

Hebrews 10C (2014)

- The word “patience” is an interesting word
 - It sounds good to our ears, because it describes an act of kindness
 - Patience is the act of letting an offense pass by unnoticed
 - Patience means giving grace by showing consideration to someone who deserves something less
 - But patience also implies a limit, doesn’t it?
 - To call someone “patient”, is to say they could be responding differently than they are
 - It suggests that sooner or later, their patience may run out
 - And so the word is so interesting, because though it sounds good now, it carries the potential for unpleasant things in the future
- The Bible says the Lord is patient and long-suffering in withholding His judgment against sin
 - He is patient not only toward the unbeliever, but also for the rebellious saint
 - But sooner or later, in both cases, His patience runs out
 - For the unbeliever, the Lord’s patience expires at the death of their body
 - As we learned earlier in this study, everyone is appointed to die once, and then comes judgment
 - But, this principle is also true for the believer
 - The Lord is patient in withholding His judgment against us for our disobedience to His Word
 - Clearly, the consequences of our rebellion are very different than those for an unbeliever who lives in rebellion to the Gospel itself
 - Nevertheless, there are consequences

- And when the Lord's patience runs thin, we will experience the discipline of the Lord
- Even more sobering, we may face the prospect of diminished eternal reward at our judgment, especially if our life was one of significant rebellion
 - The Apostle John warns us of this potential, when he says:

2 John 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

- We may put at risk what we have gained in the past through future rebellion
- So while we rejoice in the grace we've received from our patient Heavenly Father, let's not overlook that His patience has a limit
- This is where we find the writer's thoughts this morning, in our study of Hebrews
 - He has reached his fourth warning of his letter, where he addresses the consequences of his readers returning to a life of false worship under the Old Covenant
 - In Chapter 10:19-25, which we covered last week, the writer issued three "Let us" exhortations
 - These commands directed the believer to stand firm in their new-found faith in the blood of Christ
 - To continue in their confession of hope in the resurrection of Christ
 - And to continue gathering with the New Testament Church, rather than forsaking this gathering to participate in other, false observances under the Law
 - But what might happen to the believer who fails to heed this teaching?
 - What are the consequences for spurning the Lord Who died to save us?
 - How will He respond to the believer once His patience runs out?
 - The writer now issues the fourth warning to address these questions

[Heb. 10:26](#) For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

[Heb. 10:27](#) but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

[Heb. 10:28](#) Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

[Heb. 10:29](#) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

[Heb. 10:30](#) For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

[Heb. 10:31](#) It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- The writer begins by naming a certain group of Christians, specifically those who go on sinning willfully
 - What does it mean to go on sinning willfully?
 - First, notice it's expressed as a continuing action, one that has begun and doesn't end
 - The writer is referring to a Christian who runs after something sinful and doesn't come back
 - Secondly, in this context, the sin he's worried about must be that of abandoning the New Covenant and returning to life under the Old Covenant worship practices
 - These are Jewish Christians who, because of their immaturity in the knowledge of Christ and Christian doctrine, have wavered in their confidence
 - And at some point, they have returned to seeking God in the comfort and familiarity of the Jewish sacrificial system
 - In a word, they have become apostate
 - This sin was willful, because they have made a deliberate choice against what they had been taught
 - The writer says they received the knowledge of the truth
 - They knew the apostles' teaching on the New Covenant

- They knew that Christ was the only sacrifice they needed
- Yet, as the writer said back in Chapter 5, they weren't able to discern good from evil, because of their spiritual immaturity
- So they have become apostate, though they remain a child of God by grace
- But, this warning applies equally to other situations today, where Christians are sinning willfully
 - Anytime a believer choose to live in ways that are contrary to their profession of faith, they are also at risk
 - For example, if a Christian abandons his Christian walk for worldly pursuits, they are sinning willfully
 - If he or she stops assembling with other Christians, stops studying the Bible, stops praying, stops living for Christ...
 - Then, such a person is also testing the patience of the Lord
 - Or if a Christian adopts a lifestyle or a pattern of behavior that is contrary to doctrine and teaching and good witness
 - Like a Christian, who chooses to live a homosexual lifestyle or engages in fornication as a regular routine, is sinning willfully
 - Or a Christian who is routinely dishonest, routinely violent, routinely ungodly
 - Or a Christian who lives in slavery to addictions or lusts
 - These are all willful ways to sin, and all risk exhausting the patience of the Lord
- So what do you think becomes of the slave who lives in disobedience to his Master?
 - For such a person, the writer says there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins
 - He's referring to the sacrifices that were performed under the Old Covenant, so he can draw upon a principle found in the Law
 - In the Law, there were certain offenses like murder, adultery, blasphemy and others, that were not covered by a sacrifice

