

## Hebrews 10:26-31 A wonderful warning

Proposition: Never forget HE was the last and only necessary sacrifice.

### **Hebrews 10:26-31**

#### **Contemporary English Version (CEV)**

***<sup>26</sup>No sacrifices can be made for people who decide to sin after they find out about the truth. <sup>27</sup>They are God's enemies, and all they can look forward to is a terrible judgment and a furious fire. <sup>28</sup>If two or more witnesses accused someone of breaking the Law of Moses, that person could be put to death. <sup>29</sup>But it is much worse to dishonour God's Son and to disgrace the blood of the promise that made us holy. And it is just as bad to insult the Holy Spirit, who shows us mercy. <sup>30</sup>We know that God has said he will punish and take revenge. We also know that the Scriptures say the Lord will judge his people. <sup>31</sup>It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God!***

Now I hope that you are all feeling relaxed and encouraged after that reading.

I say that as a tease. This passage is heavy isn't it and it seems a bit out of place with everything else we have been reading in the book of Hebrews. We have read that Jesus; God the Son is the full and complete and final revelation of God, that is, He is the perfect revelation of God and there will be no new prophets or revelations that can add to salvation through Jesus.

We have read that Jesus is our High Priest who has gone before us leading us into the holy of holies. That He is understanding and has been tempted by all the stuff that we have but has never sinned.

We have read that we are to come boldly before Him in our time of need and that He will help us.

It's been such encouraging reading but now we just read

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Over the years there have been a lot of publications about funny wording in newsletters and funny signs.

One of the funniest church signs I think is this one.

It was a sign that was placed on the boundary of a convent in Santiago.

It read

**Absolutely NO TRESPASSING!**

**Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law!**

- The sisters of Mercy



This passage seems a little like that to me. The letter has all been about grace and our high priest Jesus, come on in, He understands, your sins are covered by His sacrifice then;

No more sacrifices for sin. Don't insult the Holy Spirit and watch out unless you fall into the hands of an angry God.

It doesn't sound like the same letter does it?

This is one those passages that satan can twist in our minds. Because we have all wilfully sinned at some point since we were baptized, does that then mean we are all stuffed there is no way back, that you and I are going to fall into the hands of an angry God?

I want to suggest to you that a warning sign can be interpreted in two different ways. This passage is a warning sign no doubt but how should we respond to it.

### **A WARNING CAN BE INTIMIDATING OR IT CAN BE INVITING**

When we lived at Raetihi occasionally you would get a weather warning, snow is coming and the roads will be icy; caution. Now for me who had to travel daily up to National Park that was intimidating and I had better be careful today. But to the young people of that area who loved to snow board that warning was inviting. There's snow coming, temperatures are dropping, awesome.

My nephew who is about 12yrs old loves sharks. He has shark books, he knows a lot about them. He is impressed with them.

Years ago Juliette and I were on the Gold Coast visiting my brother there and I saw a really horrible, intimidating sign. It's said something like don't swim here – sharks. It sent a shiver down my spine and yet if my nephew Jared saw that sign, he would want to stop, ask locals questions and see if he could spot one in the surf.

The sign would intimidate me but be inviting to him.

A lady sits down to have her hair cut and permed and styled, she spends \$100 on the treatment and just before she leaves the salon she hears over the radio; Caution, there will be strong gusty winds all over Auckland today. Oh no she cries in terror. The young man sitting next in line for a number 2 haircut who is a kite surfer hears the same message and punches the air in excitement.

This passage, if understood in its context IS consistent with the rest of the book.

You will recall if you have been studying with us that the letter to the Hebrews was a letter written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to a church full of Christians who were all ethnic Jews. They had come out of Judaism, had accepted the good news about Jesus being The way The Truth and The life but now were tempted to go back and kind of marry Christianity with Judaism and just to be sure that their sins had really been forgiven, to cover all bases they were now considering sacrificing some bulls and goats and lambs etc.

In the same way today some people say I believe in forgiveness through Jesus but just to be sure I will go to confession as well, I will make some promises or some pledges as well, I will do some penance or knock on doors or do some good work as well, just to be sure that my sins really are

forgiven. I want to cover all the bases. I want to show God that I am really serious. I have to do something to put things right with God other than just asking for forgiveness and receiving it. They want to add religion, and rules and their own efforts to what Jesus has accomplished on the cross for them.

Hebrews 10 tells us that when those times come and they often do when you feel that you are not good enough, that you are not holy enough; when you become very aware that you are nothing like almighty God; when those times come we are told not to turn your back on what Jesus has done for you on the cross, don't say I need to do some sacrificing and some self-punishment, I need to somehow do more than just accept what Jesus has done for me.

***<sup>26</sup>No sacrifices can be made for people who decide to sin after they find out about the truth.***

There is no need and nothing can be achieved by sacrificing bulls and goats after you have sinned. There is no need because Jesus was the final, the perfect and the complete sacrifice.

God is always saying, repent, stop it and come back to me and I will forgive and forget it because Jesus already took the punishment for that sin.

