

Session 7: The Warnings Are Real

Reading the passages both sides would rather manage

PART 1 · LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group reads the New Testament's warning passages for themselves and discovers three things: the warnings are addressed to believers, they describe a real danger of falling away from real grace, and the writers deliver them without embarrassment. The group also hears the Once Saved Always Saved position at its full, formidable strength.

Catholic Touchstone. "To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith" (CCC 162, in substance): the gift is real and the gift can be lost. The Church has taught since the Council of Trent that the grace of justification can be forfeited, which is precisely why she teaches us to hope and pray for final perseverance (CCC 2016) rather than to presume it.

What You Need to Know

Tonight the study stops circling and walks toward its question. You are not going to answer "can salvation be lost?" tonight; you are going to let the texts pile up until next week's answer feels less like a doctrine and more like an observation. Your discipline tonight is twofold: read the warnings without softening them, and present the OSAS case without weakening it. If your group leaves thinking the other side is foolish, you have failed them; the OSAS position is built from real verses, held by serious Christians, and your steelman must be one they would recognize as their own.

Know the warning texts cold. **John 15:6** is first because you promised it: the parked verse from last session. **1 Corinthians 10:5-12** is the Exodus map's dark station: the people who were "baptized into Moses," who ate and drank the supernatural food, were overthrown in the wilderness, "and these things happened to them as a warning... Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." **Romans 11:17-22** addresses Gentile Christians as branches grafted into the olive tree, sharing its rich root, and says without blinking: "provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off." **Hebrews 6:4-8** describes people "once enlightened," who "tasted the heavenly gift," "partakers of the Holy Spirit," and contemplates their falling away. **Hebrews 10:26-31** speaks of one who "profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified": the apostate the author fears is someone the blood really sanctified. **Galatians 5:4** says to baptized Christians seeking justification through the law: "You are severed from Christ... you have fallen away from grace"; the sentence is only possible about people who were in Christ and in grace. And **1 Corinthians 9:27** is the text that most directly undercuts the claim that warnings are only for the unconverted: Paul disciplines his own body "lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." Paul warns Paul.

Two honesty notes, both load-bearing. First, the assurance passages the OSAS position quotes are also really in the Bible, and tonight you will grant them out loud: John 10:28-29, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 John 5:13. The Catholic claim has never been that those texts are false; it is that they promise what they promise (no external power can seize Christ's sheep; God's faithfulness never wavers; confident hope is right) without promising that I cannot walk away. Session 12 gives assurance its own full night; say so, visibly, and keep the promise. Second, the pastoral temperature: tonight can frighten exactly the wrong people. The scrupulous will hear sirens; the presumptuous will hear nothing. Steer by this: the warnings in Scripture are addressed to the confident ("let any one who **thinks that he stands...**"), and the comfort is addressed to the trembling. Apply each medicine to its disease, and end the night on St. Alphonsus's remedy: the one who prays does not fall.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The wilderness generation is the master root, and it has been waiting since Session 1. The group planted the Exodus map (saved at the sea, being saved in the wilderness, will be saved in the land) and cashed its first station at Baptism (Session 3). Tonight the map turns dark: the condemned adult generation, all but Caleb and Joshua, genuinely rescued at the sea, genuinely died before the land (Num 14:22-23, 28-30), and Paul says these things were "written down for our instruction" (1 Cor 10:11). **Ezekiel 18:24-26** states the principle without narrative: "when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity... None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered." Ezekiel is describing real righteousness really abandoned; keep this text close, because it returns in mercy's direction in Sessions 8 and 9 (the same chapter runs both ways). And **King Saul** gives the danger a face: a man genuinely chosen and genuinely given the Spirit (1 Sam 10:6-10) from whom the Spirit later departed (1 Sam 16:14); it is why David, mid-repentance, begs "take not your holy Spirit from me" (Ps 51:11). David had watched it happen to his predecessor.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Cyprian of Carthage

On the Lapsed (251)

After the Decian persecution, St. Cyprian faced a church full of the *lapsi*: baptized, communicant Christians who had denied Christ under threat and now stood outside. His treatise grieves over them as over the wounded, teaches in substance that their fall was real and their peril mortal, and then spends its strength on the road back: penance, tears, and the Church's ministry of reconciliation.

