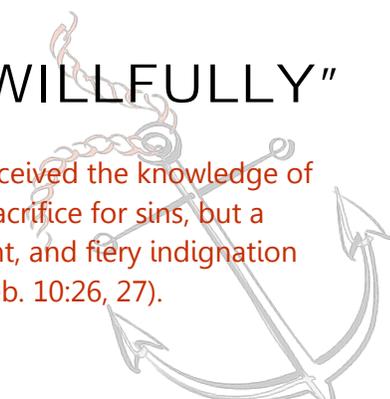




"FOR IF WE SIN WILLFULLY"

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26, 27).



Sin is the constant enemy and snare for our souls. Sin is shown in Genesis 4:7 as something lurking at the door and desiring to be let in. Yet it is something which can be ruled over. Likewise, it is possible for one to receive the knowledge of the truth—be saved—and subsequently sin so as to be lost (cf. Heb. 3:12). If our highlighted passage above does not accord with such, then what is it teaching? Sin is not only a *willful* act but it can also become a *hardening* agent (Heb. 3:13). The Hebrew writer is warning against this hardened persistence in sin. It can effectively begin to work in even the neglect of the worship services and Bible studies and can culminate in a full departure from the faith with an impenetrable heart which will not repent (Heb. 10:25; 6:4–8).

As with most things, one can only help those who will help themselves. Jesus cannot save one who constantly desires wickedness and runs away from Him. The drunk must soberly see and hate his condition which drinking has caused him if he is ever going to break away from it. We need to rule over sin and not let it have its way in our lives.

Perhaps one of the better ways to rule over sin is to see it for what it actually is—to see it through the eyes of God. Sin is a rebellion against His word and will. "...Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 Jn. 3:4, KJV). The one who acts presumptuously is shown to be one who despises the word of the Lord (Num. 15:30, 31). Subsequently, the man who wanted to gather wood on the Sabbath day displayed total disregard for God's law and was stoned to death (Num. 15:32–36). Such a punishment shows how God views sin. Sin is not only that which exalts itself above God's law, but was the corrupting influence that led to the destruction of the very good world God created (Gen. 6:5–7). Further, sin was the cause of the tortuous and shame-filled death of Jesus, the Son of God (1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; 1 Jn. 2:2; Heb. 6:6; 12:2; etc.). Make no mistake about it, sin brings shame upon Christ. Would you love something which shamefully put your loved one to death? This is what sin did to God's Son.

We see in Hebrews 10:29 that sin is worthy of punishment because it tramples the Son of God underfoot, profanes the blood of the covenant, and is insulting to the Spirit of grace. Let me be plain: Jehovah is *insulted* by our sins. These points ought to enable us to better identify what sin is and ponder on how terrible it is. Men must walk carefully to not condemn what is not sinful and at the same time not exonerate what is wicked (cf. Matt. 12:1–7; Rom. 14:1ff; Lk. 16:14–15; etc.). "Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:104).



—Steven J. Wallace