

This interview was in response to the question as to why people who have come out from 'traditional' churches find it so hard to 'hear' the message of grace, the message of the gospel, the almost too good to be true news even when it is presented to them every week.

So why do you think people are not "hearing" this almost too good to be true news?

On reflecting on my own experience, I didn't come to an understanding of God's grace until around 5 years ago when I was given a CD with some of Andrew Wommack's talks on it. Within minutes, the Spirit within me bore witness that what I was hearing was the truth and that this was the answer I had been looking for. My relationship with God and Jesus was not a relationship of peace, and I always felt it had something to do with my misunderstanding of what law and grace was. I remember that in the previous church I was in, the pastor for a period of time put out a suggestion box for talks we might like to hear. I put in a suggestion that I wanted to hear a talk on law and grace. The pastor did give the talk but it didn't help me.

If you thought your lack of peace related to not understanding grace, did you seek out further information?

Well No! I didn't search too widely for the answer to my situation because I thought the problem lay with me and not with the teaching I was receiving or my understanding of the Gospel message or Grace message in the Bible. Because I thought I understood the Gospel message, I concluded that the reason for my not experiencing the peace of God in my life was because I was just failing in my Christian life. And there precisely was the problem. It was not about my ability, or my failings. It was all about Jesus and His grace, His ability, His success, His free gift to me that covered my failings.

. ... So back to the question you asked before

I can now understand why people are missing the good news of the Gospel of grace. For me, it took hours and hours of listening to the message of grace to renew my mind and reverse the subtle legalistic teaching I had been sitting under. I guess I thought it took me such a long time to completely embrace the gospel of grace because I was just dense. I hadn't thought (until now) that it was really that difficult for the normal person. But it appears that there are others who are struggling with the concepts of the grace message.

So what do you think has gone wrong? Why are people not understanding the grace message of the Bible?

Well I have given this a lot of thought.

John 1:16-17 - Speaking of Jesus

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Everyone has heard the definition of grace as the unearned, undeserved favour of God. While the church may not teach the Mosaic Law, Christianity at large still has a law based

way of seeking a relationship with God. Initial salvation may be taught graciously as the unearned, undeserved favour of God and goes something like this:-

Jesus died to forgive you of all sin. There is nothing that you have done that Jesus won't forgive you for. Come to Jesus, just as you are.

But after you have accepted Jesus, the subtle or not so subtle message of the Church at large is:-

Now you must overcome all sin, do works of righteousness and earn your salvation

When we fail, which we invariably do, these failings are met with messages of legalism and condemnation from the Church at large. So... instead of resting in the forgiveness of God which was accomplished at the Cross of Jesus, we pick ourselves up, seek forgiveness and hope it has been granted, dust ourselves off and try to DO better next time.

Surely we do need to act in a way which honours God. We would not be good ambassadors for Christ if we acted in a way that dishonoured God

That's absolutely true! But the difference lies in the motivation. In the NON-Grace, legalistic approach, good works or good behaviour is the goal for which we contend, strive and put in our best effort. The motive for doing good works is to make God happy with us. If our efforts are good enough, we can gain God's approval or avoid God's disapproval. That's the legalistic, NON-Grace approach.

And the Grace Approach?

Good behaviour and good works is not absent in the Grace Approach. Far from it! The motivation for doing good works is because God is already happy with us. We love God because he first loved us. We are assured that God loves and accepts us because He has withheld nothing and provided everything in the sacrifice of His Son. Through the finished work on the Cross, God's love and forgiveness is graciously extended to us, independent of our own efforts or failings. Paul says in

2 Corinthians 5:14:- It *is the Love of Christ which constrains us....*

Because we are secure in the Love of God which envelops us, we love God back through our actions because it is our natural inclination and our very great pleasure to do so. This is confirmed in Titus when Paul points out that it is the grace of God that causes us to live a righteous and Godly life.

Titus 2:11-14

*11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

So it is the Love and Grace of God that gives us the desire to live a Godly life

And there is the difference!

Grace approach - We do good works and avoid sin - Because we love God who loved and accepted us first

Legalistic approach – We do good works and avoid sin - Because we are trying to gain the love and acceptance of God.

So we've mentioned the good works aspect! Everything seems to be going well for a while! Then we fall! What would be the Legalistic/NON-Grace approach?

The NON-Grace approach is: - To be right with God you have to DO the right thing and do not DO the wrong thing!!

I have come to realise only recently that I wasn't unique. There are a whole bunch of us who are just as spiritually dense as me. We have had a works based, law based way of relating to God.

