

## Hebrews 6C (2014)

- We've waded into the third warning of Hebrews
  - And the moral of the story was "we don't always get a second chance..."
    - The writer expressed his concern for this church because they weren't making spiritual maturity a priority
    - They were a little lazy, a little neglectful
    - They weren't moving forward into greater knowledge of God's Word
    - And into a greater life of obedience and faithfulness
  - What the church didn't seem to understand, was that failing to move forward puts a Christian at serious risk of sliding backward
    - Without a steady diet of God's Word in our spiritual life, we are susceptible to missteps, deceptions and fleshly temptations
    - And as we move further and further down that path, we may be on a one-way trip
  - The writer warned the church that we might not get a second opportunity to obey and to be blessed by our obedience
    - God may not grant us the grace that leads us to recover, turn back and restart a walk of obedience and discipleship
    - Instead, the Lord may permit us to stay where our sin has placed us
    - Living-out the rest of days in rebellion and in the consequences that naturally follow
      - We may end our life living like the prodigal son in the mud of the pig sty
  - And God has good reason not to extend us second chances
    - The writer says we are putting the Lord to open shame each and every time we pursue an ungodly, disobedient lifestyle
    - We have already received an opportunity to repent and set our lives on a new course when we were brought to faith in Christ

- If we squander that opportunity, then we're playing the odds that the Lord will overlook our disobedience and rescue us again
- The writer finished the warning with a parable about a farmer and his field

**Heb. 6:7** 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;

**Heb. 6:8** but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

- As we learned last week, the parable teaches about the two possible ways a believer can respond to the grace of God and the consequences of each response
  - First, a believer can receive the grace of God and turn it into a harvest for the Lord
  - His investment in us is returned in spiritual fruit
  - And we in turn receive a blessing, which we understand is a picture of eternal reward awaiting us in the Kingdom
- But a believer can also return God's grace with unholy, unpleasing works
  - We can forgo study of God's Word, allowing our spiritual maturity to atrophy
  - We can get distracted by the riches, pleasures, worries and cares of this world
  - And as we retreat into a selfish, self-serving life, we are like a field producing a worthless crop for the Lord
  - And so our work will be burned up in a future day of judgment
- So it's mature, obey to be rewarded – or shrink back, disobey and suffer loss
  - It's simple and yet, it's sobering, and now that he's put this challenge in front of this church, they're probably wondering if it's too late for them
    - Remember, he's already called them out for not being able to follow his teaching, though they ought by now to be teachers
    - So perhaps they've already squandered the chance to mature?
    - Certainly, his audience might have been tempted to come to that conclusion

- So the writer moves into an encouragement, hoping to spur the church into a better place

**Heb. 6:9** But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

**Heb. 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.

**Heb. 6:11** And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

**Heb. 6:12** so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- The writer turns a corner, leaving behind his chastisement, and turning toward encouragement
  - He says we're convinced of better things concerning you
    - The "we" here is probably the apostles, collectively
    - And the better things they believe this church will receive are the things that accompany salvation
    - There are things that accompany salvation, things that elsewhere Paul calls "spiritual fruit"
  - In Galatians, Paul lists the fruit of living in the Spirit of our salvation

**Gal. 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Gal. 5:23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- These are the characteristic behaviors and attitudes that accompany salvation in the life of an obedient believer
  - They develop in believers who are diligent to strengthen themselves through healthy spiritual disciplines, while crucifying the flesh in its desires
  - And they lead us into receiving a blessing of eternal reward
- Why is this writer convinced that these believers will right the ship and continue to move forward in their faith?
  - Did he have prophetic knowledge or was simply speaking in optimistic terms?

