

The Five Warnings Of Hebrews

Their Applications to Us

John W. Ritenbaugh

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A number of years ago, I saw a notation in the study bible that I use regarding something in the book of Hebrews, that it contains five warnings to those to whom it is written. Of course it is written to us, and so therefore that includes us. The warnings have never been applicable since the first century until this generation of the church.

When Hebrews was first written it admonished people living at the end of an era, or at least very near the end of the era. , that Jerusalem in a few years would be falling. It was going to be overrun and destroyed by the Romans, thus ending a long period of time in which Jerusalem was the headquarters place of Judaism. It was also the headquarters place of the first century true church, and therefore the home, the mother church, of those who were raised up after Christ's resurrection.

By comparison, we too live at the end of an era—a far greater end than they were facing. It is the end of the Babylonish system, and at this end it is going to culminate in the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

It is written to Hebrews living in Israelitish culture, coming to a conclusion, and facing difficult choices, because the church was in turmoil both from within and without. The pressures of the surrounding world were impacting to a greater degree than normal, and every indication was that those pressures were not going to lessen, but rather that they were going to increase. So those to whom it was written were obviously slipping from a former higher level of commitment, and growing increasingly careless and lackadaisical in the author's judgment.

The author's judgment included within it that what was needed was reason containing warnings, illustration, and exhortation as to why they must get their lives turned around.

It is very clear from reading the entire book of Hebrews that their problem did not involve sin in its most obvious sense. By that I mean they were not openly and willingly breaking one or several of God's commandments, like stealing, lying, adultery, or murder. But regardless, they **were** falling short of the glory of God through wrong attitudes—things that we might consider today as being "matters of the heart." They no longer had the earlier enthusiasm or devotion to godly responsibilities that they had exhibited when first converted. This in turn alarmed the author to the undeniable fact that, above all, their faith in what they had been taught by the apostle was waning.

It was a change of faith that produced the scattered condition of the church today, and it was the same thing that produced the condition that we see in the book of Hebrews. We no longer all believe and speak the same things. We too have turned aside from what we received from the apostle.

I am not saying this, believing that Herbert Armstrong had every last point in his teaching absolutely correct, because he too was learning. He was far ahead of us, and overwhelmingly correct in his judgment in those things that he passed on to us. How many have departed from what he passed on and gone their separate way?

This pattern is why the author begins the book of Hebrews as he does.

Hebrews 1:1-4 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Here the author sets forth his major theme to those receiving this epistle. You will notice that there are none of the normal greetings that appear at the beginning of other epistles. There are no names, no mention of places, no pronouncements of grace, peace, or mercy. He immediately shows that Jesus

Christ is the agent of God's ultimate revelation to mankind, and that His message given to the apostles and then to us is superior to anything given to *any* of God's agents in the past. I mean true ministers, true prophets.

The unstated question and theme is: Where are you going to find anything that is better? The implication is that all of the messages that came through other prophets were fragmentary and incomplete. The others' revelation came bit by bit in vision, in dreams, analyses of events, and things like Urim and Thummim, and even direct communication as God prepared some to receive them. The idea here is that in the messages in the past there was no lack of variety, but none of those former messages was from *the One* who was so close to the Father as the Son.

Christ's revelation is climactic, and it is complete, because He is the Son, and His message is for the Last Day. In fact He inaugurated the Last Day. He inaugurated a *new age*. (Sorry about that word.) His birth as a man is what initiated "the last days," and also began the church age. The fulfillment of His message will not be complete until He restores all things. His message gathered in all the revelations previously given and focuses them into the culmination which He will effect. The implication is that *His* is *the definitive revelation*. The author touches on this theme throughout the epistle, and so His message is to be the direct focus because we are living in the time immediately preceding His return, and we must be prepared for it.

Though Jesus did not write a single word in the New Testament, those designated by Him did write what He revealed to them, and no one else possesses anywhere near equal authority to the Son. "There is no other name given under heaven by which men might be saved."

