding purpose of special revelation—which for us is the Scripture alone—is to guide men to a proper relationship with God. God’s gracious salvation is the only way guilty sinners can experience that relationship, and God’s gracious salvation is in and through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself declared that He was “**...the way, the truth, and the life...**,” the only way for anyone to come to God ([John 14:6 NASB](#)).

It follows that if the purpose of Scripture is to guide people to the Lord and if the only way to the Lord is through the redemption of Jesus Christ, then the revelation of Christ should be the grand and predominant theme of Scripture. Indeed, it is. All revealed truth in one way or another relates to and is ultimately defined by the central truth of the Messiah, the Christ, and the anointed.

Obviously, the New Testament develops this saving theme. **The Gospels**, with narratives concerning His earthly ministry, introduce the performance of His saving work, the historic foundation of the gospel. [Acts](#) records the initial proclamation and dissemination of the

message of His saving work. **The Epistles** explain and expound the nature of His person and work and the implications for personal and church life. The [Revelation](#) assures the consummation of all the glorious truths of His person and work. Understanding the message of the New Testament is impossible without reference to Christ.

Understanding the Old Testament is also impossible without reference to Christ and His gospel. He is the key that unlocks all the mysteries. This is not speculation; this is the teaching of the New Testament, both by direct statement and by example. When the resurrected Christ walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He expressed His concern that they were slow to believe what the prophets had written concerning His suffering and glory ([Luke 24:25–26](#)).

Luke 24:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ “**And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!**

²⁶ **Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”**

He then started with Moses and continued through the Prophets, expounding what those Scriptures taught about Himself ([Luke 24:27](#)).

Luke 24:27 (NASB)

²⁷ “**Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”**

Later in the company of all the disciples, He included the [Psalms](#) in that corpus of messianic revelation ([Luke 24:44–45](#)).

Luke 24:44-45 (NASB)

⁴⁴ “**Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**

⁴⁵ **Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”**

His reference to **Moses** [the Law], the **Prophets** [Major and Minor], and the **Psalms** was the Jewish

designation for the entire Old Testament, similar to our referring to the New Testament as the gospel and Epistles. In other words, Christ said that the entirety of the Old Testament spoke about Him. **The Pentateuch**, the first five books with all their religious rituals, prepares the way for the Perfect Priest to stand between God and the people He represents as the perfect sacrifice for sins. **The Historical Books** draw attention to the Perfect King, who would come to rule His people and subdue His enemies. **The Prophets** anticipate the Perfect Prophet, who represents and reveals the only true and living God. **The Poetical Books** put it all together with the Christ as the great theme for worship and praise. What an authoritative clue for interpretation this is! It means that if we read any book of the Old Testament without reference to what it teaches concerning Christ, we are missing the key element in the book. If we do not see Christ, it is not because He is not there.

This brings us to the issue of this series of articles, the Gospel According to the Old Testament, and this book highlighting the gospel according to [Hosea](#). The aim of the series is to show the pervasiveness of Christ in the Old Testament and to encourage all who read, teach, or preach from the Old Testament to do so with a view to Christ and His gospel. The book of [Hosea](#), like every Old Testament book, lends itself to this approach. Much of Hosea’s message parallels the points of the sermons preached by most of his prophetic and ministerial counterparts: God hates sin, God judges’ sin, God delivers from judgment upon repentance. Each of these points certainly has gospel implications. Yet, as is true regarding all of God’s servants, there was something unique about Hosea, his ministry, and his message. His life and preaching exhibit a transparency that clearly points to Christ, but they also evidence a deep complexity that places his prophecy among the most difficult to understand in the Old Testament. But whether we look on or under the surface, Christ is the key to meaning. Discovering Hosea’s inspired contribution to the progression of God’s redemptive revelation is the goal of our study.

