

**Victoria Ave/Emmanuel Baptist**

**Sunday, May 31, 2020**

**Hebrews 6:1-12**

**Warnings from Hebrews #3 – “Falling away from the Faith”**

I am a big fan of gameshows. I enjoy matching my wits (or lack thereof) with the contestants on television. Seeing what I know and I don't know and then daydreaming about the thousands of hypothetical dollars, cars, vacations, and the odd vacuum!

I really like to watch classic gameshows. A favourite of mine that has been rebroadcasted is “What's My Line?” It is interesting to see the big celebrities in their prime and even before they were a major star play the game.

Another show that has been “rebooted” for today is the show “To Tell the Truth.” If you are not familiar with the show, 3 contestants are introduced. They all claim to be the same person or claim to have achieved something noteworthy. The host comes on and declares “only one of these people is/has done....only they have been sworn to “tell the truth.” A celebrity panel takes turns asking questions in hopes of finding which guest is the “real one.” At the end of the round they cast their votes and then the host comes on and says (a phrase that has entered pop culture history) “will the real...please stand up!”

In our lesson/warning today in Hebrews 6, the author is really issuing a challenge for the “real Christian” to please stand up!

The 3<sup>rd</sup> warning we are looking at today, is often considered one of the most “troublesome” passages in the book (if not in Scripture). It is a warning about ***falling away from the faith***. The 50¢ theological term for this is **apostasy**. Our word comes from the Greek **apostasia** which means “a defection or revolt.” We can use a simple definition that APOSTASY is “the formal disaffiliation from, abandonment of, or renunciation of a religion by a person.

Let's read Hebrews 6:1-12 and then we will jump into what the warning means for us!

## Hebrews 6:1-12 New Living Translation (NLT)

**6** So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. <sup>2</sup> You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup> And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come— <sup>6</sup> and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame.

<sup>7</sup> When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God's blessing. <sup>8</sup> But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.

<sup>9</sup> Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. <sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do. <sup>11</sup> Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. <sup>12</sup> Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance.

When a warning is given in Hebrews...or given in scripture, our first reaction should be to ask WHY? Why is there a need to be warned? WHAT should we take note of? Does it apply to us?

Something was going on in this church (or group of churches) that required the author to address it in this letter.

When we read a letter like Hebrews, one of our current day problems to understanding what is being said is the fact that we are dealing with a one-sided conversations. We see this in other letters in the New Testament (Corinthians is a great example). The author is addressing issues that have been brought to his attention. Perhaps he has observed them or someone within the church has written him a letter informing him of the issues. The author then writes back addressing the issues. Our problem today is that we only have the answers and lack the questions. It is our job to discern what the question might have been.

What do we know about the problems addressed in Hebrews?

We know that there seems to be an issue surrounding FAITH. More specifically there is an issue of whom you should place your faith. There seems to be a lack of understanding regarding who Jesus is and why you need to have faith in Him.

The author finds it necessary to teach some foundational material and starts to systematically work through the fact that we place our faith in Jesus BECAUSE He is superior to all others! He is superior to the angels. He is superior to Moses. Jesus is superior to the religious traditions and leadership (namely the priests) because Jesus is the HIGH PRIEST!

This next section begins in 5:11 and goes to 6:12. The teacher takes a moment from his train of thought to remind the audience of readers that none of this information he is re-teaching is NEW TO THEM! They should KNOW this stuff! It is foundational, it is fundamental. IT IS MILK!

Many Christians begin their journeys on fire. They soak up the information given to them. Then something happens. They stop learning! We learn the basics of Sunday School and think that this is sufficient.

Many know about Jonah and “the whale.” What they don’t know is the rest of the short book. The reality is that you can take the story of the big fish out of the book and you will not lose any teaching, meaning, or theology. The same is the case with JOB. Most know the story of how Job lost everything due to a challenge by Satan. This takes up a chapter and a half...but there are 42 more chapters in the book. What do they say? How does it apply to life today? We must move from milk to meat!

