

A More Severe Punishment

Hebrews 10:28-29

When we studied the book of Jude, a book with only one chapter, I received a letter from a woman who was offended with me for speaking four weeks in a row on eternal judgment. I'm not sure it crossed her mind that the reason we spent four weeks on the subject is because the text led us to do so. Likewise, in the next few verses of Hebrews, we come to a section where eternal punishment is the topic at hand.

I. Those who intentionally ignore the one true God and His Word die with no mercy (v. 28).

This is precisely what happened to the ancient Hebrews in the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law. *"If there is found in your midst one ... who has transgressed the covenant ... and has gone and served other gods and worshipped them ... you shall stone them to death. On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death"* (Deut. 17:2-6; see Deut. 13:6-11 and 19:13 for "no mercy.")

II. The punishment is most severe on those who ignore or ridicule the Living Word of God (v. 29).

Notice the word punishment (*timoreo*), used only once in the New Testament. It means 'penalty' and was used by the ancient Hebrews to refer to one who "dishonored God" (Deut. 17:2-6). Jesus used the root of this word when He said Jews do not "honor" Him as they should -- as God (John 8:49-51). *"Be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell,"* said Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:28).

How much severer the punishment do you think he deserves who has ...

A. Ridiculed the Sonship of God? *"...trampled under foot the Son of God"* (v. 29).

This "trampling under foot" phrase is a strong, middle-eastern idiom for disdain and disrespect. It is to be understood as a desire of pulling Christ from His throne, trampling Him under your feet and ridiculing in scorn His Deity, His Personhood, His righteousness and His eternal glory.

B. Rejected the Sacrifice of God? *"...has regarded as unclean the sacrifice"* (v. 29).

In the early days of Christianity, when most Christians were Hebrews, some Hebrews mocked the death of Christ as the death of a common criminal. He was a deluded man who died unclean. In our modern day, Tim Minchin, an Australian comedian, wrote and performed a song for a Christmas special last December. In the performance, Minchin likened the resurrection of Jesus to a zombie horror film, singing: *"Try that these days you'd be in trouble, geeks would try to smack you with a shovel."* In the audience were Tom Cruise and other actors applauding loudly.

C. Resisted the Spirit of God? *"...has insulted the Spirit of grace"* (v. 29).

This insult is what is also called the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit of which there is no forgiveness. To insult the Spirit is to reject your need of a Savior to deliver you from your sins (Matt. 12:32).

III. Those who embrace Christ have the punishment due their sins borne by Christ (v. 29).

This is the difference between the person who has trusted Christ and the person who has not. The death of Jesus Christ is called "penal substitution" – meaning Christ endured punishment for me. The sinner who ridicules and scoffs at the death of Christ is justly punished by God for all his sins.

A. Hell is real. Someone has said, *"It is unwise for Christians to claim any knowledge of either the furniture of heaven or of the temperature of hell."* Jesus was very clear that there is coming a Day of Judgment (Matt. 7:22). Hell is the place reserved by God for sinners (Isa. 34:8; Rom. 12:19).

B. Hell is rough. Hell is a prison (1 Pet. 3:19) Hell is a pit (Psalm 7:15). Hell is dark (Job 10:21-22). In hell there is the worm of conscience that gnaws, the isolation from God and others that is painful. The life lived apart from God will receive eternal life apart from God. That is hell.

C. Hell is ready. You do not escape it by performing better, being nicer, or trying harder. Hell is escaped by acknowledging your inward struggles and resting in the person and work of Christ.