To say that Christ is the key to understanding [Hosea](#) is not to say that He is the only specific theme in the book, but it is to say that every other truth or command must find its ultimate reference in Him. To attempt to implement anything the Bible requires without reference to Jesus Christ is foolishness, whether it pertains to Old Testament or New Testament truth. The same prin-

ciple applies to [Hosea](#). It is beyond the scope of this article to treat exhaustively every verse in [Hosea](#); this is not a commentary. Rather, this will be a theological overview of Hosea's message with a view to its gospel application. Searching for Christ in [Hosea](#) is not a vain game of hide and seek; finding Him is a sure thing. God's promise is that those who seek Him will find Him. **So as we study Hosea, we want to be on Christ-alert.**

I will develop the study in **three parts**. **Part 1** concerns necessary issues of introduction. Introduction is that discipline of study that deals with such matters as authorship, date, historical background, purpose, and theme of writing. Although these may not be the most exciting or edifying elements of Bible study, they are essential facts that help to put a book in its context. Knowing both the historic and the canonical contexts of any book of the Bible is a significant aid and safeguard to proper interpretation. It is important to see where [Hosea](#) fits in the progress of both redemptive history and revelation.

Part 2 develops the symbolic message of [Hosea](#)—his marriage to Gomer. Unquestionably, the link between Hosea's personal life and his public ministry is unique and therefore critical for the understanding of the message. Understanding the theology of marriage as a biblical symbol and type of God's relationship to His people and specifically of Christ's relationship to His church is essential to grasping the significance of Hosea's experience. The significance of his tragic experience highlights the beauty of the ideal relationship that exists between Christ and His bride.

Part 3 establishes the parallels between Hosea's life and the message he preached. If his marriage to Gomer was the symbolic message, his direct message concerns God's marriage to Israel. What Hosea did for Gomer, God did for Israel. What Gomer did to Hosea, Israel did to God. It was a relationship initiated by divine love, spurned by treacherous sin, and maintained by unfailing divine faithfulness. Although many of Hosea's statements are deep and difficult, his overall gospel message is very much on the surface. This particular part of the study will lend itself to the aim of the series to show the gospel in the Old Testament.

Please remember that in this study I am con-

cerned with the big picture of [Hosea](#), not the minute details. Our interest is in why and how the parts fit together to advance the revelation of the Christ and the gospel, rather than a technical exegesis to interpret all the specific parts. There are commentaries for that. So while I acknowledge that all the problems of interpretation may not be resolved, it is my prayer that throughout this study the Lord Jesus Christ will be evidently set forth and that the Holy Spirit will lead into truth by showing Christ and glorifying Him.

PART ONE JUST THE FACTS

The Bible did not fall to earth from heaven complete and leather-bound. Different men—all of whom were inspired by the Holy Spirit—wrote the Old Testament over a period of about a thousand years. But each one lived in his own time and place; each one reflected and addressed the specific issues of his day. The truths of the Bible are universally and timelessly relevant, but they were first given to a specific people at a specific time to meet specific needs. The ultimate objective of our Bible study is to understand those universal and timeless truths and to apply them to our specific times and needs. An important part of Bible study is to learn what we can about the author, his times, and his particular circumstances.

Continued in next edition...

CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)

The present state of society is due to the infidelity of "the churches" during the past century, and the apostasy of Christendom began by losing its grip upon the basic truth of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. And there is no hope whatever of Christendom being recovered from its present corrupt condition and woeful plight until it regains that grip, until it recognizes and avows that the Bible is a messenger from Heaven, a direct communication from God, imperiously demanding complete subjection of conscience to its authority and total subjugation of the mind and will to its require-

ments. It has, therefore, become the imperative duty of God's servants to put first things first: to affirm with clarion voice the Divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Bible, to present to their hearers some of the many **"infallible proofs"** by which it is authenticated, that they may **"know the certainty of those things"** ([Luke 1:4](#)) wherein they are instructed. Thereby God Himself will be honored, a sure foundation laid for faith to rest upon, the only specific provided for the disease of materialism and infidelity.



