

The Confident Fruitful Life

Hebrews 6:7-12

Introduction

In Hebrews 6 the author challenges the reader to go forward, grow up, mature. The Christian life is one of constant maturation. Some of the Hebrew Christians were tempted to return to Judaism. But real life is in Christ. The writer has made strong arguments about the superiority of Christ in every way to Judaism.

It makes perfect sense that the religious seeker would ask the question; “which religion is true?” In the ancient world with a host of gods and goddesses which ones demanded our attention, our love, our worship our devotion? The Jewish people knew that the false gods of the Greek and Roman world were not God’s at all. The revelation of God by Moses was far superior. The Apostle John said that the law came by Moses but grace and truth came by the Lord Jesus Christ. We sometimes think of religion like a worldview smorgasbord where we can pick and choose the one that suits us best. Not so says the writer of Hebrews. Even if you narrow the choice down between Judaism and Christianity—the writer urges us to choose Christ! If a person abandons Christ for Judaism they miss the whole point. The Law of Moses and the Priesthood and the Sacrifices all point to Jesus. To embrace that Law—or that Priesthood or those sacrifices and have no Messiah is be worse off!

The author will illustrate his point by referring to a piece of land. When the land is fruitful it is blessed (v. 7). When the land is barren or fruitless it is cursed (v.8). Pretty simple. But now the author points out his confidence that the warning need not apply to his readers (vv.9-12). What are the elements of a fruitful life? Love (v.10). Hope (v.11). Faith (v.12).

The Blessings Of A Fruitful Land (v.7)

Hebrews 6:7–12 (NKJV) 7For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;

The illustration speaks of the fruitful life. Just like the earth drinks in the rain and bears fruit, useful for those by whom it is cultivated. The farmer or vine-keeper cultivates the soil, plants the gardens and fields and all benefit from the crop produced.

The true believer drinks in the rain; bears fruit receives blessings. The Lord cultivates love and hope and faith in our lives.

Theologians speak of sovereign grace. Both the believer and the unbeliever are benefactors of God’s sovereign blessings. God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

For the Hebrew Christian was Judaism a gigantic waste of time? Of course not. Paul argues the whole world received the benefits of God’s revelation through Moses. The Jews gave us the Bible. The whole world is blessed by Abraham’s faith and Moses’ obedience.

Paul argues persuasively that we are all blessed because God adopted Israel, revealed His glory, gave His “covenants, the giving the law, the service of God and the promises” (Rom.9:4); and then powerfully “. . .of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”(Rom.9:5).

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Christ has come.

The Curse Of A Fruitless Land (v.8)

8but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

There is not much you can do with barren land.

The fruitless land is a parable for the fruitless life. The land is not completely barren—it does yield thorns and briers. Just like the life lived apart from Christ. But these are things that will wind up in the furnace. The barren life—that produces thorns and briers is **rejected!** Near to being cursed! What happens when a person is rejected?

The apostate is impervious to reason—reluctant to have their conscience reached. The apostate hears the word—it reaches the heart—the conscience—the affections—the apostate is enlightened, tastes, examines the heavenly gift, senses the sweetness and goodness of the Word of God, experiences some measure of blessings—but all to no effect! They put Christ in their mouth and spit Him out! Thorns and thistles! **Having rejected God they are rejected by Him.**

The true believer bears true fruit. The apostate and the make-believer are like barren land. The land is not completely barren—because the water produces thorns and briers. This is the fruit of sin! It receives but never produces anything ultimately useful. Wait—thorns and briers do have one use—they generate heat when burned! The make-believer and the apostate and the fruitless land share a common destiny. Burning. Newell: “Fearful state, fearful outlook” (p.195).

The Confident Assurance Of The Faith Filled Life (vv.9-12)

9But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

Who is the writer warning? The person making a false profession of faith? I don't think so. He is speaking to the person who has come to a true faith in Christ. But, beloved (used 60 times in the New Testament; *only used here in the book of Hebrews*); we are confident of better things concerning you! The Old KJV reads; “we are persuaded better things” (past hesitation now settled—) past misgivings doubts—now suggests a present confidence. The writer is saying—I had my doubts about you—but no longer!

The things that do **not accompany salvation are the things noted in verses 4-6.**

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What are the things that accompany salvation? Remarkable privileges—faith—filled experiences—personal professions—

The work and labor of love (v.10). The full assurance of hope (v.11). The diligent labor of faith (v.12). Sound familiar? Instead of faith, hope and love—the writer of Hebrews begins with love—continues in hope and concludes in faith. But make no mistake—these three things—remain.

What brings assurance of salvation? The work and labor of love (v.10). The full assurance of hope (v.11). The diligent exercise of faith (v.12). Love for the saints because we have experienced the love of Jesus. Hope in the present world and future world because of Jesus. The exercise of faith—because our faith is in Christ. We are saved by faith and kept by faith.

There are certain signs that accompany salvation: Faith hope and love. There are certain signs that accompany decay—thorns—briers—burning.

The Work And Labor Of Love (v.10)

10For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

The Lord will not forget their work and labor of love (see also 1Thes.1:3). The work and labor of love has been directed toward His name (Jesus?). The ministry has been directed to the saints and they continue in that ministry.

What is the evidence of salvation? The work and labor of love. Active love for the people of God and the household of faith. The evidence of salvation is love and service to the saints!

