

WARNING THREE (PART III): PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FALLING AWAY HEBREWS 06:09–20

Introduction

The writer has just given the Hebrew believers the most severe warning that could be given to a people. They must fear lest they fall away — fall so far away that they would never again repent. What is the answer? How can believers keep from falling away? This is the discussion of this passage: *the precautions against falling away*.

- I. Precaution 1: the love and confidence of people (v. 9).
- II. Precaution 2: God’s justice (v. 10).
- III. Precaution 3: being diligent and not being lazy (vv. 11-12).
- IV. Precaution 4: imitating the believers of faith and perseverance (vv. 12-15).
- V. Precaution 5: God’s promise and oath (vv. 16-18).
- VI. Precaution 6: the anchor of hope (vv. 18-20).

I. *Hebrews 06:09 Encouragement of the People*

Precaution one: The love and confidence people have in us. There was danger that the Hebrew Christians would slip back into sin. There was danger that they would return to the world and begin to live like the world. There was the danger that they would again ignore, neglect and deny Christ. But the minister of God believed differently: he loved them, and because he loved them, he had great confidence in them. Note three things.

1. The minister calls them *dear friends*. They were dear and ever so close to his heart. Although it is not mentioned, he was bound to be praying for them not just daily, but all through the day. He loved them so much that they never left his mind or thoughts.
2. The minister expressed great confidence in them: “we are confident of better things in your case.” He does not expect them to fall back into sin; he does not expect them to forsake Christ and return to the world. He has confidence in them; he expects them to stand fast in Christ and to hold on to their faith in Him.
3. The minister expects them to do the works, the things that accompany salvation. This is striking. Not only will the believers not fall away, but they will do the things that accompany salvation — so says the minister. What a great confidence the minister has in them!

How could the believers return to the world? How could they return to live in sin when they are loved so much and have someone who believes in and has so much confidence in them?

The point is this: if a believer turn away from Christ, he will hurt those who care for him and cut them to the core. But if he stands fast, he will prove that he loves and appreciates them. He will prove that he is well worth their love and confidence.

Thought 1. We must always remember two significant things: when we fall away, we not only hurt ourselves, but we hurt and cut the heart of both Christ and all those who love us — we hurt and cut them to the core.

How can we keep from falling and hurting Christ and those who love and have confidence in us? By taking certain precautions, and the first precaution is this: look at the people who do love and have confidence in us. Look at them and...

- think about how sin and shame will hurt them and cut their hearts.
- think about how it will break their trust in us.
- think about the damage and destruction.
- think about how much better it is to please their love and fulfil their confidence in us.
- think about how much better it is to do the works of salvation than to do the works of sin.

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

Gal 5:7-10 *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.*

2 Cor 7:16 *I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.*

2 Th 3:4-5 *We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

Phile 1:21 *Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.*

II. Hebrews 06:10 Judgment and Justice of God

Precaution two: The justice of God. Note a most interesting thing: the Hebrew Christians were weak and immature in the Lord. They were not growing in the Lord, and some were so close to falling away that they had to be severely warned (cp. Heb. 5:11-6:3; 6:4-8). But they had not forgotten the poor, sick, bedridden, homebound — those who needed attention and help. They had grown cold toward the Lord and His Word; they had become dull of hearing, and were no longer listening to the preaching and teaching of God's Word. But they were keeping in touch with the people who needed help. They were cold spiritually, but warm in social ministry and service. They had lost interest in Christ and His Word, but were active in helping other people.

The point is this: God Himself is vitally interested in the needy. Note the words: "your work and the love you have shown Him." God loves and cares for the poor and needy as much as

He does for anyone. Therefore, when a person ministers to the poor and needy, God sees it and He will not forget it. God cares about how we treat people, and He notices our love that reaches out to the poor and needy. Therefore, we need to remember the justice of God:

=> that God is not unrighteous or unjust.

=> that God does not forget; He sees all.

