

The Pendulum Swings

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[0 : 00] At the outset of our study of the book of Hebrews and periodically during the various lessons, I have used the example of the swinging pendulum on a grandfather clock.

I've got one of those. When the pendulum is over on one side, the author is talking about true blood-bought followers of Christ, Christian people, redeemed people. But often in Hebrews, the pendulum swings to the other side, and then the author is referring to unbelieving church members who have made no commitment to follow Jesus. They're intrigued by him. They're interested in him. They've left the synagogue so they can't just go back. They're kind of polluted now. But that's talking about unbelieving people who are people who are attending church. They're listening. They're gaining some data, some information. There's actually a third group, and I don't hit this one too hard. But there are some people in there, in that church, that are C&E members. You know what I mean by that? Christmas and Easter.

Christmas and Easter. They show up Christmas and Easter. They get their ticket punched. And then you don't see them again. And every now and then there's a verse that may be referring to them. It's kind of hard to tell.

But the two main ones are the believers and unbelievers. To properly interpret a passage in the book of Hebrews, one needs to carefully note the position of the pendulum.

That's really essential. And in that way, you know to whom a particular passage is directed. Now this is maybe a little vague so far in our study. There's been some pendulum swings. But we're going to see a major one tonight that's going to be very clear.

[2 : 45] Now lately, we have been reviewing the passages in Hebrews chapter 6. And as I told you last time, this portion of Scripture may be the most misunderstood in the entire Bible.

Many, and I would say a majority of people in various churches and various denominations, believe these verses offer conclusive proof that a true follower of Christ, someone whom God has drawn to Himself whose name was written in the Lamb's book of Christ, and we could use all kinds of descriptions of that, a true blood-bought member of the church of Jesus Christ, they believe these passages prove that that person can lose his or her salvation.

We're not talking about people. We're not talking about people that are just hangers-on and, yeah, I'm kind of intrigued by this, or I prayed a prayer when I was seven years old because my mom made me. We're not talking about those.

Now we know from the totality of Scripture that's an impossibility. It can't happen. But we still have to deal with the confusion many have adopted for these words.

And we studied those very passages last time. I want to read to you again because it's important. I'm going to start in Hebrews chapter 6 in verse 1 and go through verse 6.

[4 : 49] Listen to these words. Very important. It is impossible. That's a pretty strong word, isn't it?

It is impossible to renew them again to repentance since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

And this we will do if God permits. For in the case of those who have been once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away, it is 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.

One thing I note when I read these words here, when we take the totality of the New Testament, particularly the writings of Paul, 13 books, Peter, and John.

[6:56] Peter 2 books, John 5. Those are not salvation terms. Tasted never shows up in describing regeneration.

Tasted is in the New Testament five times. Two in Hebrews. We just read. And then it shows up in a couple other books.

None in Romans, particularly Romans 8, which defines salvation for us. Nothing in John 6 where Jesus is talking about salvation and John 10 where Jesus is also talking about salvation.

It doesn't show up there. It just doesn't show up. And so this evening, we come to a passage that unfortunately, a lot of people just pass over.

They don't want to have to deal with it. And it's unfortunate because these words of inspiration, in my view, settle the issue of just who's being addressed in the opening words of Hebrews 6.

[8:17] chapter 6. And we have to be attentive because I believe the pendulum that has been on the side of unbelievers is about to shift back to believers.

unbelievers. So we've been studying unbelievers for a couple weeks, way back into chapter 5. and the opening words of chapter 6.

And now we're going to press on. And let me say to you, my view has some strong individual proponents, but it's not the majority view in the Christian church today.

A lot of denominations would not sit still for what I've been teaching in here. They wouldn't. But let's make note here of the pendulum swinging with this verse, Hebrews 6.9.

The writer says, But beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you and things that accompany salvation.

[9:33] though we are speaking in this way. That's dynamite. Just exploded. The writer goes and he says, I'm now going to talk to you guys that are really saved.

Because there's things that happen when you're saved that accompany salvation. And the writer goes on, For God is not unjust, so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, and having ministered and still ministering to the saints.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The pendulum swung again. We had two pendulum swings there. It swung to believers, and then it swings back to unbelievers when He leads off and says, And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence as these believers that have things that accompany salvation.

So we have two pendulum swings in that section. Now the Spirit of God from our initial study here in Hebrews has been giving warnings and appeals to unbelievers in this Hebrew church.

[11:12] He's telling them, Hey, don't fall away. Hang with us. You're being exposed to all these great teachings. You're being told about Jesus. You're being told about salvation.

Don't fall away. And it's really risky for people that have heard the good news, understood the gospel, and then to fall away.

Because there's a word for that person thinking Jude uses it and some others. That's apostasy.

