

HEBREWS - PRESSING ON/TAKING FLIGHT

Week 13 – Hebrews 6:1-12 (part 2)

Our lives as believers in Jesus can be likened to climbing a mountain – as we're changed from glory to glory.

II Cor. 3:18 – “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image (conformed to HIS image) from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

MacArthur – “from glory to glory – from one level of glory to another level of glory – from one level of manifesting Christ to another. This verse describes progressive sanctification/maturing. The more believers grow in their knowledge of Christ, the more He is revealed in their lives.”

Hebrews 12:14-15 – “Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

Falling short of the grace of God?

Divine enablement

Heb. 4:16 – going boldly to the throne of grace where we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need!

MacArthur then sites Phil. 3:12-14 where Paul proclaims that he's pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In our walk with the Lord, GOD equips us. As each believer moves from glory to glory – we can't quit!! God has given us His word, the Holy Spirit to teach us (John 16), Jesus, our great High Priest Who is our Advocate. . .to Whom we can go – 24/7 – to obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need!

Because of God's GREAT love for us – because He desires the best for us – we read these WARNINGS coming from a heart of LOVE – from the author to the readers and TO US! The author is proclaiming in the first two warnings (Heb. 2:1-3 and Heb. 3:12-14), “Don't drift from the anchor – from Jesus Who is our hope (Heb. 2:1-3). Don't neglect, don't be careless with this great salvation you've received. Exhort one another in the body of Christ so that you don't develop an evil heart of unbelief. Don't become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

The author is telling the readers, “Don't go back under the Mosaic Covenant which is not COMPLETE!” The Mosaic Covenant was given to the Jewish people TEMPORARILY until the Messiah came and sacrificed Himself once for all! And then we have the third warning. The author is telling the readers and us in Hebrews 6 that we need to go on to perfection – to go on to what is COMPLETE in Jesus – to go on to maturity. Move on from the foundation to the rest of the building!

The author then gives an illustration in Heb. 6:7-8 of God blessing the earth with rain (common grace). A farmer can either be diligent and work the field and produce fruit.

Or a farmer can neglect a field – causing it to be overgrown with thorns and briars – to become worthless (NASV) – and then it’s burned. BUT the ground is not destroyed!

AND – when we are faithful believers – what is produced is used by God in the lives of others. Heb. 12:12-14 - Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

The major views re: Heb. 6:4-6 (which some have claimed to be the most difficult passage in the Bible!). These views are held by theologians within the Evangelical church.

1) There are those who believe that this passage teaches a believer can lose their salvation.

If a believer can lose his/her salvation (Scripture teaches ETERNAL SECURITY [John 6:40, 44; John 10:27-28; Rom. 8:29-39; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 7:25; Heb. 12:2; I John 5:11-13], this passage in Hebrews then teaches that he/she cannot regain his/her salvation – as it’s impossible to renew them again unto repentance (v. 6) – it’s impossible to be saved a second time.

2) There are those who explain that the recipients of this warning haven’t yet made a final decision about Jesus. They are only *partially* “enlightened” and have *merely* “tasted” God’s heavenly gift, in contrast to eating and digesting it. They’re nibbling. NOTE: the text does not say *partially* or *merely*! AND, when we read that Jesus TASTED death in Hebrews 2:9 – He didn’t nibble at death. He experienced death to the full degree. He DIED!

In this view, where the readers are NOT believers, the “falling away” is from the knowledge of the truth – not personal possession of it.

3) There are those who explain that the recipients of this warning are believers to whom the author is outlining an extreme scenario – perhaps a hypothetical example. To “fall away” is IMPOSSIBLE (since true believers are eternally secure), but the phrase, “fall way,” according to this view, is placed in the sentence to strengthen the warning and to shock the readers.

4) There are those who explain that the recipients of this warning are believers – enlightened w/ descriptions following of how this speaks to being saved (tasted, partakers)

“Falling away” is a falling away from the road to maturity since that is the topic of discussion esp. since Heb. 5:9-14.

The author is telling the readers, “If you readers decide to go back under the law, don’t you know that there is NO cure for sin under the Law. The law only condemns (but the law is perfect – it restores the soul [Psa. 19:7] – it shows us our NEED of a Savior/Redeemer/Messiah). Jesus’ sacrifice is the only cure for sin. If you go back under the promise thinking that you’ll be returning to Jesus when the persecution dies down, it’s like you’re recrucifying Jesus and putting Him to open shame!”

NOTE: Hebrews 12:28-29 which is a serious warning to those who WILL receive a Kingdom that cannot be shaken – “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which

cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may^[i] serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

Re: Hebrews 6:4-6, I’m suggesting that the author views his hearers as saved individuals. He refers to them as having been “once enlightened.” This enlightenment is NOT a reference to a light that was perceived and then rejected.

