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If We Deliberately Keep On Sinning, No Sacrifice For Sins is Left

The Fifth Warning - 10: 26-39

The Danger of Apostasy: Apostate Jews

If we deliberately keep on sinning no sacrifice for sins is left DIG: According to the passages in Deuteronomy, what were to be the consequences for committing apostasy and encouraging others to do so as well (Deuteronomy 13:13-18, 17:2-6)? What is the unforgivable sin? Can the unforgivable sin be committed today? What are the six causes of apostasy that the writer of Hebrews warns his readers about? How would you define “deliberate and willful sin” in today’s language and with modern examples? If those Jews to whom the author was writing habitually reject Jesus in favor of sin, what did they forfeit (see verse 26 and 6:4-6)? What could they expect instead (see verse 27, 30 and 31)? What would be the basis of their guilt (see 4:12-13)? After such a dire warning how does the author appeal to previous testing, present actions, and future events, all to encourage the Hebrews in the diaspora?

REFLECT: Who is the apostate in your circle of friends or acquaintances? How do you treat them? How do they treat you? Are they on your “Ten Most Wanted” prayer list? Are they subtle about their disdain for YHWH or do they mock Him openly? Have you earned the right to be asked a question about God from them? If you were caught at a coffee shop without your Bible, could you lead them to the Lord? Why not? How does God want you to respond? Do you live your life with a sense of urgency for the Lord? Do you say to yourself, “There is so little time!” I must visit that shut-in. I need to use my spiritual gifts more often. I need to read my Bible more. I must be about my Father’s business! Why or why not? What can you do about that this week.

This is the last of **five warning passages** (to see link click [Ag](#) - The Audience of the Book of Hebrews), and is by far the most serious and sobering. It deals

with **apostasy**. There we discover that **unbelievers** had been associated to some extent with the Messianic community. **Their** hearts had been warmed toward the gospel of **Messiah**, and **some** had made a superficial commitment to **Him**, but **their** enthusiasm was cooling because the persecution **they** were experiencing. As a result, **they** were in danger of becoming **apostate**.

When **unbelievers** are confronted with the gospel, only two responses are possible. **They** either believe and are saved, or they refuse to believe and become **apostate**. **Apostasy**, as we will see, is the **sin** of rejecting the gospel for which there is no forgiveness. **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us (First John 2:19).**

There have always been **apostates (Deuteronomy 13:13)**. Sha'ul, Isra'el's first king, became **apostate (First Samuel 15:11)**. Moreover, Amaziah, king of Judah, also turned from following **the LORD (Second Chronicles 25:14-15, 27)**. So **apostasy** is nothing new, nor is **Ha'Shem's** attitude toward it. It is the most serious of all **sins** because it is the most **deliberate** and willful form of unbelief. It is not a **sin** of ignorance, but in rejecting known truth. Judas Iscariot is, of course the classic apostate. No other **unbeliever** had ever been exposed to **Messiah's** truth, love, and grace as did Judas. But he rejected the truth and became **apostate**. Today there are those who say, "I would probably believe in **Christ** if I had just a little more proof, a little more light." But Judas had the perfect proof, the perfect light, and the perfect example. For some three years he lived with **the Truth**, and yet, he turned his back on **Jesus**. There is never enough proof for **unbelief**.²⁷⁹

The nature of apostasy: Apostasy is an intentional falling away from the gospel. There are **people** who move toward **Jesus**, right up to the edge of salvation. **They** hear of **Him** and **they** are drawn to **Him**. **They** are perhaps deeply convicted of **sin** and may even make a halfhearted profession of **faith**. But **their** interest in the things of **YHVH** begin to wane, and the pressures and attractions of **the world (First John 2:15-17)** distract them further, until **they** have no interest at all. **They** may turn to another religion or no religion at all. **Apostasy** is determined by what you leave, not where you go after you leave. After **a person** leaves **ADONAI**, it really makes no difference where **he** or **she** goes (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Et - The Parable of the Soils**).²⁸⁰



The characteristics of apostasy: If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left (10:26). Here is the most concise scriptural definition of **apostasy** - **receiving the knowledge of the truth**, that is, the gospel, but **deliberately keep on sinning**. Apostates have seen and heard the truth, **they** know it well, but they willfully, **deliberately** reject it. Therefore, **apostasy** has two major characteristics: knowledge of the truth of the gospel and the willful rejection of it.

