Hebrews 10:30-31 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
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The Epistle
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See ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"
(See also MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews)

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Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: oidamen (1PRAI) gar ton eiponta, (AAPMSA) Emoi ekdikesis, ego antapodoso; (1SFAI) kai palin, Krinei (3SFAI) kurios ton laon autou.

Amplified: For we know Him Who said, Vengeance is Mine [retribution and the meting out of full justice rest with Me]; I will repay [I will exact the compensation], says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge and determine and solve and settle the cause and the cases of His people. [Deut. 32:35, 36] (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

Barclay: For we know who it was who said: “Vengeance belongs to me; it is I who will repay,” and again: “The Lord will judge his people.” (Westminster Press)

NLT: For we know the one who said, "I will take vengeance. I will repay those who deserve it." He also said, "The Lord will judge his own people." (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: For we know the one who said: 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay'. And again: 'The Lord will judge his people'. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: For we know the One who said, To me the meting out of full justice belongs. I will recompense. And again, The Lord will judge His people.

Young's Literal: for we have known Him who is saying, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will recompense, saith the Lord;' and again, 'The Lord shall judge His people;'--

THE FIVE WARNING PASSAGES IN HEBREWS

- **Heb 2:1-4** (notes) **Heb 3:7-4:13** (notes) **Heb 5:11-6:12** (notes) **Heb 10:19-39** (notes) **Heb 12:14-29** (notes)

FOR WE KNOW HIM WHO SAID VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY: oidamen (1PRAI) gar ton eiponta (AAPMSA): hemoi ekdikesis, ego antapodoso (1SFAI):

- Dt 32:35; Ps 94:1; Isa 59:17; 61:2; 63:4; Nah 1:2; Ro 12:19; 13:4
- Hebrews 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

- Hebrews 10:26-31 The Only Options: Christ or Judgment? - Steven Cole
- Hebrews 10:28-39 Apostasy: The Negative Response to the New Covenant 2 - John MacArthur

For (**gar**) explains why the previous statement (re: "severer punishment") is an absolute certainty for the apostate.

We know - The writer includes himself in this sure knowledge. The truth of God taking vengeance is not a possibility but a certainty where such action is warranted as in the case of the individual who is apostate.

Spurgeon - God's fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem. If a man tries nothing else, he will test his gold; and if no others shall be judged, yet certainly those will be who say that they are the Lord's people. In that dread day, He will separate the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the dross from the gold; His fan will be in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor; He will sit as a refiner of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi; He shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. Woe to those, in that day, who are a defilement to His Church and an adulteration to the purity of His people!

Steven Cole comments that

> Even though he has been issuing this strong warning, the author has all along included himself with his readers by using the first person plural ("Let **us**," Heb 10:22, 23, 24; "**we**," Heb 10:26, 30). Here he says, "For **we** know Him who said," and then he cites two references from the Song of Moses (Dt. 32:35, 36). As we have seen before (Heb 3:7; 8:8; 10:15), for this author **what Scripture says, God says**.
>
> The first quote (Dt. 32:35) establishes God's sole right to take vengeance, but here the emphasis is on the fact that those who wrong such a Being as God have no chance of escape. You may wrong another person and somehow manage to escape his vengeance. But God will repay!
>
> The second quote (Dt. 32:36) in its original context has the nuance of God vindicating His people by judging their enemies. Although the apostates had formerly been associated with God's people, their rebellion has put them on the side of God's adversaries (Heb 10:27). They will not escape. Leaving the fellowship and repudiating the sacrifice of Christ does not remove them from judgment, but rather, places them squarely in line for judgment! As Hughes says (p. 426),
>
> "So far from escaping from God, the apostate falls into the hands of the living God: he abandons God as his Savior only to meet him as his Judge." (Hebrews 10:26-31 The Only Options: Christ or Judgment?)