Cyprian's church did not treat believers' falling as a theory; the Decian persecution buried it under names and faces, and the Church built the theology of mercy this study reaches in Session 9. The Church's penitential practice exists because the warnings were never hypothetical.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Augustine of Hippo

On Rebuke and Grace (c. 427)

Writing to monks confused about grace and correction, St. Augustine teaches, in substance, that some truly receive the grace of justification and yet do not persevere in it to the end; the gift of persevering is distinct, and no one may presume it of himself. This is why correction and warning are acts of love rather than insults to grace: God uses them.

Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, held both of tonight's truths at once: grace is entirely God's gift, and the warnings are entirely serious. If he could hold them together, so can your group.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Alphonsus Liguori

The Great Means of Prayer (1759)

The Doctor of moral theology compressed his teaching on perseverance into one blunt maxim about prayer and salvation, teaching in substance that prayer is the necessary ordinary means by which God sustains the believer in grace: the grace to stand is always offered, and prayer is how we go on receiving it.

Hand this to your group as tonight's exit ramp. The warnings are not a weather report about random lightning; falling has an anatomy, and so does standing. The one who keeps asking, keeps receiving. That is the whole Catholic answer to fear, three sessions early.

Catechism Connection

CCC 162. Faith is an entirely free gift, and "we can lose this priceless gift." The Catechism cites St. Paul's instruction to Timothy about those who have made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim 1:18-19). To persevere we must nourish the gift and beg its increase.

CCC 1274. The baptismal seal is indelible, and the faithful Christian who has "kept the seal" until the end will die marked with the sign of faith. Notice the Catechism's own verb: *kept*. The mark cannot be lost (Session 3); the keeping is the Christian life.

CCC 2016. The children of the Church "rightly hope for the grace of final perseverance": hope, the middle path tonight must hold open between presumption and terror. Sessions 10 and 12 build on this paragraph.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH · leader only, never read aloud

Parking lot promise: keep it first. Open the Build section with John 15:6, announced as the kept promise from last week. The group must see the study honor its debts; it buys you the trust tonight spends.

Exodus map: the dark station. When 1 Corinthians 10 returns tonight, have the group physically recall the map from Session 1 (sea, wilderness, land) and locate tonight on it. We are wilderness people reading wilderness mail.

Do NOT define mortal and venial sin tonight. Someone will ask "so what sins do this?" That is next session's entire discovery, keyed to 1 John 5:16-17, and answering early collapses it. Say: "Exactly the right question. It has a session: next week."

Sealed guesses: announce the opening. Tonight ends with the announcement that next session the envelopes come out. Attendance instruction: nobody misses Session 8.

Crown discipline. Revelation 3:11 would fit tonight perfectly. That is exactly why it stays in the drawer; its night is Session 14. Do not use it, quote it, or allude to it.

Assurance texts. Granted out loud tonight inside the steelman, resolved in Session 12. If 1 John 5:13 resurfaces from the Session 1 parking lot, point to it there and renew the promise.

Session Goals

1. The group reads the six core warning texts and can state to whom each is addressed.
2. Participants hear the OSAS case at full strength and can repeat it fairly.
3. The group answers the OSAS case from the texts, including why the assurance passages do not cancel the warnings.
4. The Exodus map's dark station lands: rescued people really fell, and it was written for us.
5. The scrupulous leave with St. Alphonsus's remedy in hand, and everyone leaves planning to attend Session 8.

Time Note

Plan for 90 minutes; do not book this room for anything after. Win 8, Build 60, Send 10, prayer 6. If running long, cut **Build question 2** (Ezekiel 18 gets a full return next session) and compress the **Dig Deeper** to one sentence. Never cut the John 15:6 opening, the steelman, or the closing St. Alphonsus turn: the night must end on the remedy, not the diagnosis.

PART 2 · DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer

PRAY TOGETHER

Father, your word comforts us, and tonight your word will warn us. Give us ears for both, because both are love. Keep us from hearing lightly what you said gravely, and from despairing over what you said to make us watchful. Hold fast what you have begun in us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WIN · Opening Questions

- Think of a warning that changed how you live: a doctor's, a mentor's, a rumble strip on a highway. What makes a warning a gift rather than a threat?
- Be honest: coming into tonight, do warnings in Scripture make you anxious, or do you tend to assume they are for somebody else?

BUILD · Into the Text

Leader: keep last week's promise first. Say: "A week ago, one verse in John 15 was left sitting in plain sight, and I parked it. Tonight the study pays its debt." Read John 15:1-6 aloud, and let verse 6 land in silence for a moment before the question.

