

# Hebrews 6:1-8

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Date: 07 July 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please join me in your copy of God's Word in Hebrews chapter 6. As we continue our verse-by-verse study of the book of Hebrews.

! Our text for today is Hebrews chapter 6 verses 1-8. Before I lead us in reading this, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good. And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

Hebrews chapter 6 verse 1 and following. Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity.

Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. And of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

[ 1 : 01 ] And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt.

For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. Preaching is always a serious task.

If preaching is approached properly, we are picking up weighty things. Eternal matters. This should not be a time of silly frivolity.

Texts like this make me especially feel the weight of the task before me, because its topic is especially weighty.

[ 2 : 26 ] The author of Hebrews is writing to a beleaguered church, a church that has suffered much, a church that was being tempted to forsake following Jesus Christ, in order to alleviate their suffering.

We chose to study the book of Hebrews in part, because we believe that it is going to become increasingly uncomfortable to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ in the age we live in.

There are and will be pressures on every side to forsake the following of Jesus for the sake of comfort.

For the Hebrew church, the temptation was to return to Judaism. They were accepted as Jewish worshipers of God by Rome.

But as Christ followers, as followers of the way, they were suffering much. For us, the temptation is and will be to become cultural Christians.

[ 3 : 39 ] Cultural Christians are, in fact, not Christians at all. They worship a God of their own making, not the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ.

They believe that they are generally good enough to gain heaven and need only to make a decision to add a little Jesus to their lives, to live their lives more fully.

Their religion is focused on them, how it benefits them, how it makes them feel. They have not encountered the risen Christ.

They know about Him, or at least some version of Him, but they do not know Him and are not known by Him. These people have been led to believe that they are Christians when they are not.

And this is a rampant problem of our day. This is quite possibly a problem in our midst. I fear that false conversions are the greatest issue of the church in our day.

[ 4 : 59 ] The need to rightly preach the gospel that people will not be deluded into thinking that they are in fact in Christ, that they are safe, that they will be carried through the storm is the most concerning matter.

Every generation has had to reassert the gospel, has had to recapture it, re-clarify it. And we are not different in our day. Listen to what Paul wrote to the Galatian church in chapter 1, verses 6-9.

If you're familiar with this letter, you know that the Galatian church was being tempted by what we've called the Judaizers to pick up, as Gentile believers, Jewish practices, laws, and keep those laws in order to have their acceptance.

To forsake the gospel that says we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and to add to that works. And he said this, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

[ 6 : 22 ] Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

It was a serious matter already in the first century church. This idea of distorting the gospel. He says as if there is another one.

Those were preaching that you can be justified in any other way but by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This was the gospel that Paul had preached and he says even if I come and preach to you a different gospel or even if an angel from heaven comes contradicting this gospel, let us and let him be accursed.

The gospel that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone is the narrow path that leads to life now and life forever.

[ 7 : 44 ] All other so-called gospels are the wide path that leads to destruction. And there is much of that in our day.

Preachers who will say just enough that sounds good and true but not press all the way, not present the gospel in its entirety and in great clarity.

So if you're in my hearing and claim to be a Christian, you're here this morning and you're saying, I am a follower of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself in one of three categories.

If you claim to be a Christian, you could claim not to be a Christian, that would be an entirely separate category altogether. If you claim to be a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself in one of three categories this morning.

Number one, a confident Christian. You will have a surety of your salvation. You will say, yes, I know that I am in Christ.

[ 8 : 48 ] I have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Secondly, you may find yourself as an unconfident Christian.

You may find yourself truly a follower of Jesus Christ, but not having the assurance that we would all hope you would have. That kind of confidence that we want you to enjoy, knowing that you have been saved by God and that you are kept by God.

And the third, possibly, that you're not a Christian at all. It is very possible to say that you're a Christ follower and to not be a Christ follower.

And the Bible is helpful to us in this. It's not silent on this topic. It has much to say about this topic. How do we know? How can we press on in knowing that we are, in fact, secure in Christ? That His righteousness is ours.

[ 9 : 57 ] That our punishment due our sin He took on the cross. How can we know this? Our text this morning is helpful to that end.

Our text this morning is a warning not to be found in this third category. To not be one who says they're a Christian and proves not to be.

Next week's text as we continue on in chapter 6 will be an encouragement to be found in the first category. To not have false assurances today, next week, is to have good and proper and true assurance.

How can we know? So today is primarily about the negative side of that. And our text this morning begins in verse 1 with the therefore.

