

13

WARNINGS AGAINST APOSTASY (PART 2)

Hebrews 6:4-12

Introduction: With Great Privilege Comes Great Responsibility

I. Quick Review of Definition of Apostasy

- A. What an Apostate is Not:
 - o An apostate is not just a non-Christian
 - o An apostate is not just a struggling Christian
- B. What an Apostate Is:
 - o Someone who seemed to be a believer, was part of Christ's visible church, participated in the community of faith, and then later rejects Christ, turns away from sound teaching, and leaves the church.
 - o Key point: Apostates are those who were once inside the church

II. A Somber Warning: Those Who Fall Away from Christ Face Judgment (6:4-8)

- A. Some Who Look Like True Believers Will Fall Away (v.4-5)
 - o Keys to understanding these difficult verses
 - Don't be surprised that the descriptions in v.4-6 sound like a believer—that's the whole point! They *seemed* to be believers but turned out not to be.
 - There is a way to be part of God's people only *externally*—you can enjoy many of the privileges and not be saved.
 - Keep in mind the same situation was true for Israelites in the Exodus. Many were part of God's people *externally* but never made it to the promised land.
 - o People can have many spiritual privileges but still fall away in unbelief:
 - "once enlightened" = received the knowledge of God's truth



- "tasted the heavenly gift" = experienced blessings of God's community (may refer to manna from heaven in Israel, or Lord's Supper in church)
 - "shared in the Holy Spirit"/"powers of age to come" = witnessed miraculous signs and wonders (Israel saw this in Exodus, early church saw miracles of apostles)
 - "tasted goodness of word of God" = sat under the teaching of the Word
- B. When they do fall away, it is "impossible" to restore them again (v.6-8)
- o Does this mean that apostates can never repent in the future and be saved?
 - This is very difficult. But the passage indicates that apostasy is such a severe renouncing of Christ that there's no salvation left.
 - Apostates are "crucifying once again the Son of God" because they treat him with the utter contempt and rejection he experienced as this crucifixion.
 - o This is why apostates are subject to more severe judgment
 - They have received enormous privileges and still rejected Jesus. They did not do it ignorantly, but knowingly and willingly.
 - V.8: if land soaks up rain its supposed to bear fruit. If it soaks up rain and bears only thorns and thistles, what is it good for?
- C. Implications
- o If true believers can't fall away, then why does the author give the warning at all?
 - Author doesn't know which are the true believers, so he gives warning to all
 - God uses warnings to motivate true believers to stay the course
 - o Spiritual privileges can't save you—don't trust in them!

III. A Hopeful Encouragement: Your Fruitfulness is a Sign of Salvation (v.9-11)

- A. Good Fruit So Far (v.9-10)
- o Our author is encouraged by what he already sees: "In your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation" (v.9-10)
 - o Three Critical Areas of Fruitfulness:
 - Labors in Ministry—"your work"
 - Affection for God—"love you have shown for his name"
 - Loving God's People—"serving the saints"
 - o Where are you seeing fruit in your life right now? This should either encourage you or challenge you



B. Press Ahead in the Future (v.11)

- o Be Serious about your faith: “show the same earnestness”
- o Be Hard working in your faith: “so that you may not be sluggish”
- o Be Patient In your faith: “be imitators of those who through faith and patience...inherit the promises.”



Discussion Groups

1. Have you known folks in your life who apostasized? What impact did that (or does that) have on you?

2. When you look at the fruit in your life, where are you encouraged that God is at work? Discouraged?

3. How does this passage help you see that perseverance and striving are necessary parts of the Christian life? What are some practical ways you can be “earnest” in the year to come?

