

• If we are sinning deliberately after we have received the knowledge of the truth the sacrifice for sins no longer remains available

The alternative to drawing near

• For introduces the alternative

• It is quite possible for we Christians to sin

• A matter of deliberate choice

• We have an enlightened conscience that accuses us when we do so

• After conversion

• No longer

We have every reason to be bold and confident about the power of the blood of Christ^{□1}, so much so that we find it relatively easy to come to God, to persist in expectation and to show loving concern for Christian brothers and sisters^{□2}. In Hebrews 10:26 our writer is closely following up what he has just said. It begins with 'For...'. We must follow every word carefully. There are sixteen Greek words in this verse (¹For ²we ³sinning ⁴deliberately ⁵after ⁶the ⁷receiving-of ⁸the ⁹knowledge ¹⁰of-the ¹¹truth ¹²sacrifice ¹³for ¹⁴sins ¹⁵no-longer ¹⁶is-left-available). In ordinary English we may translate: *For on occasions when we are sinning deliberately after we have received the knowledge of the truth the sacrifice for sins no longer remains available.* The translation 'if we deliberately **keep on** sinning' slightly over-emphasizes the Greek tense, and gives the impression that it does not matter if we deliberately sin only a few times! On the other hand the tense may be translated 'are sinning'. It does refer to something that is continuing.

Let us look at it one word at a time.

1. *For...* Our writer is explaining why we should obey the exhortations of Hebrews 10:19–25. We should do so because now that there is such a clear and plain reason for Christians to have boldness in seeking help and supplies from God, it would be insulting to God to fail to make use of the offer given us. 'So let us be drawing near ...', he says, 'for...' the alternative is fearful judgement.

2. *...on occasions when we sin...* This is often translated 'if we sin' but 'when we sin' would be equally possible. The word is 'we' not 'they'. Our writer is dealing with something that might happen in the lives of Christians. He includes himself. He says 'we' not 'you'. We must not hold a doctrine that says it is impossible for a Christian to sin! Of course no one would seriously say this but some kinds of doctrine ('If you do that you **cannot** have been saved...' seem virtually to be saying it is **impossible** for a Christian to sin – which is nonsense). True Christians may fall quite badly.

3. *...deliberately...* The word means purposely, wilfully, intentionally. Similar words are used in Philemon 14 ('in order that your help may not be a matter of necessity, but **of your own will**') and in 1 Corinthians 9:17 ('if I do this **out of willingness**, I have a reward') and 1 Peter 5:2 ('look after God's flock **willingly**, as God wants you to, and not unwillingly'). There is a contrast here between what is true before and after conversion. Before we come to faith in Christ we may sin in great ignorance. Think of what Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:13, 'I was a blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent, but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief.' There is such a thing as acting ignorantly in unbelief. Or consider Acts 17:30, 'The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.' But once we have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we can no longer be so much acting ignorantly in unbelief. When we sin we sin against things that we know. There is a deliberateness in Christian sinning that makes it worse than pagan sinning. Most sin by Christians is 'deliberate', for we now know we ought not and need not be continuing in sin, and we have an enlightened conscience that accuses us when we do so.

4. *...after we have received the knowledge of the truth...* This is our writer's description of Christian conversion. It is believably receiving God's gospel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. *...there remains no longer any sacrifice for sins.* This is similar to the phrase in Hebrews 10:18. There the writer means that the sacrifices of the Old Testament (which were allowable at first) now are **no longer** needed

□1 10:19-21

□2 10:22-25

because the sacrifice of Christ has come. 'No longer' means 'from this point on'. The sacrifice of Christ replaces the Levitical sacrifices so that they are 'no longer' needed. Now we have similar language in Hebrews 10:29 although our writer is speaking of something different. The Greek word *ouketi* ('no longer') comes in Matthew 19:6; Mark 5:3; Luke 15:19; John 4:42; Acts 8:39; Romans 6:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:19; Philemon 16; Hebrews 10:18 and Revelation 10:6 – as well as in Hebrews 10:26. It always means that something has been true up to this point but now it is true 'no longer'. The man of Mark 5:3 could have been bound once but at the time of the incident in that chapter it was 'no longer' possible. In 2 Corinthians 1:23 Paul had been to Corinth before but has decided for the moment 'no longer' to go there.

• *Remains – still available*

The word 'remains' comes from the Greek *apoleipo*. It means 'remain' or 'be still available'. Hebrews 4:9 says that a rest is **still available** for believers to enter (using the same Greek word). Hebrews 4:6 says this rest 'remains open' or 'remains available' (again using the same word as the one we have in Hebrews 10:26).

• *The sacrifice is not withdrawn but it is no longer effective in the future*

We must notice what our writer does not say. He has said that the blood of Christ gives eternal redemption and that it sanctifies us for ever¹. He does not now say that 'the sacrifice for sins is withdrawn' or 'the sacrifice for sins is taken away'. It does not say, 'the sacrifice for sins is cancelled'. He says it is '**no longer**' effective. It means it has achieved something up to this point, but **in future** it will fail to do what one might expect it to do. The point is not that God's **past** salvation is in any way undone or reversed in our lives but that the **future** blessings of the blood of Christ will not come into our lives. In Hebrews 9:12, 14, 15 the blood of Christ did three things. It **gave** eternal redemption (past tense); it **will give** daily cleansing of conscience (future tense referring to what is future day by day); and it **may bring** us to our inheritance (a 'subjunctive' referring to what may happen). It is the second two that are lost by a Christian's sinning – temporarily or maybe permanently.

¹ 9:12; 10:10

The point of Hebrews 10:26

The point of Hebrews 10:26 is that persistence in sinning by the Christian stops the blood of Christ from having the **further** effects that it ought to have. The eternal redemption is not lost. The everlasting 'set-apart-ness' of the Christian is not lost¹ but the conscience is no longer being cleansed and there is danger that the inheritance-of-reward might be lost. Hebrews 9:14 fails to work! There was sacrifice for sins to give eternal redemption but then the blood 'no longer' goes on to give daily cleaning. The blood fails to lead the sinning believer towards his inheritance (9:15 fails to work also). There has been a sacrifice for sin giving eternal redemption – **and that is not taken away** – but it has no further effects.

¹ 9:12; 10:10

• *Inheritance of reward may be lost – the sacrifice has no further effects*

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