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Hebrews 10 – Overview

In looking at [Hebrews 10](#), the first couple of things that just stand out is that midway through the chapter the author begins with some amazing exhortations. In fact, the last 3 ½ chapters of Hebrews are all incredibly exhortative and have much practical application for the believer's life. For instance in v21 the exhortation is to **"draw near"**, in v23 it is to **"hold fast"**, in v24 it is to **"consider"**, in v25 the believers are told to **"not forsake"**, in v25 they are to **"consider one another"**, in v35 they are told to **"not cast away"** their confidence, and in v36 they are encouraged to **"endure"** and to **"do the will of God"**. Obviously, there have been a few other exhortations up to this point, but nothing quite as full of exhortations as this. In [Hebrews 2:1](#), the Hebrews were encouraged to **"give the more earnest heed"** to what they had heard, and in [Hebrews 3:1](#) they are told to **"consider"** Christ. In [Hebrews 3:12](#) they are told to **"beware"** and to **"exhort one another daily"**. In [Hebrews 4:11](#), the believers were encouraged to **"be diligent to enter God's rest"**, in [Hebrews 4:16](#) believers are encouraged to **"come boldly to the throne of grace"**. In [Hebrews 6:1](#) they are encouraged to **"go on to perfection"**, and in [Hebrews 6:12](#) they are told to **"imitate"** faithful believers. So, in [Hebrews 1-9](#), the author has given a total of eight exhortations, but then in [Hebrews](#)

10 he provides eight exhortations in one chapter alone. So, it is important to appreciate that the very “tone” of the author’s letter has changed. He has been providing these Hebrews with doctrine after doctrine after doctrine, but now he is ready to move on to the practical application that should follow in the believer’s life from that doctrine.

Without becoming overly critical, it seems that for many Christians the idea of studying doctrine is generally viewed as somewhat boring. Everybody likes the exhortative passages and the passages that encourage and stimulate them to do something, but unfortunately those Scriptural encouragements are often somewhat short-lived simply because the individual has almost ignored the doctrines that are behind the exhortation. If we were to examine any of Paul’s letters, it is crystal clear that when he wrote letters to the churches that the first several chapters were always devoted to doctrine. For instance, in Romans there is only one section of exhortation in the first eleven chapters – only one in [Romans 6:11-13](#). He has given literally 6 ½ chapters of doctrine before he gives his first exhortation, and then he has another 5 ½ chapters of doctrine before he comes to his great exhortative conclusion of the believer presenting their bodies to God as a “**living sacrifice**” in [Romans 12:1](#). The first three chapters of Ephesians are purely doctrinal, and the second three are practical. In Colossians, the first two chapters are doctrinal and the second two are practical. In Galatians the first four chapters are doctrinal and the last two are exhortative. This is the primary New Testament pattern – doctrine, then exhortation, doctrine then exhortation, doctrine then exhortation.

The point is really very simple. Until a believer has an appreciation for doctrine, the practical applications will not have much impact in their life. As we have studied about the great high priestly ministry of Christ on our behalf and then the author’s amazing picture of how Christ offered His actual blood to the Father in [Hebrews 9:12](#) as the actual and final completion of the atonement, just encouraging someone to do something will often become an exercise in futility. I was talking with someone recently who had been a pastor, had retired, and was now teaching a Sunday School class in a large church. What was interesting about our conversation was a statement that he made about the doctrinal study he

was teaching. He stated that they were studying the various doctrines like sanctification, salvation, or justification and that the people literally seemed “glazed” as they were listening to the teaching. His comment was that they seemed to have no interest whatsoever in studying doctrine, but rather preferred to have discussion about very peripheral issues related to the Christian life. Certainly there is nothing wrong with discussing various social and cultural issues, but the problem is that if the individual does not have a doctrinal perspective on those issues that invariably they will come to the wrong conclusion. The way that this has been communicated throughout the study on Hebrews is simply that “doctrine is for living”. Believers cannot live an effective and meaningful Christian life if they are not grounded in biblical doctrine. Doctrine is the foundation of the Christian life. It is what the Christian life and all of the exhortations are built on. Without understanding doctrine, the exhortations become biblically isolated and will not seem to have any significance to the believer. In order for an exhortation to be meaningful and practical to the believer’s life, it must have a foundational truth that supports why the exhortation can even be given. The Scriptures ALWAYS provide a meaningful basis for what it asks the believer to do. God’s Word never speaks to the believer in a spiritual vacuum, but always provides foundational truths for the exhortations that are given to the believer.

