

BEWARE OF GOD'S WRATH - PART 2



What They Once Were

Finally, the writer describes these casualties of God's wrath not just in terms of what they had become, but in terms of WHO THEY WERE BEFORE THEY STARTED WILFULLY SINNING - which makes their condition so much more guilty.

The text mentions three characteristics of such people:

1. They had *received a knowledge of the truth.*
Verse 26: *"²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,*

These casualties of wrath who trample the Son of God know the truth. We will all be judged in proportion to the amount of light and truth available to us. These people had received the gospel. They were walking away from Christ in the broad daylight of truth.

2. They are described, surprisingly to our ears, as part of "God's people." To explain what is happening in the divine vengeance the writer says in **verse 30b**, *"The Lord will judge his people."*

This seems to mean that the writer *sees the visible church - the external church - the way he saw the Old Testament people of God* - they are a *mixed group*. Some of "God's people" will be saved, and some from "God's people" will be lost.

For example, in **Ezekiel 34:17**, God says

¹⁷ *"As for you, my flock [= the people of God, the external church], this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats.*

As Paul says in **Romans 9:6**, *"Not all those from Israel are Israel."*

(The Judgment of Charity) In other words, in the Bible, the phrase "church" or the phrase "my people" or "God's people" refers, in the "Judgment of Charity" to all who have either, in the Old Testament, by virtue of being born Jews, or in the New Testament, by virtue of having become part of the visible church, are treated as God's people. And every biblical writer knew, all God's people weren't saved.

That's the way this writer seems to be thinking. This is very important for understanding the language he uses and the way he warns.

Externally, he calls the church the "people of God." He calls them brothers - even "holy brothers" - **giving the benefit of the doubt to any who has professed faith in Christ.** But he knows that the visible church and the true church of God's elect are not the same. There are many hypocrites.

And, as this text shows, many of these eventually become visible by "willfully sinning" and forsaking the gathered body (see verse 25).

3. Finally, the most controversial of all is in verse 29 he says that these casualties of God's wrath were **"sanctified."** **Hebrews 10:29**

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, ...?*

In What Sense Were They "Sanctified"?

Now this third description is very controversial. And I do not claim infallibility for my own interpretation. But I commend it to you as consistent with the rest of the book and the rest of Scripture, I believe. Three main interpretations:

1. One view Some take it to mean that you can be truly born again and justified by faith, and consequently, sanctified - and yet be finally lost and destroyed by throwing away your faith.

And there is no eternal security and this text proves it, they would say. Because it says here that these apostates had been "sanctified." Which is on the other side of new birth and justification. So new birth and justification guarantee nothing. This is one very common viewpoint.

2. Second. Others say that the *possibility* raised here of sanctified people committing apostasy will, in fact, never happen, because those who are truly elect and born again will be kept from apostasy by the work of the Holy Spirit. *It is only a theoretical possibility.* So no sanctified people ever do, in fact, apostacize. And this prospect in Hebrews 10:26-31 never happens. The elect take heed to the warning and

persevere in faith and holiness.

That's not my view either. I cannot escape the implication that the writer really believes that this happens.

So the question become whether or not is verse does jeopardize eternal security, and if not, why not?

The first of these I think to be untenable in view of *I do not believe that this verse does jeopardize eternal security, for one reason, because of what this writer says elsewhere* (and what the rest of the New Testament teaches about the security of the believer in Christ).

In **Hebrews 3:14** he says, *"For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end"* - meaning that if we do not hold fast to the end, then we "had not become a partaker of Christ." Failure to persevere in faith is not a sign of losing salvation but of never having been a partaker of Christ. Perseverance to the end is a sign that you have become a partaker, lack of perseverance is a sign you have not.

And, more importantly, 15 verses earlier, in this same chapter (10:14), he says, **Hebrews 10:14**¹⁴ *because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (sanctified)."*

Now there's a verse to put against v. 29 and puzzle with. I'm glad they come from the same book and even the same chapter, because unless you willing to say that the author can't remember what he just said 15 verses earlier, you have one verse that says those who are sanctifies are *made perfect forever* and one verse that says they had *been sanctified* and are now targets of God's wrath on the way to hell!

What are we going to do with that? Is this double talk?

3. So the third view (my view) I conclude that the sanctification of verse 29 is not the same as the sanctification of verse 14. The one proves eternal perfection (verse 14) and the other

The sanctification of **v 14** proves a genuine united heart to Christ proves great guilt after apostasy (**verse 29**).

What could it be? What is this sanctification in v.29, after which you can be lost? It's really not hard to explain from the Bible, or from this book or from this Hebrew church's experience. What is this fruitless sanctification? Here's what I think.

It means a "religious" separation from the world and "outward" purification that often happens when a person becomes part of the visible church (like Jesus said, when you cleanse the outside of the cup).

Where you come under the influence of truth in preaching and teaching, Sunday after Sunday. They come under the influence of love among the saints. They come under the influence of the ordinances and even eat and drink the sacred emblems of Christ's body and blood.

They feel the blowing of God's Spirit of grace and taste his wooing and winning influences.

And in all of this, they are 'visibly set apart' from the world - sanctified the way the people of Israel was sanctified among the nations, even though many of them were faithless.