

NOT ONE STEP BACK: APOSTASY AND ITS AWFUL CONSEQUENCES!

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Hebrews 6:1-6 and Hebrews 10:38 &39

We continue from our Sunday School study on the subject of apostasy. The title to my sermons is, "**Not One Step Back: Apostasy and Its Awful Consequences!**" This is not an easy message to preach because of its contents and consequences, nonetheless, we must preach on the whole counsel of God as the Apostle Paul would declare in Acts 20. Preaching on apostasy is a solemn and sobering warning to nominal Christianity that permeates many churches in our day. Many church pews are filled with mere professors who are still dead in their trespasses and sins. The Word of God addresses many subjects and in this case the Word of God addresses this subject with such clarity, certainty and in fearful warning, so none are without excuse. This is a fearful and sobering message, hope you take heed to its warning.

We came to this fearful and terrifying topic because of the news we heard regarding ex-pastor Bruce Gerencer, posted on the internet site, Debunking Christianity. What I am about to share with you this morning has been made public domain; therefore, I am at liberty to share this. My attack is not against Bruce Gerencer, which I personally know and preached at his church in Ohio, years ago, but in his own words he attacks the Word of God and Christianity, yea, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. By his own words, he has renounced the Bible and Christianity. I will quote him in some areas of my sermon only to make application. Listen to his own words, "*All told I was a preacher for 33 years. I pastored churches for 25 of those 33 years...I entered the ministry as a fundamentalist independent Baptist. I believed the King James Bible was the inerrant, inspired, infallible, perfect Word of God. I believed my calling in life was to win as many souls as possible and build a church up for the glory of God...I left the ministry as a tired, worn out, abused preacher. I've come to the conclusion that the Bible, as great of a book as it is, is not the inerrant, inspired word of God. At best, the Bible is a spiritual guide and a book of mythical stories written by men thousands of years ago. It is not a book that is overly relevant to the world that we live in today. The stories make for great reading but they offer little real practical wisdom for moderns in a 21st-century. Since I do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and I no longer embrace the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith, I am no longer a Christian...My deconversion came at the moment where I finally admitted to myself that I no longer believed the Bible to be the word of God...These days I call myself an agnostic. I do not know if a god exists or not.*" By his own testimony he willingly and knowingly renounces God, The Bible, and the Christian Faith which makes him an apostate! This is the definition of an apostate which the Bible so clearly identifies: I John 2:19, "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*" The book of Hebrews is an important book for the child of God to read and study as it deals with soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology which also helps us understand the shadow and types in the Old Testament.

Now, on the positive aspect, the book of Hebrews gives great encouragement to the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a matter of fact in Hebrews 10:38, it says, **“Now the just shall live by faith...”** This statement is made 4 times in the Bible to strengthen and reassure us in the way, verse 38 continues, *“...but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Verse 39 gives us that confidence and support in our everyday battles, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; **but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.**”* Now, on the negative side, the book of Hebrews is also written with 5 serious warnings against apostasy. Remember many Jews had made professions of faith in believing on Jesus Christ, but when persecution arose many were reverting back to Judaism. The writer of the book of Hebrews has stern warnings against those who would renounce their faith in Jesus Christ, Heb.3:12, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, **in departing from the living God.**”*

Our Lord Jesus Christ also addressed this issue in His kingdom parables as He warned that many would revert back to their formal lifestyles because of persecution and/or the love of the world. Matt.13:20-22, *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but **dureth for a while**: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth **because of the word, by and by he is offended**. 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and **the care of this world**, and the deceitfulness of riches, **choke the word**, and he becometh unfruitful.”* Notice the comparing verses in Luke’s account: 8:13 & 14, *“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these **have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away**. 14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are **choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life**, and bring no fruit to perfection.”* What fearful warning from a Savior who loves sinners.

They are 5 fearful warnings in Hebrews:

- **Hebrews 2:1 - 4 – The Danger of Drifting.**
- **Hebrews 3:7 - 4:11 – The Danger of Disbelief.**
- **Hebrews 5:11 – 6:8 – The Danger of Departing.**
- **Hebrews 10:19-39 – The Danger of Despising.**
- **Hebrews 12:14-29 – The Danger of Denying.**

The one we shall consider is the third warning:

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:8 – The Danger of Departing.

Paul’s (I believe he wrote Hebrews) warning begins in chapter 5:11 all the way to chapter 6 which we saw in our Sunday School. He proceeds in chapter 6 with two

heart wrenching phrases: In verse 4, "***For it is impossible...***" and in verse 6, "***...to renew them again unto repentance...***" It's the damning dagger of dreadful condemnation without any means of hope, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW AGAIN!!!!!! This ought to bring us to tears of holy fear in our own hearts. Thank God for His Sovereign Omnipotent Preservation! I thank my Lord Jesus Christ for those comforting words in John 6:37 & 39, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."* We preach this morning not from malice or hate but from a fearful, caring yea warning heart, whose main concern is the souls of men. May God help us this morning!