This verse is from the **Septuagint (LXX)** rendering of Deuteronomy 32:35…

> Here is the Septuagint (LXX) of: Dt 32:35 = *ekdikeseos antapodoso* (1SFAI)

Phil Newton…

> God will exact justice. He is a just God and therefore must satisfy his justice. Here we see the legal aspect of divine justice. Quoting from Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32:35, '**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.**" It was a warning to Israel in anticipation of their apostasy. It is in that text he warns, "**In due time their foot will slip**." A person may think that he is getting away with his sin, and in this case, deliberate opposition to the gospel. But divine justice will be exacted; "**in due time their foot will slip**."
>
> Justice will always be served. We observe this on a regular basis as men and women who have committed crimes against society for extended periods, thinking that they would never be discovered, are caught and judged, though some appear to get away with their crimes.
>
> **Paul Johnson,** in his book Modern Times, details the Nazi war crimes against the Jews and other European citizens. His descriptions of Auschwitz where 25,000 Jews "were literally worked to death" and 2,000,000 were gassed with Zyklon-B, followed by "the ghastly search for gold and the removal of the teeth and hair which were regarded by the Germans as strategic materials," then burned to ashes at the rate of "2,000 bodies every twelve hours," defies the imagination. He explains the Nuremberg trial where German industrialists involved in the death camps were given remarkably light sentences and paid little reparations for those victimized. Then he asks the probing question, "**But who is foolish enough to believe there is justice in this world?**' [Modern Times, 415, 417, 422]. **He is right. Vengeance belongs to the Lord; He will repay.**(Hebrews 10:26-31 The Peril of Playing Christian)

Wuest - The certainty of the punishment is assured by the word of God. Vincent says that the word**vengeance** is "an unfortunate translation, since it conveys the idea of vindictiveness which does not reside in the Greek word. It is the full meting out of justice to all parties. The quotation is an adaptation of the Lxx of Dt 32:35. The second citation is literally from Lxx of Dt 32:36." (**Hebrews**

Commentary online)

Vengeance (1557)(**ekdikesis** from **ek** = out, from + **dike** = justice; see also **ekdikos**) is literally that which proceeds "out of justice". **Ekdikesis** means to give justice to someone who has been wronged. It means to repay harm with harm on assumption that initial harm was unjustified and that retribution is therefore called for. The word indicates full, complete punishment. **Ekdikesis** was a technical term for administrative justice.

W E Vine says ekdikesis describes pay back that is based on justice and…

> not (as often with **human vengeance**) from a sense of injury, or merely out of indignation. The judgments of God are holy and right, and free from any element of self-gratification… There is thus no element of vindictiveness, of "taking revenge,"… in the judgments of God; they are both holy and right (cp Rev 16:7-note). (Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

Ekdikesis is punishment which represents a just response. Just or righteous retribution (= Repayment. That which is given or exacted in recompense).

So on one hand **ekdikesis** describes the execution of justice, seeing to it that proper justice is accomplished, giving justice to someone who has been wronged (Lk 18:7, 8, Acts 7:24. In the Lxx = Nu 31:2, Jdg 11:36)

On the other hand **ekdikesis** speaks of the penalty inflicted on the unjust (wrongdoers) or the recompense for harm done (Ro 12:19-note, Heb 10:30). It describes punishing on the basis of what is rightly deserved. Vengeance is God's prerogative alone!

The related verb **ekdikeo** in the papyri was used to decide a case, work as an advocate, defend or help someone to obtain his rights.

Ekdikesis is the carrying out what is right by the exacting of a penalty. The **ekdikos** is the one who exacts satisfaction for a wrong by punishing the wrongdoer or by inflicting punishment in retaliation for an injury or offense. In secular Greek **ekdikos** was used for the office of an official legal representative.

The root noun **dike** describes the basic tenet that a society can expect a certain level or standard of behavior and if that standard is violated ensuing judgment can be expected. In Greek mythology "dike" was the goddess of just punishment. In secular usage dike meant a legal decision or judgment.

Vengeance describes the punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense. Vengeance is the full meting out of justice to all parties. The 1828 Webster's dictionary has a longer definition…

> The infliction of pain on another, in return for an injury or offense. Such infliction, when it proceeds from malice or mere resentment, and is not necessary for the purposes of justice, is **revenge**, and a most heinous crime. When such infliction proceeds from a mere love of justice, and the necessity of punishing offenders for the support of the laws, it is **vengeance**, and is warrantable and just. In this case, **vengeance** is a just retribution, recompense or punishment. In this latter sense the word is used in Scripture, and frequently applied to the punishments inflicted by God on sinners.

Ekdikesis - 9x in 9v - **NAS** = avenging of wrong(1), justice(2), punishment(1), retribution(1), vengeance(4).

Luke 18:7-note now, will not God bring about **justice** for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 "I tell you that He will bring about **justice** for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Luke 21:22-note because these are days of **vengeance**, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

Acts 7:24 "And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took **vengeance** for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.

