The Falling Away of The Hebrews

This writing is an exposition of select passages from the book of Hebrews the misunderstanding of which has bred a number of false teachings, as well as becoming a stumbling block to many regarding their eternal security in Christ.

Let it be understood from the beginning that the security of a truly born again believer is never taught in scripture to be temporal. What, are we only secured until we sin? Really? Does any sin negate our security or is it some special sin? Is it a certain quantity of sins or does it have to do with the perverseness of the sin?

According to Hebrews 10:29, many Hebrew believers had “trodden under foot the Son of God” and counted the blood of Christ which made possible the new covenant an UNHOLY THING. Furthermore, they did “despite unto the Spirit of grace”. They literally despised the Holy Spirits efforts to show them unmerited and undeserved favor by lovingly and gently convicting them of their sin and wooing them back to repentance and forgiveness by the blood of Jesus Christ.

May I ask you a question? Does sin get any worse than that? And yet, I urge you to take note that God called them “his people” in Heb. 10:30. I will unashamedly and authoritatively state that there is ETERNAL security IN CHRIST. Do we understand that when we truly believe and receive Jesus Christ as our savior, he truly becomes our ETERNAL SAVIOUR?

I Cor. 12:12-13 says, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized (Holy Spirit baptism not water baptism which is a picture of Holy Spirit baptism) into one body,…”

Eph. 5:30 says, “For we are members of his BODY, of his FLESH, and of his BONES.” Based upon the authority of God’s own words, we are as eternally secure as Jesus Christ himself is, because as far as God the father is concerned, we are part of his own Son’s body. Do you not understand that our Father designed salvation to be ETERNAL? If man could lose his salvation, he certainly would and God knew that! We are hopelessly depraved apart from the mercy and grace of God.

While we are talking about our Father’s marvelous blueprint and design of our salvation, let us look at Eph.2:8-9 which says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it (the faith to be saved) is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Not only is our salvation a gift from a loving God that is not willing that ANY should perish, but he gives us the faith to be saved. When God said, “Not of works, lest any man should boast”, he was making it perfectly clear that there is absolutely NOTHING that man could offer God to make him worthy of salvation. Just as we can not work our way into salvation and into the body of Christ, we can not work our way out of salvation.

The price of our redemption was the blood of Jesus Christ which the Hebrew believers in 10:29 were counting as an “unholy thing”. The remaining faithful believers in Heb.10:35 were admonished not to cast away their confidence in the Lord Jesus as many of their brethren had. We find in Heb.3:6,3:14 and 10:6,10:14 that these wayward believers were encouraged by their God to hold fast their confidence and the rejoicing of their hope. After dealing with their besetting sin of unbelief for many verses in chapter 4, God points out to them that they have all the power they need to hold fast their profession of faith through the word of God, and besides this glorious truth, he reveals to them that they have their own personal high priest, Jesus the Son of God that is passed into the heavens. He goes on to tell them in Heb.10:19 that because they have their own personal high priest, they have access to him at any time through his blood. He assures them that he will sprinkle his blood on their evil heart and defiled conscience and wash away their sins, even the sins of Heb. 10:29, which he was well aware of when he wrote this passage.

Heb. 10:19-22 says, “Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; (Holy of Holies) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (The washing of the water of the word. Eph.5:26)

Is it not obvious that our Lord was doing everything he could possibly do to draw his faithless children back into fellowship and a right relationship with him and forestall his judgment and fiery indignation, “WHICH SHALL DEVOUR HIS ADVERSARIES”. Even though he calls them his adversaries, he calls them “his people” in Heb.10:30. How so?

The scripture teaches that when we choose to disregard the convicting and the wooing and drawing of the Holy Spirit, choosing to exalt our will over his will, we become enemies of God.

Rm.8:5-7 says, “For they that are after the flesh (following after the desires of the flesh) do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; (to that which is spiritual) but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity (The attitudes and hostile feelings of an enemy or adversary.)

The Hebrew believers in chapter 10 had chosen to reject the new covenant and the blood of Jesus Christ on which it was based and return to the requirements of the old covenant or the law. Here again, God sought to reach them in chapter nine in verses 5,10,12 and 14 with the truth that Jesus was the one final sacrifice for sin. God told them in Heb.10:4 that it was not even possible that the blood of goats should take away their sins, only the one final sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ could do that.

He told them in Heb.9:11-12, “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in ONCE into the holy place, having obtained ETERNAL REDEMPTION FOR US.”

Sad to say, these our brothers in Christ of long ago cast away their confidence in the redeeming and cleansing blood of the one final Lamb of God. He was the one final offering that could not only perfect them at the moment of salvation unto complete righteousness and true holiness, but perfect them unto righteousness and true holiness moment by moment. They had their own high priest that sprinkled his blood on their evil heart and defiled conscience every time they sinned, if we they were willing to yield to Holy Ghost conviction and confess their sins to their living and loving God.

Our Lord greatly manifested his love for his children turned adversaries, pouring his heart out with much admonition and exhortation, however the tone of his voice begins to change from that of a loving Father seeking his prodigals, to that of a stern judge having weighed the evidence and preparing to pass a sentence unto judgment.