People that have heard the truth flirted with accepting the truth, believe it in certain forms, but then fall away and basically say, Well, I think I'm going to look over here for something more.

I think I can go to God an easier way, a better way than that bloody religion of Christ. Christ. And he said, That's what's scary.

That's apostasy. There are apostates that do that. There's no other way, guys, but Christ. We know that. And you know, that makes sense to all of us, doesn't it?

[12:29] But it doesn't make sense to the world. I've had guys tell me, Look, I believe in God. I just don't believe in Jesus. I said, Let me assure you, you don't believe in God. He who has the Son has the Father.

He who has the Father has the Son. If you don't have one or the other, you don't have either one. But they're begging these guys, Don't fall away.

Don't become apostates. And then, he opens up with this beautiful passage about believers.

Things that accompany salvation. It's a marvelous passage of Scripture. And then we see that immediate shift away.

The Spirit tells the unbelievers to observe the believers in the congregation that's all around them.

[13:40] The Spirit of God, probably through the minister, is telling them, observe your fellow Jews, now Christians, in our congregation.

What do they do that's different from unbelievers? believers? What does any believer do that's different from people out there driving up and down the highway unconcerned about what's going on in here?

Well, one thing, they show diligence. There is a realization of the full assurance of hope. They are not sluggish.

They've become imitators of Christ. and they are set up to inherit the promises. But I'll tell you, before we get to any of that in verse 9, it starts out this way.

But beloved, nowhere in Scripture are unbelievers ever referred to with the beautiful word beloved.

[15:04] It's not in there. Old or New Testament. That is a word reserved exclusively for true believers.

We are the beloved of God. He is speaking to the believers in this particular congregation, wherever it was. It may have been in Greece.

We're not sure. The archaeologist Spade has not turned any samples of this church as yet. He knows that many in his congregation are believers because once God saved them, certain things accompanied their salvation.

well, that's pretty bold. I mean, does that happen to every true believer? And you know my answer to that is, yes. Yes, it does.

Now, we can be sure that true believers do produce fruit, but they also produce a lot of plastic fruit.

[16:25] Plastic fruit is part of the wood, hay, and stubble that's going to be burned up someday.

What a good friend of mine who's a minister of the gospel and now with the Lord, he referred to that as the great bonfire in heaven.

we do produce a lot of plastic fruit. And it may take a magnifying glass to find some legitimate fruit, but if you're a true believer, it's there.

Now, if it's not there, if you're devoid of any fruit at all, you need to go back and examine yourself to make sure you're in the body. But God keeps that account, by the way.

The elders don't have a big book and say, okay, who did some fruit today? I hope not, but if we do, I want Lee to be the recording secretary. Or James.

James has more experience at that from being a deacon. Once these guys were saved, they became producers of fruit, things that accompanied salvation.

[17:38] And a true conversion experience will result in certain good works. Where'd those come from? There are things that God planned for each individual believer.

There are things that God planned out. The Apostle Paul, writing by inspiration, was very clear on this. In Ephesians, he describes how salvation is accomplished in an individual's life.

And then he goes on to describe what happens after God converts a human soul. Listen to these words from Ephesians. And they're very familiar to you.

Chapter 2, verses 8-10. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God. I heard a guy one time, and he says, I get asked all the time, what's the gift of God, grace or faith? And my answer to that is yes.

[18:53] Both. Both. Both. Grace through faith and not of ourselves, it's the gift of God.

It is not a result of works. Is that a good thing that it's not human work, human effort? Well, it tells you the next sentence, so that no one may boast.

Can you imagine the boasting? Well, you may be saved, but I'm more saved. As if you can be more saved. It eliminates boasting.

And then it goes into verse 10, for we are His workmanship. We're God's workmanship. We've been created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Where those come from? which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Now you might be sitting there saying, you know, I'm not walking in good works.

[20:09] Well, get started. Time's short. Time's short. There we see the grace of salvation conversion. And then the true works that follow a true conversion.

Now in Hebrews, the Holy Spirit was speaking about intellectual enlightenment from the Word of God.

These guys have been enlightened. They've been sitting around hearing the gospel. That would enlighten anybody. Heck, you might even be able to enlighten Putin a little bit in this deal. I don't think you'll save him.

But these things accompany revelation when someone's exposed to the truth. They're enlightened. Both the Spirit of God and true believers hope such exposure will bring people to Christ in a saving relationship.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. I was told one time in Greek that says faith comes by hearing and hearing by speeches about Jesus Christ. I could buy that.

[21 : 29] The hope is this exposure to the truth will bring people to Christ in a saving relationship but for that to happen there must be an exercise of true saving faith in Jesus Christ.

