

The Five Warnings of Hebrews

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CHAPTER 4

THE DANGER OF DEFORMITY, Hebrews 5-6

The writer of Hebrews is concerned about the Christians of his day. He is gravely concerned because of the actions they are committing and the consequences to them for these actions they are committing and the consequences to them for their actions. If they continue on their present course these indifferent Christians will die.

The first danger is the danger of drifting away from the truth spoken by the Son. Those in the nation of Israel that were redeemed by the blood of the passover lamb and redeemed by the power of GOD, when they drifted away from the law given by angels, died. Three thousand died at the golden calf incident.

How much greater is the Word spoken to us, and the responsibility to live in light of its truth. We who are believers cannot be indifferent to its message and proper.

The second danger is the danger of not entering into His rest because of unbelief. It is not enough to be saved by faith as an end to itself. The believer must continue to live by faith. If he lives in unbelief he will receive, not blessings, but discipline from the Lord.

A whole generation perished in the wilderness because of this failure. They were saved out of Egypt and from bondage by the power and to the glory of GOD, but they perished in the wilderness.

There is more to the Christian life than just being saved. There is a rest for the people of GOD. There is a crossing of the Jordan River as well as a crossing of the Red Sea. Many believers today die in the wilderness never having entered in by faith into the blessings GOD has for them. The graves in the wilderness stand as a warning to us that we do not fall after the same manner of unbelief caused by a bitterness against GOD for His dealings with us.

The exhortation is to every believer to let the Word of GOD do its work in our lives and not to be hardened or calloused to its operation. With this the first section of the books of Hebrews is concluded, and leaving the person of the Son, the writer speaks about the work of the Son for us, seeing He is who He is.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE WORK OF THE SON, 4:14-10:18

- A. As the Great High Priest, 4:14-7:28
- B. As the True Tabernacle, 8:1-9:11.
- C. As the Perfect Sacrifice, 9:12-10:18

Under 4:14-7:28 we have:

- 1. Introduction: Our Great High Priest, 4:14-16.
 - a. Where He is - His Position. "**passed into the heavens.**"
 - b. Who He is - His Person. "**Jesus the Son of God**".
 - c. What He is. His Character. "**without sin.**"
 - d. What He does. His Work. "**touched with the feelings of our infirmities**"

He gives mercy and grace to believer-priests.

2. The Son is a True Priest, 5:1-10

- a. The nature of a priest, 5:1-4.
 - (1) He must be a man, 5:1-2.
 - (2) He must offer sacrifices, 5:3.
 - (3) He must be GOD-called, 5:4.

b. The Son fulfills these, 5:5-10.

Because the Son fulfills these, no other mediator is needed. No other priest officiates. We have one high priest and only one. It is not an earthly man serving in an earthly tabernacle; it is the eternal, perfect Son serving in Heaven.

As we begin to consider the first misused Bible passage regarding whether Christians can lose their salvation or not, Hebrews 6:4-6, I intend to take bite size portions of this next chapter to give my readers an opportunity to digest the truths contained therein. I doubt that, after a proper consideration of what these verses are actually teaching, readers will have an easier time "trusting" the GOD of their Salvation, rather than worrying about what they might do to lose their home in Heaven, they might rather reflect on what the Saviour has done and does to keep us saved. Friend, until you can trust CHRIST for you whole salvation, I have to ask whether you have truly trusted him for even PART of your salvation. Salvation is, and always has been, total trust and dependence upon the finished Work of JESUS CHRIST upon the cross of Calvary.

Much more is to be said on this subject of the Son being an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Aaron, but the writer stops because of their immaturity. The trouble is with his hearers, not with his subject. They are unable to take this truth in, and there was a reason for this condition.

Before we look into this warning, we need to realize that 5:11-6:20 is one unit of thought. It is one complete paragraph. The chapter break is unfortunate at this place because any interpretation

of Hebrews 6 must begin at 5:11.