Not only is He is the Son, but He is also our Creator. All of this appears in the first four verses of Hebrews 1. He is our Creator, and He is the Heir of *all* things. What a thundering, bombastic, and portent-filled opening provided to give authority for why we should listen to what the Son's message says, that we must yield to in order to please Him. The people to whom this was written were no longer yielding in the same way that they had before. They were slowly but surely slipping away from what they formerly exhibited.

The First Warning :

Hebrews 2:1-4 Therefore, [because of these things] we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard [What did we hear? We heard the message of the Son], lest at any time we should let them slip. [That is exactly what was happening.] For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with different miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?

Each warning is an indication of the danger that the author perceives. What danger is there here? That the people were slipping away. Each warning is followed by explanation and exhortation. The warning here is: *Do not neglect the message*. There is no greater Messenger. There is no greater message than His gospel.

He immediately begins by saying that judgments will follow upon those who allow things to slip, just as surely as judgments fell upon those who rejected earlier messages of prophets. He reminds them in verse 4 that God verifies the Son's message by giving signs, miracles, and gifts to the first generation that heard them. It is interesting that he does not suggest that his readers had those gifts. I think that is very interesting because it is obvious that this era, this generation of the church, does not have the gifts that God gave to those who immediately followed Jesus Christ.

This gives emphasis to the concept that in reality the book of Hebrews is written to the last generation—those who do not have the gifts—to give evidence to them that they indeed are of God. Notice it is not any specific injunction that they are disobedient, but rather it is an overall ignoring, a willful underestimation of the whole of what they had been given.

Neglect means to disregard. It means to fail to care for. It means to be remiss. It means to overlook, to ignore, to be inattentive to, to let slide by. The word indicates disrespect. Now here comes the real problem: The word "neglect" may mean disrespect. It indicates disdain. It indicates carelessness.

It indicates indifference. It indicates laziness. It indicates shortsightedness. It indicates forgetfulness.

Can we find ourselves possibly anywhere along the line there? If we have any of those attitudes that they are going to show up in neglect of the greatness of the message that we have received, and that the real problem is in what the word indicates. In an overall sense it indicates a failure to value as highly what is neglected in favor of other things.

You know what I am about to say is true: We take care of things that we feel are important to us. We do this because we value them highly, whether it is our marriage, our job, our car, our home, our clothing, or status in the community. We will spend our time and effort on these things. It will just happen naturally. We will give our time and energy and all of our self to those things that we value highly. It cannot be hidden.

If we value rest highly, we will not work, because rest is more important to us than work. If we value our car highly, then we will spend our time making sure that we polish our idol. Meanwhile, other things will be neglected even though those other things may in reality be more important than spending time on the automobile. If we like golf, or basketball, or softball, or baseball, or skiing, or whatever it is, more highly than something else, that is what will get our time and energy. It cannot be hidden.

What we value we work at and take care of. What is of lesser value, we ignore, we neglect, we let slide by. The principle itself is something that is not of and by itself bad. It is the choice that is made by which we determine the relative value of something. That is where the problem is, because what we value highly we are going to naturally give our time and energies to.

So, BOOM! Right off the bat he says to these people, "I can tell by the way you're acting that you are neglecting the message because of what you're giving your time and energy to." And so the message is being neglected. This is why he immediately urges them "to give the more earnest heed to the things that they had heard," and then he powerfully exhorts them, without saying so directly, to re-evaluate the worth of what they have, and what lies ahead. He draws their attention to Christ as our pattern and example.

What does he say then following verse 5? He says, "What is man, that you are mindful of him?" What is he drawing their attention to? He is drawing their attention to their calling, and the value of that calling, and the value especially in terms of what? That we are *co-heirs* with Christ of *all* things. Of what value is it to inherit everything that God has created?

There is a very good example later on how Moses exercised his faith in regard to the value of things, because he gave up all the riches and wealth and power of Egypt in order to spend his time, his energy, the rest of his life with the slaves out in the wilderness. He made the right choice, and he is a fine example. It took the exercise of faith, though, to do that on his part, because the relative value of what he had in Egypt could have weighed more heavily on his mind, and he would have then neglected the people of God, the gospel of God, and instead had given his time and energy to his power and his position in Egypt. So he is a witness for all time of one who made that choice.

