

Third Warning, part 2

We have entered a war zone called Hebrews 6:4-8. Charles H. Spurgeon introduced his sermon on this passage with, “There are some spots in Europe which have been the scenes of frequent warfare . . . the kingdom of Belgium, which might be called the battle field of Europe. War has raged over the whole of Europe, but in some unhappy spots, battle after battle has been fought . . . This is one of the texts which have been trodden under the feet of controversy; and there are opinions upon it as adverse as the poles, some asserting that it means one thing, and some declaring that it means another.” He was correct. Hebrews 6:4-8 is probably the battle zone, the Belgium of Hebrews. We have entered a war zone.

IN THE TRENCH. In the early church, some church fathers even wanted the book of Hebrews removed from the Bible because it did not agree with what they believed. That is a sad commentary on the human heart. They were not willing to be open to scripture and change what they believed. So they attempted to remove the part of the Bible they did not like. The problem was not the Bible, but their understanding of it.

Today, there are at least four major opinions about the meaning of this passage. The first one says that Hebrews 6:4-8 teaches that Christians can lose their salvation, but it will be difficult for them to accept Christ again. The second view says this passage is talking about apostates - Christians who have turned and completely rejected Jesus. Others say that Hebrews 6:4-6 is not about Christians but about people who claim to be Christians. Finally some say the passage is a divine scare tactic to motivate the readers to action.

Someone may ask, “Why are there differences of opin-

ion?” The answer is that some of the words and expressions in this passage are not completely clear. In the last study, “Warning - Part 1,” we started by explaining the meaning of the words “enlightened,” “tasted,” “partakers,” “fallen away,” and “renew,” from the Greek. That was our hand-to-hand combat. We needed to know the meaning of the words first. Now we can step back and look at the battle field. This will enable us to gain a better understanding of what Hebrews 6:4-8 is all about.

BATTLE FIELD VIEW. We will look at the battle field

from five perspectives in order to gain an understanding of the passage. We will look at Jesus’ disciples, Matt. 7:22-23, the phrase “become partakers of the heavenly gift,” the word “impossible” and the illustration in verses 7-8.

Jesus’ Disciples. Men and women down through history have left the faith, some who were even involved in ministry. Jesus’ disciples were involved in ministry also.

The gospel of Luke reminds us that Jesus gave His disciples authority over demons and power to heal. They went out



preaching and healing.

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to perform healing. (NASB) Luke 9:1-2

Judas was part of this ministry according to the apostle Peter,

For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry.” (NASB) Acts 1:17

Judas was a partner in ministry. Jesus had asked him to be a disciple, and he volunteered just as the others did. He was part of the ministry team. It must have been exciting to be with Jesus, to hear Him at the Sermon on the Mount, to hear His parables and have them explained, to see the reactions of the crowds of people, to cast out demons and perform miracles. Yet, all the time Judas was not a true believer.

Jesus had other disciples at the start of His ministry - many of them. How many we do not know, but John 6:59-71 says that many of them left Jesus.

But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble? . . . But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him . . . As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. (NASB) John 6:61, 64-66

Many of these disciples did not believe from the beginning. Yet the Holy Spirit says they were called “disciples” in John 6:61, and Jesus tells us they were not real disciples because they never believed. Just like Judas - the “son of perdition” (John 17:12), these folks had been enlightened by Jesus’ teachings, and tasted or experienced His power. They had shared in the ministry of the Spirit, but they were not real. We have just used the key words of Hebrews 6:4-6 with their basic Greek meaning.

“*I Did.*” At the close of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus

shocked us with,

Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you . . . (NASB) Matt. 7:22-23

If someone cast out demons and performed miracles, most of us would say that God was surely with him. But that may not be true. How did these folks do these miracles and cast out demons? Jesus said they did these things. Were these folks Christians at some time in their lives and then lost their salvation? Were they like those who were called Jesus’ disciples and like Judas had never believed? Jesus gives us the answer when He says He never knew them. The Greek word for “never” means “never at any time!” They were never Christians. Yet, they performed miracles and cast out demons in **Jesus’ name**. They looked good, looked real, but they were not. They were enlightened, tasted and shared in the ministry, but they were not real. They did not lose their salvation or turn apostate.

The Heavenly Gift. Another part of the battlefield is the meaning of “have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit” in Heb. 6:4. We must look at Hebrews 3:14 to discover this meaning.