So we must always consider when the therefore is there, why is it there? What is it there for? And so last week's text which started chapter 5 verse 11 and went through verse 14 Reese Winkler labored to preach for us and did a wonderful job explaining the text for us.

[ 11 : 13 ] We saw the only rebuke in the book of Hebrews that these Christians, this beleaguered church that this author is writing to, had become dull of hearing.

And then we saw in the text an exhortation toward maturity. So, you have become dull of hearing and he says this should not be so, so let us press on, right?

Let's grow up into Christ. So let me read verses 11 through 14 before we move on in our text today. Author of Hebrews wrote, we're getting verse 11, about this we have much to say and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food.

For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature. For those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

[ 12 : 30 ] So there's this exhortation found in this to not be children any longer, but to grow up into maturity. And it's with that in mind that he says, therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity.

Grow up. And here he refers to these elementary doctrines of Christ. Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

There are six doctrines here that the author of Hebrews calls the elementary doctrine of Christ. Now, most New Testament scholars agree, and there's a lot of disagreement about this particular text, but most New Testament scholars agree that this list of doctrines we find in verses 1 and 2 were an early form of catechism for Jewish converts to Christianity.

So people who professed faith in Jesus Christ were taken through a series of teaching. teaching. Let us help you understand this way that you're now claiming to follow.

And it may have taken the form of a catechism like we have today with a question and an answer, or it may have just been a structured teaching. But most agree, that's what here the author of Hebrews is referring to, kind of a packaged teaching for those who are new to the faith.

[ 14 : 16 ] And so we see first some reference to the law. Jewish converts would have been very familiar with the Old Testament law, the civil, ceremonial, and the moral law.

And so he references repentance from dead works. They would have had to learn, just as we have to learn to come to faith in Christ, that we can no longer work at self salvation, that this is an impossible thing to do, no amount of keeping of the law is going to help us find favor with Christ, because we can never do it perfectly, and this is what the law requires.

They did and we will fall short of the righteous requirement of God found in the moral law. We cannot do it. We may keep part of it, and even the parts we will keep imperfectly.

We will be mixed with messes of motivation. We cannot keep the law perfectly. And so, we must repent.

We must confess that we have failed to keep the law. They were taught to repent from dead works, to do that negative act of repentance, and then to do the positive act of placing their faith in God.

[ 15 : 46 ] The text says, of faith toward God. That God could save them. Sola fide, by faith alone.

By placing all of their trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So, we have in these first two doctrines a soteriology.

How is it that we are saved? Nixie references Jewish cleansing rites, which they may have still been practicing as a New Testament church, but certainly Jews in their day were practicing these rites of washings and the laying on of hands.

And so, most likely their instruction about washings was about baptism, New Testament, regenerate baptism into the fellowship of a church and in baptism of the Holy Spirit.

They would have come to understand what it means to be truly cleansed. Not to just bear an outward sign of it, but to be regenerate, to have the Spirit of Christ come into you and make you new, make you clean forever because you have His righteousness.

[ 17 : 05 ] And the laying on of hands likely would have been taught about the commissioning and empowering Christians for Christian service, like when Paul and Barnabas were prayed over and

sent on their missionary journey.

So the church is used in this way to send Christians by the power of the Spirit. And so we see in these next two, a pneumatology, right?

Some doctrines about the Spirit of Christ. And then he picks up lastly a couple of Old Testament concepts, like the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

And in Christ, these Old Testament teachings have their realized, their fully fleshed out meaning. So they would have come to understand the resurrection of Christ and what that means for us, our future resurrection in Him.

And they would have been instructed in eternal judgment, a final judgment that Jesus presides over as the judge. And so this catechism, this early Christian teaching, contained within it also an eschatology.

[18:18] So a simple and basic soteriology, pneumatology, doctrines of the Spirit, and eschatology, doctrines of the end times. So those are important things.

The author of Hebrews says, therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity. It would seem that he's saying they're not important anymore, but they are.

He's not saying let's forget these doctrines. We have outgrown these doctrines. We never outgrow our need of them. He is merely asserting that they should be settled in their understanding.

And they should be living in light of them. They should be building lives on the foundation of these doctrines of Christ. They should be going on in maturity, not having to be again reminded, brought back to the milk, the basics of Christian faith.

They should be building upon that and maturing in those realities. And this is what he means. This is the press. This is the drive of the text.

[19:34] And then he says in verse 3, and I like the interjection, and this we will do if God permits. We have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and we will finish by grace alone, through faith alone.

Having been saved by the Spirit, we are not now being perfected by the flesh. We pay a part in our growing up. These Christians are rebuked for being dull of hearing.

