

The Peril of Unbelief

Heb. 3:12-19

Introduction:

1. The Allstate Insurance Company has a series of advertisements where Dean Winters plays the role of “mayhem.”
2. In one of those commercials he played the part of a raccoon, which had taken up residence in an attic. He tore out the insulation, shorted out the electricity, had 4 babies and tore hole in the roof.
3. Were you to read your insurance policy you probably would not come across the word “mayhem” but the word “peril” would be used to describe the serious and immediate danger caused by mayhem.
4. We have been watching the news for the perils associated with hurricane Harvey as it blasts the east coast of Texas.
5. In Heb. 3:12-19 there is a warning of the serious and immediate danger of unbelief. The purpose behind the mayhem commercials and the hurricane warnings is that proper preparations be made in order to avoid the consequence of the peril.
6. The Book of Hebrews warns of the peril of unbelief and defines the actions to be taken to avoid it.

Discussion:

I. Heb. 3:12-19.

- A. Verse 12 is the warning: “Take care.”
 1. It demands sensitivity to the situation.
 2. It assumes “falling away” is a possibility. Some have the idea that one cannot fall away.
 3. But if we define belief as a voluntary trust that we place in God for the benefits available in Christ then coming to not trust is a legitimate possibility.
- B. Verse 13 tells us what we need to do in order to avoid falling away. Encouragement so that we are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin is necessary to avoid the peril of an unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.
- C. Verse 14 says we need to hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.
 1. It is those who are near to the living God that fall away. Those who have become partakers of Christ must hold fast to the end.
 2. The writer calls to our attention the example of Israel who left Egypt and because of unbelief died in the wilderness (cf. Psa. 95:8-11; Ex. 17).
 3. They did not enter the rest of Canaan because of their unbelief. The warning extends to us. We will not enter the rest promised us if our faith in God fails.

II. Heb. 4:1ff.

- A. There are many “Let us” statements in Hebrews. They call our attention to our responsibility. The first says, “Let us fear. . .” (4:1). If we are to avoid the peril of

unbelief “fear” needs to be aroused in us.

- B. The whole of Hebrews highlights the greatness of Christ (cf. Heb. 1; greatest priest, greatest sacrifice, the one through whom God communicates). He is the source of salvation (5:9).

III. Heb. 6:1-8 warns against falling away.

- A. Falling away comes as a result of unbelief.
- B. Some may reason that these that fall away were never true believers in the first place.
- C. The passage describes them . . .
 - 1. “Those who have once been enlightened.”
 - 2. “Have tasted of the heavenly gift.”
 - 3. “Have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit.”
 - 4. “Have tasted the good word of God.”
 - 5. “And the powers of the age to come.”
 - 6. They certainly sound like true believers.
- D. “And then have fallen away. . .” from what did they fall if they were not true believers?
- E. The severity of the warning is evident in verse 6: “It is impossible to renew them again to repentance.”
 - 1. “They again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”
 - 2. In their unbelief they deny what they have previously held as dear.
 - 3. They have turned away from the Son of God.
 - 4. The consequence is illustrated in verses 7-8.
 - a. Cursed.
 - b. Burned.
 - 5. We need to “fear” lest such come upon us.

IV. What can we do to avoid such perils?

- A. Let us press on to maturity (6:1).
- B. Let us hold fast our confession (4:14).
- C. Let us draw near with confidence (4:16).
- D. Let us draw near in full assurance of faith (10:22).
- E. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope (10:23; cf. 4:14).
- F. Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (10:24).
- G. There is need for diligence (6:11) and endurance (10:36-39).
- H. The peril reiterated (10:26-31).
- I. Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise (13:15).

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you taking seriously the peril of unbelief and therefore falling away?
- 2. Do you understand the need for endurance?
- 3. Are you considering how to avoid falling away? For yourself? For others?