So when I failed, this is the way I used to think (and I'm still renewing my mind against it). I am now convinced that I am not the only one who thought this way. It goes something like this:

Oh God!
I have Failed!
AGAIN!
WHAT is WRONG with me!

When a Christian (who is under the bondage of legalism) fails in some action/inaction, the legalistic/NON-Grace advice often is 'throw yourself upon the mercy and grace of God and seek His forgiveness'

So I am now praying

Oh God I am throwing myself upon your mercy
I am seeking your forgiveness
God I don't know if you are going to forgive me this time?

But this is what I am thinking (And now I am really hoping God isn't listening to this bit)

Here I am seeking God's forgiveness! But if I was truly sorry and repentant I wouldn't keep doing the wrong thing! And I do keep doing the wrong thing!
Therefore I must not be truly repentant!

I am really going to have to assume God doesn't figure that one out! So I am going to put on a brave face and march on with renewed determination to DO the right thing the next time! Then I can prove to God that I am truly repentant because next time I am going to DO better!

Unless I am unique, that doesn't work! We do continue to fail! When we continue to fail, we give up on ourselves. And there is a clue right there! We should be giving up on ourselves and relying on Jesus, but because our relationship with God is works based, law based and dependent on our good behaviour; our relationship with God suffers. Because we have given up on ourselves, we start heading to a place where we think God has given up on us

And there is the subtlety of the NON-Grace approach. Words like Grace and mercy are used but we have no assurance we have received grace and mercy because of our legalistic law-based thinking

Surely we fail whether we have a Grace or a Legalistic approach! How does the Grace message differ when it comes to dealing with our failings?

Christians living in the Grace of God do fail and fail plenty of times. BUT it's the way we deal with our failings that is so radically different.

How So?

The Grace message brings with it a completely different, revolutionary and gracious approach. When we fail:-

We don't have to go begging God for forgiveness. He has already forgiven us!

We don't have to throw ourselves upon the Grace and Mercy of God. God has thrown His Grace and Mercy upon us when He sent Jesus who was Grace and Truth

Under the Grace approach we deal with our failings something like this

"Yes God, I have failed/sinned/fallen short/ whatever it was. But, I am so thankful to you! This will not be held to my account because Jesus has already taken care of it. I don't need to beg your forgiveness and wonder if you will forgive me, because you have already forgiven me. You didn't just forgive me when I realised what I had done. The redeeming and eternal power of your sacrifice was so great, that you forgave me for that sin before I was even born. Thank you for your Love, Grace and Mercy which has set me free to honour you in all that I do."

Will we fail again? For Sure!

But we do the same thing. Acknowledge our failing. Thank God for the finished work on the cross. Allow our hearts and conscience to be washed by the blood of Jesus. Move on in the Love of God.

We have to keep reminding ourselves

It is not about us and what we have done! It's about God and what He has done

IF we can grab a hold of this Grace message, it will set us free! This Gospel of Grace is the GOOD News, the nearly too good to be true news. This will set us free to honour God in our actions exceedingly more than the legalist who is doing the actions for the purpose of seeking the approval of God.

That sounds Great! Why do you think people aren't embracing this Good News

There are a lot of reasons, but I think one of the reasons a lot of people have trouble embracing this almost too good to be true news is because they think it is too good to be true. People sometimes start getting a hold of the Gospel message of Grace, start resting in the Love of God, start experiencing the freedom that comes with the knowledge of the TRUTH (otherwise known as Jesus) and then they read a scripture which appears to be terrifying. I think sometimes it's a misunderstanding of some of these "scary" scriptures or other scriptures which appear far from gracious that causes people to think that the burden of salvation is now back on them.

Well I have a scripture that scares a lot of Christians. Can we go to Hebrews 10:26?

Hebrews 10:26 (KJV)

²⁶ *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins*

What would be your interpretation of this?

Firstly I'd like to address how it is commonly interpreted by the church at large.

It goes something like this:

If after you have become a Christian by being born again through accepting and believing the truth that Jesus is the promised Messiah, God's only acceptable and perfect sacrifice;

And Then IF You commit a sin knowingly and wilfully;

THEN: You are no longer in right standing with God.

Its extreme interpretation is that in severe cases the wilful nature of the sin is so great that we have of our own doing, of our own choice and of our own will disqualified ourselves forever, from being able to avail ourselves of Jesus' sacrifice and spilt blood again.

From a first reading, it does seem it may be saying that. How would you see it?