Unfortunately the people here to whom this was being written were putting the emphasis on the wrong thing. Like I said earlier, it could not be hidden. If we are on our toes, all we have to do is to see what it is that we give our time and our energies to, what it is that we place the value upon in our lives, and we will then know where our treasure is. It is a simple evaluation, although there are undoubtedly complexities in applying it, because our human nature wants to pay attention to things that are of lesser value.

We are co-heirs with Christ of all things God has created, and that the Author of our salvation had to go through similar difficulties in order to ensure that we could have these things. That is what the remainder of chapter 2 is about. So he exhorts them in two specific areas: the difficulties motivating neglectfulness are not unusual, and they are worth it. It is not unusual at all to have this problem. Everybody has it, and so all of us who have heard the message are faced with making the choice as to what we are going to put in first priority. "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Second Warning :

Hebrews 3:7-12 Wherefore (as the Holy Spirit says, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

This takes the neglect one step further. This is a warning against doubt, because at the base of their neglect is going to be a waning of faith. Comprehending this revolves around the word "hear" in verse 7. This is a very widely used word in the New Testament, as well as the Septuagint Old Testament. It is applied in seven different ways throughout the Bible that begins with a simple awareness of hearing a sound. It is even applied in the sense of obey.

This can actually rightfully be translated: "Today if you will obey My voice." Is that not what is implied sometimes when you say to your children, "Did you hear me?" You are really asking, "Why didn't you obey me?" "Did you hear me?" It also is applied in the sense of giving some degree of attention to. For example: "Today, if you will give *attention* to My voice." That is a low level usage of the word, but it could be used in that way.

The most common usage is synonymous with the English word "*understand* ." That is how it is applied here in Hebrews 3:7. "Today, if you will *understand* My voice." The author is aiming for understanding as his goal for those to whom he is writing. Now why? Because he did not want them to doubt. In order to have *the* faith, understanding of the word is necessary. A lack of faith leads to a lax, neglectful, careless lifestyle, which was what their problem was. They were growing evermore careless in the way that they were living. By the time we get to chapter 10, we are going to see that faith is the main focus of the author's writing, but here we will see this buildup toward chapter 11 is just beginning.

Here they were, in short, being accused of not really thinking things through. This has to do with giving weight to what you hear, which of course then has to do with the value that we put upon it. If we do not understand how valuable it is, then we can't really give it the weight in our lives that it needs to have. He is then telling them, "Do you understand?" "Today, I want you to understand." He is urging them to really think things through, and especially maybe at this time at this stage in the letter, to think through the direction that they are headed, because it can only end in the Lake of Fire.

He is aiming right at this point that the neglect that they had was being caused by a misunderstanding. So this warning dovetails perfectly with the first warning that was directly tied to their greatly undervaluing the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is asking then, "How can one have faith in something he has little understanding of, or pays little attention to?"

Let us go to Romans 10:14 where Paul nails this. Listen to these questions.

Romans 10:14-15 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?

See how Paul is working right back to a source that gives faith.

Romans 10:15-17 As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing [meaning understanding; not just hearing the word, not just hearing the sound, but faith comes by *understanding*] the word of God.

Just hearing the word is not going to produce faith, but the sound received—the understanding—if the words are thought upon, and conclusions are rightly drawn. Romans 10:14-17 clearly show us that *the* faith in Christ, and of Christ, arises in us from hearing, from understanding, the word of God.

But we are faced with a problem because we live in a world being overwhelmed by a flood of information, but about 99.44% of it is absolutely useless to our calling. Richard pointed out in a sermon about a month or so ago that our credulity—our ability and willingness to believe God—is being strained to the breaking point. We have seen everything, it seems, from the most corrupt government in the history of America to a technological electronic wonder, to the wonders of modern film making.

We have been there. We have done that. So what is so great about the gospel? It is very easy to lop it off. Will the coming of Jesus Christ be just as thrilling and meaningful as the next James Bond flick, or the next science fiction movie? We can become totally jaded and lost in terms of the reality of what is occurring in and to our life.

