

"Five Warnings"

Some say that we're living in a post-Christian society. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Many have become much weaker in their faith today, and we need encouragement. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The word of God tells us of the love of God and the grace of God, but it's also a book with encouragements and exhortations. God reveals what He's done for us and what He expects from us. God saves us from sin, but He expects us to change our ways and draw close to Him. God saves us with the intent to transform our lives to become like our Savior Jesus Christ. Occasionally we need a reminder to encourage us to live as we ought to live. Thanks for taking time with us today. We would love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The book of Hebrews is a "word of exhortation," encouraging Christians to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus and not fall back into the world or revert to Judaism. Thirteen times the Hebrew writer uses the phrase "let us," encouraging them to grow in faith and devotion. In chapter 11, the Hebrew writer speaks of the great faith and commitment of the saints of old, encouraging them to keep their confidence in Christ and to endure.

The author describes the people to whom he is writing as drifting away, neglectful, in danger of unbelief, dull of hearing, immature, and needing to be taught first principles. You see, they lost sight of Jesus, and that He was better than what they had before. Some were hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, some were led astray by false teaching, some could miss their eternal rest, and some were beyond being renewed to repentance. They needed encouragement to do better, not to give up on Jesus Christ, and to fix their eyes on the Lord and to follow Him. I suspect people today need the same thing!

Now this is an important study, and we offer it free on Five Warnings in the book of Hebrews! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Hebrews 12:1 to 3, and explore the five warnings found in the book of Hebrews.

Our reading today comes from the letter to the Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 to 3, in chapter 11. He talked about the great hall of fame of faith, and how he encourages them keep their faith in God. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." What a great admonition to stay faithful.

Let's pray together. "Father in all of the challenges of life, we pray that You will bless us and help us to stay strong, to stay committed to Your way, and to love You and to love others always, as we do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

First, if we would take the warning of Hebrews we would beware of drifting. Hebrews 2:1 to 4 says, For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through the angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation. After it was at the first, spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard. God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders, and by various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. I tell you, drifting is something that happens when we lose our focus on the goal. What starts out as a small departure from the goal in time becomes a great departure. Now no one drifts toward the will of God; people intentionally follow the Lord; but people do drift away from the will of God. When we drift away from God, we drift away from the joy of the Lord, away from righteousness, and away from His blessings. God wants us to enjoy a better life that's found in Him, not the world.

Second, beware of hardening your heart in unbelief. Hebrews 3:12-14 says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end."

Now to "fall away" is to abandon a former relationship or association. It's not a temporary slip-up, but an intentional desertion of what one has formerly been. Sin and unbelief has led some in those days to quit the Lord or to quit the church altogether. They abandoned what they believed and were no longer committed to serving the Lord.

Now notice the text, "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." There is an "if" to our salvation. Did you know that the word "if" occurs more than twenty times in the New Testament directly referring to our salvation? Our salvation is indeed conditional to our remaining faithful and obedient to God's holy word. God wants us to enjoy a better life, and that's found in Him and not the world.

Third, beware of becoming dull of hearing. Hebrews 5:11 to 12 says, "Concerning him we have much to say, and it's hard to explain, since you've become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you've come to need milk and not solid food." Well I'm not surprised at some Christians who grow upset when they hear someone speak the truth from Scripture.

Some had clearly stopped listening to the good word of God. Hebrews 6:4 to 8 says, "For in the case of those who've once been enlightened and have tasted 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 (that is, they've deserted), it's impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it also was tilled, it receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it's worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned."

You see, there can be no doubt that these people were once faithful Christians. Notice the description: they were once enlightened, they tasted the heavenly gift, they were partakers of the Holy Spirit, and they tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. Yes, they were once faithful to the Lord Jesus, but you see, they fell away from or they abandoned what they believed. They deserted their faith to the point that no one could talk to them about repenting of their sins. They

crucified to themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame. Oh God had blessed them, but they gave God thorns and thistles. God wants us to enjoy a better life, that's found in Him and not the world.

Fourth, beware of shrinking back from the Lord. Hebrews 10:25 to 39 says, "And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." You see, assembling with the church is not some drudgery but an opportunity to grow in love and good works. When people forsake the church, they forsake their church family, they forsake the worship, and they forsake the encouragement to love and good works. My friends, don't rob yourselves.

We must remember: God's patience does have limits when people keep sinning willfully. Hebrews 10:26 to 31 says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Now anyone who's set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (He says) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'vengeance is mine, I will repay.' And again, 'the LORD will judge his people.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Now don't imagine that you can shrink away from God and go unnoticed. Hebrews 10:35 to 39 urges us, "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith and the preserving of the soul." God wants us to enjoy a better life, that's found in Him not the world.

