

# Do Not Despise Jesus' Sacrifice

## Hebrews 10v26-39

### Part 1 – Just Stop! - Persevere in obedience (v26-31)

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "*It is mine to avenge; I will repay,*" and again, "*The Lord will judge his people.*" 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

### Part 2 – Do Remember! - Persevere by remembering (v32-34)

32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

### Part 3 – Hope Confidently - Persevere for reward (v35-39)

35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while,

*"He who is coming will come and will not delay.*

*38 But my righteous one will live by faith.*

*And if he shrinks back,*

*I will not be pleased with him."*

39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

## Introduction

As Christians living in Britain in the beginnings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are relatively removed from the original recipients of this letter. We know that the original readers were around probably before the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. That this group of Hebrew Christians, due to the sufferings and persecution they were enduring, were thinking of abandoning their faith in Jesus as Messiah due to the suffering and persecution they were enduring.

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world do suffer for the sake of Gospel and are systematically persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. In 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain, we don't have those kind of physical sufferings and persecutions because of our faith – yet.

But as I read history, and read of the persecution of the Church down through the ages, I can see signs of persecution coming even to us in this country. So, just as the writer speaks to this group of Hebrew Christians, so he speaks to you and I.

I, of course, don't know your personal circumstances. I don't know where you are at in your Christian life. You may be persevering joyfully or you maybe struggling with some aspect of life and thinking of giving it all up. You may not even call yourself a Christian, as you are at the stage of investigating what all this Jesus talk is all about. Wherever you are at, whatever stage you are at, there is something in this passage for you.

I know that classically these passages are seen as warnings, but I also see them as active encouragements - in this case, to persevere. Persevere by being obedient. Persevere by remembering who you are and what you have done. Persevere by looking forward to being with Jesus Christ permanently and forever.

## **Part 1 – Just Stop! - Persevere in obedience (v26-31)**

This is the main thrust of the passage, and so for today it is where we will be spending most of the time given, before going on briefly to the other parts of the passage and finally how it all applies to us as we go to work tomorrow and living our lives.

### **Deliberately sinning**

(verse 26) *Deliberately keep on sinning*. What does the writer mean? For this group of Christians, this meant to reject the knowledge and message of Jesus as God. Having received the knowledge, it's rejecting this knowledge of Jesus. These people, who were Hebraic Jews, were under persecution. They would have been under pressure to repudiate Jesus Christ as Lord. They were probably under pressure to deny Jesus as the Way to the Father. Perhaps some of them had already done so and left the church. Perhaps others had left, and had come back into the fold. So the writer of this letter urges them to continue to persevere. For if they did not persevere and did not stop sinning, it would be despising, mocking and ridiculing the sacrifice of Jesus, who was God's son, on the cross. By continuing to reject Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit who calls people back to God and who transforms people, is insulted and grieved. By habitually and willfully sinning by rejecting Jesus, people's consciences become dull and insensitive to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. They start to withdraw from meeting with other Christians, as the writer states in verse 25.

### **Mosaic Sacrifice**

But why stop this deliberate habitual rejection of Jesus and what is all this about sacrifice? In the Old Testament under the Law of Moses, there was what was called the atoning sacrifice, performed so as to ask God's forgiveness for the sins of people. But not all sins, for this sacrifice only covered those sins committed by ignorance, coercion or unwillingness. It did not cover sins done deliberately. Those sins were spiteful of God and His laws, and knowing that it was hurting God. Basically it was living a life of selfishness and not bowing in obedience to God. Living a life whereby, "my will is my right, and God can get lost." As I said, there was no sacrifice for those kind of sins, in the Law of Moses.

This Mosaic covenant, or the Law of Moses as the writer refers to it, covered all areas of life through a variety of commandments, judgments and decrees:

- The commandments were given so the people would know how to correctly relate socially to God (Exodus 20v1-6)
- The judgments were given in order that the people could relate socially to each other properly (Exodus 21v1 - 24v11)
- The decrees dictated their religious life, so that God could be approached by humanity on His terms (Exodus 24v12 - 31v18).