People say, what's my responsibility? You have to believe. No one's going to heaven that doesn't believe in the finished work of Christ. Well, where does belief come from?

Well, it's the same word to have faith. It's a gift of God. But I've told you the story of the guy sitting on a stump waiting to see if God's going to save him or not and he goes to hell. It's an active faith. You've got to believe. The beloved here again are true believers. believers, but they came from a background like any one of us, the background of unbelief.

One time they were unbelievers. No one here was born a believer in Jesus Christ. You were reborn as a believer but not in your original birth.

[22 : 39] And it's interesting, the very word traces back to the Greek word agape and we should know what that is. That's the highest form of sacrificial love in the universe.

And he talks here about these things that accompany salvation. Many things accompany salvation. Certainly there are more things than we can discuss in the context of one lesson. I'll tell you a great place to review this is in the book of Romans.

In Hebrews, the things that accompany unbelief are found in Hebrews 5, verse 11, to Hebrews 6, verse 5. We already looked at those. Those are the things that accompany unbelief.

But the things that are found in the things that accompany salvation are an outgrowth of a personal relationship with Christ based upon His perfect sacrifice.

[23 : 56] Christ is the object of our faith. His sacrifice on the cross. He leads us to the Father. He brings us to the Father.

The Father looks at us. He's looking for Jesus inside us. Now to whom does this apply? That's a subtle phrase.

There is a subtle phrase that it's easy to pass over if we're not careful. The Spirit of God says, though we are speaking this way, that undoubtedly was put there as an encouragement to believers.

Even today when believers read this portion of Scripture, they wonder if they can lose their salvation. That is why there's great confusion over this section of the Bible.

In order to calm the fears of true believers, the Spirit confirms He is speaking in a manner that could cause great concern if Christians believe these words applied to them.

[25 : 03] Let me provide you a paraphrase that John MacArthur finds helpful. Beloved fellow Christians, though we have been speaking about these awesome and fearful warnings to unbelievers, we know that far better things apply to you.

We have the accompaniments of salvation, not of unbelief. These warnings to apostates and potential apostates are put in this letter to you because these people are in your midst.

And I think it's foolish if we assume the rapture occurs at 11 or 11.15 some Sunday morning that the church is going to be emptied.

I just don't think it will be. I'd like to think this class would be emptied, but I don't know. I think John's words here cannot become any clearer.

Every congregation has believers and unbelievers. Jesus referred to them as wheat and tares. tares. And this warning is to them, to the unbelieving tares.

[26 : 33] And let me quickly caution, that does not mean that we try and identify every unbeliever in our group. We don't know anybody's heart.

I sometimes don't think I know my own. When people try and guess who was saved, and who was lost, they can be very wrong and very destructive to the cause of Christ.

Even Jesus, when the follower said, well, there's wheat and tares, should we pull up the tares? He said, no, because you'll end up pulling up a bunch of wheat. You don't know who they are. Leave

them alone.

We need to be content to obey God and we witness to every creature. Spurgeon said, I witnessed every creature. He said, if salvation, if God painted a yellow stripe down the back of everyone that was going to believe, he said, my ministry would be going around London lifting shirts.

But God didn't do that. So Spurgeon said, I preached to every creature and when one of them gets saved, I said, boy, he belongs to God. He was saved before the foundation of the world.

[27 : 56] I still like what our Chinese brothers do. Guy comes to the underground church, says, I've been saved, I want to join, and I said, we'll see. Start attending and we'll see.

Let's give it some time. Because when persecution comes, a lot of people run out the door. That's true today. Today. We just need to be content to obey God and witness to every creature.

And I say, once that's done, back away and allow the Spirit to do His work. Don't force the Spirit of God.

Let Him do His work. God does not forget His own. Very important. Hebrews 6.10.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have shown toward His name in having ministered and still ministering to the saints.

[29 : 09] Now, this is good news. God knows the faithful who truly belong to Him. In fact, He's written the name of every believer in the book of life before the foundation of the world.

That does not mean there will never be periods of doubt. I've had doubts, not more than 10 or 15 times a day, but I have had doubts.

We all experience doubts from time to time. Lord, would a true believer do what I just did? Would a true believer think what I just thought or say what I said?

And Paul goes so far as to tell us, hey, you need to test yourselves. Give yourself a test from time to time making sure that you're in the body of Christ. And once we prove to ourselves that we're indeed one with Christ, we should rest in the fact, Romans 1 8.1, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

No condemnation. So test yourself. And Paul says a verse later, well, what do you do if you fail the test? Well, go back to your original salvation experience and review it.

[30 : 36] maybe you need to do business with God in that respect. And then he talks about the works of the believer.

The greatest work of the believer, and this provides the evidence that we are believers, it's not even witnessing, as important as that is.

