

A.W. Pink on Apostasy

As we have pointed out in preceding articles, this section (verses 26-31) was introduced by the apostle for the purpose of enforcing the exhortation found in verses 22-24, the sum of which is, a call unto Christians to persevere in a state and practice of godliness. Grossly has this passage been perverted by theological factions belonging to two extremes. The one has misused it in the endeavor to bolster up their false doctrine of regenerated people falling from grace and being eternally lost. Without now going into that subject, it is sufficient to say that Hebrews 10:26-31 contains not a word which directly supports the chief contention of the Arminians. What we have in this passage is only hypothetical, "For if we sin willingly," i.e. deliberately, fully, and finally abandon the profession of Christianity—not that the Holy Spirit here says any of the regenerate Hebrews had, or would do so. A similar and still more pointed case is found in those words of Christ's. "Yet ye have not known Him: but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you" (John 8:55).

The second party of those who have misunderstood this passage, are Calvinists possessing more zeal than wisdom. Anxious to maintain their ground against the Arminians, most of them have devoted their energies to show that regenerated Christians do not come within the scope of verse 26 at all; that instead, it treats only of nominal professors, of those having nothing more than a head-knowledge of the Truth, and making merely a lip-profession of the same. And thus has the great Enemy of souls succeeded in getting some of the true servants of God to blunt the sharp edge of this solemn verse, and nullify its searching power over the conscience of the saints. It is

sufficient refutation of this theory to point out that the apostle is here addressing those who were "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1), and in the "we" of Hebrews 10:26 included himself! We will not take any notice of a third theory, of modern "dispensationalists," who affirm that none but Jews could commit the sin here mentioned, beyond saying that our space is too valuable to waste in exposing such trifling with Holy Scripture.

But what has been pointed out above presents a serious difficulty to many. We may state it thus: If it be impossible for truly regenerated people to ever perish, then why should the Holy Spirit move the apostle to so much in hypothetically describing the irremediable doom if they should apostatize? Such a difficulty is occasioned, in the first place, through a one-sided conception of the Christian, through considering him only as he exists in the purpose of God, and not also remembering what he still is in himself: unless the latter be steadily held in mind, we are in grave danger of denying, or at least ignoring, the Christian's responsibility. That the Christian is to be viewed in this twofold way is abundantly clear from many Scriptures. For example, in the purpose of God, the Christian is already "glorified" (Rom. 8:30), yet he certainly is not so in himself! Here in Hebrews 10:26 etc. (as in many other passages) the Christian is not addressed from the viewpoint of God's eternal purpose, but as he yet is in himself—in need of solemn warnings, as well as exhortations.

Again; the difficulty which so many one-sided thinkers find in this subject is to be attributed to their failure in duly recognizing the relation which God has appointed between His own eternal counsels and the accomplishment of the same

through wisely ordained means. There are some who reason (most superficially) that if God has ordained a certain soul to be saved, he will be, whether he exercised faith in Christ or no. Not so: 2 Thessalonians 2:13 clearly proves the contrary—the "end" and the "means" are there inseparably joined together. It is quite true that where God has appointed a certain individual "unto salvation," He will infallibly give him a saving faith; but that does not mean that the Holy Spirit will believe for him; no, the individual will, must, exercise the faith which has been given him. In like manner, God has eternally decreed that every regenerated soul shall get safely through to Heaven, yet He certainly has not ordained that any shall do so whether or not they use the means which He has appointed for their preservation. Christians are "kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5)—there is the human responsibility side.

Looked at as he still is in himself, the Christian is eminently liable to "make shipwreck of the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). He still has within him a nature which craves the vanities of the world, and that craving has to be denied, or he will never reach Heaven. He is yet in the place of terrible danger, menaced by deadly temptations, and it is only as he constantly watches and prays against the same that he is preserved from them. He is the immediate and incessant object of the Devil's malice, for he is ever going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; and it is only as the Christian takes unto himself (appropriates and uses) the armor of God's providing, that he can withstand the great Enemy of souls. It is because of these things that he urgently needs the exhortations and warnings of Holy Writ. God has faithfully pointed out to us what lies at the end of every path of self-will and self-indulgence. God has mercifully placed a hedge across each precipice which

confronts the professing Christian, and woe be to him if he disregards those warnings and pushes through that hedge.

In this solemn passage of Hebrews 10, the apostle is pointing out the sure and certain connection there is between apostasy and irrevocable damnation, thereby warning all who bear the name of Christ to take the most careful and constant pains in avoiding that unpardonable sin. To say that real Christians need no such warning because they cannot possibly commit that sin, is, we repeat, to lose sight of the connection which God himself has established between His predestined ends and the means whereby they are reached. The end unto which God has predestined His people is their eternal bliss in Heaven, and one of the means by which that end is reached, is through their taking heed to the solemn warning He has given against that which would prevent their reaching Heaven. It is not wisdom, but madness, to scoff at those warnings. As well might Joseph have objected that there was no need for him and his family to flee into Egypt (Matthew 2), seeing that it was impossible for the Christ-Child to be slain by Herod!

What each of us needs to watch against is the first buddings of apostasy, the first steps which lead to that sin of sins. It is not reached at a single bound, but is the fatal culmination of a diseased heart. Thus, while the writer and the reader, may be in no immediate danger of apostasy itself, we are of that which, if allowed and continued in, would certainly lead to it... in the case of the Christian, the seed of eternal death is already in him. That seed is sin, and it is only as grace is daily and diligently sought, for the thwarting of its inclinations and suppressing of its activities, that it is hindered from fully developing to a fatal end.