If that interpretation is correct, then it is a terrifying scripture. On the face of it and read in isolation from the rest of the Bible, and the book of Hebrews and specifically the 10th Chapter of Hebrews, it is totally understandable why this interpretation is so common. However, I propose that this scripture has nothing to do with those people commonly

referred to as backsliders by the church at large. I propose that the wilful sin being referred to here is the sin of:

Wilfully rejecting the Gospel of Grace; wilfully rejecting Jesus's sacrifice as God's answer to the human sin condition, wilfully rejecting Jesus, God's free gift of righteousness.

That seems like a bit of a stretch!

It does say in verse 26

For if we sin wilfully

It would seem it may have a broader meaning than rejecting Jesus. Wouldn't wilful sin refer to any deliberate sin?

Wilful Sin

If wilful sin in this piece of scripture meant sin that we commit with the knowledge that what we are doing is wrong, then not one of us would make it. Only Jesus Himself would be able to pass that test. Almost all sin has a wilful element.

You are saying all sin has a wilful element. Give us some examples

It may come as a surprise that the Bible says more about gluttony than it does about homosexuality. Yet every single one of us in this room would have at some time been guilty of gluttony. We know that we have had sufficient to eat; we know that we shouldn't be going back for a second helping but we wilfully do.

We also know that we should speak evil of no man (Titus3:2) and be praying for our kings and all those in authority (1Tim2:1) but most of us wilfully and passionately make disparaging remarks about our particular most 'non-favourite' politician or political party.

If all of this isn't bad enough, sin is not just doing bad things it is failing to do good. (James 4:17)

¹⁷ *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

How many times do we fail in this area?? How many times do we decide (wilfully!) to let an opportunity to do good pass us by?? We know that we should love our neighbour in preference to ourselves, but every single one of us falls short in that area every day; in word, thought or deed.

So it seems that we all commit wilful sin. This would put us all in a lot of trouble right there. I think we all fall into the trap of thinking that we are a Special Sinner.

"You don't understand! My sin is not the ordinary garden variety sin. My sin was an especially wilful sin. NO! We ALL commit wilful sin

One interpretation I've heard is that it refers to the seriousness of the wilful sin

I've heard that too. With our human reasoning we figure that there is too much scripture indicating that there are some of us who are going to make it... so what God must be referring to is the seriousness of the wilful sin. So we try to classify sin as big sin or little sin.

Little sin might be a little 'white lie'. A big sin might be homosexuality, adultery or murder. Our human reasoning figures that since some are going to make it, this scripture must be referring to those who commit the BIG wilful sins.

So NOW, if after we have become a Christian and come to the knowledge of the Truth (Jesus Himself declares Himself to be the Truth)... It is a common belief in the Church that when we commit sin (especially a 'big' sin or a sin that in our estimation has just a little bit too much wilfulness about it) THEN, we have backslidden, the sacrifice of Jesus no longer avails for us and we are destined for hell.

But the Big Sin/Little Sin concept is not consistent with the Bible. Sin is Sin. According to God's perfect standard, once we have committed any sin, we have fallen short, we have missed the mark, we have FAILED! We are totally guilty before God. There are many scriptures that support this. As James puts it in (James 2:10) (See Gal 3:10 as well)

¹⁰ *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*

Big sin! Little Sin! It's all the same to God! It all carries the same penalty! Death! Death is the wages (or consequence) of sin. We all commit wilful sin. If we hold to this definition of wilful sin, nobody can be saved.

It would appear from the scriptures that there are many who are going to be saved. Are there any other explanations?

People wrestle over this and come up with all sorts of reasoning. One is: Since we've all committed wilful sin and the big sin/little sin concept is invalid, and there are definitely those who are going to be saved, then those people must have DONE something about it. Therefore it must now be up to us. There is something we now have to DO to get ourselves saved out of this mess. By now, we have put ourselves under so much condemnation that we figure the sin is so big that even Jesus can't save us now. It must be up to us. Oh what can we DO (DO, DO, DO! It seems to be ingrained in us, that when we are in a tight spot we default to WORKS and not to Faith).

So ... our next move is to add some Works to the grace we have received.

So what are the works that you think people default to?

We figure that in the case of the really big and especially wilful sin, God's sacrifice is not enough and we will have to add some of our own sacrifice and penance. (This is the works/legalistic approach of sacrificing bulls and goats). But we sacrifice our goats in a special way!

We figure that, MAYBE, if we beat ourselves up enough, because after all the punishment that Jesus took was not enough to cover this especially big sin, if we grovel before God enough, do enough penance and beg God enough for forgiveness, maybe He will forgive us and maybe we can get back into right standing with God.