Comment: Moses brought retribution to the Egyptian for mistreating his fellow Israelites. In a similar (but perfect way) God will bring retribution to those who reject Him and mistreat His people (see 2Th 1:8 below)

Romans 12:19-note Never take your own revenge (ekdikeo), beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "**VENGEANCE** IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

Comment: This is a very difficult truth for most Christians to apply in everyday life because our old nature is so prone to retaliate. The modern world breeds the "tit for tat" get even mentality. Only believers controlled by the Spirit (cp "self-control") can carry out this instruction.

Wuest: Ekdikesis = "“a revenging, punishment,” the latter word more applicable in this context as connected with God. God cannot be said to have vengeance in the sense that a person has vengeance, namely, a retaliatory feeling which prompts a vindictive requital."

2 Corinthians 7:11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what **avenging of wrong**! (This use refers to judicial punishment) In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 dealing out **retribution** to those who do not know God (not "know about God" which even so-called atheists could affirm, but to know Him intimately and personally, ultimately as their Father - note - God is not the Father of unbelievers contrary to prevalent liberal false teaching - see Jn 1:12, 13) and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus

Comment: "Obey" is used in place of "believe" so that clearly the NT teaches that one aspect indicating true, saving belief is obedience (cp Jn 3:36). This is not the obedience of legalism like the Pharisees, but the obedience that is internally motivated and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit. In this sense, one might say that "obedience" while clearly calling for a personal choice, is evidence of supernatural work in a person's heart. In this way to "obey" is used in lieu of to "believe".

The KJV has "**Vengeance**" which is somewhat of an unfortunate rendering for to many individuals (specifically the non-believing world) the word vengeance as commonly used in secular settings implies that God has a sort of personal vindictiveness when in fact He has perfect righteousness and justice! God's "vengeance" is so different from fallen men's vengeance.

Vincent writes that "To know God is to know Him as the One, true God as distinguished from false gods; to know His will, His holiness, His hatred of sin, and His saving intent toward mankind.

Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, "**VENGEANCE** IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

1 Peter 2:14-note or to governors as sent by him for the **punishment** of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

Ekdikesis - 47x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Ex 7:4; 12:12; Num 31:2f; 33:4; Deut 32:35; Judg 11:36; 14:4; 2 Sam 4:8; 22:48; Ps 18:47; 58:10; 79:10; 94:1; 149:7; Isa 59:17; 66:15; Jer 11:20; 20:10, 12; 46:10, 21; 50:15, 27f, 31; 51:6, 11, 36; Lam 3:60; Ezek 5:15; 9:1; 14:21; 16:38, 41; 20:4; 23:10, 45; 24:8; 25:11f, 14f, 17; 30:14; Hos 9:7; Mic 5:15; 7:4;

Exodus 12:12 'For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments (Hebrew = shephet; Lxx = ekdikesis) -- I am the LORD.

Numbers 31:3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD'S **vengeance** (Hebrew = neqamah; Lxx = ekdikesis) on Midian (used again in the phrase "executed judgments" Nu 33:4).

Deuteronomy 32:35 '**Vengeance** (naqam; Lxx = ekdikesis) is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.'

2 Samuel 22:48 The God who executes **vengeance** Hebrew = neqamah; Lxx = ekdikesis) for me, And brings down peoples under me, (Repeated in Ps 18:47)

Spurgeon: It is God that avengeth me. To rejoice in personal revenge is unhallowed and evil, but David viewed himself as the instrument of vengeance upon the enemies of God and his people, and had he not rejoiced in the success accorded to him he would have been worthy of censure. That sinners perish is in itself a painful consideration, but that the Lord's law is avenged upon those who break it is to the devout mind a theme for thankfulness. We must, however, always remember that vengeance is never ours, vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and he is so just and withal so longsuffering in the exercise of it, that we may safely leave its administration in his hands.

Psalm 58:10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the **vengeance** (Hebrew = neqamah; Lxx = ekdikesis); He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

Spurgeon: The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. He will have no hand in meting out, neither will he rejoice in the spirit of revenge, but his righteous soul shall acquiesce in the judgments of God, and he shall rejoice to see justice triumphant. There is nothing in Scripture of that sympathy with God's enemies which modern traitors are so fond of parading as the finest species of benevolence. We shall at the last say, "Amen," to the condemnation of the wicked, and feel no disposition to question the ways of God with the impenitent. Remember how John, the loving disciple, puts it. "And after these things I

heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. Not that he shall be glad of the vengeance purely as it is a hurt, or a suffering to the creature, but the righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance of God, as it is a fulfilling of the threatening of God against the sin of man, and so evidence of his own holiness. Psalms 59:9-10. Joseph Caryl.