Time will not permit us to take an exhaustive study of this, but let us briefly trace the argument.

1. The Spiritual Problem, 5:11-14.

a. Their present state: deformity due to immaturity, 5:11-13.

b. The ideal state: normality due to maturity, 5:14.

:11 - The problem in his hearers is that they have become "**dull of hearing**." They didn't use to be that way.

:12 - They had been believers for a long period of time, and when for the time that they had been saved, should have been teaching at the Jerusalem Bible Institute, they still needed the teaching of the beginner course.

:13 - This explains why they were still in babyhood. They had failed to use the knowledge they had in practical Christian living. The great principle of the Christian life is "use it or lose it!"

These people knew that CHRIST was the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices and that the temple sacrifices are all fulfilled in His once for all sacrifice; yet they cannot understand why it would be wrong for them to go back to the Temple and to the sacrifices. Their problem is not a matter of knowledge, but it is a matter of the "use" or "exercise" of that knowledge in life situations to discern right and wrong.

:14 - The mature ones are able to do more than know facts. They can relate doctrine to experience. Thus maturity in the Christian life is not knowledge as such, but the ability to use that knowledge to solve situations and problems in relation to daily living.

2. The Spiritual Truth, 6:1-8.

a. The need to go on, 6:1-3.

Notice that this follows in light of what was said in 5:11-14.

The chapter begins with "**Therefore**". Now whenever you see a "**wherefore**" or "**therefore**" you need to stop and see what it's "*there for*". It follows something else. In light of certain facts something else is true or some action is to be done. Here it is action to be done.

:1 - You immature believers need to leave the ABC's of certain basic doctrines and go on unto maturity.

There is nothing wrong with the ABC's for the early school child, but there is something very wrong if the high schooler still has to go over them because he has not yet learned how to use the dictionary.

"**Perfection**" here is the word used for maturity. There is nothing wrong with babyhood for

babies, but there is something wrong if you continue there year after year requiring others to feed you.

:1-2 - There are six basic ABC's that they were to leave. Nothing wrong with these foundational truths, for these were things that figured prominently in the first teachings of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost. The foundation is fine, but you don't just continue to build the foundation -- you go on --- that is, you build upon it.

These are, the "**foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.**"

a. **repentance from dead works** - You have been weighed in the balance of GOD's judgment scale and been found wanting. Nothing can change that - you were lost and undone, condemned, without CHRIST, without HOPE, without GOD. You repented. This is a one time occurrence - never to be repeated. You can only be condemned ONCE.

b. **faith toward God** - You were reborn into GOD's family, delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son the instant you placed your faith in trust in the finished work of CHRIST. The angels have all rejoiced, it's over. You were passed from death unto life, and your life is not hid with CHRIST in GOD. It's a done deal - finished. You had nothing to do with getting salvation, and you certainly will have nothing to do with keeping it. So forget it! Move on! It is the fear of losing salvation that keeps people in this condition of immaturity. The rest of this study will make that quite clear.

c. **baptisms** (it is plural here). Ephesians 4:5 says that there is only one baptism. There is! There is only one baptism that saves. Like b. above, this baptism occurs the instant you believe. This spiritual baptism is, or certainly should be, followed soon after by a water, "believer's baptism" done as a testimony of what happened when you believed - you died to the law, were buried to the law, and were raised in newness in life with the same power that GOD used to raise up His own Son from the grave. It's finished. Done! Forget it! Move on!

d. **laying on of hands** is a Jewish symbolism. Christianity is identification with CHRIST (Romans 6:3, 4). The Israelite placed his hands upon the burnt offerings (Leviticus 1:4); and Aaron laid his hands upon the sin offering (Leviticus 8:14). This is in line with baptism and Church membership - we identify with CHRIST. Now go on! Forgetting those things which are behind! Move on!

e. **resurrection of the dead** - so many Christians spend their whole life discussing the coming of CHRIST. He is coming again! It will be a time of His own choosing! Forget it! Live a mature life and as some have said, "It will all pan out".

f. **eternal judgment** - Heaven is our home! It's a done deal! Forget it! Now live a mature life as a believer and win others so that you won't show up empty-handed in Heaven. It is all very logical, really.