This Mosaic covenant looked forward to the promised Messiah to come and make the perfect sacrifice (Galatians 3v17-19). It was never meant as a means towards eternal salvation. It was given so that people could realize the futility and helplessness of their own efforts in regards to salvation, and the need of God's help. Paul writing in Galatians 3v22-24 explains that the Law of Moses was only a protective fence until, through the promised Messiah, humanity "could be made right with God through faith." This Messiah was Jesus Christ and this new covenant is sealed only through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. His sacrifice ensures the truth of this New Covenant. There is no other way for this New Covenant to be sealed except through Jesus' blood. This New Covenant finalizes what the Mosaic Covenant and Law could only point to: the follower of God, living in an obedient life and conforming to God's holy character.

## **New Covenant**

So the Law of Moses pointed forward to the New Covenant. This New Covenant is seen in the Old Testament in places such as Jeremiah 31 and in Ezekiel 36.

Four features of this covenant are:

- Regeneration - God transforming you;
- Restoration - God being your God and you being His;
- God living inside you through the Holy Spirit and leading you;
- Justification - God forgiving and removing your sins

That is why the writer of this letter tells them to stop deliberately sinning, stop contemplating about sinning by rejecting Jesus and recognize Jesus for who He was – God's Son, the long-awaited for Messiah..

This New Covenant guarantees salvation for all who would accept it, and it shows why Jesus' sacrifice is greater than the sacrifices under the Law of Moses!

## Jesus' Sacrifice

But what of Jesus' sacrifice? Jesus died for all sin, the just for the unjust (1 Peter 3v18). That is how God is both just and the Justifier of sinners. That is why Jesus needed to be both fully God and fully human, so as to be the full sacrifice that was required to deal permanently with sin! For while people were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for them, (Romans 5v6-8), willingly giving His life as a ransom (Mark 10v45) and when He died on the cross as a sacrifice, He bore the consequences of all sin – past, present and future.

This sacrifice was required in order that Jesus Christ could take away the sins of the world, which includes yours (John 1v29)! He therefore became sin (2 Corinthians 5v21) and it was His blood as the sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish (1Peter 1:18-19) that fulfils God's requirements permanently.

So the writer is saying to these Hebrew Christians, the day of judgement is coming. If you have turned your back on Jesus' sacrifice, then there is no further sacrifice that can pay for your sinfulness and you will be condemned to a life without Him forever. If you have insulted the Holy Spirit who beckons and calls you, then you will be cast out. And as the writer reminds his readers, and us in verse 31 *"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* For God is living and not just some mere idol sitting on a shelf. A living God can be disobeyed, as well as being obeyed. A living God sees all, hears all, knows all. A living God is holy and pure and must judge disobedience, or this God would not be God!

How are you doing? Are you persevering by obeying God in every aspect of your life?

As 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians, we generally don't like to hear of God as Judge. Its just not the done thing to talk about it. We hear all the time that God is love. And it is true – God is Love. However, God is also a holy and pure God, and cannot abide sin or disobedience. Therefore, sin must be dealt with. He cannot arbitrarily forgive sin. The judgment and penalty of sin, which is death, was poured out on Jesus Christ. Therefore justice has been done, because God is just. By faith in Jesus Christ we are declared righteous as a free gift, and Christian Disciples are therefore justified. Nothing we can do could make us justified before Almighty God.

## **Part 2 – Do Remember! - Persevere by remembering (v32-34)**

Then to show his pastoral side, the writer goes on to tell them how to persevere. He tells them to persevere by remembering the day they received the light. By remembering how they have suffered and God delivering them. Remembering the public humility, insult and persecution – and how God was with them in the middle of it. Remembering how they stood with others who were maltreated because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Remembering how their earthly possessions were stolen from them and remembering they have new possessions both now and waiting for them.

How are you doing? Are you persevering by remembering back to the days of when you became a Christian – a follower of Jesus Christ? Can you see the evidence of how God has been transforming you under the New Covenant?