The Greek language has two primary words that can be translated **knowledge**. *Gnosis* has to do with ordinary knowledge, and in the B'rit Chadashah is often used for general spiritual knowledge. But *epignosis*, the word used in **verse 26**, signifies full **knowledge**, understanding, and discernment. In other words, **the people** described here are those who had much more than a passing acquaintance with the gospel. **They knew** it well. **The apostate** has all the information and lacks nothing intellectually. **He** is among those who **have once been enlightened . . . tasted of the heavenly gift**, had been around when **the Ruach HaKodesh** was around, and **had tasted the word of God (6:4)**, but still didn't believe. **Apostates** are reared, almost without exception, within the Messianic community or church.

Eventually even after years of pretense or self-deception, **the unbeliever** who acts like a believer, falls away. **He** gives up, gives in, loses interest and goes **his** own way. **He** reverts to **sinning deliberately**, with no more regard for the **ADONAI'S** way or **ADONAI's** people. To **know God's way**, to study about **it** and hear about **it**, to identify with believers, and then to turn away from **it** is to become **apostate**. The process of falling away may be gradual, but at some point a conscious decision is made to leave the way of **the LORD**, and reject the saving grace of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.

The Greek word for **deliberately** (*hekousios*) carries the idea of willful intention

that is habitual. These are not sins of ignorance or weakness, but to those that are planned out and done with forethought. The difference between sins of ignorance and sinning **deliberately** is much like the difference between involuntary manslaughter and first-degree murder. *Hekousios* is habitual. It is not only **deliberate**, but it's an established way of thinking and believing. It's the permanent rejection of the gospel and the forsaking of **God's** grace.²⁸¹

We cannot always determine who is **apostate** and who is merely backsliding (see the commentary on **Jude Ah - Godless People Have Secretly Slipped In Among You**), and we should not try. It is difficult to distinguish between a disobedient carnal believer and an **apostate unbeliever**. We should never judge people, but we should be **fruit** inspectors. In the last analysis, **the fruit** will show **a tree** for what it is, because **every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit (Matthew 7:17)**.

The causes of apostasy: But why would a person who knows the gospel, who saw **the Light**, who even experienced many of the blessings of **the Ruach HaKodesh**, ever reject such a wonderful gift? In one sense, there is always just one answer . . . **deliberate** unbelief. Following our own will, often has no other reason except that's what we want to do! But in another sense, there are a number of things that strongly influence a person to turn his back on **God**, that stimulate his desire to deny his **Creator**.

Persecution: What may drive a believer closer to **the Lord** will likely drive an **unbeliever** further from **Him**. The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay. Whenever the congregations of **God** are persecuted, **the faithful** become stronger and **the faithless** flee from the things of **ADONAI**. **They** do not have the strength or desire to pay a high price for something that means so little to **them**. When the persecution is severe, **the apostate** will not only leave **the faithful** but will often join the persecutors: **Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other (Matthew 24:9-10)**.

False teachers: False teachers will also cause their share of **apostasy**. In the same passage in **Matthew**, **Yeshua** says: **And many false teachers will appear and deceive many people (Matthew 24:11)**. Persecution frightens unbelievers away from the truth, whereas false teachers lure them away. It can discourage or corrupt any believer who is too immature to recognize and deal with falsehoods, or too

sinful to resist them. But a true believer will never be led to deny our **Lord** because of false teaching, no matter how unbiblical or persuasive it is. True believers may deny some biblical truths because of false teaching; but the only person whom false teaching will cause to deny **Yeshua** is a person who never belonged to **Messiah** in the first place (**First John 2:19**). When **unbelievers** get “fed up” with the gospel, **they** can usually find someone who will tell **them** what **they want to hear**. **For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear (Second Timothy 4:3).**

Temptation: **Apostasy** is sometimes triggered by temptation. The things of this world become more attractive and more influential than the things of **God**. These **apostates** are the **rocky soil** hearers in **Luke 8:13**, who are attracted to the gospel for a while, but who are then tempted away from full commitment. Whether the temptation is in the form of many small ones over a long period of time or of a very strong one that comes on suddenly, they do not have **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** inside of them to be able to say “no” to **sin**, and as a result, they reject the gospel.