Heb. 10:26-27 says, “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth NO MORE SACRIFICE for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

God had supplied ample truth and ample proof that Jesus Christ through his blood and one final sacrifice was their only hope of having their sins forgiven. He made it crystal clear that the blood of goats and calves which they were placing their faith in could never wash away sins or purge their conscience from guilt. There is an unquestionable amount of contextual evidence that God, in this stage of final appeal, is telling his children that if they continue in their sin, exerting their will over his will, “there remaineth NO MORE SACRIFICE for sins.” They had cast away their confidence and rejected God’s one and only final sacrifice for their sins. Because of their unbelief and the hardness of heart that resulted, all that was left for them was “a CERTAIN fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation”.

Heb. 12:6-9 says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore we have fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, AND LIVE?

God sets forth a sobering principle in this passage regarding how he handles the chastening or disciplining of his children. The first principle he set forth in verse 6 is that every son, who God loves dearly, at some time in their walk will not only be chastened but scourged.

Pro.22:15 says, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” This truth applies not only to our human relationship with our parents but with our relationship as sons with our heavenly Father. The presence and activities of our old nature guarantee the need for such correction.

Pro.13:24 says, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.(early)

Need more be said? God follows and implements his own biblical principles in our lives as we find him doing so in the lives of these Hebrew believers. Pay close attention to these words in verse 7, “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons;”. We need to focus on the fact that the Hebrew believers that did not endure the chastening of God relinquished their privilege of being dealt with as sons and forced their Father to deal with them as adversaries and enemies.

A vital and pivotal principle must be interjected at this point. This amazing principle soaked in our Father’s mercy, grace and love is found in I Cor. 11:31-32 which says, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we SHOULD NOT BE CONDEMNED with the world.” Glory! God in his infinite wisdom devised a means whereby no matter how far we stray from his will, we will never be condemned and receive the judgment of hellfire that this world will experience.

When the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, we have the privilege of agreeing with the Spirit and passing judgment on our disobedience and having the blood of Christ wash it away. In this passage of scripture, we find that we are gloriously afforded the privilege of choosing to judge our sin so that God does not have to. Like the Hebrew believers, their were many in the church at Corinth that sinned against the body and blood of Jesus Christ and were too hard hearted to take advantage of this privilege and principle of restoration. God says in I Cor.1:30, “ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

This brings to mind a parallel truth in Heb. 12:9 appropriate to this context and the context regarding God’s chastening in Hebrews 12:5-9. Again, it reads, “Furthermore we have fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we GAVE THEM REVERENCE: shall we not MUCH RATHER be in SUBJECTION (To our Father’s chastening)unto the Father of spirits, AND LIVE.” Many Corinthian believers and many Hebrew believers that were not willing to endure God’s chastening or give due reverence to their heavenly Father were no doubt chastened and scourged unto death due to God’s fiery indignation. Let us be instructed that this too is an act of God’s love in that this is a part of his plan and blueprint for his children’s lives that they might not be condemned and damned to the world’s eternal judgment.

With the spiritual understanding that we now have regarding the goodness and severity of God toward the Hebrew believers, and hopefully having a greater perception of these contextual truths, it seems it would be an appropriate time to take a look at Hebrews chapter 6.

Going on unto perfection IF God permit

Heb.6:1a says, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;”.

Heb.6:3 says, “And this will we do, If God permit.”

Although it is common knowledge that Heb.6:6 is the stickler in this passage, or I could say for many a stumbling block, It again seems necessary to briefly follow the mind of the Spirit by developing the context to some degree.

The word “Therefore” in 6:1 carries the weight and embodiment of truths found in Heb. 5:11-14. They are instructed to go on to perfection for the simple reason that so many were not doing so. The main thrust of these verses seems to be their relationship, so to say, or lack thereof with not only the God of the word but with the word of God itself.

This faltering relationship seems to have been alluded to back in Heb. 2:1-3 where they were exhorted with perhaps mild warning that they were neglecting their “so great salvation” by not giving the more earnest heed to the things which they had heard about Jesus Christ, their Creator, Redeemer and Savior. If we were to do a word study on each word of verse one, it would read as follows, ‘It is a binding necessity and imposed divine obligation for you to give super abundant attention and consideration to the word of God you have heard, being in danger of allowing them to flow carelessly by.

By the time we arrive in chapter 5, we find God addressing the consequences of their neglect of their so great salvation, and their care less attitude toward his word. He tells them in verse 11 that they had become dull of hearing or were in a state or stupor of spiritual apathy. This is further verified in verse 12 in these words, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”

He goes on to tell them in verse 13 that they are spiritual babies feeding on the milk of the word at best. Because of their careless and carnal approach to their Christian life, they were totally unskilled in the use of the word of righteousness, bearing no conformity to the image of Christ due to their unrighteousness. Being the Father of lovingkindness and gentle patience that he is, he seems to offer some hope in verse 14 in these words, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use (habitual practice) have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” He reveals that full age or full spiritual maturity can be achieved if they are willing to have the right relationship with him through a renewed and sustained relationship with his word. They must become highly skilled in the habitual practice of using the word all their waking hours. They must exercise their five senses with the habitual use of God’s word to learn to discern both good and evil thus producing righteousness and consistent spiritual growth unto full age.

