

Hebrews Chapter 6A

Throughout the years the Parsons' family has enjoyed a few winter vacations in the great state of Maine.

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- Driving through the beautiful countryside of New Hampshire into the quaint little towns of Maine we encountered some very unique warning signs along the road. I believe that some of these warnings are exclusive to the region.
- Elk Crossing, Frost heaves (*wicked nasty*) slippery when wet, hills & curves,
- I bring this up to ask you: "What is the purpose of a warning sign?" Is it to Caution, to Advise, to Inform us of imminent dangers lurking just ahead.
 - I want you to think about this, it will apply to the text that we will study this morning.

The Warning Sign itself has NO ability to determine whether or not the person behind the wheel is a licensed driver.

- The warning sign itself is not a test of driving skills. It is simply a warning and those warnings speak to anyone and everyone who is traveling on the road.
- I can tell you from personal experience driving in New England, when these warning signs are ignored there are dangerous even deadly consequences that can follow.

One of the mistakes that many people make when they face the critical warning passages that are contained in this book of Hebrews is this:

- Rather than see them for what they are: Warning signs posted for the good of everyone who reads supporting the Author's goal of strengthening faith and encouraging perseverance.

Well-meaning Saints and Preachers over the years have interpreted these warnings in such a way as to cast dark shadows over the assurance of our salvation and the finished work of Christ.

- Instead of seeing these passages as an exhortation to persevere they turn them into doctrinal statements saying true blood bought believers can fall from grace.
- There are some who use the natural fear that accompanies a warning sign to inflict doubt and confusion in the hearts of the sheep.

As we encounter the warning sign recorded for us here in Hebrews 6 I encourage you to view the Warning sign in the light of the whole context of Scriptural revelation.

- I will help you to do that as we work through the passage.
- Let's remember some of the previous warning signs:

Chapter 2 we were warned of the danger of spiritual drifting

Chapter 3-4 we were warned of the danger of hardening our hearts to the voice of God

Here in Chapter 5-6 we are warned of the Malady, the spiritual infirmity that could be described as “A Failure to Thrive.” (*let me explain*)

Biologically the “Failure to Thrive” is a diagnosis that is used by pediatric doctors when an infant doesn’t grow as it should, for some unknown reason the child simply doesn’t gain any weight.

In Hebrews Chapter 5 This hard warning comes to those who claim to be born of God but the evidence of spiritual health, that slow and steady progress toward maturity is not taking place. It seems there is little evidence of real spiritual growth!

- Let’s think about that in a biological sense.

A Baby is born; the Birth weight is 8 lbs. 8 oz. At the 3-month checkup the baby has lost weight and is only 8 lbs. (*some concern*) At the 6-month checkup the baby is 8 lbs. 8 oz. (the parent’s Concern deepens)

At the One Year checkup something is drastically wrong! Baby remains 8 lbs. 8 oz.

Normal healthy babies will double their birth weight by 5 mos. of age and triple their birth weight by 1-year-old. The average weight of a 6-month-old is about 16 pounds. By the time the baby is 1-year-old, the average weight should be around 21 pounds.

IN the same way, those who are Born of God should naturally grow to spiritual maturity and produce spiritual fruit.

- The Apostle Peter makes that point in his first Epistle.

1Peter 2:2, **Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

Keeping the warning about spiritual growth in the forefront of our minds let’s look at this text like a doctor meeting with his patient.

1. Diagnoses of the Problem (a lack of appropriate growth)
2. Introduction of a Case Study (Discuss what happened to others))
3. Explanation of the Symptoms (What are the symptoms of spiritual health)
4. Finally, A Positive Prognosis (Encouraging words from the Doctor)

REMINDER: This is a very difficult portion of scripture so pay close attention.

As Ron taught last week, the Author of Hebrews has just started expounding the glories of Jesus our Great High Priest when he suddenly STOPS, He can’t go on he needs to address what he sees as a failure to thrive.

Hebrews 5:11 **About this (About the Priesthood of Christ) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.**

- The author is anxious to see these believers grow up in their faith.
- When Luke was born I longed for the day when I could play baseball with him. I had dreams of buying his first bat and glove. As a Dad I couldn't wait until he could walk, until he developed the hand and eye coordination to catch a ball.
- Spiritual dads dream of teaching their spiritual children the beauty of the Holy Trinity and the glorious implications of the hypostatic union of God and man united in the person of Christ. They long to expound upon our adoption as sons and our eternal reward.
- But wait, these are subjects for the spiritually mature for those who have learned to handle the Word of God with skill.