The greatest work of the believer is the active display of love. Love for your fellow believers.

Is that my phone? Love for your fellow believers. Love for people who are considering Christ. Love for your enemies.

Love for people driving up and down the road that we don't know who they are. love for you. It is this true agape love. Works do not save us, but true works follow true salvation just as surely as a ship sails into harbor.

[31 : 51] James was very clear that works apart from faith were dead, and never has dead works produced a living salvation. salvation. Paul declared the Thessalonians to be saved, and he based it on the fact, he told them, I see your faith and labor in action.

He saw their works. Works didn't save them, but they accompanied salvation. They claimed to have faith, and by their actions they proved that they had faith, and love is a product of faith.

Love is a product of faith. And have love for His name. When we do things inside or outside the church to further the cause of Christ, what is our motive?

If it's done out of love for the name of Christ, then that is done to the glory of God. We're to love unbelievers. I heard John McCarthy the other day say, what does God think about practicing homosexuals?

And I have to admit, I had a twin say, boy, John's going to nail them now. He'll hammer them. And he said, what does God think about practicing homosexuals?

[33 : 11] God loves them. And He wants them brought out of that lifestyle and make a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and become true believers and be rescued from the darkness of that lifestyle.

I was humbled. Wasn't the first time. Won't be the last. We're to love unbelievers. More than that, we're to love fellow believers.

Even if they're not part of our particular group. I'm going to be at a VOM board meeting in May. I'll be the only Baptist guy in there.

That's okay. far above love for unbelievers and love for believers we are to love God. God in triunity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In fact, that is the greatest commandment ever given. Our love for Him is to be total with all we have.

[34 : 19] Love is actually the mark by which God identifies us as belonging to Him. You know, and all too often, let's be honest, the world looks at the church and does not see love.

They don't see love. They see people fighting over color of carpet and songbooks and do we use the King James only or can we use other versions?

I mean, there's all kinds of them. but the world looks and they don't see us loving each other so they conclude one, we must not belong to God or we'd be loving one another.

Now, the world may be wrong on that but they can still make that judgment and two, even more devastating, the world may conclude, well, I don't think Jesus is who He claimed to be because He said His followers would display observable love toward one another and toward the lost and they're not doing that.

And then we're to follow by example. Now it's time for the pendulum to swing back to the unbelievers and we desire each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end.

[35 : 44] you're not to be sluggish but become imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The writer is again speaking to unbelievers.

Many had probably made some sort of profession of faith. I remember one preacher said, don't tell me about your profession of faith, tell me about your possession of faith.

But the Spirit knew they were in imminent danger. they were flirting with their return to Judaism which had reached a dead end. When one walks away from Christ, they forfeit for all time if they don't return any hope of salvation because salvation can't be found in any other name.

It always irritates me when I hear these guys say, well, you know, there's many paths to heaven. Even the liberal church believes that.

I listened to a preacher yesterday after I saw our service on television and got a mega church, big church.

[37 : 07] I won't call his name, but it was Andy Stanley, Charles' son, and they've had a major falling out. Andy is at great risk. I mean, I heard him with my ears say, well, and this, he read a passage quoting Christ that Jesus was wrong when he said this.

That's not right. He made a mistake there. And then he said, there's nothing in the Bible that criticizes homosexuality.

And he said, I know you're going to tell me Paul did, Peter did, John did. He said, they aren't Jesus. that's what they wrote.

He also said, there's no proof or even a suggestion that Jesus ever rose from the grave. I heard him say that, Pastor. How do you grow up in Charles Stanley's home and come up with that?

Pray for Andy Stanley. He needs the Lord. And he's got thousands in his church that he's leading astray. these unbelievers are admonished to show diligence.

[38 : 28] That is a Greek word that carries with it the idea of eagerness or haste. The clear suggestion here is that one should come to faith quickly. We do not know what tomorrow brings and really do not even know if we will be here tomorrow.

We come to Christ not through some long drawn out act, but through the obedience of faith. When salvation occurs, it is instantaneous, and we don't want to do anything to delay it.

Now, many of the unbelievers in this Jewish church were sluggish. Some had even become C&E; church attenders. That is the same word for dull.

Sorry, Jerry. Same word for dull. One of the greatest Christians I ever met. Their senses toward the things of God were in danger of growing dull.

Once that occurs, salvation has passed them by. Those in the church who have not committed to Christ should be imitators.

[39 : 43] They are to imitate true believers. What are they to imitate? Not their personality, not even their abilities. they are to imitate their faith. They are admonished to follow the saved down the same path they traveled.

And at the end of that journey lie the rewards that come with true saving faith. death, that's when they will inherit the promises of God.
Only then will they inherit the promises of God.