The positive of that is, so here, they have to participate in that process. We don't just obey when we feel like obeying, when we're compelled to obey.

We obey, because we know it's good and it's our part to play in our growing up and in our maturing, but all along, we praise God for the grace he gives us for obedience.

God saves us and God keeps us, and we'll see much more about this later as we continue to study. But at this point of verse three, and this we will do if God permits, I want to read a really brief excerpt of a poem written by John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress.

[20:56] This is not in Pilgrim's Progress, but he wrote, Run, John, run, the law commands, but gives us neither feet nor hands. Far better news the gospel brings.

It bids us fly and gives us wings. All that God commands of us, he provides the necessary means to fulfill.

those commands. Now, in verse four, we come to the most complicated and contested part of our text.

For it is impossible, the author of Hebrews says, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

The most complicated and most contested part of our text. Three views have commonly been held of this text. I'm going to give you brief summaries of the first two, why they're not the proper views, and then I'll present the third view and support it at length.

[22:21] The first view, erroneous view, is hypothetical. The author of Hebrews is presenting a hypothetical case.

This view says, it's referring to a situation that could not really happen. This view should be rejected because it is just unreasonable.

If the sin could not be committed, then the writer would have no reason to warn his audience to avoid it. What is the point? Why waste the precious parchment and ink warning against a sin that cannot be committed?

I would suggest to you that it's not a hypothetical at all. Secondly, erroneous view, the actual view. This view holds that God provides the grace for salvation, that perseverance though, the keeping to the end, is entirely up to the individual.

So God can save you, but he cannot or will not keep you, and you must keep yourself. This view sees individuals spoken of as actually in the faith.

[ 23 : 38 ] They are in fact Christians, but having the ability to lose their salvation. I don't know anybody in our day that likes to believe that. They would never say they do, although they may functionally.

This view says that these people may have had all the appearances, been found in the faith, but yet they can reject it, having been in it.

this view should be rejected because it is just flatly unbiblical, which I'll show you momentarily with a third view. The third view is the apparent view.

This view, the proper one, holds that anyone who falls away from the faith were not truly believers to begin with. They weren't actually in the faith to begin with.

They may have had the appearance of faith, but were not, in fact, Christians. I'm going to give you a few reasons why I believe this is the right view of this text.

[ 24 : 44 ] First, this idea, the ideas presented forth that these people had been enlightened, they had tasted, they had shared.

Remember our audience? These are Hellenistic Jews, people who are practicing Jews, familiar with their old Testament, would have been familiar with the story of their predecessors, their people.

The children of Israel had a privileged position as they encountered God in the wilderness. They had followed the instructions with the Lamb's blood on their doorposts.

They had been spared the Passover judgment. They had miraculously crossed through the Red Sea, had seen the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. They had tasted the miraculous waters of Marah, ate daily manna.

They had heard the voice of God's thunder out of the clouds at Sinai. They had all the same spiritual benefits, but not all of the children of Israel believed.

[ 25 : 50 ] These original hearers would have been very familiar with this as he employs language like enlightened and tasted and shared. That they were a people that had the spiritual benefit of God, but had yet not believed.

And he's warning against that in our text. This is the point that the author of Hebrews is making in chapter 3. You can recall our study there.

As he speaks of those unable to enter the promised land into the rest of God, and then he says in Hebrews 3 verse 19, so we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Because they weren't faithful to the God that had called them and had provided all of this spiritual benefit. Positive spiritual experiences do not make for salvation, but only a trusting in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

Throwing your whole self on him, that he fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, that he paid the debt of your sin.

[ 27 : 13 ] No amount of thelies when you're part of a church saves you. It's faith in Christ that saves you. So this is consistent.

His language is extremely consistent. We just have to get our 21st century minds to catch up to the text. Secondly, I think this apparent view is correct because of the parable of the sower.

Jesus gave us instruction about these types of people. It should grieve us, it should make us very sad, but Jesus wants us to understand what's happening when we see people who claim to be in the faith, who by all measurable means seem to be in the faith, and then forsake it altogether.

As he tells this parable, he tells the parable of the sower going out and sowing the seed. The gospel of Jesus Christ. And we see that different soils receive it and respond to it differently.

And there's a particular soil that speaks into this text. It's the rocky soil, that rocky ground. Jesus explains it in Matthew 13, 20-21.

[ 28 : 29 ] He says, For at what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

So, it's the person who says, this sounds great. Eternal life? I like it. What must I do?