The gospel requires that we make searching evaluation of our life in reference to history, in reference to cause and effect, in reference to what is happening within the framework of our own personal living environment. He advises in verse 12 to "Take heed." That means attend to; give careful attention to.

It is interesting in a recent writing that I received regarding the Pentecost issue that the author of that paper said that history did not matter. I thought it was really interesting. By coincidence I saw a quote from a man whose name that I have forgotten right at this moment, but I know that the name of this person was somebody that most everybody would recognize as being a person of at least thoughtful consideration of things. He said that he believed that the worst thing that mankind has ever done is to forget the lessons of history. Do you know what that does? It condemns every generation to re-inventing the wheel. Here was this paper that came from within the church of God, that the writer said that history does not matter in regard to what has happened in the past in reference to Pentecost.

The author of Hebrews says, "Listen!" "Tend to." "Give attention to." This is what we have to do. This is why I so frequently emphasize that God gives us patterns in the Bible so that we can have faith in what is going on, because we see patterns repeating themselves over and over again, and God does not deviate from those patterns even though He could. He has the power to. He

does not want to confuse our evaluation of things so that we can see and recognize His hand in what is going on, because this is the way He has acted in the past, and this is the way He will act in the future. This is the way He is acting right now, and we can have faith in what is going on, and make right evaluations. What good are the Scriptures, of history, if it does not matter? We could not depend on a Scripture that God is not going to follow through exactly as He did in the past.

So the author is calling upon them to make sure that they pay attention to, and this paying attention to will produce understanding, and their faith then would be strengthened.

This exhortation and illustration goes all the way through chapter 4 and up to verse 13. He is calling upon them to meditate and think things through.

The Third Warning :

Hebrews 5:11-14 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The warning here is of their spiritual immaturity. The warning begins with his reference, his desire, to speak more on the spiritual priesthood of Melchizedek, but he feels he cannot because they are *dull of hearing*. And then he says more explicitly that they are like babes, meaning immature spiritually, rather than full-grown adults.

Let us go back to I Corinthians 13 where Paul uses an interesting illustration.

I Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Now there is a general description of children as having *a way* that is different from adults, and that one must put aside *this way* if one is ever going to become an adult. Paul said that he did. We find Paul also touching on something similar to this in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:14-15 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Now let us add "tossed to and fro" to this description of those who are children, or are immature spiritually. As we would say today, children—those who are immature—are all over the place. They are not only lacking knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, but they are easily distracted. Their way can be described as "broad and shallow" rather than "narrow and deep." They cannot stay focused on one thing for very long. They get intense energy for whatever they are doing at the moment, but it only lasts for a short while, and then it is on to the next thing that grabs their attention. They have, in short then, an undisciplined, short attention span.

Now feed that back into Hebrews 5:13-14. We are getting more evidence as to why these people were so neglectful, and what was happening in their lives as a result of this, because as they proceeded along the way that they were going, they were going backward. Every evidence was that they were reverting to childhood. Not real childhood, but one that is far more important: spiritual immaturity.

It says that "a good understanding have all they that *do* His commandments." The opposite hand is also true then. Those who *do not* do the commandments

of God go backwards to spiritual immaturity. Does Peter not say that those people he was writing about were going back to their vomit? Like a pig going to his wallow, they were going backwards; regressing.

The sad thing is, if the gospel of Jesus Christ is neglected because people are not hearing properly, giving attention to understanding through meditation and study and application, then we begin to find that they start reverting to spiritual *unconversion*. It is getting sobering. So the result of their immaturity, back in Hebrews 5:13, is that they are becoming unskillful. "For everyone that uses milk [the symbol of immaturity] is unskillful."

Let us put it this way. If you do not keep yourself up to speed in your discipline, do you not lose your skill? You may still know how to play the piano, but I can guarantee you that if you do not continue to practice the piano you begin to lose the edge that your formerly had. You begin to revert back toward what you were even before you knew how to play the piano. You never lose it entirely, but it is nonetheless deteriorating.