Before we move on we are going to have to stop right there! This will destroy us! Peace with God, confidence towards God, a vibrant and loving relationship with God can only happen once we realize it is the cleansing blood of Jesus, his eternal sacrifice that has

perfected us forever that keeps us safe and secure. The cleansing blood of Jesus – NOT our ability to confess our sin is what takes care of our sin. The sin consciousness that arises when we feel we need to grovel before God every time we fall short in order to obtain forgiveness will destroy us!

There would be many who think we should be very aware of our sin and that we should be asking for forgiveness every day. A very large number of people attend confessionals where they list off their sins. Wouldn't keeping track of our sin so that you can confess them be a good thing to clear the conscience?

This approach focuses us in on our sin instead of resting in Jesus who forgave us our sin. Besides... What if we didn't confess every sin? What if we didn't grovel hard enough? What if we didn't express enough regret? The burden is now on us to take care of our sin. This lets Satan in the door who will accuse us and condemn us. And Satan would be absolutely right because if the burden is on us to confess every sin, and do a good enough job of paying for our sin through penance, and sorrowful begging, then we are always going to fall short. No! Our efforts are never going to be good enough. There was One who paid the price for sin. We need to come to a place where we see every sin already covered by Jesus blood. Our response to Satan should be:

YES Satan, You Accuser of the brethren, you Defeated one! I have fallen short! I have sinned!

BUT, in the courts of heaven, I have an Advocate with the Father

1 John 2:1 (KJV)

¹ *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

Our advocate is none less than Jesus Christ Himself. He will represent us. We don't have to represent ourselves! Jesus confession of grace to the righteous Father will be "See that little child who just stumbled and fell into sin. I paid for that sin at the Cross of Calvary. I became sin for that child so that he may be the "righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21)

The full extent of our responsibility is to agree with God - Thank you Jesus. Even though I stumbled or even fell into the depths of sin, you took that sin upon yourself. Through what you did and nothing that I did, I now stand before you righteous

And 11 verses down (1John 2:12)

¹² *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you... for his name's sake*

Why would we be begging for forgiveness when the forgiveness has already been granted to us? God doesn't want us grovelling around begging forgiveness for sins and iniquities that he has chosen to remember no more ... Yes we confess our sin, not to receive forgiveness but because we already have God's forgiveness. We acknowledge we have fallen short ... but rejoice in the good news of the Gospel, that if we believe on Jesus and the finished work on the cross, then God sees us as righteous. We place our faith not in ourselves but in Jesus.

The focus is **NOT** on the sin that Jesus paid for. The focus is on **JESUS** who paid for the sin.

So you would see this introspective attitude of analysing our sin as taking the focus off the Victory that Jesus won for us?

Precisely! We really need to get over ourselves in this area. When we focus on our failings and beat ourselves up for being the scum of the earth, we detract from the One who should have our attention.

We need to remind ourselves that God valued us and extended His LOVE and GRACE to us... in that even while we were yet still sinners, Jesus came and died for us

Romans 5:8-9 (KJV)

⁸ *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

But Verse 9 speaks to us now that we are believers

9 Much more then (Not much less now, MUCH MORE now), *being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*

This kills a very favourite sacred cow of the church at large - that you can be a dirty rotten sinner And when you come to Jesus, He forgives you of every dirty rotten thing that you've done, but **MUCH LESS** now are you going to be forgiven if you dare to sin after being born again.. It's actually the opposite. Now that you've accepted and received the purifying and cleansing blood of Jesus over your life, which washes and cleanses you instantly how much **MORE** are you protected from the consequences of sin. It's like being under a waterfall of Grace. While we choose to rest in finished work of the cross of Jesus, be sanctified by the eternal sacrifice of Jesus and remain under the cleansing waterfall of the Gospel of Grace, Sin can't take a hold of us. It is immediately washed away.

So getting back to the original question of what is the Wilful sin of Hebrews 10:26? Are we any closer to identifying it?

I think we have established what it is not. But at this point, it will be helpful to consider what was happening at the time the letter to the Hebrews was written

Firstly we need to have a look at:

The Changing of the Belief System in the First Century

Yes! Well that would have been the biggest upheaval in Judeo-Christian history. What were the biggest changes as you see them?