1. Jesus is speaking to the Eleven at the Last Supper: to branches, people already "in me." What does verse 6 say can happen to a branch, and what does the branch have to do for it to happen?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

"If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned" (Jn 15:6). The branch does not have to commit some exotic crime; it has to stop abiding. And the subject is not outsiders: only something attached can be cast forth. Jesus states this to his closest friends, the same night he washes their feet, because love warns.

Hold the group here briefly: the study's big question is not answered yet, but the reason it is a real question is now on the table in red letters.

Live discovery. Say: "Session 1 gave us a map: saved at the sea, being saved in the wilderness, the land still ahead. We cashed the sea at Baptism in Session 3. Tonight, find out what happened in the wilderness. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, all of it, slowly. Then tell me: where are we standing on our own map when Paul says 'take heed'?"

2. The people in verses 1-4 had real privileges. List them. Then verse 5: what happened to "most of them"? And verses 11-12: who does Paul say this was written for, and to whom is verse 12 addressed?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Privileges: under the cloud, passed through the sea, "baptized into Moses," ate the supernatural food, drank from the supernatural Rock, "and the Rock was Christ" (10:1-4). Paul could not describe them as more genuinely rescued. Verse 5: "Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Verses 11-12: "written down for **our** instruction... Therefore let any one who **thinks that he stands** take heed lest he fall."

And the map answers itself: we are wilderness people. Rescued at the font, fed on the way, not yet home. The mail is addressed to us, and it is addressed specifically to the confident.

3. Read Romans 11:17-22. Paul tells Gentile believers they are branches grafted into the olive tree, sharing "the richness of the olive tree." What condition does verse 22 attach, and what does the passage forbid?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

"Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, **provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off**" (11:22). The branches in question are in the tree, fed by the root; the cutting off is real and conditional on continuing. And the passage forbids exactly one attitude: "do not become proud, but stand in awe" (11:20). Presumption is the one soil this text will not grow in.

4. Read Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-29. The author piles up descriptions of the people he is warning about. What has genuinely happened to these people, according to his own words? Note especially the phrase in 10:29 about the blood.

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Hebrews 6: "once enlightened," "tasted the heavenly gift," "partakers of the Holy Spirit," tasted the word of God and the powers of the age to come. Hebrews 10: they "received the knowledge of the truth," and the apostate has "profaned the blood of the covenant **by which he was sanctified**" (10:29). The author strains language, and Catholic tradition has commonly read him as meaning it: real recipients of real grace. (That justification can be lost is the Church's defined teaching; identifying each passage's warned persons is the tradition's reading, not a separate dogma.) Warning people that they might fall from something they never had would be warning no one.

Add Paul's two shortest witnesses: "You are severed from Christ... you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4), said to baptized Christians; and "I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27). Paul includes Paul. The warnings have no exemption clause for apostles.

Build, Then Press

Leader: this is the study's most important steelman. Present it slowly, at full strength, from its own best texts. Many in the room have loved ones who hold it.

A committed Evangelical friend says: "**Listen to Jesus himself: 'I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand' (Jn 10:28), and the Father is greater than all. 'Eternal life' that can end was never eternal. Paul agrees: nothing in all creation 'will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:38-39). 'He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion' (Phil 1:6). Believers are 'sealed' with the Spirit as a 'guarantee' (Eph 1:13-14). So what about apostates? John answers: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us' (1 Jn 2:19). People who fall away reveal they were never truly converted. And the warning passages? They are one of the means God uses to keep his elect persevering: real warnings, really heeded, by everyone truly his. Your Hebrews 6 people had every experience except the new birth.**"

5. Grant everything in that which is true. Then answer it from tonight's texts. Where exactly does it fail?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Grant much, gladly: those verses are real, and what they promise is precious and true. No power in creation can snatch a sheep from Christ's hand; God never withdraws, never wearies, never breaks covenant; confident hope in him who began the work is exactly right (we will spend all of Session 12 on this). The Catholic quarrel is not with one syllable of what those texts promise.