I find that very true with typing. I sit in front of a computer, and I type a great deal. As long as I do that, my skill at typing is pretty good. I can move along at a pretty good rate with very few mistakes. But all I have to do is make a trip to South Africa and back again, when I am gone let us say for about fourteen days, and the next time when I sit down at that computer I start hitting all kinds of wrong letters. The fingers just do not go to the right place.

That is a simple illustration, and everybody knows that is true. That is what he is saying here. He is saying that if we do not keep up to speed spiritually, we are going to lose the edge and revert to those who are unskillful. Then he goes on to say in verse 14, "But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age [meaning practiced, or trained] even those who by reason of use. . ." They keep at it.

Notice the accusation he makes of them, and then we are going to connect it to the first two warnings. The first three warnings are directly linked. The first one was that they were neglectful. The second one was that they were not hearing things properly. The third one he is telling them, "You *are* dull of hearing." That is what he said. "Seeing you *are* dull of hearing." Now he

has hit them with the hammer. It is not *maybe*. They *are*, and then he gives his evidence.

The *King James Version* in its translation gives the sense of what he said rather than the direct translation. The same word that is translated "dull of hearing" in verse 11 is translated in Hebrews 6:12 as "slothful." "That you be not slothful." Now he has nailed them. The reason that they were neglectful, the reason that they were dull of hearing, was because they were *lazy*. Directly translated, the author has accused them of being sluggish, slothful, spiritually lazy. Quite a warning.

They were in effect behaving like little children playing spiritual sand pile and other kinds of childish distraction rather than disciplining themselves to attend to their very serious spiritual responsibility. It takes discipline and hard work to think, meditate. It takes discipline to set the right priority, and then to control oneself to follow through. Children will not do that. So whether one accepts the *King James Version* "dull of hearing" or the more accurate "sluggish" or "lazy," one gets a picture of people who are like children too immature to discipline themselves to do the right thing. The result, from a teacher's point of view, was that they were difficult to teach. But they were not always like that. There was a time that they listened. Their faith was built.

He then calls upon them, at the beginning of chapter 6, to understand the implication and practical application of the basic doctrine.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore [since they are hard of hearing, since they are spiritually immature], leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

He wants them to understand the implications and practical applications of those doctrines. These thoughts are connected to what he said in chapter 5, verses 11 through 14. He is telling them that to study into these things is not enough. They must apply them.

Hebrews 6:9-11 But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire, that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

Notice how he mentions *work*, that their lack of work was pulling them down. Have you ever seen a child that loves to work? Children love to play. He exhorts them then to be diligent to the end. He is telling them to stay focused. In verse 12 he tells them not to be lazy, but to exercise faith and patience. In verses 13 through 15 he illustrates through Abraham's example.

Hebrews 6:13-15 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

That is what these people were not doing. They were not patiently enduring. Like children, they ran off and played away at what was distracting them for the moment.

The Fourth Warning :

Hebrews 10:26-29 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing and has done despite unto the spirit of grace?

The larger context for this warning begins in verse 19 and continues all the way through verse 39. The warning is of a critical danger of turning away

from the "once for all" perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ by going back to their old way. This warning is directly connected to the pattern that was being shown in the first three.

It is very easy for us to say that we believe in Jesus Christ, and that He is the payment for our sins. However, it is what we *do* that is actually giving evidence that something else is more important. Where does that reality actually leave us? Our works are the ultimate judgment for or against us.

This is where the pattern that they were in would naturally lead. From neglect, and failure to listen, and immature laziness, would come *deliberate, willful sin* which, in the case of one who has already had his sins forgiven by Christ's blood, amounts to treading the Son of God under foot and doing despite unto the spirit of grace. It is, in short, presumptuous *unpardonable* sin, and the person stands condemned by evidence provided by his own lifestyle.

We are going to go now to the Old Testament to the book of Numbers.

Numbers 15:27-28 And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sins ignorantly, when he sins by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

Numbers 15:30 But the soul that does ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproaches the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut *off*; his iniquity shall be upon him.