The New Testament was written in a time of transition from the belief that righteousness was obtained through the observance and works of the Law to the belief that only through Jesus could anyone stand righteous and justified before God. There was enormous resistance to this and writers such as Paul wrote many letters proving that Christ was the fulfilment of the OT law and the mediator of the new covenant. Mankind, and in particular the Jews, had been trying for 2,000 years to earn their righteousness with God through works of the law. In Romans 3.10 Paul makes reference to the Psalms (Ch 14) to prove that even the OT acknowledged that whether Jew or gentile, there "was none righteous, not

one". The point Paul was leading to was that the law itself admitted that it could save no-one. So Paul goes on to say in verse 20 (of Rom chapt 3)

Romans 3:20

Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

It is clear from this verse that the law was not the vehicle to gain justification in the sight of God

Paul then goes on to say in the next verse, that the Law itself prophesied a time when justification would be granted without the Law. This was radical. Not only was it proved that even the OT writings agreed that the Law could justify no-one, even the OT itself bore witness that there was a time coming when justification and righteousness could be obtained completely and independently of the Law.

This is brought out clearly in

Romans 3:21 (from the Amplified Translation)

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed [independently and completely] apart from the Law, though it is [actually] confirmed by the Law and the [words and writings of the] Prophets.

So in these 2 verses, Paul was saying that he was not preaching a new doctrine after all. God had never intended that the OT law be used for mankind to gain right standing with God. Faith in God was always the only way to obtain righteousness. The legalistic Jews had completely misunderstood the writings in the Law and prophets. Paul confirms this point in his letter to the Colossians when referring to the ordinances of the OT

Colossians 2:17 (AMP)

¹⁷ Such things are only a shadow of what is to come and they have only symbolic value; but the substance [the reality of what is foreshadowed] belongs to Christ.

These ordinances (meat, drink, holy days Sabbaths etc) are only symbols of Christ until as such time as Christ could come. Jesus is the reality, the real deal. Our faith from the very beginning was meant to be in God. The OT saints, like us, were saved by faith and not by the works of the law. The Law such as the 10 commandments revealed to man that he was in a state of sin but the Law was powerless to save because man was unable to fulfil it. Hebrews 10:4 confirms that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin. The washings and sacrifices and observances of holy days were shadows and symbols of Christ, who was to come and reconcile mankind with God. Faith was always intended to be placed in God and the promised Messiah. These OT folk also had their sins covered by Jesus (Rom 3:25 and Heb 9:15 confirm this). It was their faith in God and His promised Messiah which saved them, not the blood of bulls and goats and the observance of the law.

So if the Law was never designed to save anyone, was the Law a bad thing?

Absolutely not!

The law is just and holy and good – the weakness of the law lay in man's ability to keep it (Rom 8:3)

The Law served as a stop-gap measure or a guardian until as such time as Christ could come (School master to bring us to Christ). The Law served a number of purposes, and we will

have to deal with this another time but in Summary there are 3 approximate 2,000 year time periods:

First Time Period: (Adam to Moses: This was 2,000 years with no Law). Because there was no law during this time period, sin was not charged to mankind's account but sin reigned and so everyone suffered the consequence of Adams's sin and died (Romans 5:12-14)

Second Time Period: (Moses to Christ: This was 2,000 years of the Law). Mankind had been in a state of ignorance or denial regarding their sin condition so the Law was introduced to make them aware that sin was killing them. (For by the Law is the knowledge of sin). Sin had already defeated mankind. He just didn't know it. As Paul says in Romans 7:7

"I had not known sin except by the Law".

The 10 commandments identified the holy standards of God. It was never possible to keep the law, so its purpose was to point to the fact that we needed a Saviour. Moses introduced a system of sacrifices. The sacrifices were required by the Law. But they were actually a means of God extending His mercy. The blood of bulls and goats was never going to forgive sins, but the whole point of these ordinances was to point them to Jesus. The sin for OT people under the law was dealt with by Jesus just as our sins were dealt with by Jesus. The OT saints were required to perform the shedding of blood to serve as a reminder that their faith was in God and a future Saviour who would deal with their sin.

So we were up to what was happening in the world at the time the book of Hebrews was written. We have covered the changing belief systems. That must have upset a few people?

In this first Century as the church was being established, denying the saving power of the law and preaching a better Covenant of grace was so divisionary and so radical, and enraged the legalistic self-righteous Jews with such murderous passion that a gospel preacher was bound to end up dead.

Acts 13 and 14 recounts the dedication of the Jews to end Paul's preaching. They had Paul and Barnabas thrown out of Antioch, pursued them to Iconium where they planned to stone them but they escaped. The Jews then pursued them to Lystra where they finally had opportunity to stone Paul and then left him for dead.

In 2Cor 11:23-24 Paul recounts his experiences with the Jews (these are experiences with his fellow countrymen ... not the Romans or gentiles). Apart from the stoning in Lystra, he was thrown into prison and faced death more times than you would care to think about, 5 times he received 39 lashes with the whip (195 stripes in total). Three times he was beaten with rods.