Psalm 94:1 O LORD, God of **vengeance** (Hebrew = neqamah; Lxx = ekdikesis), God of **vengeance** (Hebrew = neqamah; Lxx = ekdikesis), shine forth!

Spurgeon: O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself: or, God of retribution, Jehovah, God of retribution, shine forth! A very natural prayer when innocence is trampled down, and wickedness exalted on high. If the execution of justice be a right thing, -- and who can deny the fact? -- then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer, Who can see a nation enslaved, or even an individual downtrodden, without crying to the Lord to arise and vindicate the righteous cause? The toleration of injustice is here attributed to the Lord's being hidden, and it is implied that the bare sight of him will suffice to alarm the tyrants into ceasing their oppressions. God has but to show himself, and the good cause wins the day. He comes, he sees, he conquers! Truly in these evil days we need a manifest display of his power, for the ancient enemies of God and man are again struggling for the mastery, and if they gain it, woe unto the saints of God.

Isaiah 66:15 For behold, the LORD will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind, To render His **anger** (Lxx = ekdikesis) with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire.

AND AGAIN, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE": kai palin: krinei (3SFAI) kurios ton laon autou:

- Deuteronomy 32:36; Ps 50:4; 96:13; 98:9; 135:14; Ezekiel 18:30; 34:17; 2Corinthians 5:10
- Hebrews 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- Hebrews 10:26-31 The Only Options: Christ or Judgment? - Steven Cole
- Hebrews 10:28-39 Apostasy: The Negative Response to the New Covenant 2 - John MacArthur

The LORD will judge His people - There is no partiality with God.

Lord (master, owner)(2962)(**kurios** from **kuros** = might or power, related to **kuroo** = to give authority) primarily means the possessor, owner, master, the supreme one, one who is sovereign (used this way of Roman emperors - Act 25:26) and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power. Kurios is used of the one to whom a person or thing belonged, over which he has the power of deciding, the one who is the master or disposer of a thing (Mk 7:28)

This verse is also from the Septuagint (LXX) rendering of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy…Here is the Septuagint (LXX) of Dt 32:36 = *krinei kurios ton laon autou*

This quote could also be from Ps 135:14 which in the **NAS** is rendered…

> For **the LORD will judge His people** (in the following context idolatry seems to be in view here - Ps 135:15, 16, 17, 18), and will have compassion on His servants.

The thrust of these OT passages is clear - God looks more to those who are His own and yet who presumptuously play with sin even though they should know better.

We see this illustrated in the case of David in 2 Samuel 24, a passage that can be somewhat confusing, even suggesting God incited David to sin, and so it must be properly cross referenced.

2 Samuel 24:1 says…

> Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." (2Sa 24:1)

Cross referencing this passage we read the parallel record in 2Chronicles 21…

> Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel (How do we resolve this? Clearly Satan is the perpetrator of the evil influence on David. And yet we know that Satan can do nothing unless God allows it. So clearly God did not incite David to sin, but He did allow Satan to do it. Satan still has access to God's throne in this present age, and nothing can come into our lives that is out of God's sovereign control! This is an immutable principle beloved! cp Job 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12f, cp Mk 5:13, Lk 8:32, Lk 22:31). So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me word that I may know their number." (God even gave David an opportunity to retract his sinful order before it was actually carried out!) And Joab said, "May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?" Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. (2Chr 21:1,2, 3, 4)

David is given a choice of three painful penalties because of his sin of numbering the people of Israel, an act which was expressly forbidden by the Lord.

> And God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel. 8 And David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly." 9 And the LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, 10 "Go and speak to David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I offer you three things; choose for yourself one of them, that I may do it to you."'" (1Chr 21:7-10)

If such a greatly beloved believer as King David (cp Acts 13:22, 1Sa 16:7) could be dealt with so severely by God, the argument (similar to that used several times in the epistle to the Hebrews) is **how much more** would the apostate individual experience the full impact of the Holy God's righteous wrath!

Judge (decide, determine, condemn)(2919)(**krino** and its cognates [see below] is a root of English words like critic, critical [kritikos] = a decisive point at which judgment is made) primarily signifies to distinguish, to decide between (in the sense of considering two or more things and reaching a decision), to make up one's mind, to separate, to discriminate. to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, without necessarily passing an adverse sentence, although that is often what is usually involved. As you will see from this study, **krino** has various shades of meaning which must be determined from the context. The basic meaning of **krino** is to form an opinion after separating and considering the particulars in the case. Krino means to evaluate and determine what is right, proper, and expedient for correction.