- I think he was optimistic, because he knew this audience was to receive and read this letter
- Knowing they would read his words and be convicted by them, was reason enough to have an optimistic attitude
- Once again, it comes back to the Word of God
  - The writer's confidence wasn't in the power of these people to get themselves back on track
    - His confidence was rooted in the power of God's Word to bring them back
    - As they learned the truth, the Word would convict them and inspire them to better things
    - Just as their lack of attentiveness to the Word led to their struggles, so would the power of hearing God's Word stir them back to abiding in the Lord
  - And for that reason, I think the writer's optimistic tone is equally appropriate for those who read this letter today and take it seriously
    - If you're the kind of Christian to give attention to Hebrews 6, then there is good reason to be optimistic about your spiritual future
    - Just the fact that you are attentive to the meat of God's Word, says something about your current and future opportunities
    - It's the Christians who AREN'T studying the Bible – much less Hebrews verse-by-verse – who are at risk
    - The ones who are backsliding and in danger of experiencing the consequences the writer described are those who have no idea what Hebrews 6 says
- But we can never grow complacent or sit on our laurels
  - The walk of a Christian is a never-ending pursuit of pleasing the Lord
    - Notice the writer says in v.10 that the Lord will not overlook the good works these believers have accomplished in their walk
    - There's no need to worry that something we've done in faith will go forgotten or overlooked

- But also notice, the writer emphasizes our works must be done in love toward the brethren
- It's the work within the Body of Christ that should be the focus of our life, including the work that takes the Gospel to the world, of course
- But our work within the Body lays the necessary groundwork making evangelism outside the Church possible
  - We fund missionaries and Church outreach
  - We pray for those in the Church and the lost
  - We train others to carry the Gospel
  - We disciple those who come into the faith
  - And so on...
- But also notice the writer's statement in v.11 that he expects everyone in the Church to follow this same example of diligence
  - His comment makes the point of what it means for our walk as a Christian
    - And remember, the standard we're seeking isn't found in another Christian
    - Because if we measure our walk of obedience and spiritual maturity against others, then we'll be tempted to make comparisons to those who make us feel good
      - Those who are in even worse shape than we are
  - There is always someone else in the body of Christ who attends church less frequently, studies the Bible less consistently, prays less, contributes less, volunteers less, etc.
    - So by comparison, we find an excuse to avoid making any changes to our lives
    - But our standard is that found in the Word of God itself, and if we look at those expectations sincerely and honestly, we'll always find somewhere we don't measure up
- Secondly, the test doesn't come until the end

- Notice the writer says at the end of v.11, that we must remain diligent until we realize the full assurance of our hope until the end
  - The hope of the Christian faith is our hope in resurrection of the body
  - And in the inheritance in the Kingdom that follows
  - Later in this letter, the writer declares that faith is two parts

**Heb. 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

- We believe that God is, meaning that we believe the Lord lives, having been resurrected following His death
  - Secondly, we believe that the Lord is a rewarder of those who seek Him
  - Just like the patriarchs of earlier days, we believe in the promise of a second life, one lived with a reward that comes to those who please Him
- So the writer says we must remain diligent if we expect to receive the full certainty of our hope until the end
  - He's talking about the full measure of reward that's available for each believer who serves the Lord
  - Why lose anything?
  - If you click coupons, and buy in bulk to save earthly wealth,
  - Then why not think in similar ways about your Heavenly treasure?
  - Live in ways pleasing to the Lord to ensure the greatest possible reward
  - For in doing so, you will reflect the greatest honor and glory upon Christ
- So the writer says let's not be sluggish or lazy...but be imitators of past followers of God, who inherited the promises by living patiently, according to their faith
  - Men like Abraham, who becomes the writer's example of who we should imitate

[Heb. 6:13](#) For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

[Heb. 6:14](#) saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."

[Heb. 6:15](#) And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

[Heb. 6:16](#) For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

[Heb. 6:17](#) 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,

[Heb. 6:18](#) so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

- As we remember, Abraham was the man God granted a miraculous promise
  - God's promise, called the Abrahamic Covenant, assured Abraham he would receive great things, which the writer summarized in v.14
    - Specifically, He would receive descendants who would become a great nation
    - He himself would have a great name, and he would receive an inheritance that included a huge parcel of land
    - He would also bring a blessing to all the nations of the earth
  - And when Abraham heard these words, he believed God, and his faith made him righteous
    - By believing in God's promises, Abraham receive righteousness from God
    - We would say he was saved by his faith
  - But Abraham also had to have patience
    - His faith was tested at many times
    - First, Abraham had to wait 25 years to receive the promised son, Isaac
    - And then, he died even before he saw the nation he was promised come into being
    - And he died before he received the land God said was going to be his – he knew it would come in a future lifetime