Walk the aisle? I'm there. And that as soon as things get tough, as soon as the suffering of this world comes, and it will, as soon as discomfort because of a belief in this word, this gospel comes, they turn away.

This is exactly what was happening in this little fellowship. They had suffered for the sake of the gospel. And because these individuals didn't treasure Christ the way people who are in Christ treasure Christ, they rejected him.

The measure of faithfulness is fruitfulness. You're instructed again and again and again in the Scripture that good trees bear good fruit.

[ 29 : 57 ] Bad trees bear bad fruit. Beloved, we ought not tie our salvation to an event in our life. God saves people in and at events.

praise God, should tie our salvation to his active working in our lives. Proofs out who we are. I have been saved by the righteousness of Christ and his sacrificial death on my behalf.

And because of that, faith in that, I have the spirit of Christ who causes me to walk in his ways. this is something that can be observed.

It's fruit. It's tangible. It can be seen and smelled and tasted. The author of Hebrews does this very thing in verses 7 and 8.

He picks up this consistent Bible language. He says, For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

[ 31 : 05 ] But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. Agrarian people understood these metaphors so readily.

I hope your brain is catching what's being said here. Beloved, if we are not pressing on in holiness, and we don't do this with perfection, remember that second category?

That Christian who's just not sure? We have days. Where we act as if we are not sons and daughters of the Most High. We in every way reject His good rule.

But we ought to be able to see a general life, a general trajectory towards holiness, a hating of sin, and a loving of righteousness. This ought to be true of us.

And I will tell you this, you should not be left alone to figure this out. You will either think too much of yourself, or you will think too little of yourself. God has saved a people.

[ 32 : 10 ] He's given power to the church to do this work together. We would press one another in holiness. That we would call each other out in our sin.

That we would repent and turn to Christ and grow on in our faith. So the parable of the sower is the second reason I think that the author of Hebrews is talking about apparent Christians.

And then thirdly and most fully, the Bible doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Which says that those who are saved by Christ will persevere to the end.

Will remain in Christ to the end. That this is a sure thing. If he has saved us, he will keep us. The good old southern version of this is once saved, always saved.

In my younger years, wrestling with doubt, the doctrines of grace became a great rest for me.

There's nothing I could have done to save myself.

[ 33 : 18 ] I did not make a decision for Christ. I rejected him at every turn. I was a wretched rebel against God.

but God, because of his mercy, because of his great love for his people, saved me. As much as I may have tried to gain acceptance before him, I could not be accepted except to be clothed in Christ.

To fully believe in his righteousness and his sacrificial death for the salvation of my soul. This is a working of God.

Every time these things are taught in the scripture, it's taught as a comfort to us. It's not meant to be a thing we beat others up with. It's meant to be a comfort to us.

God has saved you. God will keep you. Richard Baxter once said, this is on your bulletin if you happen to have one this morning, in our first paradise in Eden, there was a way to go out, but no way to go in again.

[ 34 : 29 ] But as for the heavenly paradise, there is a way to go in, but not way to go out. Praise God. So I'm going to take you through just a few texts that speak to this, to make this point, that if we are saved by Christ, we are kept by Christ.

In Philippians chapter 1 verse 6, Paul declares with great confidence, I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

He started it, he is going to finish it. In Romans chapter 8 verse 38 through 39, Paul again says, for I am sure that neither death nor life, present lived life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, including your will, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Earlier in chapter 8, Paul wrote verse 29 through 30, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, to grow up, to be matured, to look more like Christ.

And those whom he justified, he also glorified. in the work of justification, there's a guarantee of glorification.

[ 36 : 00 ] Saves us and keeps us. Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 4, that we are saved to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and that it is kept in heaven for you.

Jude in Jude verse 24, has great confidence in God in his benediction where he writes, now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.

And he goes on to give him glory for that. Right? God is able to keep you and present you blameless. Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30, that the Spirit seals us for redemption.

He writes, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. John, in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 19, states of those people who have left the fellowship of the church, they went out from us, but they were not of us.

For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

[ 37 : 26 ] Jesus teaches in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 24, that it is impossible to lead the elect astray. He says, for false Christ and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

He states that it's impossible for this to happen. And in John chapter 6 verse 40, Jesus says, for this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

And in John chapter 10 verse 27 and 28, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

So what's being taught here, if you understand it by this apparent view, it squares firmly with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

And this is just a sampling of the text. There's so many more that speak to this. God saves us, and God keeps us.

[ 38 : 47 ] And so those that are being referred to in our text, those who have shared and tasted, weren't Christians to begin with.