:3 - "And this going on to maturity we will do if GOD wills it." This is very important! You

cannot compel maturity. The Father wants the child to mature, and so this third class condition shows that the fault IS WITH US, not GOD, if we do not go on to maturity. However, we do not know how much time we have left.

b. The impossibility of going back, 6:4-6.

Now we come to the passage that is without exception the most MISUNDERSTOOD passage in Scripture.

The issue to settle first and foremost is the question -- are the people the writer is addressing saved or not saved? They are either one or the other. There is no third category. (Undecided is still lost and condemned). You can only say "yes" or "no" to GOD when He woos you to the cross. "Wait" is only another form of "NO" to the Father.

These people are believers and are saved for the following reasons:

(1) Because of the message of the whole book of Hebrews.

The whole book is addressed to Hebrew Christians. The exhortation "**Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into that rest . . .**" (4:1), "**Let us labor to enter into that rest . . .**" (4:11), "**Let us hold fast our profession**" (4:14), "**Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace . . .**" (4:16), etc.

(2) Because of the immediate context in Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

These are babes, and therefore they have life (5:13). They did not need knowledge, but use of the knowledge they already had (5:13).

Their lapse into dullness was because of disuse (5:14).

They were saved else they could not have been expected to be teachers (5:13).

They are exhorted to go on unto "*perfection*," or "*maturity*" (6:1). This does not mean to come to salvation, but to come to maturity in CHRIST.

The writer includes himself along with them in needing to go on (6:1, "us," 6:3) "we").

Lastly, they already knew and accepted the basic doctrines (6:1-2).

(4) Because of the passage of Hebrews 6:4-6 itself.

There are five spiritual privileges listed here. Let us look at them carefully. Whenever Scripture uses important terms, the very same book in which they are used will define their meaning and show their significance. This is true here with these statements.

- 1 - "**Those who were once enlightened.**"

Notice Hebrews 10:32, "**But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated** (enlightened), **ye endured a great fight of afflictions.**"

This word refers to the moment when the light of the gospel was apprehended by us for the first time.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 4:4-6)

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" (Ephesians 3:9)

"But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (II Timothy 1:10).

Moreover, the word "once" when used in Hebrews marks something that is NEVER REPEATED (cf. 9:7, 26; 10:2; 12:26).

- 2 - **"and have tasted of the heavenly gift."**

Notice Hebrews 2:9, "**But we see Jesus . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.**"

Tasting in the Greek signifies holding something in common with someone else. It does not signify, as in our culture, tasting it and then refusing to partake of it. CHRIST partook of death for us completely so that we might partake of the gift of eternal life. GOD's gifts and calling are without repentance so that we have eternal life as our possession. We hold this in common with JESUS CHRIST. His life became our life because He died our death for us.

- 3 - **"and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."**

The word "partakers" is used in 2:14; 3:1 and 14. It signifies in these verses more than just participation but rather the personal character that has been gained because of vital relationship. The personal character of the human race was flesh and blood. To be partakers of the HOLY SPIRIT is to have the personal character of the person governed by Him, i.e., to be regenerated.

- 4 - **"and have tasted of the good word of God."**

This again goes back to the word "taste" and in this case they have experienced a special utterance in which they realized that it was from GOD.

- 5 - **"and the powers of the world to come."**

This was the powers of the millennial age. They had not partaken of the age, but of the powers of the age, and they experienced this rebirth in their own life.

Now the parallel uses and references show that these five things are stated about believers.

