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Sermon Notes

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A Terrifying Warning to Apostates

Hebrews 10:26-31

The date was July 8, 1741; the place was a small town in Connecticut named Enfield. The regular preacher was unable to preach, and so a substitute preacher stepped into the pulpit. The man happened to be Jonathan Edwards, the greatest pastor-theologian in American church history. The sermon he preached that day was entitled “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” almost certainly the most famous sermon in American history. It is a sermon that has been collected in anthologies, even of American Literature. American high school students study it, usually not with any kind of sympathy or open-minded view.

The text of the sermon was Deuteronomy 32:35

Deuteronomy 32:35 It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them.

The central doctrine of the sermon was this:

"There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God; and that God is incensed at their sin."

Yes... that was the text and the doctrine; but the title of the sermon comes from our text today...

The concept of “Sinners in the HANDS of an ANGRY God” comes plainly and directly from Hebrews 10:26-31

The text says that people who go on willfully sinning after receiving a knowledge of the gospel have nothing to look forward to but

Hebrews 10:27 a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

And at the end of the text:

Hebrews 10:31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

So there is all is... SINNERS in the HANDS of an ANGRY GOD

That sermon made Edwards infamous rather than famous... modern sensibilities are offended at the topic and Edwards's careful and thoughtful handling of it. But John Piper has asked some very insightful questions about that sermon, and the topic that is in front of us today:

He said that Edwards shuddered to the depths of his soul over the concept of the wrath of God depicted in Scripture. In Revelation 19:15 it says

"[Christ] will tread the wine press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty."

Edwards commented:

The words are exceeding terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is "the fierceness and wrath of God! The fierceness of Jehovah! O how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them?"

John Piper stares into the passion of Edwards and into the biblical truth he sought to capture concerning the wrath of God against sinners; then Piper turns and faces Edwards's sneering critics who hold him up to ridicule in High School literature classes.

What high school student is ever asked to come to grips with what really is at issue here? If the Bible is true, and if it says that someday Christ will tread his enemies like a winepress with anger that is fierce and almighty, and if you are a pastor charged with applying Biblical truth to your people so that they will flee the wrath to come, then what would *your* language be? What would you say to make people feel the reality of texts like these?

Edwards labored over language and over images and metaphors because he was so stunned and awed at the realities he saw in the Bible. Did you hear that one line in the quote I just read: "Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them?" Edwards believed that it was impossible to exaggerate the horror of the reality of hell.

High school teachers would do well to ask their students the really probing question, "Why is it that Jonathan Edwards struggled to find images for wrath and hell that shock and frighten, while contemporary preachers try to find abstractions and circumlocutions that move away from concrete, touchable Biblical pictures of unquenchable fire and undying worms and gnashing of teeth?" If our students were posed with this simple, historical question, my guess is that some of the brighter ones would answer: "Because Jonathan Edwards really believed in hell, but most preachers today don't."

In today's text in Hebrews 10:25-31, we come face to face with the terror of a wrath-filled, omnipotent God... a God who takes vengeance on His enemies... a God who

focuses like a laser beam the white-hot indignation of His wrath on human beings who have offended Him

This picture of God is not a popular one... it is frequently denied by theologians and pastors who seek to tickle the ears of soft, 21st century people who want only good news and never bad... this picture of God is repulsive to many, psychologically damaging, the experts say...

But the question in front of us is, “Is it TRUE???” Does the God who actually exists, the God who actually created the universe, the God who actually sits on a heavenly throne ruling the universe, the God who will someday sit in judgment on every human being that ever lived... does the God who REALLY EXISTS actually have an deep passionate wrath against human sinners

The Bible says He does... the passage we are studying today says that He does... And frankly, if that is the truth, if God is really this way, then a commitment to love and truth REQUIRE that I preach this text exactly the way that it has come down to us

Context: The Author is writing to Jewish people who had made an outward profession of faith in Christ, but who were now under intense persecution, tempted to forsake their profession of Christ and go back to Old Covenant Judaism.