The legalistic Jews were intent on using any means to shut down the Gospel message and even infiltrated the gentile churches. Galatians was written by Paul for the purpose of countering the message of the Judaizers who were trying to bring even the Galatian Gentiles under Jewish law.

So if the legalistic Jews wanted to force the Gentiles under the Law, they must have got upset about the Hebrews abandoning the law and turning to the Gospel?

They certainly did! So when we understand the passion of the day, we can understand why the Hebrews author spent so much time reinforcing and proving the point that Jesus was the only way.

The book of Hebrews was written to believing Jews who had made the switch and were now putting their faith in Jesus for their righteousness, rather than faith in the sacrifices and ordinances which were only the types and shadows pointing them to Jesus. This was a time of immense pressure from the legalistic Jews to force people, especially their own Hebrew brethren back under the Law.

Because the Hebrews were familiar with the Law, the author of Hebrews focuses in on the Hebrew tradition and OT Law and proves Jesus is the Better Way by referring to and quoting the OT Law. The purpose of the book of Hebrews was to prove to the Jews, using their own sacred scriptures, that Jesus is the ONLY way to the Father and the ONLY way to receive righteousness. Attempting to obtain righteousness through the sacrifices of the Law didn't actually work in the OT. Much less now that these OT shadows had come to fulfilment in the person of Jesus.

Chapter one of the book of Hebrews opens by declaring Jesus is greater than the prophets of the past and greater than the angels. In Chapter 3 it is shown that Jesus is greater than Moses. Chapters 5 – 10 Jesus is shown to be our Great High Priest, who offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice and therefore much greater than the sacrificial system of the law and the Levitical priesthood

In Hebrews Chapters 6 and 7 the author makes reference to Genesis 14 and to Psalm 110 to prove that Jesus was the one prophesied to come, who would be of the same rank and order as Melchizedek, and would establish an eternal priesthood which would require a change of the Law
(Hebrews 7:12)

12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

Later in Hebrews Chapter 8 the author quotes from Jeremiah proving that God was always planning to make a better covenant. Chapter 9 describes how under the Old Covenant, the Levitical priesthood went into the physical earthly temple with blood of animal sacrifices but Jesus went into the heavenly tabernacle in heaven itself offering his own blood which is a perfect and complete sacrifice which purifies or purges the conscience.

Hebrews Chapter 10 is where we are getting to and verse 26 in particular

²⁶For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins

We need to keep in mind that a primary purpose of the Hebrews author was to convince the Hebrews to resist the temptation by the Judaizers to return to the Mosaic Law for their righteousness. Jesus was the one and only answer to sin. They had accepted this at first, but were now being swayed by the persistent legalistic Jews.

A one sentence summary of Chapter 10 may be that the OT sacrifices are useless when it comes to dealing with sin but by the offering of Jesus' body we are assured of perfect and eternal remission of sin which allows us to boldly approach God's throne of Grace.

If we turn to Hebrews Chapter 10, beginning at the first verse

Hebrews 10:1 (Amp)

For since the Law has only a shadow [just a pale representation] of the good things to come—not the very image of those things—it can never, by offering the same sacrifices continually year after year, make perfect those who approach [its altars]

So immediately, the message is:

Do not return to the altar of the Law with its sacrifices... It never did, it never will and never could make you righteous. The Law was merely a representation of the good things to come (the good things to come – being the good things accomplished at the cross of Jesus).

Verse 2

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins

If the OT sacrifices had worked (which they didn't) then the worshippers would have been satisfied that their guilt had been taken care of. But these sacrifices couldn't take away the sin of the people, so their sin remained and therefore their guilt remained.

Verse 4

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

This re-iterates the same point. The Law and its sacrifices could not take away sins

Verse 5 – 9 is a quotation from Psalms 40(v6-8). The point here is that the OT itself once again commented on the uselessness of the OT sacrifices and prophesied that there was a body prepared well before the law was instituted. The body to be offered for the sin of the world was prepared for Jesus, the eternal Word of God, our eternal high priest

(AMP)

⁵ *Therefore, when Christ enters into the world, He says,*

*"Sacrifice and offering You have not desired,
But [instead] You have prepared a body for Me [to offer]."*

⁶ *In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no delight.*

This might come as a surprise for some people. Even though the Law required sacrifices, God took no delight in them, because they could not take away sin. When Solomon dedicated the temple, 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep were sacrificed. We would probably regard this as a bit over the top but it is interesting to note that God would have taken no delight in that either.

7 "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come
To do Your will, O God—
[To fulfil] what is written of Me in the scroll of the book.'"

Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God – That is speaking of Jesus coming to do the will of God.