But then we get to verse 4, this little phrase at the very beginning that says, for it is impossible, and then later in verse 6, to restore them again to repentance.

If they've experienced this and then have fallen away, it's impossible to restore them again to repentance since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt.

We must understand what that means. We must wrestle with that language. It is a difficult passage to wrestle with.

We've said before that this is the most complex Greek in the New Testament. It's a beautifully written book, but it contains some turns of phrases in it that are quite hard.

[ 39 : 52 ] We've got this wonderful resource that's the New Testament in the Greek text, sentence diagrammed. And this one, usually I'll print those things out and I'll tape them together and I'll put them out of my desk and I go, oh, aha.

This one turned my head around and around. So the simplest thing for us to do, and for the sake of time, is to place it in its larger biblical context.

Let's say, is it possible that we would commit a sin that cannot be forgiven? If you are much of a student of the Bible, you will know that there's a sin called the unpardonable sin.

There's much debate about what that is, but I would suggest to you that that's what they have done. They have committed the unpardonable, sin. And Jesus speaks about this in Matthew chapter 12. And in Matthew chapter 12, he's healed a man who's demon possessed and mute. And when that happens, the Pharisees, the Jewish people, who have experienced the benefit, the spiritual benefit, of being part of the community of God, they had the Word of God, they had all the signs and wonders, that they were being pointed to Christ.

[ 41 : 11 ] These men rejected the work of Jesus as coming from God and they attributed it instead to the Elizabeth. They attributed it instead to Satan.

They had been given every benefit and yet they didn't believe. Jesus says, verse 31 and 32 of Matthew 12, therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Jesus is not talking here about taking the Holy Spirit's name in vain. This is not what he's saying. What he's saying is, those who see the work of the Spirit of Christ, this part of the triune God working to bring benefit to you, to lead you spiritually to faith in Christ, who reject Him absolutely to the end, they cannot be saved.

They cannot be. How can one who refuses to place faith in Christ be saved? And there's a little bit of a clue to this in our text.

[ 42 : 37 ] The author of Hebrews says, since, why is it impossible to restore them again? Since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt.

What these people are doing who appear to have been in the faith and have now left the faith, is they're saying that this Jesus who was crucified, laid to death, raised three days later, was not in fact the Christ.

He was just a man. They have lost their faith in Jesus being the Jesus He said He is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They're participating in His crucifixion by simply saying, He's just a man. They held Him up to contempt. Their derision, their accusation, they're saying He was justly condemned for claiming He was the Son of God, for claiming to be the Christ.

They became participators in that and putting Him to death, not believing that He was faultless, that His death on the cross was entirely unjust because He had kept God's law with perfection.

[ 44 : 02 ] That He bore all of the wrath due our sin in Himself. They're rejecting that and they're rejecting it with finality.

They've altogether said the person and work of Jesus means nothing to me. So those who appeared to be, who received the benefit of Christian fellowship, showed themselves not to be, because they don't have the salvation of their souls by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And this is the great warning of this text. It's the warning for us this morning. You may have all the spiritual benefit of growing up in a Christian home, being drug to church each and every Sunday, being forced to sit in fellowship with your parents, being taught the gospel in your home, going on mission trips every summer.

You may have all of that and not be found in Christ. And so the encouragement for you is to self-examination and to church examination.

to bring others around you that will help you consider the fruitfulness of your life. Because it's that fruitfulness that proves out the faithfulness.

[ 45 : 28 ] Not that we're saved by works, but works evidence. Right? Our unshakable faith in the works of Christ. So again, if you're in my hearing this morning and you claim to be a Christian, you're going to be in one of three categories.

A confident Christian, an unconfident Christian, possibly not a Christian at all. And I would just plead with you to really consider the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If it's not abundantly clear to you that you're in the faith, talk to someone about this. Come and find me. If I'm not available to talk to you, there are so many people in this fellowship that would gladly share the good news of Jesus with you, that you would repent and believe in Him.

If you're an unconfident Christian, the kind of wonderful thing is that it's still a call to repentance and faith. Turn from your sin. Those sins that you have carried into this room with you that feel like an

unbearable baggage, confess them to God and turn to Christ.

Run to the cross. If you've been there before, go back again. You may find it's the first time you've ever been to the cross and the burden of your sin is loosed from your back.

[ 46 : 57 ] I would hope that each of us would find ourselves in that first category, having a full assurance of our faith and persevering to the very end.

In closing, I'm going to read to you from 2 Peter chapter 2 where the Apostle Peter writes in verse 20 and 21, For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them to have never known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. May we not be those people.

Let's pray together.