God begins the next sentence and chapter 6 with the word “Therefore’. As aforementioned, this word carries the weight and implies the significance of following the mind of the Spirit in giving the more earnest heed to that which he has already said and relating it to that which he said in the previous verses. It simply means, for this reason, or in consequence to what has been said before.

It seems that God is saying in so many words, the consequence in your life of taking heed to the truth formerly revealed should be that you leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, the milk of the word, and go on to full age or spiritual maturity where you will feast on the strong meat of the word.

Again, Heb. 6:1 says, “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;”. God follows up this spiritual directive packed with great hope with these words in verse 3, “And this will we do, if God permit”. There are two ‘ifs’ that are contextual keys to Heb.6:1-6 and they are packed with meaning and perhaps enlightenment. It would seem that these two ‘ifs’ bind verse 3 and verse 6 together. Sandwiched between these two verses is all the evidence one needs to prove conclusively that these were true born again believers. It is true that they were very immature believers. They no doubt had considerable fears and doubts about their salvation and whether Jesus Christ could really save them. It is also true that they spent little to no time in God’s word and were not at all faithful in their church attendance which is why God warned them in Heb.10:25 about forsaking the assembling of themselves together with other believers.

It might be said with some credibility that these spiritual maladies describe a great number in our churches today!

Heb. 6:6 says, “If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

It is quite apparent that many had fallen away from the faith by falling away from their faith into unbelief. God made this clear in the latter part of chapter three and most of chapter four. They had literally fallen away from salvation by grace through faith, as well as sanctification by grace through faith. This can be substantiated in the words of Heb. 12:15a which says, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;”. The word “fail” carries the idea of falling short of which is still away from grace.

It needs to be remembered that when we sin and exalt our will over God’s will, God sees that as pride. This is important because scripture teaches that God only gives grace to the humble. It is also important to understand that obedience always follows true humility. We will leave these thoughts behind knowing we are in full agreement that they had certainly fallen away from God’s grace, as well as their faith.

So now the big question we have all been waiting for is, why was it impossible to renew them again to repentance? We all agree that repentance is absolutely necessary for spiritual renewal. Spiritual renewal involves more than simply confessing our sins when we are convicted by the Spirit. A work of the Holy Spirit takes place in our hearts whereby the Spirit convinces us that we have violated some truth from the word of God. When we confess or agree with the Spirit, our high priest sprinkles his blood on our evil heart and defiled conscience. At the moment we surrender our spirit in sorrowful contrition, God enables us by his grace to truly repent. At this point, we put off the old man and put on the new man. In Romans13:13 Paul calls it putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and making no provision for the flesh.

We have a big problem! God has already told us that these believers had done despite to the Spirit of grace. This means they wanted nothing to do with God’s Spirit or his grace. Furthermore they wanted nothing to do with the Son of God or his blood. This was all made clear in chapter 10. Does scripture not speak for itself as to why they could not be renewed to repentance? All that God provided for the grounds of being renewed to repentance was rejected and even mocked. It wasn’t that it was not God’s will to renew his children, but it was because they had no desire to be renewed on God’s terms.

Before we close, we must look at these words in verse 6, “…seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open (public) shame.”

It must be remembered that every sacrifice required by the law was a shadow of the one final sacrifice of the Lamb of God. They were a picture or figure of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. Every time these unrepentant believers offered a goat or bull, they were mocking the death, burial, and resurrection of the true Lamb of God. They were saying that the blood of bulls and goats was superior and more efficacious than the blood of Jesus. In God’s mind as evidenced in this verse, they were in a figure crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and publicly putting him to an open shame.

Heb. 6:8 goes into greater detail regarding the fiery indignation of God and his judgment on these believers. They truly bore no spiritual fruit but thorns and briers. They were rejected. The word here for rejected means worthless. It is also translated ‘castaway’. Even Paul feared the thought of ever becoming a castaway. He says also that they were “nigh unto cursing”. Nigh simply means near. They were as close to being eternally cursed as a saved man could be, yet not so.

Finally, a fitting end to our treatise is found in the words, “whose end is to be burned”. No, this is not talking about hellfire! God has already shown us in I Cor.11:32 “that we should not be condemned with the world”.

The believer’s “end” culminates at the Judgment Seat of Christ, not the Great White Throne Judgment. Speaking of the Judgment Seat of Christ, God says in I Cor. 3:13, “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” Verse 15 goes on to say, “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. It is of a certainty that our Hebrew brothers “shall be saved, yet SO AS BY FIRE.”

My closing thought is a query as to where you will fit into God’s judgments, and whether you will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment. If the Holy Spirit reveals to you that your destiny at this time is the latter, by all means listen to the Spirit as he urges you to believe on and receive the Lamb of God which taketh away your sins.