The Author has for 9 ½ chapters poured out reasons why this would be a terrible mistake; he has shown plainly the superiority of Christ over all others... Christ is the Son of God, who created and sustains the universe; the Son is superior to angels, to Old Testament prophets, to Moses, to Joshua, to Aaron, Levi, even to Abraham... So also Jesus brought a superior Covenant, the New Covenant... at the center of this was a superior priestly ministry—as our Great High Priest, He offered His own blood once for all in heaven, not animal blood again and again in an earthly tent

These overpowering truths lead to a series of exhortations that sum up what God wants them to do

Hebrews 10:19-25 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- Let us draw near to God
- Let us hold on to our hope

- Let us stay actively connected to the church

Having given those positive encouragements and commands, he then turns to warn them if they should refuse to obey. In so doing, he gives us a powerful dose of reality... the reality of God's wrath against those who, for a time, embraced God's grace in Christ, but who then turn away from that grace and trample over Christ to get back to a life of sin

I. The Terrifying Reality of God's Wrath

A. Hebrews is Rich With God's Grace in Christ

1. Beginning of the Book

Hebrews 1:3 After [Christ] had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

2. The End

Hebrews 13:20 ... the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep

3. Again and again throughout... God rich grace to sinners by the shed blood of Christ is the central theme

Hebrews 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 8:12 I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

B. Hebrews is Also Powerfully Clear About God's Wrath Against Sinners

1. Hebrews 2:3

Hebrews 2:3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

2. Hebrews 3:11

Hebrews 3:11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.

3. Hebrews 6:8

Hebrews 6:8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

C. Our Text: Clearest Description of God's Wrath in the Book

1. Beginning, Middle, and End

- a. beginning

Hebrews 10:27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

- b. Middle

Hebrews 10:28-29 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished

- c. End

Hebrews 10:30-31 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

2. Legal Description: "Judgment": verse 27

- a. The wrath depicted here is a JUDGMENT by Almighty God
- b. It is based on His unerring righteousness, His perfect knowledge of everything we have ever said or done
- c. The issues here arouse God's righteous judgment against the sins listed here

3. Emotional Description: "Fury of a fire"... resulting in Terror

"fury of a consuming fire"

- a. The words are overwhelming... an intensification of language to give us a sense of the greatness of the thing itself
- b. The word "fury" = "zeal" God's burning passionate zeal for His own glory, and especially the zeal the Father has for the glory of the Son
- c. He is INCREDIBLY ANGRY at people trampling His Son underfoot and treating His sacred blood as a common thing... He does not have a mild reaction to that... it makes Him incensed!!
- d. We've already seen this ZEAL in Hebrews

Hebrews 1:13 To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

Hebrews 10:13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool

- e. This BURNING ZEAL on the part of God the Father was prophesied in the OT

Isaiah 9:7 He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Psalm 2:1-10 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ³ "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." ⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. ⁵ Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ⁶ "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." ⁷ I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." ¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

f. Jesus spoke of it... and warned the Jews who were so disrespectful to Him that God would judge them for it

g. This EMOTIONAL DESCRIPTION reasonably results in TERROR on the part of sinners

“a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire...”

- i) The word “expectation” means that this person has growing within himself a terror of his impending judgment
- ii) As he looks ahead to the future, unlike the joyful expectation of HOPE and of eternal reward, this person has the exact opposite... he can look ahead with terror
- iii) Sometimes this actually happens... terror right before death

Josef Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, was an eyewitness to her father's death and described what happened to that cold-blooded murderer:

“The death agony was terrible. God grants an easy death only to the just. He literally choked to death as we watched. At what seemed like the very last moment he suddenly opened his eyes and cast a glance over everyone in the room. It was a terrible glance, insane or perhaps angry and full of fear of death... Then something incomprehensible and terrible happened that to this day I can't forget. . .He suddenly lifted his left hand as though he were pointing to something up above and bring down a curse on us all. The gesture was incomprehensible and full of menace. . .The next moment, after a final effort, the spirit wrenched itself free of the flesh.”

Thomas Paine

"I would give worlds if I had them, that The Age of Reason had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! ... No, don't leave; stay with me! Send even a child to stay with me; for I am on the edge of Hell here alone. If ever the Devil had an agent, I have been that one."

Sir Thomas Scott: "Until this moment, I thought there was neither God nor hell; now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty!"

Sir Francis Newport, the head of an English atheist club: "You need not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in His presence! You need not tell me there is no hell. I feel myself already slipping. Wretches, cease your idle talk about there being hope for me! I know I am lost forever! Oh, that fire! Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!"

Voltaire: --- "I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life." (He said this to Dr. Fochin, who told him it could not be done.) "Then I shall die and go to hell!"

(Voltaire's nurse said: "For all the money in Europe, I wouldn't want to see another unbeliever die! All night long, he cried for forgiveness!!")

iv) Sometimes that terror doesn't happen

Thomas Edison, an atheist—his final words were: "It's very beautiful over there!"