Disciple's Study Bible - This passage (1Chronicles 21) may seem to picture God as very harsh and vindictive. It was crucially important for Him to establish in the minds of His people the importance of following His will, not that of Satan or themselves. It is a serious matter to act against God's will in a flagrant manner. The destruction exacted here seems enormous (see 1Chr 21:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18) --but if later generations profit from this lesson, it will have served its purpose. Even in exercising His wrath, God does what is right and just. The most faithful of God's people make mistakes. King David's command was evil and brought God's judgment. Even judgment brought evidence of God's mercy (1Chr 21:15). (Disciple's Study Bible)

Phil Newton - Distinguishing promised - Some will consider that their involvement with the church at some point in their lives is adequate cover from the wrath of God. But the next quote from Deuteronomy 32:36 explodes this deceitful notion: "**The Lord will judge His people**." The implication in context is that the Lord discerns among His people. There are those who were part of the nation of Israel, the people of God, who were not believers. Outwardly they appeared to share in the blessings of God, but inwardly their hearts rebelled. The same is true in the church. **The visible church does not contain a pure body of genuine believers.** As much as church leaders try, as closely as Scriptural principles are adhered to, absolute purity is impossible in this world. Tares are found among the wheat (Mt 13:36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43). Goats are part of the flock of sheep (cp Mt 25:31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46). But the day will come when the Lord distinguishes between the wheat and tares, the goats and sheep. In that day there will be no more hiding and masquerading as Christians. What will that day expose about you (ME)? (Hebrews 10:26-31 The Peril of Playing Christian)

Hebrews 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.(NASB: Lockman)

> **Greek**: phoberon to empesein (AAN) eis cheiras theou zontos. (PAPMSG)
>
> **Amplified**: It is a fearful (formidable and terrible) thing to incur the divine penalties and be cast into the hands of the living God! (Amplified Bible - Lockman)
>
> **Barclay**: It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Westminster Press)

NLT: It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. [NLT - Tyndale House])

Phillips: Truly it is a terrible thing for a man who has done this to fall into the hands of the living God! [Phillips: Touchstone])

Wuest: It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Young's Literal: fearful is the falling into the hands of a living God.

IT IS A TERRIFYING THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD: phoberon to empesein (AAN) eis cheiras theou zontos (PAPMSG):

- He 10:27; Isaiah 33:14; Luke 21:11
- He 12:29; Ps 50:22; 76:7; 90:11; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5
- Hebrews 10 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- Hebrews 10:26-31 The Only Options: Christ or Judgment? - Steven Cole
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FALLING INTO
THE HANDS OF GOD

It is notable that this passage would have struck a chord with Jewish readers for “Falling into [someone’s] hands” and “living God” were both regular Jewish expressions.

Wuest - The certainty of the punishment is assured by the word of God. Vincent says that the word **vengeance** is “an unfortunate translation, since it conveys the idea of vindictiveness which does not reside in the Greek word. It is the full meting out of justice to all parties. The quotation is an adaptation of the Lxx of Dt 32:35. The second citation is literally from Lxx of Dt 32:36.” (Hebrews Commentary online)

It is a terrifying thing - This was meant to be a frightening verse to those readers who were being tempted to commit apostasy. The writer is trying to get their attention before it is too late and they make the fateful, fearful choice of rejecting the only refuge of escape from the **hands of the Living God**. Believers should apply the truth of this passage to their life! There is a tendency to think "Sure, I've sinned, but I can just confess it (1 John 1:9-note)." We can just confess it. This is true, but we need to ask the Spirit to help our heart develop a proper balance between holy fear of offending God and God's holy mercy when we do offend Him. And inherent in confession is repentance from that sin (cf Pr 28:13-note). Job gives us a perfect example of a godly man to follow (cf Heb 6:11-12-note) - "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil." (Job 1:1). Why did Job turn from evil? What did the writer say in the immediate context? So there is your answer about why a proper fear of God is so valuable in serving as an impediment to commiting a sin when we are sorely tempted.