For instance, the writer here in Hebrews does not just start exhorting these believers who were going through incredible trials. In [Hebrews 10:32](#) the writer says that they had “**endured a great struggle with sufferings**”. In v33, they had been “**made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations**”. In v34, they had endured the “**plundering of their goods**”. These are words that represent the great trials and afflictions that they were experiencing. The picture is that the exercise and implementation of their faith had had a great cost to them personally. There was no “cheap grace” in their lives. You would have thought that the author would have started with a chapter on encouraging them and telling them that everything was going to be okay, and then giving them some practical exhortations as to how to work through all of their difficulties – BUT HE DID NOT DO THAT. To the contrary, he taught them doctrine over and over and over, and he gave them the most remarkable picture of Christ given anywhere in the New Testament letters. Nothing in all of the New Testament letters after Acts compares with the picture of Christ

provided in Hebrews. This is literally nine chapters (with one brief parenthesis in [Hebrews 6](#)) on the greatness and person of Jesus Christ. If an individual does not fully understand what Christ gave up to be their Savior, then they will never have much strength whatsoever to continue in the Christian life in the face of often terrible trials and afflictions. No one enjoys those kinds of things, but very often they are the inevitable result of being a Christian and if the believer is not grounded in doctrine, they will most likely have no spiritual strength whatsoever to endure, and will eventually “**cast away their confidence**” as mentioned in [Hebrews 10:35](#). No wonder the author could finally begin to encourage them with these words in [Hebrews 10:19](#) when he said,

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Based on everything that has been studied in this overview study, the key word in that verse is the word “**Therefore**”. The word “**therefore**” is literally pregnant with meaning. It is a word that says that something of great importance has been stated before ever making this statement that God has granted believers a “**boldness**” in coming to Him. It is a word that points back to everything that has preceded the encouragement that is to follow. It is a word that transitions the believer from doctrine to the outworking of that doctrine. In [Romans 12:1](#) for instance, after nearly eleven chapters of virtually nothing but doctrine, and after the greatest teaching anywhere in all of the word of God on the sovereignty of God, Paul states this,

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.* ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

No wonder Paul said “**therefore**”. No wonder Paul could encourage them to “**present their bodies as a living sacrifice**”. Why? It was because in the justifying work of God in [Romans 1-5](#), in the amazing work of the Holy Spirit in [Romans 8](#), and in the all sufficient sovereignty of God over all things in

[Romans 9-11](#), it would be spiritually demeaning to the work of God on the believer’s behalf not to do what Paul was encouraging them to do.

Now, the second thing that immediately stands out in [Hebrews 10](#) is what may be the strongest warning to the believer in all of Scripture – [Hebrews 10:26-31](#).

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. And again, "*The LORD will judge His people.*" ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews has five major warnings, but this warning is the most sobering warning that could possibly be given. There is virtually nothing in the rest of the New Testament that even compares to its intensity and the bearing that it can have on the Christian life. It is a warning. It is a very, very strong warning. Its very design and its very nature is to provoke the reader to a kind of spiritual sobriety that maybe they had never exercised in their life. This warning has as much of a foundational basis to it as does any of the other exhortations. The worst thing that a believer can do is to take the work of Christ lightly, to ignore its ramifications, and to dismiss its demands on the Christian life as though they are not significant. The last thing that any committed believer wants to do is to demean the work of Christ on their behalf by becoming spiritually indifferent and casually lethargic in the exercise of their Christian faith. We would be in grave danger of not understanding the New Testament if for some reason we developed a doctrinal stance that supported spiritual indifference, biblical disinterest, and practical apathy relative to the exercise of the Christian faith in our life. The very work of Christ demands a believer’s reverence and obedience. It mandates certain attitudes and life perspectives that cannot just be casually dismissed as having no bearing or im-

portance on how the believer lives. All of the Scriptures are designed to bring the believer into a position where they are being “**conformed**” to the very image of Christ Himself, and that cannot happen without considerable effort, concentration, diligence, and personal discipline in the believer’s life.

