THE DANGER OF FALLING AWAY

**DATE: 12/18/2013 Wed.**

**TEXT: Hebrews 6:1-8**

**INTRODUCTION**

When we finished **chap. 5** we were talking about spiritual growth

We looked at where, many believers actually are, in contrast to where they should be

**I Peter 2:2** says - ***“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby”***

Just as physical growth is normal, spiritual growth should be the norm in the Christian’s Life

**Humor:** Unfortunately, many are like the little boy who fell out of bed in the middle of the night. When his mother rushed in to see what had happened, he said, “*I don't know. I guess I was sleeping too close to where I got in.”*

Tragically, many Christians are living to close where they have got in

They Got in the Family of God,

But they have never Grown up as a Child of God

Even after years of being saved, they are still spiritual babies

**Quote:** Warren Wiersbe made this incredible statement - *“After over forty years of ministry, I am convinced that spiritual immaturity is the number one problem in our churches today.”*

Having been in ministry now for some 25 yrs., I have to agree

Most, if not all problems, that I’ve experienced …

(And all pastors experience them)

… Can be traced to immature Christians

Many think they were farther along than they really are

But actions speak louder than words

After bringing to light the immaturity of many of the Hebrew Christians

The writer now continues in his warning

He continues by challenging them to move forward in their Christian life

He is calling for spiritual growth or else there is –

***“The Danger of Falling Away”***

Let’s pray and think on that thought tonight

***~~~Prayer~~~***

Have you ever wondered why it is that so many professing believers don’t seem like they are even saved?

Why is that? It’s because they have never grown or progressed in their walk with the Lord

I think these verses will bring some understanding to that dilemma

**I. OUR “PROTECTION” – vs. 1-3 …**

Because of their spiritual immaturity these Hebrew believers were in danger of falling away

The writer calls them to move from the ABC's onto the deeper things of the Word of God

Growing in Grace will **“Protect”** us from Falling away

**Hebrews 12:15 – *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”***

**II Peter 3:17 – *“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness”***

Immaturity and indecision go hand in hand

A lack of confidence in God, breeds instability and spiritual hesitation

The children of Israel manifested these weaknesses at Kadesh-barnea

They paused there and sent in spies because they did not trust God's promise that the land was theirs for the taking

**A. The ‘Principles’ – v.1a**

***“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ...”***

The word ***“principles”*** comes from the word which means *beginning*

In the context of our passage, it is speaking of the elementary or basic doctrines that we begin with as believers

We are told that there comes a time when we are to leave those basics and move on

As we grow up, we are weaned from milk to enjoy meat

The word ***“leaving”*** means *to go or to send forth*

The idea is not *leaving* in the sense of Forsaking,

But of Advancement

Think about it this way

The basis of our language is the alphabet

In preschool, a child learns the ABC's

But as the child develops, he moves beyond the simple ABC's and begins to spell and read

He never abandons the ABC's, but goes beyond them

The writer is telling us to move on from the basics to the deeper truths of the Word of God

He is Not telling us to abandon these principles as insignificant or useless

He is telling us that we need to move beyond the basics

These **Principles** are the foundational truths we build on

But once the foundation has been lain, we must now build on that foundation – **Eph. 2:20**

There are six spiritual basics given

These basic foundational truths are mentioned in three groups

**1. v. 1c – *“repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God”***

This is where we respond to the Gospel

Dead works is trying to keep the Law

Repentance and faith are the very basis of salvation

The sinner learns that his works and his religion will not save him and he turns to Christ for forgiveness and salvation

**2. v. 2a – *“Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands,”***

This second pair involves ordinances

Of course baptism is the first act of obedience to the Lord

The laying on of hands was a common practice in the early churches

It was associated with the recognition of the call of God on someone’s life

Laying on of hands symbolizes that recognition

**Acts 13:1-4**

**3. v. 2b – *“The resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment”***

The Resurrection of Christ is 1/3 of the Gospel

Upon receiving Christ as Saviour…

We are assured that because Christ conquered the grave and rose again, so will we

Our Saviour assures us that the sting of death has been removed …

And that the grave holds no victory over the believer

**I Corinthians 15:55 – *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”***

In addition we receive grace without fear of eternal judgment because Christ took our sin on Himself

**II Corinthians 5:21 – *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”***

These **‘Principles’ Protect** us From Falling Away

**B. Our ‘Perfection’ – v. 1b**

***“... let us go on unto perfection;”***

Yes, the Basics are important

The word ***“perfection”*** though, carries the idea of *completeness* or *maturity*