I think Puritan **John Owens** was correct about this concept of eternal damnation as "**terrifying**" when he said that…

> People are prone not to think about this. But God’s judgment exists and will be dreadful, terrible, and eternally destructive of everything that is not good.
>
> To **fall into the hands** of someone is a common expression and refers to anyone falling into and under the power of his enemies. When a person falls into the hands of his enemies there is no law or love between him and them, and he can expect nothing but death. This is what it is to **fall into the hands of the living God**. There is nothing in the law, there is nothing in the Gospel that can be appealed to to stop the punishment.

As **Spurgeon** said "a low view of Hell usually is associated with a low view of the Cross."

R A Torrey wrote: **Shallow views of sin and of God’s holiness,** and of the glory of Jesus Christ and His claims upon us, lie at the bottom of weak theories of the doom of the impenitent. When we see sin in all its hideousness and enormity, the Holiness of God in all its perfection, and the glory of Jesus Christ in all its infinity, nothing but a doctrine that those who persist in the choice of sin, who love darkness rather than light, and who persist in the rejection of the Son of God, shall endure everlasting anguish, will satisfy the demands of our own moral intuitions… The more closely men walk with God and the more devoted they become to His service, the more likely they are to believe this doctrine"

Phil Newton…

> **John Owen's** comment explains,

"When a person falls into the hands of his enemies there is no law or love between him and them, and he can expect nothing but death."

Such has been the case through the centuries in times of great conflict. But Owen adds,

"This is what it is to fall into the hands of the living God. There is nothing in the law, there is nothing in the gospel that can be appealed to to stop the punishment" [The Crossway Classic Commentaries: Hebrews, 215].

Just as God has shown us the excellence of his love through Christ, he will also show the terror of his wrath to those who reject Jesus Christ and the offer of pardon in the gospel [Edwards 10].

Conclusion - **Are you playing Christian?** I would not suppose that any among us have gone to the extreme of **apostasy** but neither had any of those who listened to this epistle being read in the church. But the danger is there because of the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13-note) and unbelief (Heb 3:19-note). I just made the statement that we have not seen wrath displayed, but we have in one place, the Cross (cp Gal 3:13). Christ bore the wrath of God for you so that through faith in Him alone you might be declared righteous (just) before God and know the delights of divine grace for eternity. I plead with you to turn to Christ in repentance and faith while mercy awaits.(Hebrews 10:26-31 The Peril of Playing Christian)

So clearly this section of Hebrews should be a frightening for those church members who are religious but who lack relationship with Christ (cp Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 7:23-note, Titus 1:16-note, 2Cor 13:5). As someone has well said "You can have tons of religion without an ounce of salvation."

When **Jonathan Edwards** preached his famous sermon over 260 years ago, "**Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God**," his text came from Dt 32:35, but the words for his title came from this text. "**It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**."

The hands of Christ are very frail
For they were broken with a nail.
But only those reach Heaven at last
Whom those broken hands hold fast.

Living God - 28x in the Bible - Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 2 Kgs 19:4, 16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4, 17; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Dan 6:20, 26; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev 7:2

Steven Cole comments that :the author concludes, "**It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God**." He is trying, quite literally, to scare the hell out of them! (**Ed**: otherwise certain assignment of them to hell) The Apostle John (Rev 6:12-note, Re 6:13-note, Re 6:14-note, Re 6:15-note) describes the terror of God's judgment as it overtakes kings and commanders, the rich and the poor. After a great earthquake, the sun turns black and the moon turns blood red. The stars fall to earth and the sky splits apart. Mountains and islands move out of their places. Hiding themselves in caves and among the rocks of the mountains, everyone cries out to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Re 6:16-note, Re 6:17-note) (Hebrews 10:26-31 The Only Options: Christ or Judgment?)

Spurgeon - It must be a fearful thing for impenitent sinners to fall into God's hand when we remember the character of God as revealed in His judgments of old. Taking the Scriptures as our guide, we see in them a revelation of God differing very widely from that which is so current nowadays. The God of Abraham, as revealed in the Old Testament, is as different from the universal Father of modern dreams as he is from Apollo or Bacchus. Let me remind you that ever since the day when Adam fell, with but two exceptions, the whole of the human race have been subjected to the pains of sickness and of death. If you would behold the severity of Him who judges all the earth, you have only to remember that this whole world has been for ages a vast burying place. to fall into the hands of the living God What a terrible verse is that! It is a text that ought to be preached from by those who are always saying that the punishment of the wicked will be less than, according to our minds, the Word of God leads us to expect it to be. Upon such a subject we cannot afford to trifle. Besides, the mystery of Calvary indicates to us that sin must deserve at God's hand a terrible penalty. Did Jesus suffer so bitterly to save men, and will not the unsaved endure bitterness indeed? Must the eternal and holy Son of God, upon whom sin was only an imputed thing—must He bleed, and die, and offer up His life, with His soul exceedingly heavy even unto death—and is the world to come a thing about which men can afford to sport or idly dream?