- Only the believer is once enlightened.
- Only the believer has the gift of eternal life.
- Only the believer has the HOLY SPIRIT.
- Only the believer partakes of the New Testament revelation and so governs his life accordingly.
- Only the believer has experienced the power of the new birth.

Moreover, every one of these statements is aorist tense signifying that these things are never repeated acts of GOD's working. This too shows the writer is speaking to believers in which GOD Himself has performed operations which will never be repeated. If they had not been saved then they could have experienced these things; but since they were saved these acts could never be repeated.

Furthermore, just what more could someone say about believers than what is stated here. There isn't anything more that could be said.

Having established without any question that the writer is addressing believers the question still remains what is he saying to them?

Let us consider what this passage CANNOT teach.

It cannot teach that you can be saved, lost and saved over again. The passage says such is an impossibility. Anyone who teaches such a thing is not out in left field; he is out of the ball park.

This passage cannot teach that you can come up to a point of enlightenment, etc., and yet not be saved, and reject this enlightenment and experience and never be able to be saved again. This makes an unpardonable sin which Scripture knows nothing about.

What this passage DOES teach (and it is just so simple).

Something is impossible.

It is impossible for those who are saved to fall away and then be saved all over again and so remove all the wasted years of failure and babyhood since this would require CHRIST to die again and put him to open shame because His first death was not sufficient. Since all of this is impossible, and we cannot remove the record of wasted years as a believer, there is only one thing for us to do -- let us go on to maturity.

The record of my past stands. I cannot change it. Therefore I must be concerned about today and tomorrow for I cannot do anything about yesterday.

This is impossible:

all past erased >> at the cross >>>all past erased >>> at the cross

Therefore this must be done:

all past erased >>>>>at the cross >>>>> so >>>>> go on!

How can we know this is what the writer is speaking about?

- 1 - Verse 4 begins with "for" and gives an explanation of why we must go on.

- 2 - This fits the context.

The context before is speaking about babyhood and wasted years. The only thing they can do is go on.

The context following gives an illustration of wasted years of the land bringing forth thorns and briars (6:7-8). We cannot go back and do anything about these crops. The only thing that can be done is go on and bring forth a good crop this year.

- 3 - The word used here for "**repentance**" is *metanois* and signifies "**repentance**" to salvation. This is always in the New Testament used of initial repentance to salvation.

(*metamellomai* is "**repentance**" which is restoration to fellowship in the New Testament).

- 4 - The use of the word "again" is significant.

It is impossible to renew a saved person "*again to initial repentance*" unto salvation, simply because he is already saved. The "again" shows a prior experience. In this case a prior experience of salvation.

To paraphrase this we could say: "leaving babyhood, let us go on to maturity for it is impossible by means of a falling away to renew -- that is make the whole record new -- by means of an initial repentance to salvation seeing this would necessitate CHRIST dying again and make His first death of no avail, and therefore a mockery to those looking on."

For this to happen Godwardly, it would call for another crucifixion of CHRIST. Manwardly -- to those who watch -- they would say that His salvation was not worthwhile as the first crucifixion was not sufficient, and how could we know that even a second crucifixion would be sufficient also.

c. The illustration of the principle, 6:7-8.

The land is not burned, but the fruit of the land is as if it is thorns and briars. So all will be brought out at the judgment seat of CHRIST.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every

mans work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is. If any mans work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any mans work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (I Corinthians 3:11-15).

It is not the BELIEVER who is burned, but his Works that are rejected.

We cannot erase the record of last years thorns. Therefore let us go on and by the grace of GOD this year produce a good crop that will glorify the Lord.

3. The Spiritual Action, 6:19-20.

- a. Your part: things that accompany salvation, 6:9-12.
- b. GOD's part: immutable, stedfast promises, 6:13-20.

The exhortation is to us.

Philippians 3:13-14, "**Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**"

The prospects are as bright as the promises of GOD.

Not one word has ever failed.

Therefore, let us go on.

~ end of chapter 4 ~