Truly God HIDES HIMSELF!! However, Hebrews 10:27 speaks very plainly of a

"Fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

"Expectation" is something in the MIND... an emotion... a sense of certainty about what the future holds

4. Physical Description: a consuming fire... literally devoured by the fire (BUT NOT ANNIHILATED!!!)

a. Again and again, hell is depicted as a raging FIRE

b. The word fire gives a sense of the agony of hell's torments... it is no mere metaphor, but the experience will go infinitely beyond anything we can describe

D. A Punishment Worse Than Death!!

1. The Author uses a "how much more" argument

Hebrews 10:28-29 *Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot*

2. Throughout the epistle, the Author speaks of the SUPERIORITY of the New Covenant to the Old... Christ is better than the prophets, the angels, Moses, Levi, Abraham, and Aaron; the New Covenant sacrifice is better than the Old
3. Also in Scripture, judgment is based on knowledge... the more we KNOW, the more we are responsible for

Luke 12:47-48 *"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*

4. So... if someone has been thoroughly trained in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and rejected it... they are worthy of the greatest possible punishment
5. How much MORE SEVERELY do you think a person DESERVES to be punished the author says
 - a. The Law of Moses mandated DEATH with NO MERCY
 - b. The MORE SEVERE punishment has to be worse than death!!

E. The Root of God's Wrath: His Holy Character, His Sovereign Position

Hebrews 10:30-31 *For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

1. His Holy Character
 - a. We Know Him who said...
 - b. God cannot lie... everything God has said He will do He WILL MOST CERTAINLY do
 - c. God keeps His promises... AND His threats
2. His Position: Vengeance is MINE says the Lord
 - a. It BELONGS to God to take vengeance for sin

- b. In Romans 12, the emphasis is on human beings NOT taking vengeance, for “Vengeance is mine” says the Lord, so don’t take revenge but leave room for the wrath of God
- c. But in Hebrews 10, the emphasis is on the CERTAINTY of God taking vengeance
- d. This is especially PERSONAL; God the Father is zealous for the glory of God the Son
- e. The apostasy described here is a personal affront to Jesus... and to the Holy Spirit
- f. God has PROMISED to repay this sin with His holy wrath... and HE **WILL REPAY!!!**

II. When Does God Display This Wrath?

- A. The Root Cause is... SIN!!! (Of course)

Hebrews 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning

- B. But... Christ’s Sacrifice is Sufficient for any Sin; this sin seems to be the Unpardonable Sin
 - 1. The shedding of Christ’s blood is obviously sufficient for any sin
 - 2. A sin for which an atoning sacrifice has been made is ATONED FOR
- C. God Pours Out His Wrath When... “There is no longer any sacrifice for sin”
- D. When there is “No longer any sacrifice for sin”
 - 1. Animal sacrifice is obsolete... and was NEVER effective in removing sin
 - 2. Christ’s sacrifice is perfectly sufficient for any sin... but it is not for these people
 - 3. The issue has to do with a category of people who have experienced the grace of the Gospel and TURNED AWAY from it
 - 4. For those people, there is “no longer any sacrifice for sin”
- E. In the Old Covenant, this penalty was reserved for those who REJECTED the Law of Moses... not merely sinned
 - 1. The penalty of death was associated with many sins in the Old Covenant

2. BUT the death penalty was especially connected with apostasy from the Covenant itself... by pursuing other gods

Deuteronomy 13:6-11 *If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷ gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), ⁸ do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. ⁹ You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. ¹⁰ Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹¹ Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.*

3. So also here, we are dealing with those who have rejected God's final sacrifice for sins...

III. For What People Is there No Longer a Sacrifice?

A. Who Are They Now?

1. Going on willfully sinning

Hebrews 10:26 *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left*

- a. The Greek verb tense gives the sense of a habitual, continual commitment to sin
- b. It is SO VITAL that you realize this is NOT referring to particular sins of the flesh with which we may struggle; it is NOT referring to some habitual lust, or pattern of laziness, or lack of self-control in eating, or some problem with anger

Matthew Henry: This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls; they have been ready to conclude that every wilful sin, after conviction and against knowledge, is the unpardonable sin: but this has been their infirmity and error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ, the only Saviour,-despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier,- and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this after they have known, owned, and professed, the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously.

- c. This is not some "surprisal" as the Puritans used to call it; some temptation that suddenly comes on you in a moment of weakness and shatters your defenses

- d. No... this is a DELIBERATE LONG-STANDING rejection of Christ and everything He stands for
- e. The word translated “deliberately” means “voluntarily, willfully, of one’s own accord”; this is a cold-blooded decision to hate Christ and turn away from Him as a settled and final decision of life

2. Enemies

Hebrews 10:27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

- a. The Author uses this word powerfully here
- b. This person is now an ADVERSARY... an ENEMY of the living God
- c. It is impossible to trample Jesus and have God as your friend; you trample Jesus, God is your personal enemy
- d. How terrifying is that? To have omnipotence against YOU??