=> that works and labour of love to people are acts of love shown toward God.

God is just; He will not forget our love for Him or for people. He is going to judge us; therefore, we should love Him, His Word and His people.

Thought 1. William Barclay has a very practical comment here that will challenge the hearts of those who might be cooling off toward Christ and His Word.

“There is a great practical truth here. Sometimes in the Christian life we come to times which are arid. Sometimes the Church services have nothing to say to us. Sometimes the teaching that we do in Sunday School, or the singing that we do in the choir, or the service we give on a board or court or committee becomes a labour without joy. At such a time there are two things we can do. We can give up our attendance and our work. If we do that we are lost. We can go on grimly with it, and the strange thing is that if we do, the light and the romance and the joy will certainly come back again. In the arid times, the best thing to do is to go on with the habits and the routine of the Christian life and the life of the Church. If we do, we can be sure that the sun will shine again “ (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 61).

Thought 2. The justice and judgment of God, the fact that He sees all and does not forget, should stir us to never fall away. The justice and judgment of God are a precaution against returning to the world and denying Christ.

Mat 16:27 *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”*

2 Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

1 Pet 1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

Psa 58:11 *Then men will say, “Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth.”*

Psa 62:12 *And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.*

Psa 96:13 *They will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.*

Eccl 3:17 I thought in my heart, “God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.”

III. *Hebrews 06:11–12 Diligence*

Precaution three: Being diligent and not being slothful, lazy. Note two things.

1. Everyone must be diligent — every believer. And every believer must be diligent to the very end. Note the word *end*. There is to be an end to our hope; our hope for salvation will be fulfilled. The glorious day of redemption is coming. The way to keep from falling is to take precaution: we must be diligent in our hope for salvation and in ministering to people. In the meantime be diligent to the very end.

Note that assurance comes from diligence. If we are diligent in living for Christ, our hearts are filled with assurance. If we are not diligent, then we cannot be assured that all things will be well. Living an up and down life — sometimes living for Christ and other times not living for Christ, sometimes living in sin and sometimes living in righteousness — causes doubt, questioning and wondering about salvation. And it should. We should fear lest we fall away from Christ and His Word. But remember: the precaution against falling away is diligence — diligently hoping in Christ to the end.

2. This precaution is straightforward: do not be lazy. Do not become sluggish. Some had already become dull, sleepy and slothful in seeking to grow and mature in Christ. They needed to arouse themselves, and the faithful needed to guard themselves lest they begin to cool off and slip away from Christ (cp. Heb 5:11-6:3).

Thought 1. Sluggishness is always a danger for believers. The answer is diligence — staying alert and diligent. We can tell whether we are diligent or slothful by asking ourselves a few questions.

- => Do we diligently listen to the Word preached and taught or are we sluggish, allowing our minds and thoughts to wander about?
- => Do we diligently read and study God’s Word in our daily worship and devotional time or are we complacent and slothful in worshipping God on a daily basis?
- => Do we diligently pray every day — really pray — or are we complacent and neglectful in prayer?
- => Do we diligently share Christ or are we sluggish in sharing Him?
- => Are we diligent in our weekly worship of God in His church or are we sluggish and complacent in our weekly worship?

Heb 6:12 *We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

Rom 12:11 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Pet 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

2 Pet 1:10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.

2 Pet 3:14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

IV. Hebrews 06:12–15 Testimony and Example

Precaution four: Following the believers of faith and perseverance. Note that some believers have already gone on to heaven and have inherited the promises of God. They are already face to face with God and Christ. They are not dead; they are alive, more alive than when they were on earth. They are perfected, grasping and understanding what life and God and the world are all about. They now live perfectly even as God lives, and they no longer suffer pain, trials or temptations. They have inherited the glorious world of heaven and they live and dwell in the presence of God and Christ forever. But note why:

=> because of their *faith and patience in Christ and His promises*. Although they left this earth long ago, they are still living — living eternally. They are living because they had faith in Christ and in His promise of eternal life, and they patiently persevered and endured in their faith.