Keeping in mind that this is still a quote from Psalms 40, the scroll of the book being referred to here is the Pentateuch (First 5 books). The Pentateuch was the only scripture written down at the time David wrote the Psalms.

"To fulfil what is written of Me in the scroll of the book" – Jesus was saying here through the Psalmist, David, that the scroll of the book, the Pentateuch, is all about Jesus and He will fulfil what was spoken of Him in the Pentateuch. Examples are scriptures found in Genesis; The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent; and the promise to Abraham... In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Similarly, all these animal sacrifices, burnt offerings and sin offerings mentioned in both Psalms 40 and here in Hebrews Chapter 10, all of which could never take away the sin of the world were all pointing to Jesus who would come and fulfil God's will when he offered his body which could take away the sin of the world

8 After saying [in the citation] above, "You have neither desired, nor have You taken delight in sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin" (which are offered according to the Law)

9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." [And so] He does away with the first [covenant as a means of atoning for sin based on animal sacrifices] so that He may inaugurate and establish the second [covenant by means of obedience].

This verse is the final verse of the quotation from Psalms 40. The Hebrews author concludes that the Psalmist was alluding to the fact that the first covenant was based on animal sacrifices which could never remove sin. And this first covenant would be replaced by a second covenant based on Jesus sacrifice which could remove sin.

Verse 10

10 And in accordance with this will [of God] we [who believe in the message of salvation] have been sanctified [that is, set apart as holy for God and His purposes] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) once for all.

The Hebrews writer has just established from Psalms that it is the will of God that Jesus should bring in 2nd covenant. Now, for those who accept the offering of Jesus ... they can now avail themselves of this sacrifice once and for all. Jesus sacrifice remains good for all time.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

Once again, the message is: The sacrifices of the law performed daily by the Levite priests could never take away sin

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Once again: In contrast to the Levitical priest's sacrifices, the sacrifice made by Jesus our eternal high priest is a once only sacrifice good for all time. No more sacrifice is required. God's justice has been satisfied

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Here we can see that there is only ONE offering necessary to sanctify the believer. ONE! ONE! ONE! He keeps repeating this! Only ONE sacrifice was any good! Only ONE offering was any good! Only ONE man who could act as our eternal High Priest! Jesus death upon the cross has accomplished the remission of sins forever. For those who have chosen to receive the redemption of Jesus blood the atonement is complete and there is no need for any other offering because there was only ever ONE that was going to be good enough.

The writer then goes on in the next 3 verses to quote Jeremiah an OT prophet who also confirmed the changing of Covenants

15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

So far, in this 10th chapter the writer of Hebrews has established over and over again that the OT itself declared that the OT sacrifices did not take away sin but that the blood of Jesus was the ONE and only sacrifice that removes sin from the believer who wishes to avail himself of God's free gift.

Verse 18 summarises this to a large degree and makes a very important point in gaining an understanding of verse 26.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins

Notice the similarity with Verse 18

18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin

The Amplified version expands this out well

18 Now where there is [absolute] forgiveness and complete cancellation of the penalty of these things, there is no longer any offering [to be made to atone] for sin.

The author here is making this as clear as he can make it. If you are a believer then you are completely forgiven of all sin. All sin and the penalties of the law have been completely wiped out. There is no need for any further sacrifices to forgive sin because the forgiveness

is already complete. Why would we be making further offering for sin when God says that Jesus eternal sacrifice wiped out all sin and God has chosen to remember our sins and iniquities no more?

At this point we will skip to Verse 26

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins

We have already established what wilful sin is not. From the context of Hebrews Ch 10 it should be clear now what this wilful sin is. The writer has used every possible angle to prove that Jesus is the ONE and only sacrifice that atones for sin. The writer has established that sin has been taken care of and we (as believers) have been perfected forever by this ONE sacrifice by this ONE man. It really should be clear what the caveat here is. This is no strange doctrine to a Christian church. To avail ourselves of this forgiveness we need to believe on the Truth, who is Jesus and accept His atoning sacrifice on our behalf. We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. Our righteousness is imputed to us through our faith in Jesus Christ. It is impossible to get salvation any other way. It really should be no surprise that if we do not have faith in Jesus and we reject Him, that righteousness is not imputed to us.

So you are saying that this wilful sin of Hebrews 10:26 is the sin of rejecting the Gospel of Christ and rejecting the blood of Jesus as the covering for sin?

Yes! The book of Hebrews has repeatedly established that the OT sacrifices are totally ineffective with dealing with sin (this was specifically aimed at the Hebrew audience.)

But... that Jesus' blood was the only sacrifice that atones for the sin of mankind... (this is aimed to all, Jew and Gentile alike.)