- The Law of Moses made no provision for the person who intentionally committed one of those sinful acts
- You couldn't show up at the temple with a certain number of animals to absolve yourself from that sin – the only remedy under the Law for those offenses was death
- The writer calls this "setting aside the Law of Moses" in v.28
- He means ignoring what God had instructed in the truth of His Word
- So if a Jew crossed one of those lines, they knew their penalty would be very severe
 - In v.27, the writer said anyone who traded obedience under the Old Covenant for a life of willful disobedience faced a terrifying outcome
 - He mentions a fire that consumes God's adversaries
 - That's a reference to Numbers 16, where a group of men was consumed by fire from Heaven for crossing one of those lines
 - Therefore, the writer asks in v.29, what should we expect if we forsake the New and greater Covenant?
- There are some choices and decisions that may lead us into shipwrecked faith
 - Walking away from our faith community, or bankrupting our personal testimony, is a crisis in our relationship with the Lord
 - The writer says it's like trampling Christ under our feet
 - In the east, the sole of the foot is an offensive and degrading symbol
 - To trample something or someone means to treat them with utter contempt
 - Secondly, when we follow other gods, we regard as unclean the blood of the Covenant
 - To worship in any other context, besides the New Covenant Church, means we believe the blood of Christ is common, without power or significance

- Instead, we seek the power of God elsewhere
- Christians who join in pagan rituals, new age practices or other cults, are taking immense risk that a jealous God will continue to withhold judgment in patience
- Finally, we are insulting the Spirit of grace
 - The Spirit of God continues to live within us, even when we run after false worship or engage in a lifestyle of persistent sin
 - So when we sin in these ways, we drag the Spirit along with us
 - We insult Him by taking the enlightenment and empowerment He has granted us and throwing it away
- When we act in these ways, there is no get-out-jail-free card, no act we can perform (like a sacrifice) that will reset the past
 - Of course, our sins are forgiven by the blood of Christ
 - We will never experience the penalty that sin demands, which is the second death
 - But, there is still a judgment for the believer
 - If the Jews under the Old Covenant – a lessor covenant – faced a severe penalty for failing to obey the truth, what consequence do you think awaits a believer who disobeys the New Covenant?
 - We remember that in v.25, the writer made mention of a “day” drawing near, which we understood to be a reference to the judgment for believers
 - It’s that day he’s alluding to, as he calls to mind the expectation of judgment for willful sinning
 - This is the Judgment Seat of Christ, and it’s a judgment where the Lord assesses our life of service
 - As Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 3, the outcome is a test, like passing precious metal through a refiner’s fire
 - Those with a good testimony will receive a reward, while those who test God’s patience will see a consuming fire – consuming their reward

[1 Pet. 4:15](#) Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

[1 Pet. 4:16](#) but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

[1 Pet. 4:17](#) For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

- Just in case there is any doubt, the writer is talking about true believers, not unbelievers who pretended to be Christian
 - First, we see the context of these chapters has clearly been focused on believers
 - Throughout Chapter 10, the writer has been speaking in terms of “we”, which means he’s placing himself among this group
 - And he says they have a “confession” of faith they need to hold onto
 - And they have forsaken assembling together, indicating they are a part of a congregation
 - And the three offenses they committed against God are offenses that can only be committed by believers
 - Trampling Christ is only possible if we have a relationship with Him first
 - When an American soldier becomes a traitor during war, we might say he trampled underfoot the American flag
 - He brought shame to America, because he had a special relationship to the nation
 - Likewise, only a Christian can bring shame to Christ, because of the relationship we have with Him
 - Secondly, regarding the blood of the Covenant as unclean can only be an offense for a Christian
 - To regard as unclean means to act as if the blood is common
 - In other words, the person has been cleaned by that blood, though now they act as if it didn’t clean them
 - As the writer says, this is the blood by which he was sanctified (past tense)

- Finally, only a believer can insult the Spirit of grace
 - God places His Spirit inside every believer as a guarantee of their future resurrection and inheritance
 - Only a believer has that kind of relationship with God
 - Unbelievers may ignore the Gospel, certainly, but they can't insult a Spirit they don't know
- So if a believer disobeys the truth they have come to know in the New Covenant, then the writer says remember, your Lord is one to repay in kind
 - In vs.30-31, the writer quotes from the OT to remind his readers that the Lord has a history of repaying and judging even those He saves
 - Notice at the end of v.30, the Lord says He will judge His people
 - Once again, we're talking about a judgment for the believer
 - And this judgment can be severe
 - We don't know how that judgment will go for those who forsake the Lord, but this much we can say
 - It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the Living God
 - Does it challenge you to consider that our judgment moment can include terror?
 - Well, what do we find in the Bible?
 - Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle John and others all demonstrate unreserved fear and trembling when the Lord appeared before them
 - And those weren't even moments of judgment for those men
 - So imagine what the judgment moment will be like for the one who has entered into the New Covenant, has known the truth of what's expected...
 - And then intentionally lives in apostasy or severe disobedience...
 - One day, that believer must stand before the holy, awesome, Creator God to answer for how he served Him
 - It will be terrifying, because we will be without excuse