Let us all understand very clearly that, falling away or departing from Christ and His gospel is from an intentional and deliberate denial and abandonment, a complete renunciation of Jesus Christ, to which it is an unforgivable sin, perhaps the unpardonable sin. This is what Bruce Gerencer has consciously done. There is such a fearful and solemn warning in the preceding phrases in verse 4 & 6. These are words are used to incite terror and disturb your conscience. 2 Cor. 5:11, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...*" 2 Cor. 4:2, "*But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*"

There 5 specific things Paul mentions regarding those who apostatized:

1. They were once enlightened.
2. They tasted of the heavenly gift.
3. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.
4. They tasted the good word of God.
5. They tasted the powers of the world to come.

There are many that look at this list and teach that a born again Christian can lose their salvation. They have totally missed what Paul is teaching here and insert their own preconceive ideas. They have a faulty and incorrect view of salvation. The Word of God is quite clear in setting forth the glorious truth of the perseverance of the saints, that is, the true bona fide child of God can never lose a GOD GIVEN SALVATION. I don't like the term, "once saved always saved," but I wholly believe in the security of the believer. Salvation is but the work of God in the heart of a sinner, the Holy Spirit of God with omnipotent power regenerates a dead sinner unto live. This is the meaning of being born again, being raised from the dead spiritually, not some decision or reciting of a sinner's prayer, but the Almighty True and Living God taking a dead sinner and making him alive. This is not a work of man or of man's free, but of the power of a Triune God. The same power exerted in creation when He spoke creation into existence is the same power used upon a dead sinner. 2 Cor.4:6 & 7, "*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. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen*

vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Eph.2:1, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” A man made salvation can be lost, but a salvation wrought by the Living and True God cannot be lost! John 1:12 & 13, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 **Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**” The issue of Hebrews 6 is not about losing one’s salvation, but about a fearful and sobering warning to mere professors of faith. I will not spend time in dealing with this subject of the perseverance of the saints. I spoke on this subject a few weeks ago on Jacob’s Ladder part 4 on the Security in the Ladder, because the ladder is a type of Christ in Genesis 28. You can hear that sermon on sermonaudio.com/hdgb and you also download the notes on PDF file.

My subject this morning is apostasy and I know that I cannot cover the whole subject in just one sermon, I basically want this sermon to be a sobering to warning to all those who profess faith in Christ this morning. Use the example of Bruce Gerencer to be a fearful warning in not giving up on the faith! Let not one of us come a day short and thus we are reminded again, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; **but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.**”

I would like to use A.W. Pink’s definition of apostasy, “What is apostasy? It is a making shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19). It is the heart’s departure from the living God (Heb 3:13). It is a returning to and being overcome by the world, after a previous escape from its pollutions through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 2:20). There are various steps that precede it. First, there is a looking back (Luk 9:62), like Lot’s wife, who though she had outwardly left Sodom, yet her heart was still there. Second, there is a drawing back (Heb 10:38): the requirements of Christ are too exacting to any longer appeal to the heart. Third, there is a turning back (Joh 6:66): the path of godliness is too narrow to suit the lustings of the flesh. Fourth, there is a falling back, which is fatal: “That they might go and fall backward, and be broken” (Isa 28:13).” This is a good description of those who apostatized from the faith, they willingly and knowingly depart from the living God amidst all the warnings in the Bible not to do so. It is a complete renouncing of the faith in Christ, a forsaking of Christ and returning back to the world. We are not talking about a believer who doubts or falls into sin, or one who is in a heavy trial and wonders if God has forsaken him. We are not talking about a believer who backslides for a while or one who feels like a hypocrite because of wrong decisions in their lives. Again, we are not talking about someone who goes through unfaithfulness; that is spiritual infidelity in their service of Christ or a Christian with apathy or antipathy, or like Peter who denied Christ, no we all at some time or point in our Christian life can experience these things; no, we are talking about one who knowingly and willingly gives up the faith in renouncing Christ. Bruce Gerencer again says, “During the time from my last pastorate in 2003 until today I have invested great time and effort in reinvestigating the Bible and the claims of the Christian Church. I’ve come to the conclusion that the Bible, as great of a book as it is, is not the inerrant, inspired word of God... As I continued to slide down the slippery slope I thought that maybe Universalism was the answer. And quite frankly, if I was going to have any religion at all it would be Universalism. But, at the end of the day, Universalism did not satisfy me and I came to a place where it was time to stop calling myself a Christian.” Apostasy is not by some accident or

by some mistake or misunderstanding but from a willful, intentional and deliberate denial and abandonment by a complete renunciation of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. This is conscious decision that will be embedded in their conscious in the eternal fires of hell! Perhaps this is what Christ spoke about the worm that never dies, that is, the conscience, in Mark 9:48, *“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”* Gerencer continues, *“Since I do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and I no longer embrace the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith, I am no longer a Christian. My deconversion came at the moment where I finally admitted to myself that I no longer believed the Bible to be the word of God.”* He has consciously sealed his doom!