The writer is Not talking about sinless perfection

But rather of the growing up in Christ

Like a baby grows beyond the bottle and begins to enjoy solid food,

We must move beyond the basics of milk to the strong meat of God's Word

It’s OK for a child to quote and sing the ABC's when he is 5 years old,

But if that is all he can do when he is 25, he’s in serious trouble

**These ‘Principles’ Protect us**

**Our ‘Perfection’ Protects us** (Growing / Maturity)

**C. Our ‘Permission’ – v.3**

***“And this will we do, if God permit”***

Of course it is the will of God for us to grow in Grace

**I Thessalonians 4:3a – *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification”***

Sanctification is Growing in Grace

The Will of a believer must coincides with the will of God

The author fully expected that his readers would continue to advance toward Perfection (Maturity)

***“and this we will do”***

He however fully acknowledged that God must allow it to happen

***“if God permit”***

It is always the will of God for a believer to mature and to develop in holiness

***“Be ye Holy, as I am Holy”* – I Peter 1:16**

The writer is simply recognizing the Sovereignty of God in all matters

Both Paul and James admitted that future plans should always be made in light of God’s Will

**I Corinthians 16:7 – *“For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit”***

**James 4:15 – *“For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that”***

***“let us (therefore) go on unto perfection;”***

For as we do, we find ourselves in the Protective Hands of God

**OUR “PROTECTION” FROM FALLING AWAY**

**II. THE “POSSIBILITY” – vs. 4, 5**

***“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” “And have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come,”***

**Vs. 4-6** are probably some of the most controversial in all the Word of God

They could well be the most misunderstood and misapplied verses in the entire Bible

Some teach that the writer has apostasy in mind

They teach that he is talking about the possibility of someone falling away from Christ and losing his salvation

There is a serious problem with that interpretation

If this passage is teaching that someone can lose his salvation,

Then it is also teaching that once he does, it’s impossible for him to be saved again

What they are teaching is a *“one strike and you're out”* type of salvation

Since the Bible very clearly teaches that we receive ***“eternal”*** life when we come to Christ …

We can surely conclude that this passage does not teach that a child of God can lose his salvation

Another common misinterpretation of this passage is that the folks being written to were never truly saved to begin with

However, the context is clear that the writer is talking to believers

All the Epistles are written to believing people

Let’s look at that here

**A. The ‘Revelation’ – v.4a**

Notice that they ***“were once enlightened”***

The word ***“once”*** means *at some point in the past*

The word *“****enlightened”*** means *brought to the light,* or *to illuminate*

It’s talking about understanding; spiritual understanding

This is the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit

The Bible tells us He will bring us into all Truth

**John 16:13 – *“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth:”***

**II Corinthians 4:6 - *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”***

Paul used the same word, speaking to the Ephesian believers

**Ephesians 1:18 *– “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”***

This is the act whereby the Word of God gives us understanding and allows man to truly see his sinful condition and need of salvation

These people had been brought out of spiritual darkness and into God's marvelous light

They were believers

**The ‘Revelation’**

**B. Their ‘Redemption’ – v.4b**

These people had... ***“tasted of the heavenly gift”***

What is the heavenly gift?

It’s eternal life

In **Romans 6:23** we are told that - ***“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”***

This heavenly gift is salvation

However, some say that they had never been truly saved,

But that they had only ***“tasted”*** or *sampled* the gift of salvation

They talk as if Jesus was only handing out samples and these folks only got a little taste

The word ***“tasted”*** is the same word used of Jesus tasting death for every man in …

**Hebrews 2:9 – *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man”***

Did our Saviour actually bleed and die? (or)

Did He merely *Sample* death?

The word ***“taste”*** means that He actually *partook of and experienced death*

Just like Jesus has fully experienced death for every man,

These people had experienced salvation

They were believers

**The ‘Revelation’**

**The “Redemption’**

**C. Their ‘Regeneration’ – v.4c**

They were also ***“made partakers of the Holy Ghost”***

This is clearly speaking of salvation

At the very moment of salvation

…the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer

At salvation we became partakers of the divine nature

**II Peter 1:4 – *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”***

This is called regeneration

Noah Webster defines regeneration as *“Reproduction; the act of producing anew”*

Our first birth was the result of the generation from our parents

Our second birth is our Regeneration

It is a spiritual birth from the Holy Spirit as He imparts to us a new spiritual life

**Titus 3:5 – *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”***

Being a partaker of the Holy Spirit is evidence of salvation

**John 14: 16, 17 – *“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever;” “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”***

**Ephesians 1:13, 14 – *“In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,” “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory”***