- We will know we didn't heed the Word of God
- And only then, will we understand what we put at risk because of our willful sinning
- Our eternal life will be secure, but this isn't a consolation according to Scripture
- Nor can it become license for us to live in disobedience
- This is a healthy tension that we see throughout the New Testament
 - We have been saved by grace from the penalty of our sins
 - The sacrifice of Christ once for all is sufficient to save us and reconcile us to God
 - And we will live in glory with Christ forever on account of our faith in His life and death
 - But with our faith and salvation, comes an expectation that we serve the Master Who bought us
 - We must not turn back
 - We cannot insult the Spirit of grace, nor trample underfoot the Christ Who saved us
 - And if we do shrink back, become lazy or seek after false worship, then we should fear the Lord
 - We should fear the consequences
 - Because the Lord Himself said He will repay and He will judge His people
 - Keeping both these perspectives in mind will assure us a joyful life of service to an exacting Master Who stands ready to reward those who please Him
- Like all the warnings in this letter, the writer ends with an encouragement that it's not too late

[Heb. 10:32](#) But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,
[Heb. 10:33](#) partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

[Heb. 10:34](#) For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

[Heb. 10:35](#) Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

[Heb. 10:36](#) For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

[Heb. 10:37](#) FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE,
HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

[Heb. 10:38](#) BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;
AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

[Heb. 10:39](#) But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

- The writer hopes his stern words have shocked the conscience of his readers, and if so, then he says it's time to wake up and get back on the straight and narrow path
 - Remember the former days, the early days when everything in our faith was new and we were excited to follow and obey Christ
 - Before the enemy created confusion
 - Before our flesh tempted us through our fear, desires and distractions
 - They lived in their faith and by the Spirit, they did deeds in keeping with their faith
 - They suffered persecutions for their faith
 - They gave thanks to the Lord, even as they lost their possessions
 - The Jewish Christians in the early Church were commonly persecuted by fellow Jews, sometimes cruelly
 - Often they were imprisoned
 - Occasionally, they lost their lives as martyrs
 - Why? Because they knew these persecutions were tests from the Lord, and they were passing with flying colors
 - And as they endured these trials, they knew they were earning even greater treasure in Heaven

- When we're living in the Spirit, instead of our flesh, we're powerful lights in the darkness
 - We may endure persecutions as all Christians inevitably do, but we will endure them gladly and with our testimony intact?
 - We live with eyes for eternity, rather than focusing on the world
- But these Christians stalled in their spiritual growth, so their gaze began to fall
 - Eventually, they weren't looking Heavenward
 - They began to long for the stability and peace of going with the crowd
 - Of living as a Jew, accepted in their culture, instead of as a Christian, despised and rejected like Christ Himself
- Their apostasy wasn't a matter of religious convictions; it was a matter of convenience, as the writer says
 - They were seeking to avoid persecutions
 - They were more interested in saving their skin and their wealth than honoring the Lord Who died for them
 - As the writer says in v.35, they threw away their confidence
 - It wasn't lost; they gave it up to gain something earthly
- Notice in vs.35-36, the writer reminds his readers that they ought not throw away their confidence in the promises of Christ, because there is a great reward at stake
 - Our endurance, he says, will be rewarded
 - Whatever the will of God may be for each of us, if we accept it and live up to it, then we may expect to receive what has been promised to us
 - We may not know specifically what the Lord has in store for us, but remember Paul's words

1 Cor. 2:9 but just as it is written,

**"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."**

- So, we can be sure that whatever reward awaits those who serve God faithfully, it will be well worth whatever sacrifice the Lord asks of us here
 - Moreover, the writer reminds us that the wait will not be long, when considered from an eternal perspective
 - The Lord is coming in a very little while, the writer reminds us in v.37
 - And the righteous will live by faith without shrinking back
 - For those who dare to shrink back will not please God
- Finally, the writer declares, optimistically, that his readers will not be among those who shrink back and suffer the penalty
 - Instead, they will live like those of faith
 - He's saying don't be a believer who lives like an unbeliever
 - For doing so, results in destruction of your witness and reward
 - Instead, be a believer who lives like a believer
 - For in doing so, you are living-out a witness that is in keeping with your faith, which has the power to preserve your soul
 - In other words, your physical life should reflect your spiritual life
 - If you are saved by faith to serve God into eternity, then your life now should reflect that reality
 - Obey and serve Christ now, as you will in the Kingdom
 - And if you do, you will be rewarded in ways beyond your imagination
 - If you don't, you will lose something far greater than you stand to gain on earth