However when you turn your back on what Jesus accomplished for you and I on the cross and start saying, I have got to confess this, and sacrifice that, and knock on doors as well in order to be forgiven. Then you will anger a loving and merciful God. Then He will say to you that you are dishonouring the blood of His Son and insulting the Holy Spirit who shows us mercy. The person who says I have to make it right through my own energy and efforts, I have to follow these rituals, wear holy underwear, knock on doors or do things to earn my forgiveness; that sort of a person could fall into the hands of an angry God.

Jesus' death for you and me has got it covered, God just wants a humble and repentant heart and those sins will be remembered no more.

There is a story that has been around in Christian circles for decades that illustrates what Jesus has done for you and for me.

One day a loving dad picked up his three year old boy to take him to work with him for the day. The little guy had his hat on and his lunch box packed and he was so excited about spending the day with dad. Now this boy's dad had a really cool job. His dad sat in an office that operated a drawbridge over a huge river. Dad knew this job inside out and had been doing it for years. Dad's office was surrounded by windows that looked out to the drawbridge he operated, it was right alongside the railway that went over the drawbridge and it also overlooked the great river. So all day his dad would be watching ships and boats passing through the gap when the draw bridge was up, and several times a day dad would pull all these levers and lower the drawbridge so that trains could go over. Dad didn't look at the train schedules, he knew them all and he just loved his job and his son.

On this particular day he went to work with dad and it got off to a great start.

Just like he imagined it would be. As the day progressed dad got engrossed in watching the boats passing through the gap that he didn't notice that his son had slipped out of the room and was exploring. Suddenly a train sounded its whistle in the distance and dad knew he had to drop the

drawbridge and to do it really fast. This train was an hour early and had plenty of passenger carriages. As he reached for the levers he noticed that his son wasn't in the office. He frantically looked around him, went out the office door and looked around. Down amongst the giant gears that operated the drawbridge he could see his three year old playing. He yelled and screamed for his son to move but the boy seemed to not hear him. Hundreds of lives were at stake, he had seconds before the train would crash. What would he do? Save the train and lose his son or save his son whom he loved so much and lose the lives of hundreds of strangers. With hands trembling, lip trembling, tears streaming down his face dad grabs the levers and lowers the drawbridge for the train to pass over. His actions certainly killed his little boy. The drawbridge goes down just in time for the train to pass over safely.

Many of the passengers wave to the bridge operator, the dad, as the train passes over the river. They have no idea what He has done for them. No idea what a huge price that He has paid for their safety. They are oblivious to the great sacrifice, the love that the dad had just shown a bunch of strangers.

The old story has got some obvious parallels.

The Father in Heaven did allow His Son to die so that we could cross over the river of eternity from hell to heaven. John the apostle says that Jesus not only paid the price for our sins, but He paid the price for the sins of the whole world. Jesus got nailed to a cross so that everyone could be saved but many in this world are just going by happily, waving unknowingly, not even realizing what has been done at great cost for them.

There is one real flaw with this allegory though and it is this. The dad in the story was caught by surprise and had to make a tragic decision.

In reality God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit made a decision that Jesus would take the punishment for our sins and God in fact chose to send Jesus as it were to the gear box, to have him pinned to Calvary's tree.

Mums and dads, who love your children so much, consider this. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are closer than any relationship we know of on earth. How hard would it have been to agree to send Jesus to be crushed on Calvary for comparative strangers many of whom would never even acknowledge what they had done?

God sent His son to take the punishment we deserved so we can cross over into heaven. How dare we say that what he did was somehow insufficient or inadequate? How dare we say that we need to show that we are really sincere by offering this sacrifice or by doing these things or by making that promise? We are trampling on the body of Christ and we insult the Holy Spirit if we try to add to His finished work.

Even though each of us is becoming more like Him and our lives more holy there will be times when we willingly sin (hopefully few and far between) but when that happens know this. There is still nothing that can be or needs to be added to what Jesus achieved on the cross for you and me. It is finished and if you dare to turn your back on what He did only then will you fall into the hands of an angry God.

This is a wonderful warning, its inviting. It's freeing. God is warning us not to go back to religious effort or religious exercises, not to whip ourselves over our failures but just to turn from then and accept what Jesus has achieved for us. Just celebrate your salvation.

Do this in remembrance of me 2 times.

When you take the cup and eat the bread, remember me.

Remember what?

Your sin? No remember His sacrifice.

Be depressed and guilty about your inadequacy?

No celebrate His sufficiency.

Do this in remembrance of me.

The Lords table, the love feast, the communion service is not another sacrifice to get us forgiveness. The communion service is a reminder that nothing else can be done, that nothing else needs to be done. Remember ME.

We are free!

***Hebrews 10:17-22***

***<sup>17</sup>Then I will forget***

***about their sins***

***and no longer remember***

***their evil deeds."***

***<sup>18</sup>When sins are forgiven, there is no more need to offer sacrifices.***

***Encouragement and Warning***

***<sup>19</sup>My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place <sup>20</sup>by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ himself.***

***<sup>21</sup>We have a great high priest who is in charge of God's house. <sup>22</sup>So let's come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let's keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water.***

This morning as the PowerPoint plays we are going to pass communion to one another. Can you say these words as you do "God's grace is sufficient for you"?

Take time to consider what JESUS has done for you and take the bread and the cup in your own time.