Again, there are 5 specifics that Paul mentions in Hebrews 6 that those who have apostatized have experienced:

1. They were once enlightened.
2. They tasted of the heavenly gift.
3. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.
4. They tasted the good word of God.
5. They tasted the powers of the world to come.

Yet, they were not Christians, Paul is very careful to contrast these apostates with the true followers of Christ. Notice how he uses, “let us” and “we” in verses 1 & 3 in speaking about those in Christ in contrast to, “those” and “they” in verses 4 & 6. Paul uses this sharp contrast all the way to verse 9 when he again describes the Christian who perseveres, *“But, beloved, **we** are persuaded better things **of you**, and **things that accompany salvation**, though we thus speak.”*

We might come back and speak in particular regarding those 5 things mention in verses 4 - 6, as we don't have the time at present. The words of Jesus Christ in the Sermon of the Mount add much truth to what Paul is saying here, which should suffice for the moment. Please turn with me to Matthew 7 to the most fearful words perhaps in all Scripture, verse 21-23, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ clearly exposes the mere professors, the person who was only interested in a religious formality. He exposes the ones who were once enlightened, those who tasted of the heavenly who were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, just consider the miracles they wrought, cast out devils and done not a few but many wonderful works. They tasted of the good word of God, for out of their own mouths, they said that they prophesied in His name. They also tasted of the world to come, but Christ says to these poor souls, I NEVER KNEW YOU, not that I knew you and then I lost you, no but I NEVER, NO NEVER, NOT EVER, I NEVER KNEW YOU! How fearful

as these religious folks says, LORD, LORD with such confidence only to be rightfully told: **I NEVER KNEW YOU!**

Paul is saying almost the same thing because he sets forth those 5 things that they experienced, but there never was any true saving justifying faith to the saving of their souls. They crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame!

Paul in verses 4 – 6 of Hebrews 6 in his 3rd warning on the Danger of Drifting gives us a sobering and terrible fact to which we would be wise to lay it to our hearts. It is so frightening to consider that is it possible for a person to have such an undisturbed peace and an unshaken assurance in their carnal security in regards to their eternal destiny and yet at the same time have no interest in Christ or His Word. This ought to be alarming to our souls. We forget at times that Satan is a very crafty and subtle foe and likes to give sinners a soothing religious experience or feeling that everything is ok. But the word of God warns us, *“Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion!”* Even Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 13:5, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* In other words, **DON'T BE DECEIVED!** There are many that have a false peace because there never has been pardon from sins. There is also a form of godliness that possesses a man who denies the power of it. Hell is filled with eternally damned souls who went to that place thinking they were going to heaven as they sat on the church pew Sunday after Sunday. Just when Lot's wife was so secured she turned back and was plunged into hell. When all the disciples were gripped with fear in declaring, *“Lord is it I?”* Judas was the only one with confidence. There is nothing more deceiving and fearful than the awful confidence of the carnal security of a religion without CHRIST!

Don't be deceived like Bruce Gerencer, but as it says in verse 1 of Hebrews 6, **LET US GO ON!** Let us not draw back to perdition, but be of those who persevere in believing to the saving of their soul. Let us take the admonishment of Paul in Phil.2:12 & 13, *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*

Jesus challenged His own disciples in John 6:66 & 67, *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?”*

We can then say of Bruce Gerencer, that he went back and walks no more with Christ.

Oh dear brethren I encourage you not to make ship wreck of your faith, but to persevere in following Christ to the end. We must be overcomers if we are to continue in the faith amidst all of our sins, shortcomings, setbacks and struggles of life. (Read Heb.10:38 & 39) Romans 8:35 – 39, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written,*

*For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things **we are more than conquerors** through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Phil.1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

*1 John 5:4 & 5, “For whatsoever is born of God **overcometh** the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that **overcometh** the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”*

*Revelation 2:7, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **To him that overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

*Revelation 2:11, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **He that overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

*Revelation 2:17, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **To him that overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”*

*Revelation 2:26, “And **he that overcometh**, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.”*

*Revelation 3:5, “**He that overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”*

*Revelation 3:12, “**Him that overcometh** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”*

*Revelation 3:21, “**To him that overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”*

*Revelation 21:7 & 8, “He that **overcometh (conqueror)** shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the **fearful (coward)**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” If you die without Christ you will go to the same place apostates go, so I encourage to come to Christ this morning, come in repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ!*

At death will you be pronounced a CONQUEROR or a COWARD?

May God grace us, not to take one step back but to go forward in being overcomers!