- Moreover, Abraham still hasn't received the land he was promised
- Still, Abraham had to live patiently according to God's promises, diligently seeking to please the Lord so he could receive the full measure of the promise
  - The writer quotes in v.14, from Genesis 22, a well-known incident in Abraham's life
    - It's a moment when we see Abraham doing exactly what the writer is asking of his audience
    - God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac
    - And Abraham complied, believing that the Lord would resurrect Isaac, if necessary, to fulfill His promise
  - Following Abraham's obedience, the Lord swore an oath to give Abraham everything the Lord promised earlier
    - An oath is always the final step of assurance in any human dispute
    - If a man would swear an oath in ancient times, he was pledging his very life in the dispute
    - If his word is proven false, then his life would be taken
    - So an oath was considered the highest pledge possible
  - Now, we know God's Word by itself is enough to assure us of anything
    - As the writer reminds us in v.18, it's impossible for the Lord to lie in anything
    - So why did the Lord take the extra step of swearing an oath to Abraham concerning a promise he had already spoken?
- First, let's look in Genesis 22

**Gen. 22:16** and said, " By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,  
**Gen. 22:17** indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

- It was Abraham's obedience that led God to grant him this extra degree of assurance
  - Abraham was already declared righteous in Chapter 15, after he first believed God's Word
  - And it was that same faith that led Abraham to act in obedience to do something so incredible as sacrificing his son
  - So faith came first, but then came years of patience and obedience
  - And by that patience and obedience, Abraham received the full assurance of his hope in the promises of God
- Secondly, the writer tells us in v.17, that the Lord took this extra step of swearing an oath by His own Name not because His promises were in doubt
  - Rather, He did so to demonstrate a connection between Abraham's works and God's pleasure
    - Abraham completed his assignment, which was an unbelievably difficult request
    - And he did so because his faith in God's Word propelled him to live obediently
    - And as he obeyed, his faith was made evident and the Lord's Name was glorified
    - And when we live this way, the Lord blesses us all the more according to His mercy and grace
  - As James teaches us:

**James 2:21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

**James 2:22** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

**James 2:23** and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

- Abraham's faith was perfected in his willingness to obey the Lord in all things
- That's the purpose of our faith: To live a life of works done in faith, so that we can please the One Who has bought us

- Faith is perfected in the sense that it has fulfilled its purpose in God's economy
- Our faith is perfected in the way a field is perfected when it produces a good crop
- Finally, the Lord delivered Abraham an oath for the sake of his heirs, the writer says in v.17
  - The Lord wanted to make clear that when we serve and please the Lord, He is pleased and we are assured to receive a blessing
    - We have strong encouragement to take refuge in God's promises
    - If the Lord was willing to swear an oath to Abraham – an oath that wasn't even necessary – it's further evidence to us that the Lord is serious about our behavior and our rewards
    - He wants us to live according to our faith, with patience and self-sacrifice
    - And when we do these things, we are assured that our hope will not be empty
  - So we can learn from Abraham's example in remaining diligent to grow in maturity and to serve the Lord in patience
    - The writer tells us to take hold of the hope that is set before us
    - The writer imagines our hope of resurrection and reward in the Kingdom like a gift sitting on a table before us
    - God had placed this opportunity for reward before us
  - Even though we've been saved by our faith, nevertheless, we can move forward as Christians but leave our hope behind
    - We can leave behind our hope of resurrection, that is the hope of our eternal life
    - We can become so deceived by the flesh and the enemy that we never take hold of the hope of eternal life that our faith has given us
    - What a shame any time a Christian lives ignorant of the hope they already possess by their faith in Him

- And it's also possible for a Christian to leave behind their hope of eternal reward
  - We may forget that even though we were saved by our faith, our works still matter
    - We overlook that we're expected to invest time in the Word of God, so we can walk according to it
    - We neglect to show patience in the face of trial, temptation and the struggle of daily life
    - We forget it's important to persevere into holiness
    - We are expected to serve the Lord until the end of our lives
    - If we live as if the things we have now are all we'll ever have, then eventually, we will be like this one the writer speaks of
      - One who falls away
      - Gets away from the disciplines of the faith
      - And has an attitude that seeks only to please ourselves
  - Instead, we need take hold of that hope of reward and let it motivate us into pursuing a life of spiritual maturity
    - Live with eyes for eternity
    - Considering everything we do with an attitude of whether we're seeking to please the Lord or ourselves
    - Living with patience, so we can realize the full assurance of the hope until the end