Jesus sacrifice was the free gift of righteousness and there is no other means of obtaining righteousness other than faith in Jesus. So if you turn your back on the only means of obtaining righteousness, the only means of salvation and utterly reject the author and finisher of your faith, then there is no other sacrifice that can cover the sin of not believing on Jesus. This is consistent with what Jesus said in John 16:8-9 where Jesus says that He will send the Comforter

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Jesus is saying here that the Holy Spirit convicts of one sin only – the sin of not believing on Jesus. That is the only sin that counts because all the others are wiped out if you believe on Jesus.

Yes we have already found that in 1 John that all sin has already been taken care of. We often forget that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that who so ever believes on him should have eternal life.

Yes faith only is what saves us – not our ability to be perfect. The interesting thing is however, even though we may not act perfectly, God sees us as perfect.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (**AMP**)

21 He made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness].

As far as the Law Court in heaven is concerned, Sin was judged in the sacrificed body of Jesus. Through Jesus we have been judged righteous, and we can now reclaim our relationship with God which was lost in the Garden of Eden.

So back to Hebrews 10:26. It was definitely written to the Jews and focused around their pre-occupation with the OT Law. To what extent does it apply to Gentiles? Gentiles don't usually obsess about killing bulls and goats

Yes. The scripture was written to the Hebrews who were being tempted to reject Jesus sacrifice and return to the OT sacrifices for their justification. It of course applies equally to any Christian who deliberately rejects the Gospel and the blood of Jesus. Whether Jew or Gentile, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and Life – NOBODY, NOBODY can come to the Father except through Jesus. A person can be overtaken in a fault or deliberately go into sin and still not reject Jesus.

What! Are you saying we sin that the Grace of God may abound.

That's another big subject but the short answer is:

IF your attitude is to treat the gospel of grace as a licence to go into sin then you are not operating under grace. Sin is your master!

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

(It therefore follows that if sin does have dominion over you, you are not operating under grace)

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

If we choose to be servants of sin, we yield ourselves to the author of that sin, i.e. Satan, and put ourselves at the mercy of Satan whose mission is to steal, kill and destroy
If we choose to be a servant of sin, the danger is that the deceitfulness of sin will harden the heart

Hebrews 3:13

But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

If we continue to serve sin and allow our heart to be hardened, this lets Satan in the door whose delight is to destroy us and lead us down the path of the apostate described in Romans Chapter 1. We know that there is nothing that can take us away from the love of God except ourselves. If we choose to go down the path of a deliberate apostate we could potentially get to a place where we despise the blood of Jesus and maliciously do spite to

the Spirit of Grace. If we get to this place and outright reject Jesus, then God will honour our decision and let us go.

We are running out of time, but while we are in the book of Hebrews I think we should very quickly have a look at

Hebrews 6:4-6 (KJV)

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away... to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

These verses also refer to the sin of rejecting Jesus as your atoning sacrifice.

The last part of verse 6 is written in the present tense and is sometimes translated while they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. (a present continuous action) ...

So it would read:

For it is impossible for those who once were enlightened etc ...

6 And having fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance; while they continue to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and continue to put him to an open shame.

Once again it stands to reason that while you are continuing to reject your only means of salvation, it is not possible to be renewed unto repentance because there is no other sacrifice that can cover the sin of not believing on Jesus. Once again it is not referring to the Church's description of the "back slider". It is referring to the sin of not believing on Jesus.

There are a number of other interpretations and some people fear that they may have done something that causes them to be damned forever. It is certainly dangerous/ extremely dangerous to go down this path because of how far Satan can take you. If you end up deliberately and maliciously maligning the Spirit of Grace you can reach the point where you no longer desire any relationship with God. If we were to read the Romans 1 description of the apostate, they no longer care nor wish to retain the knowledge of God in their heart. (Romans 1:28). So if you are worried that you have committed the wilful sin of Hebrews 10:26 or fallen beyond hope according to some interpretation of Hebrews 6:6 ... then you haven't. The deliberate apostate doesn't want to have anything to do with God. They have gone so far down the track of maliciously defaming God and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace, that their heart has been so hardened, their conscience so seared, that they hate God and the whole idea of having a relationship with God is abhorrent to them.

The 10th Chapter of Hebrews finishes with an encouraging note.

³⁹ *But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

In concluding:

Hebrews 10:26 has been written in the negative form / what not to do. In the positive form it might just as easily say

While we remain in the Truth and place our faith in Jesus the author and finisher of our faith we can rest safe and secure in His eternal atoning sacrifice. Amen!