

Lesson 29
The False and the True
Hebrews 10:26-39

Most of the arguments that are hurled against the Christian Faith today are based on a caricature of Christianity which is a distorted view of the real thing. These strong attacks come against Christianity because men fail to distinguish between true Christians and false professing Christians. The Bible is very clear that there are people who think they are Christians and are not, and it is these mere professing Christians who give Christ and His Church such a bad reputation. However, once the world sees the real thing, it has little to say in opposition, even though it may not believe Christianity to be true.

The Book of Hebrews sets before us in a masterful fashion this true faith. It reveals to us clearly the difference between the false and the true, and we must learn to think discriminately through the issues of the wonderful book.

BACKGROUND

This is another section in the Book of Hebrews that deals with the subject of apostates. An apostate is one who at one time had a great knowledge of the Christian Faith and even made some external profession of faith, but later turned completely away from Christ and the Church. An apostate has never been saved but at one time he gave some outward evidences of real faith, but when he actually turned away, he flagged his colors and wanted nothing more to do with the Savior, indicating that he was never saved in the first place.

The author of the Book of Hebrews is trying to keep many of these professing Hebrew-Christians from abandoning Christianity and going back into Judaism. There were some who had already apostatized and left Christ to go back under the Law of Moses and the Old Testament ritual and sacrifices. ***“Not forsaking (abandoning) our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near”*** (Heb. 10:25). There were others who were contemplating this move back into Judaism because they could not take the persecution they were receiving as Christians from the unsaved world. The author is convinced in his own mind that the great majority of these professing Hebrew-Christians were genuinely saved but they were babes and had grown cold and indifferent to Christ. They are called “brethren” ***“Since therefore, brethren ...”*** (Heb. 10:19). However, the author is not really sure about the reality of salvation in the lives of a few of these professing Hebrew-Christians, and it appears to him that some of them are on the verge of apostasy. Therefore, the author takes time to expose the false from the true so that his readers might examine themselves to see if they are really saved.

THE FALSE - The Tragedy of Apostasy (10:26-31)

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth ...” -- What is the willful, terrible sin that has such awful results? It is the sin of apostasy. Some of these

professing Hebrew-Christians had a full knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, but they purposely turned away from the truth to go back into Judaism. The willful sin is a complete and repeated rejection of Christ and a permanent withdrawal from the Christian assembly. An apostate knows the true gospel of Christ but later repudiates the truth.

This willful sin is not just some ordinary act of sin by a Christian, for all Christians sin at times after they are truly converted to Christ. The present tense in the Greek means “to go on repeatedly sinning willfully” and this makes a long, continued attitude of resistance. This act is the sin of apostasy where one rejects repeatedly the claims of Christ and passes beyond a point where he can no longer be saved. This willful sin is never a sin of ignorance but a voluntary, presumptuous choice where one turns his back on Christ after giving evidence at one time of knowing Him. These professing Hebrew-Christians would not allow Christ to be Lord of their lives because they could not take the persecution from the unsaved world. What the writer is saying is that once that choice of apostates has been fully made (and this may take years), then there is no way back and this person will never be saved.

“... there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins ...” -- Christ is the perfect sacrifice for sins. He shed His blood once and for all and forever for sin and there is never a need for the shedding of another drop of blood. However, if a person totally rejects Christ, there remains no sacrifice for sins. This person will never be saved because he has willfully rejected Jesus Christ and His work for sin. He has placed himself outside the sphere of salvation. Christ’s death is sufficient to forgive any sinner, but an apostate will not avail himself of that sacrifice because of the hardness of his heart.

“... but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.” -- The apostate will most certainly experience the eternal wrath of Almighty God, no matter what his profession of faith may have been at one time. This “certain judgment” indicates a punishment of indefinable magnitude -- something that is inexpressible, inconceivable. God’s judgment is indescribable but it is certain, and it will come down upon all the enemies of Christ. If a man rejects Christ as God’s only sacrifice for sins, what alternative is left to God but to punish that person with the fires of hell for his sin!

“Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” -- The author argues from the less to the greater. In the Old Testament any person who rejected the Mosaic Law was stoned to death. His punishment was without mercy, but how much more severe will God’s punishment be to those who reject His Son, Jesus Christ? To repudiate the Mosaic Law brought physical death, but to reject Christ in this life will bring eternal death in the next life.

