

Making sense of Hebrews 6 and 10 (part three of a five part series)

In our previous segment, we considered the author's issuance of a warning by means of Hebrews 6:4-6, in order to address a distinct possibility: the existence of individuals within the group to which he wrote, who in spite of their exposure to the gospel, had failed to experience a true conversion to Christ, and now were showing their true colors in "falling away" from the faith. In vv7-8, he holds forth the opportunity for their redemption as viable; in that while the door to salvation was "close" to being permanently shut, it still remained open, through his use of metaphorical language to indicate just that:

"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; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned."

However, we cannot overlook the critical shift which takes place in v9; providing us with the key to understanding the primary purpose of the entire epistle. The author uses the word "but" in order to transition away from a severe warning, for the purpose of presenting a scenario of hope. This reveals his genuine optimism regarding this group of fellow Hebrews, as true followers of their Savior:

"But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and the things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way."

Is the "better thing" of which the author is convinced, a reference to his wish for their eventual conversion? Hardly! That would require reading something into the text that isn't there. Instead, the "better thing" involves something that would **ACCOMPANY** their salvation! In other words, the author here voices his hope for them in regard to a meaningful and fruitful Christian life; in becoming the useful "vegetation" of v7, rather than the worthless kind of v8. But if his desire for them is to be realized, their current regression would have to come to a screeching halt. The backsliding would have to stop, in order for a restoration to take place.

If it happened with the Prodigal Son, it most certainly could occur with them. The prodigal's backsliding took him to a place where his life "hit bottom." Yet, he came to his senses, repented of his sin, returned to his father, and was restored to a place of favor; which fortunately for him, did not require the blessing of his brother (Luke 15:11-32). This is why we can view the author of Hebrews as being the "better brother" whom these struggling believers needed, in order to bring about their repentance and restoration. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the author, from this point onward in chapter six, uses the word "hope" three times (vv11, 18, 19); in order to provide a much needed spiritual anchor for their souls.