Without rehearsing all that has been previously addressed in the discussions relative to the warnings of Hebrews, suffice it to say that these warnings are not for the lost and unredeemed. Certainly they may have some level of application to them, but the New Testament is written to believers. The writer here is not giving this warning to those Hebrews who were not saved, but the warning is for the believers. It is critical to understanding the passage that we appreciate that the writer is NOT stating in this warning that a believer can lose their salvation, but he is clearing stating that something can be lost. What that loss is cannot necessarily be quantified. What is clear is that when a believer ignores the demands of Scripture on their life that they will suffer some kind of loss – both in this life and in the eternal state. Once again, how to specifically quantify that loss is not practically possible, so just suffice it to say that ignoring the high priestly work of Christ carries with it a great spiritual loss for the believer.

Now, notice the various things that the author talks about in [Hebrews 10:26-31](#). First, he says that the believer can “**sin willfully**”. I.e., because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life, they know what is right and what is wrong, but in spite of His prompting and His nurturing the believer willfully chooses to disobey God. The author actually uses the word “**we**” when he states “**if we sin willfully**”. He is drawing attention to the fact that he is talking to believers. The Inter-linear Greek Bible translates the word “**willfully**” as “**intentionally**”. The Amplified Bible calls it “**deliberately and willingly**”. The ESV and the NIV call it “**deliberately**”. This is an intentional, willful, deliberate sinning against God. Every believer sins, but not necessarily in the way that the author is describing here. The Greek word for “**willfully**” is “*hekousios*” and means voluntarily of one’s own accord. It is not talking about various sins that any Christian may commit in more of an involuntary way – maybe from simple ignorance of God’s Word or from some personal area of weakness that they

have not yet been able to overcome. What is important about this phrase is that the word for “**sin**” is actually in the present active tense and in all reality should be translated as “**sinning**”. The NASB says “**If we go on sinning willfully...**”. The NIV says “**If we deliberately keep on sinning...**”. The ESV says “**For if we go on sinning deliberately...**”. The Amplified Bible says “**For if we go on deliberately and willfully sinning...**”. The point here is that this is not just an isolated sin that someone commits. The stress here is on the habitual aspect of the sinning.

This is a very strong warning for a very particular kind of spiritual rebellion in a believer’s life. This is not a message for a lost person. This can happen and it does happen, and therefore it is not something that a committed believer can just take lightly. To make this even more serious, this kind of particular sin against God carries with it some very serious and frightening consequences – “**no sacrifice for sins**”, a “**fearful expectation of judgment**”, and “**fiery indignation**” ([Hebrews 10:26-27](#)). In [Hebrews 10:29](#) the author talks about “**worse punishment**” and in v31 he says that it is “**a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**”. Those are not terms that can just be casually ignored and dismissed. At this point in the overview, we are not going to analyze all of these phrases in an in-depth way, but at least suffice it to say that they are not the kinds of phrases that can just be disregarded and unheeded. To the contrary, they should at least provoke some kind of personal spiritual sobriety in every believer’s life.

So, what is the real sin that the author is talking about in this passage? It is in v29 which says,

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Please notice that the ones to whom the author is talking have been “**sanctified**”. That is a privilege only enjoyed by believers. Lost people have never been “**sanctified**”. That privilege is strictly reserved for people who are saved. This is mentioned simply because there are many commentators that consistently argue that this passage is NOT talking about believers. They do not believe that the language can refer to Christians. However, just think about that for a moment. For 9 ½ chap-

ters now, we have been given the most amazing and glorious picture of Christ anywhere in the New Testament. There is almost nothing that compares with [Hebrews 9](#) and the picture of Christ given there. We have had multiple warnings not to take the things of Christ lightly – and there is a reason for that. Is it worse for a Christian to take Christ lightly or a non-Christian? Certainly it is worse for a Christian to do so. It is much more demeaning and denigrating to the person of Christ and the work of Christ for the believer to not take Christ seriously. Well, if we truly believe that (and I hope that we do), then do not we think that there has to be some kind of consequence for having a flippant, nonchalant, demeaning attitude towards the most amazing Being in eternity?

