

**Hebrews 10:14-39**  
**(Ezekiel 18:1-4, 21-24, 30-32)**  
**“Do Not Throw Away Your Confidence”**

## **Introduction**

On this first Sunday of the New Year, we return to our study of Hebrews and come to a passage that has caused much anxiety and confusion among people who read the Scriptures faithfully and take them seriously. The plain and simple reading of the text might well leave us all doubting our faith and wondering whether we have any hope of salvation. Who among us has not sinned deliberately since becoming a Christian? And yet the author states that for those who sin “deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment” (10:26). Who among us has remained impeccably obedient since salvation, guilty only of sins of ignorance and omission? And this is not the first time that the author has warned his readers in such strong language:

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened ... and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt (6:4-6).

We 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians do not tend to warn one another in such strong and uncompromising terms. Grateful as I am for many aspects of the grace emphasis of the past several years and its exposure of the fallacy of legalism, we clearly have gone way past Scripture in refusing to confront unbelief and disobedience on the part of professing Christians. So we need to hear and understand such texts as this, perhaps more than did our parent’s generation that placed high value on holiness.

I believe that the author is describing three different groups among his hearers, three groups that are still found in every church today, and he address each group differently: To the first, he gives a word of encouragement, to the second a word of warning, and to the third a word of challenge.

## **Body**

**1. A word of encouragement to those who through faith follow Jesus, however imperfectly, in “the new and living way he has opened for us.” Their life trajectory is toward the Lord (10:19-25).**

- Let us draw near to God in full assurance of faith (10:22).*
- Let us hold fast the confession of our hope (10:23).*

- *Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works (10:24).*

**2. A word of warning to those who through presumption reject “the new and living way,” and continue pursuing the way that leads to death. Their life trajectory is away from the Lord (10:26-31).**

- *If we go on sinning deliberately and unrepentantly, we should expect God’s judgment, because we are turning our backs on “the new and living way that [Christ] has opened for us” (10:26, and see 10:20).*
- *If we treat Christ’s sacrifice with contempt, we should expect God’s Spirit to be outraged, for we have treated as something cheap and profane the blood Christ shed in order to make us holy (10:29).*

**3. A word of challenge to those who are wavering between these two ways (10:32-39).**

- *Look back, recalling the costly lessons of the past, the blessings and the joys of following Jesus in the hard places of life (10:32-35).*
- *Look ahead, recalling God’s promises to those who endure to the end, and his warnings to those who turn back (10:39).*

## **Conclusion**

The author has addressed each one of us and if, as we believe, this word comes not merely from the human author but from God’s Spirit, then it is crucial that we listen carefully, seek understanding, and respond with the obedience of faith. Our response, it seems from our text, is a clear indicator of whether or not we have yet begun to be transformed by grace. We all sin, and have a great high priest who intercedes for us. That is a major theme of this book. Thus we enter boldly into God’s presence to find forgiveness and grace.

But if we turn our back on the way of life, refuse Jesus’ call to follow him, and presume upon God’s grace as if it were a free pass to continue living as we lived before we met him – if we treat grace as not only free, but as cheap – then we should hear the warning that we are choosing to live outside the way of life, rejecting God’s sanctifying grace, and outraging God’s Spirit.

So for those of you who are wavering, struggling, still of two minds, look back upon what drew you first to Christ and of the sweetness of those days when you stood your ground in the face of whatever came. Look ahead to the fleeting nature of life and to the promises of God to those who, in Jesus’ words, “endure to the end” (Matthew 24:13). Then trust him, follow him. The way to life is open, and Jesus still calls to us today, “Come, follow me!”

© John M. Wood, all rights reserved