Hebrews 5:14 **But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.** 6:1 **Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.**

- When the Author says: **“And this we will do if God permits”** He is recognizing the sovereignty of God that is involved in Spiritual growth.
- God is at work in the heart of the believer providing an appetite for truth and a hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- He is laboring **within us both to will and to do His good pleasure.** (Phil 2)
- With deep concern over the spiritual condition of these Hebrew people the Author introduces a “Case Study.”
- This study is an example, it serves as a warning sign expressing the dangers of NOT growing, the risk involved in NOT persevering in the faith.

2. The Introduction of a Case Study

I call this a “Case Study” because here in verse 4 the author actually stops addressing the readers with the pronouns “you, we and us.”

- And he makes a notable SHIFT to the pronoun THOSE and THEM.
- In doing so he is pointing to a different group of people. (I call it a Case Study) The fact that he is not speaking of the readers is confirmed in Vs 9 when he says:

Hebrews 6: 9 **Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things — things that belong to salvation.**

In this “Case Study” the author is describing a group of people who have already **“fallen Away.”**

- (PARAPIPTO) to fall aside, the original language denotes a conscious even deceitful act. PIPTO = to throw oneself headlong not simply to slip and fall.
- The group being referred to is a group of “those” who have cast themselves away.

Listen to the description of those in the case study:

Hebrews 6: 4 **For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit,**

5 **and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,**

- The people in this case study “**have once been enlightened.**” The wording seems to indicate a conversion. And the accompanying descriptives seem to affirm that these are regenerate, believing individuals.
- They are people who have. **tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the age to come.**

John Wesley, the great Methodist leader, made much of these verses writing,

“Must not every unprejudiced person see, the expressions here used, are so strong and clear, that they cannot, without gross and palpable wrestling, be understood of any but true believers?”

- There are many, like Mr. Wesley who hold to this interpretation and cite these verses as a proof text denying a believer’s assurance of salvation and eternal security.
- And they might have a compelling argument except for the fact that Mr Wesley’s interpretation is a direct contradiction of many other passages which clearly teach the blessed assurance of those who are truly born of God.

One key principle of biblical interpretation is this: since God is the ultimate author of the Bible, and since God is infallible and does not change, there can be no basic inconsistency in the truth revealed in Scripture.

- That means that when we are faced with a difficult passage of Scripture we must interpret that passage in the light of the other passages that are more clear.
- Mr Wesley’s interpretation actually denies some very clear statements that were made by the Lord Jesus.

John 10: 27 **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.**

John 6: 37 **All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.**

39 **And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”**

- The Sheep of Christ’s flock will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of his hand. That statement becomes even stronger when he speaks of the Father.

- Jesus (Who cannot lie) assures us, it is the will of God that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him has eternal life and will be glorified in the end.

What about those individuals who are mentioned in our “Case Study?” Those who seem to have all of the markings of redemption but have fallen away?

- We can say that while they had many of the same experiences that Believers have: They **tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit.**
- BUT they have cast it all aside. How can we understand this?

Well, I think it is important that we remember the things that we read in Ch. 3&4. Where the author uses the people of Israel as an example: The whole nation, everyone who left Egypt shared the same experiences.

- God’s great deliverance from bondage in Egypt, Crossing of the Red Sea.
- They were led by the pillar of fire, they heard the Words of God,
- They ate manna in the wilderness and drank water from a rock.
- And yet they continually hardened their hearts and finally turned away when they came to Kadesh-barnea.
- Those who died in the wilderness shared common experiences with those who actually entered into the Promised Land. Important: What they did NOT SHARE was a life giving faith that produced perseverance.

Listen to the way the Apostle John describes those who seemed to be part of the church but fell away....

1John 2:19 **They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.**

- *They went out from us.* That is, they had once been professors of the faith but were never actually possessors of the faith.
- *But they were not of us.* That is, they did not really belong to us, they were never true Christians. *How do we know that JOHN?*
- *if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.* they would have remained in the church; that is, they would not have apostatized.
- Albert Barnes says: *“There could not be a more positive affirmation than that which is implied here, that those who are true Christians will continue to be such; or that the saints will not fall away from grace.”*

How do people fall away? We need only look at the Parables of Jesus: (Sower)

Matthew 13:20 **As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who**

hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Like the Israelites in the desert: there are some in the gathering of the church, who when they face hardship quickly fall away. Their departure exposes the fact that they have no root and never produce fruit.