Now note a prime example — Abraham. God had promised Abraham a seed, a child through whom a nation of people would be born, and God had promised a land in which his people could live. (Cp. Gen. 12:1-5; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8; 22:15-18.) All Abraham had to do was believe God. If Abraham believed God, he would follow God, persevering and hoping to the end, enduring and waiting for God to fulfil His promise. This Abraham did: he patiently endured; therefore, he received the promise of God. What were the promises and what is their meaning to believers today? (See *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22; see Jn.8:54-59; *Jews, the Seed of Abraham*, Rom. 4:1-25; Rom 4:13.)

=> The seed promised by God was Isaac and the Jewish people, but there was a double meaning to God's promise. The promised seed was also a reference to Christ and the nation of believers who were to be born through Him. Abraham is the father of believers (Rom. 4:11-12, 17).

=> The land promised by God was Palestine, but the spiritual application is the promised land of heaven.

The point is this: Abraham believed the promises of God; therefore, he has inherited the promise. He has seen a nation of people born as the seed of his faith, a nation of people who believe and follow God just as he did. And he has inherited the promised land of heaven. He is face to face with God.

But remember why Abraham received the promises of God. Because he waited patiently. He stands as a prime example of a believer. Therefore, we are to follow him and all other believers who trusted God and endured to the end. This is the fourth precaution to keep us from falling away from Christ: following the dynamic example of those who have gone on before us — those who believed God and persevered in their belief and have consequently received the promise of God.

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

Heb 6:12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Heb 12:2-3 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

James 5:10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

1 Pet 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

V. Hebrews 06:16–18 God's Promise and Assurance

Precaution five: God's promise and oath. This is a glorious truth. When men are involved in strife and they want to make peace and guarantee the peace, they do it by doing two things. They keep the peace and then they swear or take an oath that they will fulfil their promise. And note: they always swear by someone or something greater than themselves. When they make such an oath, it settles the dispute. They do what they say.

This is exactly what God has done. God has promised us the hope of salvation, the promised land of heaven. And He has done more. God took an oath that He would do exactly what He said; He would fulfil His promise to Abraham.

- => He would send “the seed,” the Saviour of the world, through Abraham’s lineage and cause a nation of believers to be born of Abraham.
- => He would give the promised land of heaven to all those who believed in the promise of God as Abraham believed.

The point is this: God has both promised and sworn that He will save and give the promised land of eternal life to believers. *God promised and God has sworn* — two immutable and unchangeable things. God does not lie, and it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, what God has promised He will do...

- because He has spoken His Word; He has given the promise of eternal life.
- because He has given double assurance; He has sworn and taken an oath. He will give us eternal life if we believe and endure to the end.

1 Cor 1:9 *God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

1 Th 5:24 *The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

Phil 1:6 *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

1 Pet 1:5 *Who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

1 Pet 4:19 *So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

Jude 1:24-25 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.*

Deu 7:9 *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.*

Mal 3:6 *“I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”*

1 Kng 8:56 “Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”

VI. Hebrews 06:18–20 The Anchor of Hope

Precaution six: The refuge and anchor of hope. Man cannot live without hope. When he ceases to hope, despair about tomorrow seeps in. If he has no hope, he sees no reason for living. Hope is absolutely essential for man to live, work and have a meaningful existence. How much more true this is of eternity. If a person has hope of living forever, he does not fear or dread to face the end of this life. He knows that he is simply being transferred from this place to another place, from earth to heaven. But if a person does not have hope of living forever, he fears and dreads death. He does not know about the future after this life. Hope is one of the greatest things in all the world. With hope we have everything; without hope we have nothing — nothing but the bleakest and most dismal and dark future imaginable.