"Presumptuously" means *with a high hand*. It indicates a mental attitudinal posture of arrogance, defiance, and rebellion. "Cut off" at its simplest means disqualified from receiving any of the blessings of the covenant, but within its spirit and at its most extreme, it means to be put to death eternally. There is no mention of forgiveness for those who are guilty of sinning in this attitude.

Within the context of the law—the first five books—God gives us a picture that He is serious about His law and His way. They are not trivial, nor are they subject to the trifling attitude of casual people. But at the same time, He is also gracious. He has made high demands, and He expects compliance, but He has also mercifully provided ways of atonement when we do not fully comply.

Let us go back now to Hebrews 10. We are going to look a little bit closer at verse 26.

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

That comes right out of Numbers 15:30. This context makes this clear that willful sin is not a one-time flare-up in a person's life. This verse is one that explains it, and we cannot see it there because it is not translated well from the Greek. The Greek literally says, "If we go on sinning willfully."

It thus stresses a continual habitual sinning rather than a sin that is committed inconsiderately, ignorantly, or from weakness. In other words, God in His mercy does not take a one-time occurrence and say, "This is the pattern of the person's life." But rather the evidence comes from our own lives of what we have done over a fairly long period of time, and when it is combined with attitude, then God makes a very fair judgment based upon those things.

Another commentator translated that phrase: "If we *deliberately* keep on sinning." This is the same kind of sin that John calls "a sin unto death" in I John 5:16, and that Jesus called "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" in Matthew 12:31. The continuous pattern of sin is evidenced of deliberate rejection of the genuineness of God's forgiveness.

The evidence that comes from what the person does is that they really do not believe that God forgave them, or they do not believe that it really matters all that much. You see, the evaluation of the forgiveness is indicative that it is of no value to them. It is not worth it. They are saying that the life of Christ and its sinlessness of Creator is of no value to them. It is not worth it. It is a

deliberate quenching of the Holy Spirit. You see, it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit given to us freely by God to enable us to obey. It is thus a rejection of God's generous and lovingly-offered salvation.

The Hebrews' sin in the first century was what the whole sermon has been about. That is why the warnings were given against neglectfully letting the truth slip away, the hardening of their hearts against hearing, and their lazy, undisciplined lifestyle that was taking them back to spiritual immaturity. There is a fairly strong hint that one of the most prominent outward evidence was their sporadic attendance at Sabbath services. Look at verse 25.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is* ; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

To whom, brethren, is this written? Who is watching the day of Christ approaching? We are, with our own eyes. This was written to the end-time generation. The church has been blown apart. It is scattered all over the place, and brethren, there are quite a number of people out there who are not fellowshiping with anybody.

All too often we are finding that the reason is that they are critical and fault-finding, and they cannot find anybody to fellowship with, because in their estimation, they do not want to associate with those who are sinners. So they do not associate with anybody in their intolerance of the values or the weaknesses that they perceive are in others. Nobody is good enough for them. Who has the real problem? I mean, the *real* problem? These people were ignoring fellowship with God and with God's children, and that is *required* of His children.

The implication of this is clear, that if they do not make the effort to get together and fellowship *now*, they will not be given the opportunity to get together in His Kingdom, because they will have shown Him by their actions that they prefer to be alone rather than with those they consider their imperfect brethren. They are sealing their own doom.

To God, repeated acts of this nature are in reality the despising of the Christ who lives in those others. In this context, the author does not say at any time that those to whom he was writing had reached this point. However, his warnings are indicative that he was quite concerned that they were approaching it.

In Hebrews, the people were slipping back toward Judaism. Today we do not slip back to Judaism, because that is not what we came out of. Rather our tendency is to slip back toward Protestantism and Catholicism in attitude and approach, because that is our historical religious background.

Verse 29 shows that a continuous drifting in this direction puts one into a very serious position, and that shows up in the word *counted*. That word means a conscious judgment resting on deliberate weighing of facts. The continuous action of treating what was received of Christ as nothing more than common rather than holy, turns their sin into a contemptuous, presumptuous one, and that makes this very serious business, because God's character demands justice where mercy cannot be given because of attitude and conduct. And then he ends that by saying that "to fall into the hands of the living God" is very serious. It is a reminder that no one escapes His judgment.