3. Trampled the Son of God underfoot

Hebrews 10:29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot

- a. A vivid picture of total rejection

In the movie “Amadeus”, the villain in the story is a composer named Salieri who is tormented by Mozart’s clearly superior gifts as a composer; he is stunned by the perfection of Mozart’s music, but feels absolutely morally superior to Mozart himself; so he is angry at God for giving such a gift to such a despicable person. At a climactic scene, Mozart’s wife, pressed to desperation to seek financial help from Salieri, brings some of Mozart’s unpublished new pieces for a possible appointment to a position. Salieri reads the music and is stunned by the incredible notes floating off the page into the ear of his mind. Enraptured by the music but inwardly tortured, he lets his arms fall limp, and all the sheet music falls to the ground. His wife says “Is it not any good?” He says to her, “It is miraculous!” She answers brightly, “Oh, then you’ll help him get the position?” He glares angrily at her, and treads underfoot the music as he stalks off. The next scene shows the cold hearted Salieri burning a crucifix as an enemy of God.

The symbol of treading something underfoot is one of total rejection.

- b. To trample someone underfoot means you utterly despise them
- c. But note who is being “trampled underfoot”: the “Son of God”
- d. This is HIS gospel: Jesus Christ IS the gospel... to reject the gospel is a direct and personal affront to Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Illus. When we were in Japan, we visited the site where Japanese Christians in the 17th century had been martyred by the Shoguns. They were led to a place of tortuous death, and were shown a medallion with the face of Christ. The medallion was placed on the ground. They were commanded to tread the medallion underfoot and speak words of total renunciation of Christ while they did it. Anyone who did this would be spared. Anyone who refused was burned slowly to death. No true Christian at that time in Japan would ever have done this... they died rather than trampling the image of Christ underfoot.

Now... that is a time of extreme testing... but the people in this passage trample the Son of God underfoot deliberately and willingly... from the heart

e. What will His Father do???

4. Treated as a common thing the Blood of Christ

- a. The NIV says “UNHOLY”... but the word is more like “common”
- b. The idea is that this person no longer thinks there is anything special about the blood of Christ... it’s just blood, the same as the blood of any other criminal executed by the Romans
- c. This person no longer sees the blood of Christ as “precious” (as Peter calls it)... valuable, of infinite worth; the most powerful substance in the history of the human race; having a cleansing power and a restoring power; having the power to turn away the wrath of God and bring wretched sinners into heaven
- d. The author calls it the “blood of the covenant”... this person has turned his back on the only way of salvation, the covenant of salvation that God provided through the blood of the cross of Christ
- e. Perhaps it relates to the Lord’s Supper as well... there we celebrate by faith the shedding of the blood of Christ;

Matthew 26:27-28 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

this person drank judgment on himself because he looked on it as nothing more than grape juice and an empty ritual... he drank and walked out and embraced sin

5. Insulted the Spirit of Grace

- a. The focus here is the Holy Spirit of God; sometimes called the “Spirit of truth” but here the “Spirit of grace”

- b. He is called the “Spirit of grace” because He is the sovereign and effectual mediator of God’s grace in Christ Jesus; He works invisibly and powerfully to APPLY the effects of Christ’s blood; by working in other people through their gifts—gifts of evangelism, miracles, prophecy, healings, preaching/teaching—the Holy Spirit was powerfully at work in their midst

Hebrews 2:4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

- c. The idea is that the Spirit was powerfully active in their assemblies, testifying to the truth of the gospel, ministering the “grace of God in its various forms”
- d. BUT... these people have “insulted the Spirit of grace”; The Greek word implies a sense of outrage caused by contempt

John Owen: referred to Ananias and Sapphira who were killed by God for “lying to the Holy Spirit.” Owen asks: “If lying to the Holy Ghost is so great a sin, what is it to make the Holy Ghost a liar?”

So... when the gospel of Christ was preached, the Holy Spirit supported it with amazing miracles; these people insulted that Spirit of grace by saying the gospel was NOT TRUE

So... that is what these people are NOW... going on intentionally and willfully in sin, adversaries, trampled the Son of God underfoot, treating as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant, and insulting the Spirit of grace

B. What Were They Then?

- 1. Received a knowledge of the truth

Hebrews 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left

- a. These were people who had heard clear Christian proclamation... the clear exposition of the gospel and some careful doctrinal instruction besides
- b. AND had “received it”... they had at one point been favorable to it
- c. This is a sin against KNOWLEDGE... they had heard the gospel plainly and were now turning their backs on it

- 2. God’s people

Hebrews 10:30 "The Lord will judge his people."