### **Part 3 – Hope Confidently - Persevere for reward (v35-39)**

Here the writer refers back to the writings of the prophet Habbakuk. When the going gets tough, God's people hold on in faith and trust that God will deliver them. He is saying that God's people are to live a life of hope and total confidence in Jesus Christ.

- Why? For a rich reward
- Why? To please God
- How is this reward gained? Persevering in a life of faith
- Who gives this reward? Jesus when He comes again.
- When? In a very little while

Therefore, verse 39 is an encouragement, not to fall back, but rather to continue pressing forward despite all opposition. Continue to believe and be saved.

How are you doing? Are you continuing to persevere for the reward that is set out for you to claim, own and possess?

So what does all this have to say to us, some 2000 years after the original recipients of this letter read it?

It tells us to persevere in obedience. How do we do this? We do this by persevere by remembering. Why do we persevere? We persevere for the reward.

And what is perseverance? Perseverance is a balanced relationship. If perseverance was left to us as individuals alone, we would fail. Perseverance is also the domain of God the Holy Spirit who lives inside you as part of God's work of continuous operation in your life as a believer in Jesus Christ. Perseverance is a work of divine grace that is begun in your heart, which is continued and brought to completion one glorious day. That is part of your reward and possession.

But there are other things that are your possessions and rewards. These rewards and possessions cover both the present and the future!

- As a Christian, you will never perish, and nobody or nothing can snatch them out of His hand (John 10v27-29)
- You have eternal life and you will not be condemned, passed from death to life. (John 5v24)
- God, who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1v6)
- You are shielded by God's power. (1 Peter 1v15)
- Nothing can separate you from God/Christ's love. (Romans 8v38-39)
- The Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2v19)
- Eternal life never depends on our feeble grip on Christ, but rather on His firm grip on us.

God's whole purpose for you is to transform you into the image of Jesus Christ. His purpose for you is to make you holy. This is where perseverance for you as a Christian comes in. God's purpose is for you to be totally obedient to Him, living a life of holiness. Your happiness is not God's primary motivation, but your personal holiness is. And if you are living a holy life, pleasing to God, then you have joy and happiness as well.

### **Perseverance of the Christian**

You are to keep your eyes focused on Jesus Christ, and be willing to obey God. As a Christian, persevere in your relationship with God. Obey Him and follow Him. Ask questions

humbly of Him and expect Him to answer, particularly if you don't understand something. Persevere in your prayers, your relationships with God and with other people. God will persevere with you, turning you gradually into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. God will not abandon you, but you are free to abandon Him. If you did abandon Him, He would still continue to call you back to Himself. Jesus Christ is to cover our entire life, permeating and being involved in every aspect. By doing so, this is showing an acceptance of Him, and not a rejection of Him. For when we sin and disobey in anyway at all, it is some form of rejection of Jesus as Lord of our life. The more you sin, the less sensitive you become to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. So when you realise you have sinned, be quick to humbly ask for forgiveness.

So I challenge you with this: if He who was without sin, became sin, for you, then you are to live a life worthy of Him and your status of freedom from sin in Jesus Christ. One day, Jesus is coming again. He will take your face in his hands and in the words of Revelation 21, will wipe the tears from your eyes, embrace you and you will be with Him forever!

That's if you would call yourself a Christian here today. But if you would not call yourself a Christian here today, then I would urge you to talk to one of the leaders about Him. Don't leave this building today, without talking to somebody else about Him. There are all sorts of excuses you can make for not accepting Jesus. I hear them all the time. I just need a little bit more evidence. I just need a little bit more of this or a little bit more of that. An example to disprove these kind of excuses is that of Judas Iscariot. He lived with Jesus Christ, ate with Jesus Christ, travelled with Jesus Christ, yet gave it all up for a short-term gain of money. For him, there was never enough evidence, even though he had all those experiences with the earthly Jesus Christ. There is no other way, no other sacrifice you can make, to ensure that you are will be in the presence of Almighty God – except through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. He will continue to call you and urge you to accept Him, until one day it will be too late, and your opportunities will have passed.