The fifth and final warning appears in Hebrews 12:25-27.

The Fifth Warning :

Hebrews 12:25-27 See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

The fuller context of this warning begins back in verse 18 and it continues through verse 29. It begins with a reminder to them of Israel's failures while journeying through the wilderness.

The epistle to the Hebrews contains one overriding characteristic throughout. It is "comparison through contrast." It is sort of a "them" and "us" thing. He uses terms like: "How much more . . ." "How much less . . ." The word "better" is used frequently, which invites comparison. Here he contrasts *earth* with *heaven*, the *old revelation* with *the new*, and *they* and *them* with *we* and *us*.

Now theirs was not an open-fist-shaking accusation-riddled rebellion against God like some of the ancient Israelites, but rather it was a subtle sliding away through careless neglect. However, their neglect would have the same overall result which showed God they did not want to be under His authority. The warning of danger is the refusal to heed the warnings of Him who speaks this time not from the earthly Mount Sinai, but from heaven. In other words, the warning is not simply of the first death, but the second and eternal death. *This is our one and only chance to believe and submit.*

Israel's history shows not just one rejection of God's warning through His prophets, because time after time, consistently, there were repeated rejections through the generations. The fear is that these people will not heed either because of not believing the warning, but taking it lightly, or procrastinating until it was too late to do anything.

Remember the Parable of the Ten Virgins? They were guilty of either taking God's calling lightly, or of procrastination, so that when the cry went out that the Bridegroom was coming, it was too late to do anything effective.

The word "removing" in verse 27 means *to transfer to a new basis; to change*. It refers to "*the restitution of all things.*"—when one system is going to be removed, and another is going to be put into its place. In Acts 3:21, Peter said in that sermon "the restitution of all things." It is referring to "the new heavens and the new earth"-statements which appear in both Isaiah and Revelation. There can be no doubt that the author here is referring to Christ's second coming. Verse 28 says:

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Here is the final direct appeal related to the warning, and it serves as a reminder that we are receiving a Kingdom. This is our inheritance. It is on the line, and our inheritance is unshakeable. It is an eternal Kingdom. We are going to be given government to administrate the law of God and the way of God.

As Paul wrote in II Timothy 2,

II Timothy 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

There is a reciprocity that is shown all through God's Word, that as we do toward Him, He will do back to us.

Daniel 7:18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

If we suffer, we will reign. It is God's intention to give us the Kingdom, and it is a Kingdom that is eternal. It can never be shaken. It can never be removed. And if it is a Kingdom that is that way, we are going to be that way. Therefore the author of the book of Hebrews says, "*Let us give grace.*" That is a direct translation. That is literally what it says in the Greek, but the phrase is in reality an idiomatic expression that means, in practical usage, "Let us give thanks."

A little bit of that has come through because people sometimes ask, "Will you give grace?" That is what they mean. "Let us give thanks." That came right out of the Bible. That is what that expression means.

And so the author says here, "Seeing that we are going to receive an unshakable Kingdom, we are going to reign with Christ. It is going to be eternal, for ever and ever. He said, "Let us give thanks."

And then the author goes on to say, "Worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Remember, that in the biblical sense, worship is not limited to what we do at Sabbath services. It includes everything that we do in respect to reverence and obedience to God. Do everything acceptably, and with godly fear.

Remember that he says right in this book of Hebrews, that "without faith it is impossible to please Him," and that was the basic problem that these people were faced with, and it is the basic problem of the church today. Faith has waned. People became confused to all the false doctrine and bad attitudes that they were witness to in the church, and many have become jaded. They have lost sight, and they use that in a way as their justification for what they do.

But faith has waned, and without faith everything else degenerates. This is why they were neglectful. They no longer believed with the same intensity. Because their faith had degenerated, they no longer placed the value on the message that they heard that they formerly had. Everything was tailing off, and the way of God was being neglected. Our hearing of His Word becomes dull. Our spiritual maturity deteriorates, and we slide toward the unpardonable sin.

The lesson to us is to see that you are not caught failing to heed the warnings of our God's voice.