NOTE: Heb. 10:32 – they had been illuminated/enlightened and their lives were changed.

Heb. 10:34 – heaven is their destination.

Eph. 5:8 – you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord – walk as children of light.

Being “enlightened” is then explained by the following:

“tasted the heavenly gift

“Tasted” – does that mean they merely nibbled?

Heb. 2:9 – Jesus tasted death for everyone. He didn’t lightly experience death; He didn’t sample death. He DIED!!! Jesus experienced death in its absolute fullness and horror.

“the heavenly gift” – a supernatural gift from God (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). Romans 11:29 - The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable!

“partakers of the Holy Spirit” – Heb. 3:1 – the author calls them HOLY brethren who are partakers (fellowship, communion, partnership) of the heavenly calling. They have fellowship with the Holy Spirit which carries the concept of intimacy!

“Tasted the good word of God” – they have experienced the goodness of God’s word and have seen its work in their lives.

“. . . (tasted) the powers of the age to come” – some say that this is a way to describe God’s supernatural power which they have experienced.

All in all – it’s IMPOSSIBLE for those who have this position to renew them AGAIN to repentance if they fall away. . . since they crucify Jesus again for themselves – and recrucifying Jesus is impossible.

“Again” tells us that they have already repented. They were believers

Fall away FROM WHAT? If these are non-believers as some teach, wouldn’t we pray that they would fall away from their unbelief, from their condition of being unsaved, of being lost?

“If they fall away” – Heb. 6:6 – the Gk. word *perapipto* literally means “to fall aside” and is used only here in the NT. We must interpret “falling away” within its CONTEXT here in Hebrews. What is the context? MATURING in Christ (Heb. 6:1)

This might offer additional insight. . . . The writer has paused in his exposition of Jesus' High Priestly ministry (Heb. 5:11) to warn his readers who've been considering a return to the Mosaic Law. The author is going to contrast the High Priesthood of Jesus with the ministry of the OT High Priest in the book of Hebrews. His readers must make a choice between the priests of the OT system and Jesus. The author lays it out for them. Only Jesus offers "eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9).

In this context, the "falling away" is going back to relying on the priests of the OT rather than continuing to rely on Jesus alone.

In this context, what is being addressed is the "falling away" from maturing in your walk with the Lord and in your ministry (Heb. 6:9-10), from your confession (Heb. 10:19-23) and from gathering together (Heb. 10:24-25)

The author's frustration at the choice of the readers – his indignation over their mindset – is captured by this paraphrase of Hebrews 6:4-6: "What would you do? Return to Biblical Judaism, the Mosaic Law, types and shadows?? How then would you ever be restored to your present relationship with the Lord – you who have been illuminated/enlightened, and have been given the heavenly gift, and are in partnership/communion/fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and known God's power? You think you can opt out due to the circumstances and then come back? That would be like crucifying Jesus again – which is impossible. There is no being renewed again to repentance. Shame! How dishonoring to God to be so flippant with Christ's death on the cross!"

The writer of Hebrews appears to confront his readers with something about which they've failed to ponder. It's not an issue of how falling away would affect *them*. The issue is how their turning back to the Mosaic Law would reflect on the Savior! Rather than bringing Him honor and glory, abandoning Jesus now would dishonor and shame their great High Priest. These few verses aren't so much about the impact on those who turn back, but about the impact on God's reputation.

Something to ponder:

Jesus died once for all (Heb. 9:26). This "oneness" of Christ's sacrifice has its counterpart in the uniqueness of conversion. Christ died once; a person is justified - declared righteous by God – ONCE! The Christian has been *once enlightened* just as Christ died once. Thus, to think that you can repeat your conversion would be to repeat Christ's crucifixion: literally, "to recrucify" the Son of God!

The author of the book of Hebrews is NOT addressing the readers' position in Christ. They are in Christ. He's addressing their functioning faithfully (Heb. 3).

Let's look at Hebrews 10:22-25 - what it means to faithfully function in God's house – v. 22-25 – let us draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith. . . . Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Don't fall away from this!

We, members of the body of Christ, must be like Jesus and faithfully function in God's house. People are dramatically impacted by our functioning faithfully! A love for Jesus and obedience to Him manifests itself in love for fellow believers.

The readers can "through faith and patience" actually "inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12).

The reason for assurance of hope: God's unconditional/unilateral promise to Abraham (Heb. 6:13ff).

While, in this life, we slip, and stumble often – God carries us. We will see the summit. We will stand on the top. And, when we see Him face-to-face, we'll join with all the others who have made the climb and sing. . .

"Now to Him Who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. . . ." (Jude 24)