- a. This may be stunning to us... but it ought not to be

- b. The clear implication is that the church of the New Testament, that meets in various places around the world in the name of Jesus Christ for public worship, are “God's people” in the same way that the Jews in the Old Testament were “God's people”
- c. God had openly associated Himself with the Jews... they bore His name and His reputation in the world; so it is today with the church
- d. BUT it is abundantly clear that, simply to be a Jew in the Old Testament era did not save you from God's judgment; and neither does going to church today
- e. This explains Peter's statement:

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

3. Sanctified

Hebrews 10:29 who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him

- a. This is the most controversial of all the statements
- b. But the author is clearly saying that the blood of Jesus Christ in some way “sanctified” the apostate... the person now rejecting Christ was sanctified???
- c. “sanctified” means set apart as holy, set apart as special unto God

C. How to Understand Apostasy... “Sanctified” Then, On their Way to Hell Now???

Three possible options

- 1. That truly justified, sanctified people can later sin their way out of God's grace and lose their salvation. But then, there is absolutely NO SECURITY of salvation... and justification doesn't mean what we thought it meant—namely, the declaration by God the judge of complete forgiveness of sins based on the imputation of Christ's righteousness
 - a. Deeper: in Hebrews 10:14, the Author speaks of people saying that if they are sanctified they are “MADE PERFECT FOREVER”...

Hebrews 10:14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

the author wouldn't suddenly change his mind and say that people sanctified LIKE HE MEANS in verse 14 can later be made not perfect at all, but worthy of hell

b. Hebrews 3:14 says that truly justified people make it all the way to the end

Hebrews 3:14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

2. That this is merely a hypothetical case... this could never really happen, but it just serves as a warning to us all; but the text doesn't really read that way. It sure seems like God really will take vengeance on some people based on this
3. More likely, "sanctified" in verse 14 means something different than it does in verse 29
 - a. In verse 14, it means that God has worked a transformation from the INSIDE out... the person is set apart as holy in their hearts by regeneration
 - b. In verse 29, it means that this person was part of God's sacred people, set apart by the blood of the New Covenant, especially in the ordinances (baptism and Lord's Supper), and is now turning away from what made him a part of that sacred assembly
 - c. So... is it possible for someone to be internally transformed, regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God and made a new creation, and then to turn away from that and lose their salvation?? NO WAY!!
 - d. BUT... is it possible for someone outwardly to associate with God's holy people, the church, partake in the church's life—hearing the word preached, partaking in the benefits of the Holy Spirit's ministry, and openly associating with God's people—and then fall away from that and end up in hell? ABSOLUTELY YES!!!

IV. Clear Warning for Us All

A. Be Terrified of Sin:

1. Sin is lethal... we never know when we are sinning beyond our own ability to repent genuinely
2. Every step away from warm, loving obedience to Christ and healthy association with His holy people is a step toward apostasy
3. We can NEVER sin confidently, as though sin can have no impact on us

B. Preaching: Comforting the Afflicted and Afflicting the Comfortable

1. Take the Proper Medication:

- a. If you are a genuine Christian, you truly yearn to please Jesus, and the sin in your life is the most grievous thing you deal with every day
- b. You yearn for holiness and righteousness and hunger and thirst for it
- c. If you should stumble into sin and violate your conscience, it doesn't mean that this passage was written for you!!
- d. BUT if you are more and more comfortable with sin, more and more annoyed by the disciplines of bible reading and prayer, more and more irritated by Christian fellowship... be WARNED!!!

C. Understand and Weigh the Danger of Apostasy

D. Meditate on the Terrors of Hell

E. Look Back one Passage for Clear Applications

- 1. Daily esteem the greatness of Christ's provision for you
- 2. Nurture your confidence (full assurance of faith)... BE IN THE WORD
- 3. Draw near to God (IN PRAYER and WORSHIP; and in THOUGHT LIFE)
- 4. Protect the sincerity of your heart
- 5. Keep your conscience clean... AND allow the blood of Jesus to cleanse it
- 6. Live a clean lifestyle
- 7. Feed your hope in the future glory
- 8. Stay actively involved in a good church: encouraging and being encouraged
- 9. Keep focused on the coming Judgment Day

F. Go Look for Straying Sheep

- 1. We are to WARN each other consistently
- 2. We are to ENCOURAGE each other consistently