John Piper comments on the vitally important doctrine of the **wrath of God** which seems not to be a popular doctrine in the modern church..

If the real world that God has created includes the reality of divine judgment and vengeance and the terrifying, furious fire of **God's wrath,** then honesty and love and wisdom will all include warnings of danger, not just

promises of blessing…

We are soft and we are presumptuous. And, what's most appalling, though very few regard it as most appalling, is that when it comes to God, all we want to hear is the sweet side , the tender side, the warm side. We believe that the only good motivation comes from hearing about grace, not judgment. And little by little we let that motivational conviction (as unbiblical as it is) creep into our view of God Himself, until we have no categories anymore to understand, let alone love, a God whose wrath is a fury of fire against sinners. But the writer of this book of Hebrews will not be silent about the **wrath of God**.

It is a book utterly devoted to living by faith in future grace. O, the grace of God in this book! Chapter after chapter celebrates the glorious provision of God in Jesus Christ to free us from our sin and turn our future into a paradise of hope. The book begins and ends with Christ making purification for sins and sitting down at the right hand of God , our perfect sacrifice and priest and shepherd, who will never leave us or forsake us. But, like no other book of the New Testament, this book is also relentless in its warnings about the dangers of carelessness in the Christian life. **And the warnings are not that we might forfeit a few heavenly rewards, but that we might forfeit our souls in the fury of God's wrath.**

So here is a book that stands against the motivational assumption that the only motivating news is good news. There is both the promise of joy and the warning of pain. We saw it in Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation." We saw it in Hebrews 3:11, 12, As I swore in my wrath, they shall never enter my rest. Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God." We saw it in Hebrews 6:4,6,8 "It is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened… **if they then commit apostasy**… [they are like land that is] worthless and near to being cursed."" (Read full message)

During the Franco-German War of 1870-71, a homeowner found two unexploded shells near his house. He cleaned them up and put them on display near his fireplace. A few weeks later he showed them to a visitor. His friend, an expert in munitions, had a horrible thought. "What if they're still loaded?" After examining the shells, he ex-claimed, "Get them away from the fire immediately! They're as deadly as the day they were made!" Without realizing it, the homeowner had been living in peril.

Likewise, many people unknowingly live in constant jeopardy of something far worse—a Christ-less eternity in hell. Failing to recog-nize the consequences of unbelief, they risk sealing their doom at any moment. We cannot exaggerate the danger of rejecting Christ and living in unbelief, for what we do with Him and His offer of salvation determines where we will spend eternity.

The words of our text are among the most chilling found in the Bible. They emphasize the truth of Hebrews 10:31 : that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Our Lord describes hell as a terrible place of outer darkness (Matt. 22:13) and eternal hopelessness (Matt. 18:8-9) . —H. G. Bosch (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

When it comes to salvation,
he who hesitates may be lost!

The Ultimate Tragedy - It was an immense tragedy. More than two million pilgrims had gathered outside Mecca to take part in an annual religious event when something caused a stampede. After the dust had settled, nearly 200 people lay dead, trampled in the mad rush.

Imagine the irony! These worshipers were attempting to get closer to God. When they died, however, they found out sooner than they ever imagined whether their devotion had brought them nearer to God or not.

The real tragedy of the situation was not in the deaths themselves, as heart-wrenching as that is. Death spares no one, though its icy grip ensnares some before others. It's not death that is the ultimate tragedy but death without Jesus Christ. For any person who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior, the tragedy of death is compounded by eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 10:31).

Acts of religious devotion do not gain for us access into God's eternal presence. Entrance to heaven is a free gift, received by faith in Christ—believing that He lived, died, and rose from the grave to rescue us from the penalty of sin.

If you're not depending on Jesus, you'll suffer the ultimate tragedy. Don't let it happen to you. —Dave Branon (Ibid)

Salvation is a gift of God,
Not something earned or won;
He freely gives eternal life
To all who trust His Son. —Sper

You can have tons of religion
without an ounce of salvation.