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; (NASB) Heb. 3:14

Hebrews 3:14 says that those who become Christians will continue until the end. The Greek tense of “have become” is a perfect. This means that real Christians start as Christians and continue being Christians. Real Christians continue in the faith - “if we hold fast.” Did the Spirit change His mind when He came to Heb. 6:4? Is it possible to start as a real Christian and then not continue? Heb. 4:10 also says that Christians rest from working for their salvation just as God rested. The message in Hebrews 3 and 4 is that if you are real, you are real until the end. If we do not hold fast, we were never Christians from the start.

“Impossible.” Some understand the phrase “it is impossible to renew them again” in Heb. 6:6 to mean that a Christian can lose his/her salvation, but it is difficult for him/her to come back. If that is true, then we must change our understanding of God in Heb. 6:18,

... in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie . . . (NASB) Heb. 6:18

Is it “difficult” for God to lie or “impossible”? The conclusion is obvious. If it is impossible for God to lie, then it is impossible for those who finally abandon the faith to come back. The Spirit uses other words later in Hebrews.

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins . . . (NASB) Heb. 10:26

“tasting,” and “having been made partakers.” The land producing good plants symbolizes those who are real Christians. Land that produces thistles represents unbelievers. The parable implies one or the other is true and not both.

WAR’S END. These folks appear to be Christians.

But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. 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. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (NASB) Heb. 6:9-12

We have just learned something new about these folks. They

You Have An Anchor

Hold on, then and true believer! You have an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which enters within the veil.

The winds are bellowing, the tempests howling, should the cable slip, or your anchor break, you are lost. See those rocks, on which myriads are driving, and you are wrecked there if grace leaves you. See those depths, in which the skeletons of sailors sleep, and you are there, if that anchor fails you. It would be impossible that you should ever be saved. Therefore, thank God that you have an anchor that cannot fail
...

Charles Spurgeon

Illustration. The illustration of the watered ground in Heb. 6:7-8 implies that one or the other is true.

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (NASB) Heb. 6:7-8

The ground is watered with two possible results The ground produces either good plants or bad plants. The parable illustrates verses 4-6. The water symbolizes being “enlightened,”

are active in the church. They have been ministering to other people out of a heart of love. We learned in Heb. 5:11-14 that they should have been teachers, but they did not want to know the tough meat of scripture. They wanted milk. They were struggling (Heb. 10:32-33) and are apparently impatient. Did they want God to give them relief now? The Holy Spirit calls them to imitate someone who will inherit the promises - Abraham, their father.

PURSUE THE HOPE. The Holy Spirit calls them to show “diligence” to realize their hope (Heb. 6:11). The Greek word is *spoude* which means “to make haste, eagerness, enthusiasm.” How were they to do this? Just as Abraham pursued

the promise.

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU, AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. (NASB) Heb. 6:13-15

Abraham did not give up after awhile, but continued to patiently trust God. These folks were patient and they were thinking about going back to Judaism. So the Spirit says, “Come on, be patient, pursue the hope.” Why? Because their hope is real!

For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. (NASB) Heb. 6:16-18

The Spirit reminds them that God promised to bless Abraham (Gen. 12:1-2, 7) and then confirmed it with an oath (Gen. 22:16-17). Then He adds that since God cannot lie, we should be greatly encouraged. We can trust God.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek. (NASB) Heb. 6:19-20

Our hope is Jesus - our eternal high priest!

CONCLUSION. What a lesson for us. These folks were active in church, and ministering to others but they were not spiritually growing. They were going backward. I have found that I can give myself to ministry or to serving others in the church much easier than I can to God. It is easy to become involved, active, excited and miss God all together. That happened to the priests in Malachi 1-2. They were active in the “church” and did not have a heart for Jesus or to know Him.

Are you spiritually dry? Are you bitter with people in the church? Do your prayers “bounce off the ceiling,” or you are discouraged with God? Maybe you have other frustrations and express it differently. Should you be able to teach by this time? Have you really believed in Jesus? We all need to ask ourselves, “Is Jesus the passion of my heart?” “Am I studying the Word in order to know Jesus, defend the truth, and live a godly life?” It is the only way to be a teacher (Heb. 5:11-14). Am I praying and confessing my sins? Do you daily ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His Spirit? These are essential to spiritual growth.