Fifth, beware of refusing Him who speaks. Hebrews 12:22 to 25 says, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven."

As Christians we have the privilege of approaching God in heaven. As Christians, we're children of God, who are blessed to be enrolled in heaven. We should never take the grace of God for granted. "See to it" means to take notice of what God wants us to do. If God meant what He said on earth, we need to take Him seriously when He speaks from heaven. I fear that many feel God ought to be happy that we give Him any attention at all. God, however, demands our close attention to what He says. His words have commandments, principles, examples, and promises. To select some passages to the neglect of others fails to take God's word seriously.

Some people say, "I love Jesus, but I don't like what the Bible says about this or about that." Some imagine the grace of God allows them to live any way that we please, to believe anything we please, and do whatever is right in our own eyes. Well this way of thinking says to God that He doesn't matter, and His words aren't important. The Bible is God's word for all time, my friend. And when you challenge the word, you're challenging the authority of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. You remember

Jesus said in John 12:48, that “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” Now if the Lord Himself one day judges you by His words found in this book, you better not refuse what He says.

God wants us to enjoy a better life, and that blessing is found in Him and not the world. And God wants you to enjoy His love and to be saved from His wrath, but God has given each of us free will. You see, the Lord distinguishes between those who will listen to Him from those who won't listen to Him. The Lord distinguishes those who believe Him and believe in Him from those who don't believe in Him. John 3:17 to 18 says, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; but he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Now if you say you believe in God, but live like God doesn't matter, you're fooling yourself.

Christianity is a life of faith, hope, and love. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 12 and verse 30, that “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” People who love God to that extent won't neglect their salvation, they won't fall away in unbelief, they won't remain immature and untaught, they won't desert their faith and desert the church and desert their brethren, and they won't abandon assembling with the saints. They won't shrink away from the Lord, and they won't refuse to listen to what the Lord has to say. Sadly, some who are loved, that had love for God at one point, and maybe were strong in their faith, they can become people who aren't as devoted at another point in life. Jude 21 urges us to “keep yourselves in the love of God.” Now just as people who loved their spouses deeply early in their marriage can fall out of love, so people can fall out of love for God and turn to selfish, selfish ways. The Hebrew writer wrote this word of encouragement by inspiration because people were drifting away and falling away from God. You may be one of them. I hope and pray, if you are, that you'll return to the Lord and to His church.

Now if you truly compare being saved with being lost, you'd never choose to be lost. Being saved means being forgiven of all our sins, being saved means freedom from the consequences of our sins, it means no longer being enslaved to sin, it means being a child of God, and it means living with God forever in heaven. On the other hand, being lost means you're not forgiven, you're enslaved to sin, you're a child of wrath, and you have no home in heaven. Being lost means choosing the punishment of God over the grace of God. Now Jesus died to save us from the wrath of God. And God gives us life now on earth to make our choices. When Jesus comes again, we won't have the opportunity to change our lives and be saved. That's why we need to make the choice to believe and to obey God now, in this life, and for the days to come.

Let's pray together. “Father, we're thankful for Your grace and Your love and for the great love that You have shown us day after day. And for the plan that You've had for us to be able to live, and to be close to You and to be close to Your Son, Jesus. Father, help us to listen, to be obedient, and to do Your will always. Forgive our trespasses, and help us to forgive others. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.”

Hebrews 4:1 to 2 says, “Therefore, let us fear, if while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.” Have you heard the word of God but refused to obey it? Have you refused to listen to God? God's word and God's promises will not benefit you if you refuse to accept them.

God wants something better for you than you may realize. He teaches us what we need to know to have the best of lives! God wants us to know the truth, to be saved, to enjoy our faith and commitment to righteousness. God is in the saving business, and He takes no pleasure in punishing the wicked. Friend, life is short and uncertain. And we need to be prepared now for the life to come. And that preparation means humbling ourselves and turning to the God who loves us and wants what is best for us.

Become a Christian by placing your faith in the Lord Jesus and His word, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and being buried and raised with Christ in baptism. God will cause you to be born again when you're baptized. You'll have newness of life! Don't let anything come between you and God. Serve Him all the days of your life. Stay faithful and stay in church. Don't drift and fall away. Worshiping with other Christians, studying the Bible, drawing close to God, praying daily is your best hope of staying true to God.

Now we hope that today's study about the five warnings in the book of Hebrews has stirred you to consider your soul. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you write to us for one reason or another, don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God. And we'll be happy to meet your requests.

Do focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. You see, everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. Let us know that you're watching. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.