JONATHAN EDWARDS didn't forget about the righteous wrath of God and presented one of given in July, 1841 at Enfield, Mass," SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD":

> O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment… Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock… There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor"

He was by all accounts never a spellbinding speaker, and he did not wish to be. All of his sermons were delivered in the same calm fashion—but with penetrating force. For three days Edwards had not eaten a mouthful of food: for three nights he had not closed his eyes in sleep. Over and over again, he had been saying to God, "Give me New England! Give me New England!" and when he arose from his knees, and made his way into the pulpit they say that he looked as if he had been gazing straight into the face of God. They say that before he opened his lips to speak, conviction fell upon his audience.

When the congregation at Enfield could not control themselves as they listened to Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, and Edwards could not be heard for the commotion, he stopped and requested that they be quiet to hear the rest of the sermon, and refrain from weeping and crying out! Edwards had the manuscript held up so close to his face that they could not see his face. He went on and on until the people in that crowded church were moved almost beyond control. One man sprang up, rushed down the aisle and cried, "Mr. Edwards, have mercy!"

Others caught hold of the backs of pews lest they should slip into the pit. Most thought that the day of judgment had dawned on them. The power of that sermon is still felt in the United States today. However, the secret of that sermon's power is known to few Christians. Some believers in that vicinity of Enfield, Mass., had become alarmed that, while God was blessing other places, He should in anger pass them by. And so they met on the evening before the sermon—and spent that whole night in agonizing prayer. The rest is history. Edwards has often been portrayed as a hell-fire and brimstone preacher because of this sermon. Unfortunately, most people only think of this one sermon when they think of Edwards. But, as the historian Sydney Ahlstrom pointed out, Edwards, who wrote over 1,000 sermons, wrote less than a dozen of this type. Rather than gleefully picturing the doom of sinners, as English teachers often have portrayed him, Edwards would shudder to think that any of his hearers might not heed his warnings about eternal damnation:

O Sinner! Consider the danger you are in!
'Tis a great Furnace of Wrath,
a wide and bottomless Pit,
full of the Fire of Wrath … !

Controversy arose between Edwards and his congregation when he sought to restrict admission to Communion to only those who could give satisfactory evidence of conversion. In 1750 he was dismissed from

his charge at Northampton and the following year resettled in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he led the small Stockbridge church and served as teacher and missionary to the Housatonnoc Indians who resided in the vicinity. In 1758 he reluctantly assumed duties as president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) but died a month later (March 22, 1758) at age 55 of a smallpox inoculation.

In 1734 Edwards preached two sermons on the subject of justification, which caused a spiritual awakening among his and neighboring congregations. News of the revival spread as far as Britain and elicited from Edwards a written account of the events that was published in 1737 as A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God. In it Edwards interpreted the revival as a genuine work of God's redemptive grace among the people of New England. Three years later, during the first Great Awakening, Edwards wrote two influential works in defense of the revival that established him as the leading theologian of the movement. The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God was published in 1741 and set forth a theological defense of the revival, explicating and defending it as authentic by distinguishing "true signs" of religious experience from "false signs." In 1743 this work was expanded and published as Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival. In addition to answering the critics of the revival, here Edwards also stressed the aberrant nature of religious experience in order to temper revival enthusiasts. Edwards' most mature analysis of religious experience, A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, was published in 1746, several years after the revival was spent.

The work is divided into three parts. The first defines the nature of religious experience as a matter primarily of the heart, stating that true religion is seated in the affections or inclinations. The second identifies and examines those manifestations that are not sure signs of true religion. The third, which takes up nearly three quarters of the Treatise, describes twelve marks that arise from a genuine religious conversion. True religion is essentially a changed heart that manifests itself in Christian practice. Edwards' position was attacked by Charles Chauncey, minister of the First Church of Boston, in his sermons "The Late Religious Commotions in New England Considered" and "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion." These sum up the position taken by the critics of Edwards and the revival.

Edwards' emphasis on visible religion eventually placed him in conflict with his congregation at Northampton. By limiting church membership and participation in Communion to only those who professed their Christian faith as founded upon a definite religious experience, he reversed the position instituted by his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, who had eliminated tests for Communion. In A Humble Inquiry Concerning Qualifications for Communion, published in 1749, Edwards set forth in characteristically explicit terms his position, which led to his dismissal in 1750.

Edwards lived with a sense of the imminency of Christ's return as shown by this entry:

"It is not unlikely that this Work of God's Spirit, so extraordinary and wonderful, is the Dawning, or at least a Prelude of that glorious Work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which, in the Progress and Issue of it, shall renew the World of Mankind … And there are many things that make it probable that this Work will begin in America. "