Please notice that this is a sin that is threefold: **“trampling the Son of God underfoot”**, **“counting the blood of the covenant...a common thing”**, and **“insulting the Spirit of grace”**. **“Trampling, counting, insulting”** are the verbs and therefore they give the most insight into the actual meaning of these phrases. The word **“trampled”** figuratively means to “reject with disdain”. It means to treat with rudeness and disrespect and insulting neglect. This is not just missing your devotions one morning or being a little rude to a telemarketer on the phone one evening. There is so much depth of meaning in this word that it is somewhat frightening to me personally – the fact that somehow in my Christian life that I might reach a point where I reject the word of God and insult Christ by just neglecting and ignoring what He says to my life. Unfortunately, this often seems very normative for many professing Christians – this kind of casual disrespect and disdain for Christ and His work on their behalf.

The second word is **“counted”** and it means to have considered something, and in this case to have considered that which is sacred as being just a common thing. That which is sacred for the believer is never just a common thing. There is nothing common about God’s work in a believer’s life. In fact, the **“blood of the covenant”** surely must be the most sacred element in the Christian life. [Hebrews 9:22](#) stated that **“without shedding of blood there is no remission (of sins).”** The last thing that a genuine believer should ever want to do is to treat those things that God has made sacred to the Christian life

as just being ordinary and common. They are not common. The Word of God is sacred, the blood of Christ is sacred, the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is sacred, and the church is a sacred institution. Prayer is sacred, commitment to Christ is sacred, and the Lord’s Supper is sacred. In reality, all of the Christian life and all that it demands is a sacred work of Christ, and too often Christians just take these things lightly and indifferently. Then thirdly, the word **“insulted”** has the idea of actually “despising” the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the idea of just spurning and almost snubbing His promptings and His impulses and especially His Word. To just ignore His work or to just casually disregard and discount what He is doing in our life is a very serious violation of the life that has been given to the believer.

Now, in reading this passage of Scripture, it should actually be a great encouragement to the committed believer. Hopefully today you are not just sinning willfully, are not treating Christ with disdain and contempt, and certainly you value that which is sacred and have committed your life to it. Certainly you deeply value and respect the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. In reality, rather than being something that is frightening to the believer, these should be great encouragements to help them recognize that their life is not descriptive of these negative attributes and it should give them confidence and great assurance that they are truly saved.

Here is the encouragement in closing out this introductory message on [Hebrews 10](#). First, be encouraged to practically embrace and welcome the exhortations to **“draw near”** to God, to **“hold fast your confession”**, to **“consider one another”**, to **“not forsake the assembling of yourselves”** with other believers, and to **“exhort”** other believers in their faith. There is an obvious spiritual order in what the author has exhorted these believers. As they **“draw near”** to God, it helps them to hold fast to their confession. As they grow, they will embrace the spiritual value of considering the importance of other believers in their life and that one attribute will cause them to want to consistently meet with them and exhort them. However, it all begins with learning how to **“enter the Holiest”** (v19) and of learning what it means to **“draw near”** to God in a meaningful way that is truly impacting their life. Without a meaningful personal time with God on a regular basis, most of what the believer learns may simply be lost in their busyness and their ensuing neglect of that which is sacred. That is a spiritual tragedy.

Secondly, be encouraged to not casually dismiss the warning of [Hebrews 10:26-31](#). It is the most severe warning given to a believer anywhere in the New Testament, and to just lightly regard what it has to say may very well be a self-fulfilling prophecy in their life. When God speaks in an exhortative way, each believer needs to give attention to those exhortations because they give meaningful and purposeful direction to the Christian life. It is one thing to be a Christian, but quite another to live as a Christian. In like manner, when God provides a warning, the warning must be seen as protective for the believer. As seen in previous studies, the 25mph speed limit signs and the large curve signs on twisting mountain roads are warnings designed to protect the individual driving. They should never be seen as harmful, but rather as amazingly beneficial.

Thirdly, be encouraged to heed [Hebrews 10:35](#) to “**not cast away your confidence which has great reward**”. There are just some things in each believer’s life that they need to hold on to no matter what the cost, and their faith in Christ and His Word are two of those things. However, it involves what v36 calls “**endurance**” which simply means to patiently continue in those things that are godly and create godliness in the believer’s life.

Continued in next edition...

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