

Hebrews

Hebrews 6:4-12 – Fruit, Justice, Imitating

March 1, 2009

I. Introduction

A. **Hebrews 6:4-12** . . . For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, [5] and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6] and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. [7] For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; [8] but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. [9] But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. [10] For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. [11] And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, [12] so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

B. Prayer

II. Important Truths for the Christian Life

A. Anything less than a serious pursuit of God and personal spiritual maturity puts us in jeopardy of falling away and offending God.

1. **Hebrews 6:4-6** . . . For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, [5] and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6] and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.
2. I want you to notice the marvelous list of gifts God gives to those who come to Him in repentance and faith: (1) enlightenment concerning God, His ways, and His Word, (2) experiencing the presence of the divine nature which is given to us by God upon being born again, (3) enjoying the indwelling presence of the Holy

Spirit, (4) discovering the great truths of God revealed to us by the Word of God, (5) experiencing the reality of God's power to free us from the power and practice of sin, from the overwhelming power of temptation, from irrational fear, from self-centeredness, and from self-rule.

3. Now I want you to notice **verse 6**, and the reason I want you to look at it is because the main idea expressed there is an idea I do not know how to explain in any way that conforms to the rest of God's Word and at the same time makes rational sense.
 - a. One explanation comes from Matthew Henry, who lived from 1662 - 1714. He was a solid Christian who wrote a practical commentary on the OT and part of the NT during his lifetime. It was his opinion that we should take the statements in the Bible on both sides of this issue – that is, about falling away and about not losing our salvation – very seriously. It was his opinion that God provided those scriptures about not losing our salvation as encouragement for those who were so weak in faith as to continually question their salvation. And on the other side, he believed God spoke so strongly about falling away to put fear into those who were so confident in their faith or proud of their righteousness as to neglect pressing on to the end of their days in becoming what Christ saved them to be.
 - b. I believe the wisest thing for me is to not try and explain what this statement means since I cannot say I know what it really means.
 - c. But what I can say is that this statement shows the seriousness of entering into the Christian life and then falling away. This matter of falling away is never to be taken lightly. And to reinforce this truth, let me give you **four** reasons why it is this serious.
 - (1) There is no greater love than that a man should lay his life down for his friends – and this is what Christ did for us. To turn against the one who loved us this much is a great offense against God. He takes it personally.
 - (2) From God's side, the highest example or form of love and humility is the One who is greater sacrificially loving those who are lesser. This is what God, in Christ, has done for us. To embrace this love and then reject it is a serious offense against God.

- (3) From our side, the highest example or form of love and humility is for those who are lessee to submit to the will and rule of the One who is greater. This is what we chose to do when we were born again by repenting of our rebellion against God and trusting in Jesus to save us from our sin. To receive the gift of life and the privilege of reconciliation and then return to a life of rebellion is a great offense against God.
 - (4) To be known as a Christian and then turn away from the Christian life and submission to God is to make God look bad and to give the impression that Christ's sacrifice is of little importance to humanity. From the beginning of Israel through the end of the church age, one supreme purpose of God's people is to make God look good so more and more unbelievers will repent of their unbelief, trust in Him and live according to His will and Word. To fall away after coming to faith is to affirm to the world that God is unworthy of their submission and love and that Christ's sacrifice on our behalf is even less important.
4. What is the point here? Anything less than a serious pursuit of God and personal spiritual maturity puts us in jeopardy of falling away and offending God.
- B. Bearing fruit that is useful to God is proof of the Christian life. Bearing fruit that is worthless to God (*i.e.*, *weeds*) is proof of unbelief and a worthless life.
1. **Hebrews 6:7-8** . . . For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation **useful to those** for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; [8] but if it yields thorns and thistles, **it is worthless** and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.
 2. The essence of the message in these verses is that ground that produces a crop useful to the landowner is blessed while ground that brings forth weeds is worthless – in fact, even its crop is destroyed so that it has nothing of value to offer the farmer. Translate that into Christianity and you get this truth: The Christian whose life bears fruit useful to God will be blessed by God whereas the Christian who brings forth weeds is worthless to God, and even what it offers to God (weeds) will be destroyed.

3. This truth is not unique to the portion of Hebrews. Consider **II Timothy 2:20-21** and the matter of being a vessel for honor verses a vessel for dishonor.
4. Look at the parable of the four soils – fruit is the only proof of having responded to the gospel with repentance and saving faith.
 - a. **Mark 4:14-20** . . . "The sower sows the word. [15] "These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. [16] "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; [17] and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. (***Luke 8:13** . . . "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; **they believe for a while**, and in time of temptation fall away.*) [18] "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, [19] but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [20] "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
5. Consider these additional scriptures
 - a. **Matthew 3:10** . . . The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
 - b. **Matthew 7:19** . . . Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
 - c. **John 15:1-6** . . . "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. [2] "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. [3] "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. [4] "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. [5] "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. [6] "If anyone does not abide in Me, he

is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

- d. And finally, the parable of the sheep and goats from **Matthew 25:31-46**. In this parable, Jesus explains God's final judgment as a picture of a shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. The sheep are put on the right and enter God's eternal kingdom while the goats are put on the left and sent away into that eternal punishment which is prepared for the devil and his angels. In the words of Keith Green, the difference between the sheep and the goats is what they did and did not do.
 6. I think it is important to point out two more things here.
 - a. **First**, the ground that brings forth weeds is not totally useless or unredeemable, but what it has brought forth is useless and therefore only worthy of being destroyed. This means that while we are still alive there is time for repentance and a turning from our unbelief and wicked ways to faith in God and the pursuit of godliness. But if we die in this "fallen away" condition, we die as those who are lost.
 - b. **Second**, the ground does not determine what it brings forth, the farmer does. This means weeds are the outcome of neglect whereas fruit useful to the land owner is the outcome of diligence, faith, and patience on the farmers part.
 7. So what is the point here? Bearing fruit that is useful to God is proof of the Christian life. Bearing fruit that is worthless to God (*i.e., weeds*) is proof of unbelief and jeopardizes our eternal life with God.
- C. God is a just judge – therefore turn away from foolish or irrational or panicky fear of His judgment in relation to your standing with God.
1. **Hebrews 6:10** . . . For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.
 2. God is not a harsh judge who forgets or does not take into account the good done. He looks at both sides, the good and the bad and judges according to the true picture. This is not a balancing act between good and bad behavior to see which weighs more, but rather a discernment of the general and committed direction, values, beliefs, and behavior of an individual.

- D. Who we imitate significantly influences how we live the Christian life
1. **Hebrews 6:11-12** . . . And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, [12] so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
 2. Consider these scriptures:
 - a. **Ephesians 5:1** . . . Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;
 - b. **Hebrews 12:3** . . . For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
 - c. **I Thessalonians 1:6** . . . You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
 - d. **I Corinthians 11:1** . . . Be imitators of me (Paul), just as I also am of Christ.
 - e. **Hebrews 13:7** . . . Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.
 - f. **I Corinthians 15:33** . . . Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."
 3. Who we imitate is either a great help in living the Christian life or a great hindrance. Who is your role model? Who are your role models?
 - a. Certainly Jesus is to be our number one role model.
 - b. But beyond Jesus, who or what do you watch, who do you listen to, who do you read?
 - c. What do you fill your mind with? What do you meditate on – God, scripture, and the Christian way or images from TV, movies, magazine articles, pop music, etc?
 4. What is the point here? Who you imitate will significantly influence not only the way you live, but the way you think, what you desire, whether you hunger and thirst after righteousness, and whether you press on to be conformed to the image of Christ – as much as is possible – in this life.

III. Conclusion

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