Neglect: A **person** can put off deciding for **Christ** for so long that **he** loses the opportunity. Not to decide for **Yeshua** is to decide against **Him**. If you have paid for a flight to New York and you never get on the plane, you’ve missed your opportunity. Such a neglectful **person** may never persecute believers. **He** may not publically, or even consciously, deny **Messiah**. But by continually resisting the gospel, **he** takes **his** stand against **Yeshua** and **his** neglect moves **him** along the pathway to **apostasy** (see [Al](#) - **How Shall We Escape If We Ignore So Great a Salvation**). To make no positive decision for **the Lord** is to decide against **Him**.

Clinging to old thinking: Hanging on to an old life-style can eventually bring a person to apostatize. Many of **the unbelieving Jews** addressed in this book were in danger of clinging to **their** old way of thinking. **Their** belief in the Levitical priesthood was a great hindrance to them. Not only could it not bring **them** salvation, but it had actually become *a barrier* to salvation. False religion can become so habitual, so much a part of a way of thinking, that to give it up seems impossible. It would be like cutting off part of **their** body, **their** very life. **Yeshua** knew how difficult such a break with the old way of thinking could be, but **He** warned nevertheless: **If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Matthew 5:29).** Religious

tradition has long been one of the greatest barriers to the gospel and one of the foremost contributors to **apostasy**.

Forsaking the fellowship of other believers: Another cause is **neglecting to meet with other believers (Hebrews 10:25)**. The best place for a strong influence toward **Messiah** is to be in the company of other believers. Once someone has been exposed to the truth of the gospel, the worst place they can be is away from true believers.²⁸²

The results of apostasy: If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left (10:26). The first result of **apostasy** is that **the apostate no longer has a sacrifice** that can atone for his **sins**. As a result, **he** is beyond salvation. The only **sacrifice** that can bring a person into the presence of **ADONAI** is the **sacrifice of Messiah's** blood in the B'rit Chadashah. If **Christ's sacrifice** is rejected, then all hope of salvation is lost. Opportunity is gone, hope is gone, and eternal life is gone. Apart from **Yeshua**, everything worthwhile is gone. The ineffective, repeated Levitical sacrifices would soon disappear (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt - The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on Tisha B'Av in 70 AD**). The only effective **Sacrifice** has already been made, it was made only once. To turn away from **His sacrifice** leaves **no sacrifice**; it leaves only **sin**, the penalty for which is eternal death.

But only a fearful expectation of judgment and of "raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" (Hebrews 10:27 quoting Isaiah 26:11). The second result of **apostasy** is greater **judgment**. The greater the **sin** the greater the **judgment**. **Ha'Shem** sees the one who knows the truth and walks away from it, as **an enemy** an adversary whose judgment will be **fearful**. In explaining the parable of the Weeds to **His** apostles (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Fa - The Parable of the Weeds Explained**), **Jesus** said: **They will throw** those who reject the offer of salvation **into the blazing furnace (Matthew 13:42a)**. **Fire** causes the greatest pain known to mankind, and **the blazing furnace** into which sinners are thrown represents the excruciating torment of hell, which is the destiny of every unbeliever. **The fire** of hell **never goes out (Mark 9:44)**, is **eternal (Mattityahu 25:41)**, and is finally seen as a **fiery lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 19:20c)**. The punishment is so fearsome that **the Ruach HaKodesh** describes it as a place **where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42b)**. Hell will not be a place, as some jokingly envision, where the ungodly will continue to do their thing while the godly to theirs in heaven.

It's not a "to each his own" thing. Hell will have no friendships, no fellowship, no camaraderie, no comfort, and no hope. **The great dragon** will not be king of hell, but its number one prisoner. There will be no pleasure in hell of any kind, only torment **day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10)**.

Anyone who rejected the Torah of Moshe is "put to death" without mercy "on the word of two or three witnesses" (Hebrews 10:28 CJB quoting Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15). Think how much worse will be the punishment deserved by someone who has trampled underfoot the Son of God (10:29a CJB) Yeshua told Pontus Pilate: "The one who handed Me over to you is guilty of a greater sin (John 19:11). Judas' sin was greater than Pilate's. He had trampled underfoot the Son of God. Both were unbelievers, but Judas was apostate. He had light and evidence far greater than what Pilate had, and was therefore far more guilty in his betrayal. Jesus also made it clear that judgment, like guilt, is in proportion to sin (see the commentary on The Life of Christ He - The Parable of the Watchful Servants). Far from being more tolerant of sin today, Ha'Shem is less tolerant, because now mankind has immeasurably more light (Acts 17:30-31).

