

Hebrews 6:4-6

Perseverance and If's

The first law of Hermeneutics is Context, Context, Context. The second is closely connected to the first; it is the idea of the analogy of faith, the complete and entire consistency of scripture from start to finish. God has not EVER changed His mind or His plan about anything. Period. The third is what I call the keyhole law. This is the truth that scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. That we use the many plain passages to interpret the few difficult passages, never the other way round. It is this triad of thought that will guide us today. For there is no doubt that this is a difficult passage, and more ink has been spilled over the issues it raises, more arguments broken out, more conflict erupted and more heresy taught than I can fathom... it touches on the crown jewel of all sound theology, the promise of the perseverance of the saints. Even where this promise is retained it is often watered down and perverted by making it about our will and our choices. But the promise of our security is not anchored in us. It is anchored in the sure and certain Word of God. It is anchored in the finished work of Jesus Christ

on the cross and it is rooted in the absolute certainty that there will be NO ONE for whom Christ died, NO ONE whose sin was atoned for in His substitutionary death, NOT ONE SINGLE particle of the blood bought bride of Christ will fail to be found in Him on the great and terrible day... but the writer of Hebrews seems to imply that there is the possibility of some falling away. Hence the difficulty of this passage, and hence the need to consider the WHOLE counsel of God. To allow scripture to interpret scripture and to seek understanding from all of God's word rather than just one or two verses ripped kicking and screaming out of context. We are going to be camped out here for a little while, there is a LOT to unpack from this passage and we need to wrestle this out so that our faith is strengthened rather than harmed. For many, not fully grasping all that is promised, have strayed from the simple word of God and have run afoul of rocks. And it is here that we begin.

The flow of the thought begins back in chapter 5, where the writer starts to talk about Melchizedek, and how he was a priest of God, and how Christ is High Priest in that

same order... but the writer stops himself and makes this statement -

Hebrews 5:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

He then proceeds to chide them for being foolish, ignorant and childish in their faith. He challenges them about their failure to grow up, rebuking them for needing milk and the soft food of new believers, even going so far as to accuse them of not being able to take in solid food for it belongs to grown believers, rather than the babies into which the Jewish Christians have deteriorated. Chapter 6 begins with a determination that they should progress and take on some solid food, not laying again the foundations that have already been laid. And this is His aim, God willing. It is here that we find ourselves, and our attention must begin with his opening connective -

"For" it is a strong causative word. It means that the reason why the writer is going to say what he is about to say is contained in the idea about to be expressed. Read

it as "because" - for this cause- and here is the idea that we must wrestle out.

It is impossible to fall away from Christ and ever be restored.

All by itself, consider this very stark and somewhat frightening statement. IF you can fall, you can never get back to Christ. This simple inarguable declaration means that everything you think you know about the perseverance of the saints is doubly important. Because the common understanding and normal teaching by those who think they can lose their salvation is this, lose it today, gain it back tomorrow, lose it again, get it back again... over and over and over. But the writer of Hebrews tells us plainly, no. He tells us that restoration unto salvation is absolutely impossible if it were ever to be lost.

So here we are going to pause, and consider what the whole scripture tells us -

I. GOD KEEPS HIS OWN SAFE

a. Jesus promised that He had lost none and that He WOULD lose none.

John 6.35- 40

John 10.1-18

John 10.25-30

John 17.11-19

b. Paul testified of his confidence in the power of Christ to hold him. And notes that Timothy should hold fast the Word of God to sustain his own faith, trusting in the Spirit to keep him safe.

2Timothy 1.12-14

c. Paul also testifies that God is always true to Himself

2Timothy 2.11-13

d. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that God cannot lie

Hebrews 6.17-18

e. The writer of Hebrews affirms that the resurrection of Christ is our surest promise of life

Hebrews 7.25

II. THERE ARE FALSE CONVERTS

a. There are those who affirm they belong to Christ but who are not really His

b. There are those who teach false doctrines born out of this wrong belief

Titus 1.10-16

- i. Insubordinate
 - ii. Idle talkers - gossips
 - iii. Liars, deceivers
 - iv. Greedy
- c. The difference is in the question of their purity. Are they true children of God? Or are they of their father the devil? And notice the statement here - the condition of your soul determines how you see

the scripture, if you belong to God you are pure, if you don't you are not.

It is these false converts that the writer of Hebrews also has in mind.

III. CAUTIONARY STATEMENTS ARE MEANS

- a. The scripture affirms that God will keep all He has chosen
- b. The scripture also affirms that God uses means
- c. Part of the means He uses are these cautionary statements. They warn us to stay close, and are part of how God holds us and keeps us. He could make our bodies last forever without food or drink. But He chose to give us both, as the means to keep us healthy
- d. God uses many cautions and warnings to show us the good and teach us to avoid the bad and choose the good, to seek after Him, to desire

the rich fare of heaven rather than the weak stuff of earth...

IV. GROWTH IS NOT OPTIONAL

a. We come back to a common theme of scripture in general and Hebrews in particular. You are expected to grow

- i. In grace
- ii. In knowledge
- iii. In understanding
- iv. In discernment
- v. In purity
- vi. In holiness

b. Growth is both a comfort and an assurance

- i. Not that you have been holding on to God and are therefore safe
- ii. But that He has indeed been holding on to you
- iii. It is evidence of true change
- iv. It is a source of hope and an encouragement to stay the course and press on, looking back down

the path and seeing how far you have climbed is one of the rewards of hiking...

c. Failure to grow is a warning, and it is to these who are not growing that the writer of Hebrews addresses his remarks.

V. EVIDENCE MATTERS

a. The silence is loud. The writer does not mention when speaking of these potential apostates any real signs of conversion.

- i. Covenant of grace applied to their sins
- ii. No mercy in or towards them
- iii. No evidence of faith, or the duty of obedience wedded to gratitude
- iv. Nothing of justification
- v. Nothing of sanctification
- vi. Nothing of adoption

b. The evidence is louder. The hope given towards those whom he addresses is profound. “I am confident of better things in you”. But he still

speaks and warns about the danger of apostasy... and it is this simple fact which should cause us to examine and verify. Not fearfully exactly, but for the hope and encouragement that will sustain us when we are assailed. Consider this, is your hope more soundly strengthened if I just tell you that you should not ever doubt, or is it strengthened more by the evidence and testimony of your life, of the testimony of others, of the assurance of scripture as it attests to your character and is there not more comfort in examining your life and seeing the mark of the Master's touch all over your heart and all over your mind...

- c. This is the reason that we are told to examine ourselves. It is to prove and strengthen our assurance as we categorize and take note of all the ways that God has worked out grace in our lives.
- d. Take heart as we explore this passage in the coming weeks. Find the evidence in your life and hold up the light of the glory of the gospel of God in the face of Jesus Christ as His character is manifested in you!