

Warnings from the Book of Hebrews – Part 3

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 5:8 – 6:12

We are studying teachings and warnings, gleaned from the Book of Hebrews, that compel people to examine their faith and their walk with God. Let's continue to examine some dangerous things people do and the gospel-driven call to correct or protect that situation. Previously, we noted:

- Hebrews 2:1,3 – People let things *“slip / drift away.”*
- Hebrews 3:6,14 – People do not *“hold fast / firmly to our confidence”* in Christ.
- Hebrews 3:8-13 – People harden their hearts.
- Hebrews 4:1-2 – People gain unprofitable knowledge of God's word.

Now, we will consider ...

Hebrews 5:8 – 6:12 – People become lethargic and fruitless. Are they superficially enlightened? Or are they actually regenerated? (i.e. Having experienced the new birth)

This passage contains some of the most controversial statements in the New Testament. Variant interpretations of this part of Scripture are at the core of doctrinal debates and denominational differences (Another one, Hebrews 10:19-39, will be discussed next in this series). Good commentators can greatly vary in their explanations and interpretations. Our study does not allow time or space to discuss debates and different teaching. We must present this Scripture with a simple but faithful approach, so that the lesson can be practical. As stated earlier in this series, it is recommended that the commentaries of John MacArthur and Warren Wiersbe be consulted for deeper yet practical knowledge. Also, “Hebrews” by John Brown (Banner of Truth) is an older and substantial commentary.

Hebrews 5:1-10 – Understanding Christ from the Old Testament

Christ's priesthood is not like the priesthood of Aaron – which had continual offerings and a succession of different priests. Christ's priesthood is compared to Melchizedec – who had no lineage and pedigree of previous priests and had no succession of priests to follow Him. This discussion will continue in Hebrews chapters seven through ten. But the writer paused to deal with a spiritual problem that hinders reception to this deeper teaching about Christ.

Hebrews 5:11-14 – No appetite for solid food

People have become *“dull of hearing / poor listeners – who no longer try to understand.”* The Greek word represented here means to be *“slow, sluggish, indolent / lazy, dull, languid / lackadaisical / having no interest or enthusiasm.”*

People are not developing and maturing. Instead of being able to teach others, they are just pacifying themselves with a milk diet. Solid food is not desired. So, people are not growing in skillfulness and discernment. They let others do that while they remain babes (I Corinthians 3:1-3).

Hebrews 6:1-3 – What is milk? What is meat / solid food?

In this passage milk is described as the basic foundational doctrines that many people think are the meat of the word – such things like repentance and faith (soteriology), baptism and other church ordinances (ecclesiology), resurrection and eternal judgment (eschatology). But according to what we see in chapter five, the solid food is to learn more about Christ (from both the Old and New Testaments) and be transformed into His likeness (Romans 16:25-27; II Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 3:8-12; 4:11-15,21; Colossians 1:25 – 2:10; 3:16-17; Philippians 3:10).

Hebrews 6:4-6 – “Enlightened” but not regenerated

“Tasted of the heavenly gift...the good word of God... the powers of the world to come...” Here, the word, **“tasted”** means to experience the workings of the Holy Spirit, but not actually receive the Holy Spirit. People, that are not regenerated / not born again, can be enlightened about truth and even profess faith in Christ. They may witness what God’s Spirit is doing in the lives of others (Acts 8:5-24), in the assembly of the saints (Ephesians 2:18-22), and even experience personal conviction (John 16:7-11). Sadly, they can be *“partakers of”* and *“share”* moments in which God’s Spirit is working, yet not be a true believer. They have sampled, but not swallowed and digested the grace of God (II Corinthians 6:1 – *“... Receive not the grace of God in vain.”*).

People like this cannot be brought back to repentance with the simple truth of the gospel. They know all of that, but it has not truly transformed them. They will become hardened and stubborn by their knowledge. They will think that they know as much or more than others. They have *“fallen away.”* Departing from the true path, they are blinded from being able to see why. They justify themselves, saying “I am just fine!” or “I tried that and it didn’t work!” (Hebrews 4:1-2).

Hebrews 6:7-12 – Be not slothful, but rather be fruitful, faithful followers

We were told in Hebrews 6:1 to *“go on to perfection / maturity”* (cp. Hebrews 10:35-39; II Corinthians 7:1). We are compared to herbs, planted in a garden, drinking in the rain and bringing forth fruit. But the plants that produce thorns and briars / thistles are rejected and burned. We need to be careful and seek to be fruitful (**Hebrews 6:7-8**; John 15:1-8,16; II Peter 1:1-11).

The writer of Hebrews gives hope that the readers are true believers who simply need to be diligent and seek those things that *“accompany / belong to”* (go along with) salvation (**Hebrews 6:9-12** cp. Titus 2:1-15; I Timothy 4:12-13,15-16; II Timothy 2:19-22). Note Hebrews 6:9-12:

- Labors of love for the sake of Christ’s name
- Ministry and service to the followers of Christ
- Diligently and continually seeking assurance and hope from God’s word
- Not slothful, but following the examples of others who exercise their faith with patience and are motivated by God’s promises. See Hebrews 4:14; 6:11-12,19; 10:23,35-39.