This is the reason God has not only promised us the promised land of heaven, but He has sworn that He would fulfil His promise. He simply wants us to be “*greatly encouraged*,” that is, to be strongly and mightily encouraged. He wants us to know beyond any question that eternal salvation and life — the glorious promised land — the very promise made to Abraham and his seed — is ours. This is the glorious hope of the believer, the person who genuinely believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Note three things about the hope God has given us.

1. Our hope in God is an encouragement, or a refuge for the believer. The words “encouragement” or “refuge” (*kataphuge*) mean shelter and protection from danger, distress or some enemy. It is the picture of a ship caught in the most violent storm-tossed sea and desperately seeking the refuge of a haven or harbour. Believers are persons who have fled...
 - from the violent storms of this world.
 - from the distress of sin and shame in this world.
 - from the dangerous enemy of this world (Satan).

Believers are persons who have fled to God for the encouragement of His hope or refuge — His hope of the promised land of heaven. It is the promised land of God that gives us safety from all the storms, dangers and enemies of this world. No other property and no other land — no matter how valuable on this earth — is permanent. It all ends; it all caves in to the storms and distress of economic slumps, personal accidents, disease and eventually death. All land is eventually turned over to someone else. Therefore, to take refuge in any promised land or any other promised wealth other than the promised land of God is a very foolish act. The only true refuge is the hope of God, the eternal land of heaven promised by Him. God’s hope — hoping in God and His promise of salvation and eternal life — is a refuge for the believer, the only true and lasting refuge.

2. Our hope in God is an anchor for the believer's soul. The word "anchor" (*agkuran*) refers to the anchor used by ships to hold the ship in a certain place. The anchor keeps it from floating aimlessly about and being damaged or sunk by floating upon the rocks of forbidden shores. God's promise of an eternal land is what anchors the believer's soul and...
- keeps it from floating aimlessly about.
 - keeps it from floating upon the rocks of forbidden shores.

Note: the anchor of hope is both sure and steadfast. It cannot slip and it cannot break; it will hold the believer no matter what storms or violence are launched against it.

3. Our hope in God enters the veil, the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. What veil or curtain? The great veil or curtain that separated God from man. This refers to the great curtain within the Jewish temple that separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple. The very presence of God dwelt within the Most Holy Place and no man was allowed to enter it. Only the High Priest had that privilege, and he had it only once a year when he offered sacrifice for the sins of the people. But note two glorious facts.
- a. Jesus Christ is the great forerunner into the Most Holy Place, that is, into the very presence of God. When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, the great curtain of the Holy Place was torn from top to bottom. This actually happened, and it was a symbol of what was taking place in heaven. The death of Jesus Christ tore away the veil or curtain that separated men from God. He opened the way for man to enter the very presence of God Himself and to live there forever and ever. Jesus Christ was the great forerunner for man, the Person who ran ahead and opened up the way to God for man. The presence of God is no longer hidden or shut off from man. We can now enter God's presence and remain there forever because of Jesus, the great forerunner.
- b. Jesus Christ is the great High Priest who has entered God's presence for us. He is the great High Priest who intercedes before God for us. He is our great High Priest — our great Mediator and Intercessor — who stands before God and presents us to God. And He is the eternal High Priest, which means that we are acceptable to God forever and ever.

The point is this: our hope in the promised land of heaven is that which actually carries us into heaven. If we hope in Jesus Christ the great forerunner and great High Priest, then we shall follow Him into the very veil of God's presence. Hope in Christ and the glorious promises of eternal life carries us into God's presence. This hope is a precaution against our falling away — a precaution that we should keep our eyes open. Nothing will stir us to be faithful to Christ anymore than keeping our eyes upon the great hope He has given us in Christ Jesus, the great forerunner into God's presence.

Rom 8:24 *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?*

Rom 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Acts 24:15 *And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

Rom 4:18 *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”*

Col 1:5 *The faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel.*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

1 Pet 1:3 *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 Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Heb 6:18-19 *God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain.*

1 John 3:3 *Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. ■*