

Victoria Ave/Emmanuel Baptist

Sunday, June 7, 2020

Hebrews 10:26-35

Warnings from Hebrews #4 – “Avoiding “DELIBERATE” Sin!”

It seems that for most of my “occupational” life, I have worked with people. I started with my first job at a Radio Shack in retail sales. I worked during my college years as a server at restaurants. I proceeded to work as an admissions counsellor for a seminary, recruiting graduate students and advising them on fields of studies and courses to take. Finally, I became a pastor.

People who know me well would more than likely characterize me as sensitive (those who intimately know me might say that I can be too sensitive, needing to grow a thicker skin in some circumstances).

As a child, all I generally needed was a sideways glance of disapproval from my parents to put me back in line. A cross or disapproving word would often reduce me to tears.

When I was in grade 5 or 6, I learned a valuable life lesson. I attended a small Christian school in Nova Scotia. Our class was actually made up of three different grades with one teacher. In my grade, there were 3 or 4 students and our desks were lined one behind the other in a row. The only other boy sat in the desk directly behind me. The problem was the we both had the same name, “Ricky.”

Our teacher was a wonderful lady who helped me immensely. She was fair but strict. At times she would address individuals or the class in the necessary harsh tones. At times she would talk sharply to “Ricky” – the other one. My problem was that because he sat directly behind me and even though I knew I had done nothing wrong; I would get upset for a time when MY name was used. It wouldn’t last for long, but for a child it was upsetting (it was also at that point that I started using my full name “Richard” to differentiate between us).

My parents taught me a lesson that I use to this day and try to teach my own children. When the teacher chastised...I needed to ask myself if I was guilty! If I

knew I had done nothing wrong, then I had nothing to worry about. If I knew I was guilty of an attitude or action that was being addressed, then I needed to listen and change.

In 1 Peter 2:12 we are told to live in such a way that even if we are accused of doing wrong, our behaviour would tell a different story.

Today we have the harshest warning yet. It is severe, it is controversial, it is powerful.

Let's read it then we'll see how it applies for us today! Hebrews 10:26-35:

²⁶ Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. ²⁷ There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. ²⁸ For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and despised the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. ³⁰ For we know the one who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back."

He also said,

"The LORD will judge his own people."

³¹ It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³² Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. ³⁴ You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and

when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.

³⁵ So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.

As I said a moment ago, this warning is controversial today. As with our last warning in Hebrews, many writers, scholars, and preachers often argue something called "once saved, always saved." The question of "can a true Christian lose their salvation?"

Today I want to take a different slant on the warning. As a Christian, rather than worry about the possibility of losing your salvation, I want you to focus on living your life and faith in such a way that you know the warning does not apply to YOU!

This warning is a wake-up call to the believer to draw closer and closer to Jesus daily. If we are doing this, we don't have to worry about the negative consequences. Christianity is not meant to be some type of cosmic daisy! **God loves me – He loves me not! God loves me – He loves me not! Whew...He loves me!** We can KNOW our relationship with God is solid, healthy, and growing...but that takes WORK!

Our faith is not a spectator sport. It is meant to be a hands-on, full contact, participation activity. I shake my head when I run into people who will state, "my faith is a personal thing between God and myself." NO IT IS NOT! Faith was never meant to be private – it was meant to be shared.

How can we live knowing we will not have to face God's wrath? We worship, we serve, we learn. We take all the opportunities we have to grow. The apostle John tells us in John 20:31:

³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by

believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

How do we have assurance of our salvation? IT IS WRITTEN! That calls for study. 2 Timothy 2:15 clues us into this:

15 Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

We need to make sure that we don't lose sight of the fact that God is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14). He does not want to share our loyalties. Some have questioned whether the warning is hypothetical – perhaps God is just trying to shock us...He has no intention of punishing us. God is not an “empty threat” deity.

I love history. History is a blessing that has been given to us to learn how to love and serve God and how to love and serve the world, starting with our neighbours and going out from there. The author of Hebrews uses example after example from their shared history.

Hebrews 10:26-31 is the warning against “deliberate” sin against God. An action against God that is willful, planned and purposeful. This is not a random sin of a believer. It is a willful rebellion. As the author states: one who has “trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as a unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him...”

Just before this section, we learn about Jesus' sacrifice, His blood that was shed on the cross was the catalyst that allows us to enter into God's presence. Jesus' sacrifice made all other sacrifices obsolete. To turn you back on God is to reject the ONLY way to Him.

We are given a history lesson. The author reminds us of those who rejected God and died in the wilderness instead of entering the rest offered to them in the Promised Land.

Then we are called to remember! REMEMBER our earlier relationship with Jesus. REMEMBER how we stood strong against trials and persecution. REMEMBER!

The warning is **real!** The greatest temptation to our faith is our own lack of preparation...our own diligence. Resist the temptation that our relationship is **good enough.**

The world is ready to drag you away from Jesus. You cannot live in both worlds and you cannot serve the world's agenda and the will of God! Are you ready to do the work you need to stay close to Jesus and not need a harsh warning!