God is as much wrath in the New Testament as He is in the Old Testament. In fact, He is more jealous for His Son than for the Law of Moses.

These apostates were guilty of three sins against the three members of the Holy Trinity:

“Trampling under foot the Son of God” -- They have disdain for God the Father who sent the Son of God to be the only sacrifice for sin. They have utter contempt for Jesus Christ and then trample Him under in their thinking. An apostate spurns the Son of God and the God who sent Him. An apostate does not want Christ to be Lord of his life and he refuses to give Christ the right to govern his life. His deliberate and willful act of rejection makes him a hater of Christ.

“And has regarded as unclean (common) the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified” -- An apostate mocks the blood of Christ and considers it merely a common blood with no more power to save than the blood of any human. He profanes the blood of Christ and says that Christ’s blood is not the only way to get to heaven.

An apostate once professed faith in Christ and outwardly he appeared to be sanctified or set apart to God. It appeared that he was saved and washed in the blood of Christ, but later he rejected the whole Christian Faith and thought it a hoax, myth and a fairy tale.

“And has insulted the Spirit of grace” -- An apostate has outraged the Holy Spirit. The wooings, pleadings and convictions of the Holy Spirit concerning Christ and His salvation work are continually rejected by an apostate.

An apostate sins against the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and his judgment is deserved, certain and waiting for him. He will not escape. Anyone who refuses to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ over his life and also refuses the work of Jesus Christ for his sin is on the verge of apostasy. How terrible to fall into this sin. How tragic to pass a point in one’s experience where he might never be able to be saved!

“For we know Him who said, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.’ And again, ‘THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” -- Now the author quotes from Deuteronomy 32:35, ***“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay”*** God will judge every rebel to the Lord Jesus Christ for He knows the human heart. God alone has the sovereign right to inflict punishment upon His creatures, and His judgment will fall fairly upon all. The author then quotes from Psalm 135:14, ***“The Lord will judge His people.”*** There are many in this world who claim to be the people of God. They may be baptized, have their name on a church roll or even attend church regularly, but God will judge those who profess to be His people, for He alone knows for sure the true from the false. Those who have the externals of Christianity without the reality of Christ shall be judged. God knows who are Christians and who are churchmen, who have regeneration and not just religion. God looks into our hearts to see if we have true saving faith in Jesus Christ. Rejecters of Christ and apostates God will judge. Remember, it will be a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God at the day of judgment. We can fool men as to the reality of true saving faith, but we can never fool God! His judgment will be fierce and fearful.

This is a warning to all Christians to persevere in the Faith, to push on in Christ-like living, so that they may prove and demonstrate with their lives that they are genuine believers in Christ.

Once a fairly new convert to Christ said to me, “Through an understanding of God, Christ and

the Bible, I am becoming a God-fearing man.” He understood what it meant to fear God as well as love Him.

THE TRUE - The Triumph of Faith (10:32-39)

“But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings ...” -- The question in the minds of these professing Hebrew-Christians would be, “How can I know if I am an apostate? How can I determine whether I am true or false?” Notice carefully that the author does not turn to doctrine *per se* for evidence of genuine saving faith but good works and the enduring of suffering for the cause of Christ. The mark of real Christians is the Lordship of Christ. They follow Christ at great cost to themselves.

The author takes his readers back to when they were first converted, when they were initially enlightened by the Holy Spirit to the reality of Christ. It was in these early days they suffered much for Christ and they triumphed through them. There was evidence that God had really worked in their lives. Their early Christian years were marked by love and joy and hope, despite hardships and persecution. Now there was great need in their lives to continue to push on in the Faith and to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ that it might be evident to all that they were genuine believers in Christ.

“... partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations ...” -- These professing Hebrew-Christians were mocked and ridiculed by the unsaved world for their faith in Jesus Christ. They suffered much for their stand for Christ, but this is the mark of a true Christian. **“And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”** (2 Tim. 3:12). Christians will be exposed to public contempt, scorned and reviled by this world, and we will never be popular with the great majority of people in this unsaved world.

