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THE

Bible

STUDENT

THE ENTRANCE OF **THY WORD** GIVETH LIGHT

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NOTES ON HEBREWS

By W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Chapter 10: 26-31

Wilful Apostasy and the Effects

Introduction

The writer now deals with those who have received a knowledge of the truth; that is to say, the truth in regard to the Christian faith. This corresponds to what was said in chapter 6 as to being 'once enlightened' (6:4). The sin of which he now speaks is that of wilful apostasy, the abandonment of a professed faith. For those who were guilty of this there could not be a second sacrifice by Christ. They had given up adherence to the legal sacrifices for sin, and now to abandon a profession of faith in Christ meant that they could not look for another sacrifice; thus trampling on the blood of the covenant in Christ and identifying themselves again with their nation in His crucifixion they could expect nothing but Divine judgment; there could be no hope of forgiveness.

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Notes

Verse 26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins. The verb rendered 'sin' is in the present continuous tense, signifying not an act or a series of acts, but a condition. The word *exousiōs*, wilfully, means deliberately, with settled intention, not by a sudden impulse of the will. The word is used elsewhere in the N.T. only in 1 Pet. 5:2.

The wilful sinning, then, is that of apostasy; this is shown by the context, by the character of the circumstances, and by the object the writer has before him. Receiving the knowledge of the truth is quite different from receiving Christ by faith and thus being born of God. See the notes on being enlightened, tasting of the heavenly gift, partaking of (not being indwelt by) the Holy Ghost, etc. (6:4, 5). The knowledge of the truth is simply the mental apprehension of the doctrines of the Christian faith.

When the Hebrews now spoken of made a profession of accepting Christianity, they renounced the sacrifice for sin under the Law. But now, in turning away from their professed faith, they renounced the sacrifice of Christ. Christ could never be sacrificed again, and sacrifices under the Law could not be availing. There remained therefore no more a sacrifice for sins.

Verse 27. But a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. He who made a profession of faith and then deliberately renounced it for Judaism made himself an adversary. Such a course is to be entirely distinguished from that of a failing saint. For such adversaries there could be nothing but Divine judgment; the word *krisis* here signifies the punishment following upon judicial condemnation; this is confirmed by 'punishment' in verse 29; the fiery indignation indicates the severity of the judgment. It is not merely a fiery zeal (*zēlos*), but a fiery jealousy, the righteous wrath of God Cp. Ps. 79:5; Ezek. 36:5; Zeph. 1:18.

Verse 28. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. In

Deut. 17:2-7, where the special sin of apostasy from Jehovah for the worship of false gods is denounced, the condition here stated is mentioned, namely, 'on (the word of) two or three witnesses', and the description 'without compassion', indicating the extreme severity of the judgment, is appropriate to that passage. Accordingly that passage seems to be particularly in view in the writer's mind.

Verse 29. of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be counted worthy. The appeal is made to their consciences and judgment; a reminder of the Divine judgment follows in verse 30. The word *timōria*, punishment, is used here only in the N.T.; the corresponding verb in Acts 22:5; 26:11. It suggests the vindication of honour.

who hath trodden under foot the Son of God. This describes the nature of the apostasy. The verb *katapateō*, to tread under foot, is used as a vivid metaphor, expressive of an act of the utmost contempt and scorn. The aorist tense indicates the decisive character of the evil, regarding it as the consummation of the attitude. The mention of Christ as 'the Son of God' is markedly appropriate here, as that is the special way in which the superiority of the Lord Jesus to all others has been brought before the readers from the very first (see 1:1-13; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 28). This is the last mention of Him in this respect in this Epistle.

and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. For the phrase 'the blood of the covenant' see on 9:20. Just as under the legal sacrifices the blood of the covenant outwardly set Israel apart to God as a people, sanctifying them in that respect, so in the case of Hebrews who had professed the Christian faith, the blood of Christ, that is the expiatory sacrifice of Christ in the shedding of His blood, set apart to God the professor, even in respect of his profession, as being identified outwardly with the people of God. To return to Judaism was to count the blood an 'unholy' thing (*koīnos*, common, *i.e.*, having no cleansing value, no Divine value; more too than this, it meant that the apostate thereby necessarily regarded the blood of Christ as that of a criminal, executed for his own crime. Thus it was not a case of disobedience, it was contempt of God's grace through and in His Son.

and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? That is to say,

the Holy Spirit as the Source and Minister of grace, who ministers the efficacy and effect of the blood of Christ to, and in, the heart and life of the believer. To apostatize to Judaism was to do despite to Him as 'the Spirit of grace', that is, to treat Him with insulting disdain (the meaning of *enubrizō*, used here only in the N.T.).

Verse 30. For we know Him that said. 'We know full well' (*oida*), know through the revelation given by word from the Scriptures and by His dealings.

Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense. The first of the two quotations now made is from Deut. 32:35. It thereby made a special appeal to Hebrews. *Ekdikēsis*, vengeance, is, lit., c (that which proceeds) out of justice, not, as often with human vengeance, from a sense of injury, or merely out of indignation. The judgments of God are holy and right and free from any element of self-gratification or vindictiveness. See, e.g., Luke 21:22; Rom. 12:19; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:14 (R.V.) To recompense here signifies to give a retribution according to desert.

The weight of textual evidence is against the presence here of the phrase 'saith the Lord'. Moreover it has been virtually stated at the beginning of the verse.

And again, the Lord shall judge His people. This is from Deut. 32:36 or Ps. 135:14, but the statement here is not, as there, that God will judge foes on behalf of His people, it is a confirmation of the preceding quotation, as is indicated by 'And again'. *Krinō* here, as often, means to judge by subjecting to punishment.

Verse 31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. *Phoberos*, fearful, signifies causing fear, terrible; see v. 27; 12:21. To fall into the hands of God is to come under the disposal of His righteously punitive power. The meaning is not quite the same as in 2 Sam. 24:14. See Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5. The mention of God as 'the living God' is not to declare His existence, it is to indicate that the inescapable energy of His actions are due to the absolute energy of His life.