- It is very possible in this “Case Study” that the author is speaking of individuals, known by the readers who already left the church and returned to the rituals of Judaism denying the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement.
- Like their Hebrew ancestors they also refused to believe the Word of God and willfully set aside His gracious promises.
- The real tragedy in this warning passage is found in Vs 6:

Vs 4, **It is impossible.... 6 (having) fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.**

- There is NO recovery from this sad state.
- To repudiate Christ is, in effect to take up hammer and nails a second time and beat them into HIS hands and feet, to join oneself with those who mocked, beat and crucified the Lord of Glory.
- The hardening that takes place in the heart of the Apostate makes them unable to repent and come to faith in Jesus.

A clear example of someone who experienced all of the blessings of walking with Jesus only to fall away was JUDAS Iscariot.

John 17: 12 **While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.**

- The only disciple that Christ ever lost was the one of whom it was prophetically foretold. The Son of Destruction. The one who would betray Him. (30 pieces)

After observing the case study, understanding, there are times when unregenerate people gather together with and share some of the experiences of true believers

My question is this: Is it possible to positively identify those who belong to Christ?

- Honestly from our vantage point it may not be easy to tell. BUT we can observe the symptoms.

3. Explanation of the Symptoms

Hebrews 6:7 **For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.**

- God graciously reveals his magnificent glory to all men through Creation, through Conscience and through the proclamation of the Gospel.
- And yet despite the gracious revelation of God that comes to all men like **rain that falls on the just and the unjust** there is a great disparity in what is produced by that faithful rain.
- Some land produces thorns and thistles and some produces fruitful crops
- In the same way the revelation of God will produce good fruit in those who believe.

The symptoms of a truly regenerate heart are seen in the good fruit that is produced.

John 15:4 **Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**

- You and I both know that all genuine believers can do things that are very wrong, as Peter showed when he denied the Lord 3 times.
- BUT a good branch, one that is truly connected to the Vine of Christ, having the life giving Spirit at work within, will necessarily go on to produce the good fruit of repentance and faith.
- It simply must because it is connected to the vine.

Having reviewed the case study and clearly presented the symptoms of a regenerate heart the author once again addresses his readers personally. He has provided a faithful warning to those who have been sluggish in the faith, now he leaves them with a positive prognosis.

With that difficult warning still fresh in the minds of his readers the author now proceeds to comfort those who believe, affirming the evidence of salvation that good fruit that he has observed in their lives.

4 Finally, A Positive Prognosis

Hebrews 6: 9 **Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things — things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.**

- The good prognosis offered by the writer to those who will hear his words is based upon the evidence of the love and good works that are produced by genuine saving faith.
- James tells us that **faith without works is dead**. True saving faith will always produce good works
- The Author moves on to encourage His readers to press on, keep growing, to persevere to the end.

11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

As I said earlier these warning signs are established by the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of encouraging faith and perseverance in the saints.

They are not doctrinal statements defining the durability of the salvation of those who have been adopted into the family of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Take a moment and Consider the warnings that Sharon Gave our children when they were growing up.

- DO NOT step foot in the street! The street is dangerous. If you wonder out there you could get hit by a car. It could hurt you badly.
- And if you are MY wife. Those children are NEVER out of your sight. The moment that they turn their attention to the street there is a loving but firm hand on the shoulder turning them back to the security of Mom's embrace.

Is the warning about the street real? Yes... IS mom ever going to allow you to get hit by a car? Not a chance.

What makes us think that the omnipotent Lord of All, the very one who left his home in glory and took on human flesh, yielding his body to the torments of the cross, suffering the wrath of God in order to redeem His beloved bride from the slave market would ever allow the apple of his eye to fall away to destruction?

John 6: 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

- Have you come to the Savior? Has God graciously opened your eyes to see the wondrous LOVE that he displayed on the Cross?
- Do you understand that you are a sinner and that the wages of sin is death BUT the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ?
- For those of you who are IN Christ this morning.
- BE careful to heed all of the warning signs that are contained in Holy Scripture and find your comfort in the words of Jesus.

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