“... and partly by becoming sharers with those who are so treated.” -- These Christians had become sympathizers and sharers with other Christians who were being persecuted for their faith in Christ. They were willing to suffer with and for their brethren in Christ.

“For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.” -- When these Christians lost face in the community, when their “properties” were seized, their jobs lost and their businesses ruined, they rejoiced for they knew they were suffering for Christ which was an evidence of true, saving faith. They clearly understood that their security did not lie in carnal, earthly things but in heavenly realities. They were occupied with eternal things, not earthly things! Their loss of earthly things was merely a pledge of a greater heavenly reward. These Christians had a treasure that time could never take away.

When tragedy comes upon a Christian, he has a great opportunity to be a witness to the world. The world acts a certain way when suffering comes, but when they see Christians rejoicing in suffering and not complaining, they are stunned and know that there is something different about a Christian.

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.” -- Since these

Hebrew-Christians endured so much suffering for Christ in “former days” they were exhorted not to throw over their faith in Jesus Christ now. They had at one time triumphed over the pressures of the Christ-opposing world, but now they must continue to triumph. However, many of them were weak and immature believers and some had grown cold and indifferent to Christ. They were about to yield to the temptation of leaving Christianity and going back into Judaism. The author reminds them that their continual confidence in Christ through perseverance would bring them the reward of eternal life.

Christian, we must never stop believing in Christ; we must always keep on keeping on; we must continue to push on in Christ, for the end of our perseverance is eternal life.

“For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” -- In the Christian life there are crosses to bear, burdens to carry and hardships to endure, and especially as one takes his stand for Jesus Christ. The road to heaven is sometimes rocky but it always leads to life eternal. The promise of eternal life is to those who persevere or endure and not to those who are traitors to Christ and apostatize from the Faith.

Does your way often seem hard, difficult and lonely as you are exposed to the reproach of others? Do not despair, do not give up! God is with you and at the end of all your sufferings and tribulations is the reward of eternal life. Furthermore, it has been planned by God that Christians should suffer for Christ, for in so doing our faith is strengthened.

“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations; knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope ...” (Rom. 5:3-4).

“Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Pet. 4:19)

“FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY” -- This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:3 to point out that Christ is coming to judge all men and at that time He will clean house in the professing church. Rejecters, false professors, phony Christians and apostates will experience the scathing wrath of Almighty God, but true believers will be surrounded in His love and granted eternal life in all of its fullness.

“BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH ...” -- This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4 to show how important it is for the righteous of God to exercise continual faith in perseverance. This quote is found in three places in the New Testament. In Romans, the emphasis is upon the “righteous one” who is declared righteous by God through faith in Christ. In Galatians, the thrust is upon “shall live,” for by faith is the only way to live if one is going to combat legalism and human works as means of salvation. But in Hebrews the attention is focused upon “by faith,” for it is essential and necessary that true believers persevere in Christ by faith.

If through all hardships, scourgings and mockings, a Christian continues to persevere by faith

(even through sometimes he will miserably fail and other times make a poor showing) he shall see Jesus and have the reward of eternal life.

“...AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.” -- This again is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4 to prove that God has no pleasure in traitors or turncoats. When a person has full knowledge of Christ and repeatedly turns from Him, he will apostatize and God will not save him because he continues to reject Jesus Christ, God's only provision for sin and sinners.

“But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving (possessing) of the soul.” -- The author was convinced that he and the great majority to whom he was writing were true believers. They would not shrink back to eternal destruction as apostates, but they would push on in the Faith and persevere, possess or save the soul.

No true Christian can apostatize and every true Christian will persevere in the Faith. Without perseverance there is reason to believe there is no salvation. However, true Christians push on in Christ through their pilgrim journey on earth.

CONCLUSION

A true Christian is one who has received Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior and seeks to follow Christ in this life. A true believer has a changed heart and a new nature that gives him desires for spiritual realities. However, a false Christian is one who has not truly received Christ and has no real desire to follow Him because his heart has never been changed by the supernatural new birth that comes from God.

Are you true or false? Do you have Christ or church? Have you experienced religion or regeneration? Are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation or are you trusting in your own good works? You can never be a true Christian until you have trusted wholly in Christ to save you from sin. Have you made that step of faith towards Christ?