1 John 3:14: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.”

Loving the brethren is evidence of salvation. Serving the brethren is evidence of salvation. This is not simply fond feelings for God that result in fond feelings for Christ followers. Note the love for His name! 1 John 5:1; “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him”.

In Romans 12:10 Paul writes; “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

The Apostles preach that those who have been born of God must love what Jesus loves.

Augustine wrote; “Where there is love, there is a trinity: a lover, a beloved and a spring of love.”

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The Full Assurance Of Hope (v.11)

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

The writer encourages the Hebrew Christian to continue in that loving service to the saints in ministry right up to the end of their lives. The writer exhorts “each one of you”. To show the same diligence—or earnest desire—that true believers have both in love and labor. Were some less willing? Less loving? Unwilling to love or unwilling to serve?

Why does the author insist that each one exercise some effort—show some sign—of spiritual life? Growth. In order to increase assurance—expand certainty—demonstrate spiritual life. He wants them to obtain the full assurance of their hope!

Hope requires belief.

Someone said, “Expecting something for nothing is the most popular form of hope.” But that is not the Biblical definition of hope. Vaclav Havel said, “Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

What is the hope of the Christian?

What is the full assurance of hope? What is the final test of reality? The promises of Jesus are real. His instructions for life are real. Jesus has begun the work and Jesus will finish the work. The full assurance of hope is the fact that justification will lead to sanctification and will culminate in glorification. Jesus will return. We will be with Him forever.

Adoniram Judson used to say; “The future is as bright as the promises of God.” True that.

What does the full assurance of hope look like? M. Lloyd Jones wrote; “My only hope is that I shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.”

In order to come to Christ—the sinner must despair—the sinner must all lose all hope in self-righteousness—lose all confidence in self. Dostoevsky writes; “Hell is hopelessness. It is no accident that above the entrance to Dante’s hell is the inscription: “Leave behind all hope, you who enter here.”

Not so the Christian. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3) and “hope to the end” (1 Peter 1:13).

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The Diligent Exercise Of Faith (v.12)

12that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The charge includes yet another warning; “do not become sluggish” slothful or lazy. Sluggish was a word that meant to drag one’s feet!

But some were dragging their feet! Is it possible that an unsaved person could read this passage? I think so! Is it possible someone could read this passage—not have faith in Christ—not love the brethren—not rest in Christ—and show little evidence of any kind of faith?

What of the professing Christian? What of the so called Christian—who claims Christ—but shows no signs of spiritual life or activity? **The writer of Hebrews says—you are in danger! What of the unbeliever who ignores or neglects so great a salvation? What of the make-believer or carnal Christian or immature Christian content to live in spiritual infancy?**

What of the person willing to live their lives—but have no intention to exercise love, service, hope or faith?

We lose that spring in our step! At first our spirits soar! We are thrilled to be used by God for God’s people!

What are the dangers? We grow weary in well doing. Our love burns hot—and then grows cold. We serve—but not joyfully—and then routinely and then not at all.

The writer encourages the reader to press on—go forward—imitate those who went before you who through faith and patience inherit the promises (he will give a whole list in Hebrews 11).

The writer will give Abraham as an example (vv.13-20).

Let’s talk just for a moment about that faith and that patience that cause us to inherit the promises! Faith is believing what God says simply because it is God who says it. Faith is the assurance that the thing God has said in His Word is true. And that God will act according to what He has said in His Word.

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and receives the impossible. Faith is the gateway of communion with God. Love is the gateway of ministry to men.

The Lord promised Abraham a son. And then God asked Abraham to offer that son. Faith made it possible to offer that son. The Lord asked Daniel to be faithful to Him. To pray and obey God.

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The King made a decree that no one could petition any god or authority other than the King. Daniel was cast into a den of lions. By faith God stopped hungry lions from consuming Daniel. Stephen testified to his Jewish brothers that Jesus was Lord and by faith while being stoned Stephen saw Jesus in Heaven. Peter will remain steadfast and die a martyr's death.

What do all have in common? It took faith and patience and cost them. They did not drag their feet. Faith believes the Word of God for what it cannot see, and is rewarded by seeing what it believes.

No wonder Paul said (Gal.5:6) "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love". Faith makes things possible. Love makes all things easy.

Conclusion

We must repeat Dr. McGee's famous statement: "I believe in the assurance of the believer; and I believe in the non-assurance of the make believer."

A false faith may be greatly enlightened and knowledgeable in gospel truth (Heb. 6:4). A false faith can produce thorns and thistles. A false faith can live a good and decent life (outwardly). A false faith can say good things about Jesus (think rich young ruler—good teacher—what must I do to have eternal life).

For the Christian who relies on a security that does not include a holy life—that does not include love and service for the saints—that does not include a life lived in hope or faith—lives in either spiritual infancy or apostate delusion.

What is the best evidence that you are saved? Love and service to the saints. Hope in Christ. Faith in Christ.

Dwight Moody said, "A little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul."

Do you want assurance for your soul? Pursue love. Pursue hope. Pursue faith. Saving faith is the belief—based on the authority of the Word of God—of all that is revealed in the Bible concerning Christ. Accepting and resting upon Christ alone for justification and eternal life. It comes about by the power of the Holy Spirit—when the sinner confesses sin and is accompanied by all the things that accompany salvation—love for the brethren—service to them—a life of hope a life of faith!