Think how much worse it will be for someone who has treated as an unholy thing the "blood of the covenant" (quoting Exodus 24:8) that sanctified them and who has insulted the Spirit, the giver of grace (10:29b). The apostate regards Messiah's blood as common blood, just like that of any other person. That which cost God His Son, and that which cost the Son of becoming sin for us, is counted as worthless. By trampling underfoot the Son of God, the apostate rejects God the Father. By regarding the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, he rejects God the Son. And by insulting the gentle, gracious leading of the Ruach, the apostate rejects the Spirit. No wonder he deserves much severer punishment.

For the One we know is the One who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," and again, "ADONAI will judge His people" (Hebrews 10:30 quoting Deuteronomy 32:35-36). It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31 CJB). Ha'Shem is long suffering, patient, loving, and infinitely gracious, not wanting that anyone should perish (Second Peter 3:9). But for the one who turns his back on the grace of ADONAI, there is nothing left that God can offer or do for him. Only judgment remains.

The deterrents to apostasy: But remember the earlier days, when, after

you had received the light, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. Sometimes you were publicly disgraced and persecuted, while at other times you stood loyally by those who were treated this way. For you shared the sufferings of those who had been put in prison. Also when your possessions were seized, you accepted it gladly; since you knew that what you possessed was better and would last forever (10:32-34 CJB).

The author of **Hebrews** obviously knew a great deal about **the people** to whom **he** was writing. **He** was aware of **their** deep involvement in the Messianic community. **They** were so closely identified with the believers there that **they** even shared in their **hard struggles, sufferings** and **persecutions**. To the world, and certainly to their fellow Jews in the synagogue, **they** appeared to be one of them. **They** were not believers, but had already **suffered** for being considered one of them. At this point, the persecution these **unbelievers** had suffered had not been severe enough to drive **them** out.

It is possible, even for an **unbeliever**, to be attracted to **Christ** at first. **They** were knowledgeable of the gospel. But knowledge is no substitute for **faith**. **They** were on **their** way to believing, but had not yet stepped over the line from knowledge to **faith**. **They** had not trusted in the gospel, but neither were **they** ashamed of it. **They** had been somewhat ridiculed, **persecuted**, and even had **their possessions** seized because of **their** association with the Messianic community. At that time, **their** association seemed worth **the struggle**, so those problems had not yet caused **them** to turn away. So **they** are told to remember how far **they** had already come, and what **they** had endured, and to complete the process by putting **their** full trust and **faith** in **Yeshua Messiah**. **So don't throw away that courage of yours, which carries with it such a great reward. For you need perseverance; so that, by having done what God wills, you may receive what He has promised (10:35-36 CJB)**. Because **they** had not trusted in **Christ**, they were in danger of falling back into **apostasy**, from which **they** could never return. **They** had learned too much and experienced too much to have any excuse for not believing.²⁸³

The warning and appeal end on a positive note. The writer seems confident that some of those to whom he was pleading would believe. **For "there is so little time! The One coming will indeed come, He will not delay. But those who are righteous will live their lives by faith, and if they shrink back, I will not be pleased with them" (Hebrews 10:37-38 CJB quoting Habakkuk 2:3-4 CJB)**. However, we are not the kind to shrink back and be destroyed; on



the contrary we keep trusting and thus preserve our lives (10:39 CJB)!

God honors us with the freedom to choose where we spend eternity. And what an honor it is! In so many areas of life we have no choice. Think about it. You didn't choose your gender. You didn't choose your parents. You didn't choose your race or place of birth. Sometimes our lack of choices angers us. "It's not fair," we say. It's not fair that I was born in poverty or that I sing so poorly or that I run so slowly. But the scales of life were forever tipped on the side of fairness when **God** planted a tree in the garden of Eden. All complaints were silenced when Adam and his descendants were given free will, the freedom to make whatever eternal choice we desire. Any injustice in this life is offset by the honor of choosing our destiny in the next.²⁸⁴