This is the reason for the warning!

The writer continues in 6:4 with the powerful transition word “FOR” – and that ushers in the warning. It is a stern, scary, rather harsh few words. The author is building on the chastisement to move from milk to meat (seen in other portions of scripture).

If we fail to go deeper in learning, understanding, and practice, we run the risk of falling away from the faith due to being shallow. As a pastor, I have seen people do this. I have seen children who have been raised in a Christian home, attended and participated in Church, turn their backs on Jesus seemingly overnight! People convert to a world religion (that are completely opposite of Christianity) in the name of love. Over the last few years there have been well known speakers, teachers, entertainers, and pastors recant their beliefs. Many of the reasons could be called cliché (having been dealt with for hundreds of years) and points to a shallowness of belief and understanding.

We don’t always know why they fall away – but Hebrews is giving us a strategy to prevent apostasy.

“Will the real Christian please stand up!”

First ask yourself - “Do I consider myself a Christian?”

To help understand and answer this question, Evangelism Explosion used what they call two “diagnostic questions.” The first one is:

***If you were to die today, do you know for certain you would go to heaven?***

The second question is:

***If you were to die today and find yourself before God and He asks you “Why should I let you into heaven?” what would you say?***

Often the person interested in Christianity will give what is called a “works” answer. “I am a good person.” “I give money to the church.” This give a framework to teach.

A person with a real relationship to Jesus begins with:

1. An understanding that they are a sinner. Our sin (actions outside of the will of God) keeps us out of heaven. The problem is we can’t get rid of our sin.
2. To solve the “sin” problem, Jesus paid the ultimate price on the cross to remove our sins. He paid the penalty for us even though we were guilty.

The work the Jesus did on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin is the reason we truly need to understand WHO Jesus is. He was the only one able to pay the price for humankind.

3. We are called to turn away from our old way of living – our sins. This is called **repentance**.

Repentance is foundational, but only if it is in the shadow of Christ's sacrifice! If repentance can only be found through Jesus, then to deny Christ means there is no place or means of repentance.

As Christians, we identify with Christ's shame – to deny Jesus means we become one of the people who stood at the base of the cross and hurled insults at Jesus and His claim of being the Messiah.

In light of this, we ask ourselves another question:

***Is my Christianity based on a deepening relationship with Jesus and a desire to grow closer to Him?***

Is your faith fraudulent? A harsh question, but honest! This is the question facing the believers then and now.

Participation in the Christian community doesn't equal salvation! Just because someone starts well doesn't mean they will end well! As harsh as the warning is (for shock value) there is always HOPE!

After the warning there is encouragement! The encouragement is none other than the fact that God sees and recognizes you! God is applauding your work on His behalf – the fruit that you bear for Him!

But I thought that it wasn't based on what we DO! That is correct! The gift of eternal life is free. We cannot buy our way into heaven with deeds. We can never be good enough. God offers us salvation as a free gift! The works we do on behalf of the Kingdom of God is necessary after we receive the gift. Another lesson that they teach in Evangelism Explosion is WHY do good works. Not to get in, but because we have been forgiven. Our good works are the way we say "thank-you" to Jesus for what He did for us. Our salvation has to compel us to do the work that God set out for us to do. We obediently serve our Lord and Saviour.

It is as simple as A,B,C...

A – Admit that we are sinners.

B – Believe Jesus is God’s son, He died on the cross for us and rose from the grave on the third day.

C – Confess Jesus as Lord of our lives and commit to following Jesus and serving others.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us not to become lazy in our service to the Kingdom of God and to those around us. We are encouraged to be eager about the service we are called to. Meaningful service brings hope characterized by conviction and assurance. As we grow deeper in love with Jesus – our good works will be tangible evidence of a growing relationship!

Desire to grow – know the consequences – show your love daily.

***WILL THE REAL CHRISTIAN...PLEASE STAND UP!***