This Letter was being written to ***“partakers of the Holy Ghost”***

They were believers

The word ***“partakers”*** means *a partner, an associate*

These people had received the Holy Spirit

There is no doubt that this is written to believers

**Their ‘Revelation’**

**Their “Redemption’**

**Their ‘Regeneration’**

**D. Their “Reference’ – v.5**

***“And have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come,”***

They were not only partakers of the Holy Ghost,

But also of the Word of God and the Powers of the World to come

In Regeneration a person is saved -

**I Peter 1:23 – *“not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever”***

The Understanding of Saving Faith comes through the Scriptures

**Romans 10:17 – *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”***

**John 6:63 - *“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the Words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”***

The word ***“powers”*** used here, is the same word used earlier in **Chp. 2:4** as ***“divers miracles”***

Which God demonstrated to authenticate the ministries of Christ and the apostles

**2:4 – *“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?”***

In **Hebrews 6:5** though, it refers to the Divine Power and Glory which will be evident in the Millennium

The Millennial kingdom will embody the fulfillment of the new covenant made by the shed blood of Christ

The knowledge of God will be evident

The moral transformations of the believer into Christlikeness are only a few of the indicators

…of what life will be like when Christ returns to the earth

**II Corinthians 3:18 – *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”***

It’s beyond doubt that the writer of Hebrews was referencing to Believers

Although it is impossible for someone to lose their salvation …

… It is still possible to Fall Away from God

**OUR “PROTECTION” FROM FALLING AWAY**

**THE “POSSIBILITY” OF OUR FALLING AWAY**

**III. THE “PRICE” – vs. 6**

***“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame”***

These are also without doubt, some of the most serious and thought provoking words in the entire Bible

This passage speaks of someone going so far that repentance becomes impossible

Keep in mind that we have established that we are reading about saved people

So we are not talking about repentance in regard to Salvation

But in regard to Sanctification

**v. 4** tells us ***“…It is impossible…”***

In **v.6** we see What is … ***“impossible”***

Some versions have attempted to change the word ***“impossible”*** by translating it as *difficult*

However, ***“impossible”*** means just that - *impossible, not possible, not able to be done, unable*

We know this, because the same word is used later in this same chapter in regards to it being …

***“impossible for God to lie”* – v. 18**

So, is it *difficult* for God to lie? or is it actually *impossible* for God to lie?

We must take this text as God wrote it

It seems that there are cases where it is just as ***“impossible”*** for people to be brought back from their backsliding

… As it is for God to tell a lie

To understand this passage we must interpret it in its context

The context from **Chp. 5:11 – 6:8** is dealing with those who have Neglected (Not Rejected) their salvation and have failed to grow from spiritual infancy into mature Christians

We saw in **v.1** the writer talking about leaving the basics and going on to perfection

Earlier he asked (**2:3**) – *“****How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”***

That question is answered here in **Chp. 6**

There is no escape for squandering and neglecting our great gift of salvation

**Vs. 4, 6 - *“For it is impossible... If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance”***

The writer is speaking of those who linger so long in infancy that they pass the point of no return

Therefore, they are left behind

**I Corinthians 9:24-27 …**

These people do not lose their salvation

But rather, their Rewards

**I Corinthians 3:15 – *“If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”***

These people do however, become useless, so far as the work of God is concerned

The believer who makes the decision (whether consciously or unconsciously) to disobey God will find it impossible to reverse the future consequences of that willful act

They waste their life away in spiritual infancy, never growing up into mature Christians

Never being able to reverse the mess they’ve made

**Hebrews 12:16, 17 – *“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” “For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”***

They’ll enter eternity having squandered every opportunity to serve and bring glory to Christ

They will have no reward to give the Saviour

**OUR “PROTECTION” FROM FALLING AWAY**

**THE “POSSIBILITY” OF OUR FALLING AWAY**

**THE “PRICE” TO PAY** **FOR FALLING AWAY**

**CONCLUSION – vs. 7, 8**

The writer of Hebrews now sums up **vs. 1-6**

***“For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:” “But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned”***

The writer draws from agriculture to illustrate our closing thought

The difference between Obedience and Disobedience

We see here a contrast between 2 types of Believers

**A. ‘Fruitful’ Believers**

**v. 7** speaks of ground that ***“drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it”***

This is illustrative of believers who receive the spiritual benefits described in **vs. 4, 5**

Such believers ***“bringeth forth herbs meet*** (suitable or fitting) ***for them by whom it is dressed”*** (Prepared)

They are fruitful and receive blessings from God

**B. ‘Fruitless’ Believers**

**v.8** however, speaks of ***“ground that has received the same rain but beareth thorns and briers”***

Such a product ***“is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned”***

Burning is not a reference to Hell,

But to the judgment seat of Christ where the believer's works will be tried by fire

**John 15:6 – *“If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”***