It is with what they are made to deny. Read the assurance texts closely: John 10 describes the sheep before it promises them anything: "My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me" (10:27), and to these hearing, following sheep he gives eternal life, "and they shall never perish": gloriously true of the abiding, with no external force, wolf, or thief able to snatch them. Romans 8:35-39 is a list of external enemies: tribulation, persecution, famine, sword, death, angels, principalities, "anything else in all creation." One thing is absent from the list, and Scripture warns of it elsewhere:

"your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God" (Isa 59:2). God's love never ceases; communion with it, from our side, can. The sheep cannot be stolen; the question all night has been whether the sheep can wander, and Jesus tells a parable about exactly that.

Then test the "never truly converted" reading against tonight's descriptions. 1 John 2:19 accurately describes some apostates; but Hebrews' apostates were "partakers of the Holy Spirit," "sanctified" by the covenant blood; Romans 11's branches were **in** the tree sharing the root; John 15's branches were **in me**; Galatians 5:4's fallen had grace to fall from. To make OSAS work, every one of those descriptions must mean less than it says. And the "warnings as means" move, notice, concedes the practice entirely: it agrees the warnings must be seriously heeded by every believer, which is all the Catholic asks of your Tuesday; the difference survives only in the theory. But the theory has a cost: it must tell Paul that "lest I myself should be disqualified" was, strictly speaking, impossible, and Paul did not train like a man running an exhibition match.

DIG DEEPER · Trent's Quiet Anathema

The Council of Trent addressed tonight's question directly. Its Decree on Justification teaches, in substance, that the grace of justification, really received, can really be lost, and its canon 23 condemns the claim that a man once justified can sin no more nor lose grace. The same council, take note, also condemned the opposite error waiting in Session 12: that anyone can know with the certainty of faith, absent special revelation, that he will certainly persevere. The Church's teaching walks a ridge with a drop on both sides: no presumption, no despair, and hope holding the summit. This is not a Reformation-era novelty. It is St. Cyprian's third century, St. Augustine's fifth, and Paul's first, receiving conciliar grammar.

SEND · Taking It Out

- "Let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." Where in your life are you most confident, and what would taking heed there actually look like this week?
- The warnings are love with its voice raised. Is there someone God has placed in your life whose drift you have watched in silence? What would St. Cyprian's kind of honesty, grief and hope together, sound like from you?

Live It This Week

Pray daily for perseverance. One sentence, every day this week: "Lord, grant me the grace of final perseverance." The Church begs this gift because it is a gift; join her.

Walk the map. Reread 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 at home, and notice verse 13, which we saved for you: the warning chapter ends with a promise about temptation and the way of escape. Scripture warns like a Father.

Check the drift. Name, privately and honestly, the one place you have been coasting on "I stand." Bring it, unspoken or spoken, to next session, because next session is the one the envelopes have been waiting for.

Closing Prayer

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, true vine, we have heard your warnings and we believe they are love. Keep us abiding in you. When we grow confident, make us watchful; when we grow fearful, remind us that the one who asks receives, and that you are more ready to hold us than we are to be held. Grant us, we beg, the grace of final perseverance. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."

1 Corinthians 10:12 (RSV2CE)

PART 3 · LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Every passage used in this session, in order.

Passage	Where it is used in this session
John 15:1-6	The kept promise: the parked verse (Build Q1)
1 Corinthians 10:1-12	Live discovery: the wilderness fall; the map's dark station (Build Q2)
Numbers 14:22-30	The wilderness generation's sentence (leader background)
Romans 11:17-22	Grafted branches; "provided you continue" (Build Q3)
Hebrews 6:4-6	"Once enlightened... partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Build Q4)
Hebrews 10:26-29	"Sanctified" by the blood he profaned (Build Q4)
Galatians 5:4	"Severed from Christ... fallen away from grace" (Q4 answer)
1 Corinthians 9:24-27	Paul warns Paul: "lest I myself should be disqualified" (Q4 answer)
John 10:28-29	Steelman text: no one shall snatch (granted, answered)
Romans 8:35-39	Steelman text: the list of external enemies (granted, answered)
Philippians 1:6; Ephesians 1:13-14	Steelman texts: completion; sealed guarantee (granted; Session 12)
1 John 2:19	Steelman text: "they were not of us" (answered)
Isaiah 59:2	The one separator: iniquities (steelman answer)
Ezekiel 18:24-26	Righteousness really abandoned (leader background; returns Session 8)
1 Samuel 10:6-10; 16:14; Psalm 51:11	Saul and the departed Spirit; David's plea (leader background)
1 Corinthians 10:13	The promise after the warning (Live It This Week)