

Adult Sunday School Class

Objective: Increase awareness of the exposure of falling away and the need for due diligence.

Opening Prayer: Thank you Father, we pause now to acknowledge your presence..... I thank you that you always hear me. That you never leave me or forsake me and that you are an ever present help. I ask for a special anointing on this lesson plan and the time we will spend together today. Bless both speaker and listener. Open our hearts to receive a fresh revelation from your Spirit. I bind forces that would hinder and welcome the Holy Spirit as our teacher today. In Jesus name!

Read: Hebrews 5:11-14 & 6:1-20.

Q – What subject is the author addressing in the scriptures we just read? - He is delivering a warning message about the real possibility of Christians, believers like you and me, falling away or losing their eternal salvation.

Q – What does he describe as the elementary teachings of Christ?

- Repentance from acts that lead to death, acts of self righteousness.
 - For it is by grace we are saved, thru faith, it's not of yourself, it's a gift of God, not of works.
 - To as many as received Him, He gave the right and/or power to become children of God.
- Faith in God.
- Instruction about baptisms or symbolic cleansing rites.
- The laying on of hands.
- The resurrection of the dead.
- Eternal judgment.

Q – Which doctrines of Christ involve the laying on of hands?

- Healing.
- Deliverance.
- Ordination or being commissioned into the ministry of the gospel.
- The baptism in or with the Holy spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Q – What are the elementary subjects we teach our children in the first year or two of school?

- Numbers and basic math.
- The alphabet and fundamentals of reading.
- Basic social skills and human interactions.
- The joy of learning.
- In this day and age we even teach an introduction to computer devices.

Q – What is the expectation of those who have graduated from the elementary subjects?

- Knowledge of and a reasonable degree of proficiency in the basics.
- We expect the successful students to go on to more advanced subject matter.

Q – Does a similar expectation exist for those who have completed the fundamental step of accepting Christ as their personal savior and been taught the fundamental principals of Christian living? - It does.

Q – Let's test our knowledge of one of the key fundamentals of Christianity. How is faith in God define?

- A quiet and confident assurance that God exists &
 - God is love.
 - God is good!.....and all the time.....God is good!
 - He is the creator of all things.
 - He is all powerful and has complete control of everything.
 - He so loved the world that He gave His only son as a way for my (our) redemption.

- He is my heavenly father and I am one of His children.
- The affairs of my life are in His hands & He cares for me!
- He is always acting in my best interests.
- Faith rests in the sovereignty of God and is not dismayed by the actions of men.
- Faith is NOT about everything turning out OK.
- Faith is about being OK no matter how things turn out.....because we know God is in control.

Q – Is the elementary teaching of faith in God easy to master and/or hold on to? - Yes and No.

- Yes when we can relax and trust God regardless of circumstances.
- However it can also be a real challenge at times.
 - Recall the reactions of the disciples and the sisters when Jesus chose to delay his trip to visit a sick friend named Lazarus.
 - It was very difficult for them to believe that He was in control because He was not reacting in the way they thought He should.
- Do we have problems accepting that God is in control of the affairs of our lives when the “disease continues to progress? - At times, we do
- When God is not acting consistent with our expectations? - At times, we do.
- Do we have problems maintaining our confidence in God's word when answers are delayed? - Again, at times we do.
- Is our faith in God shaken when things don't turn out the way we expected them to? - It can be.
- How would you rate our mastery of the concept of faith in God?
 - All too often we find ourselves dealing with the foundational issues of our confidence in God.
 - Of believing He is really in control when things don't appear to be going our way.
 - When our expectations are not being met.
 - When our sense of timing is not being met.

Q – Why did the author use the analogy of milk in his introduction to this topic?

- Because milk is the primary or basic food all babies exist on.
- It's only as they mature that solid foods are introduced into their diets.

Q- If faith in God and the other fundamentals he discusses are the equivalent of milk or the initial food for babies, what topic is considered as food for a mature believer?

- Falling away from grace.
- Sliding back into a life of sin & losing one's eternal salvation.

Q – Is the author talking about a novice Christian when he describes these issues? - No, he is speaking about a mature Christian.

Q – What causes you to believe he is qualifying these remarks to a mature Christian? - The criteria used to precede the point he is making.

Q – What is the essence of his main point.

- If a Christian meeting this criteria falls away it is impossible to bring them again to repentance.
- It proves impossible **to make them repent** as they did at first. (JB Phillips)

Q – What are the qualifying criteria that precede his main point?

- Once enlightened.
- Tasted the heavenly gift.
- Shared in the Holy Spirit.
- Tasted the goodness of the word of God.
- Tasted the powers of the coming age.

Q – Once enlighten means?

- The message of salvation has been revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit.
- A conscious awareness of spiritual life and a glimmer of hope beyond the physical realm.
- Experiencing the process of having the word of God revealed to one's spirit.

Q – What does he mean when he says they have tasted the heavenly gift?

- They have accepted Christ as their personal savior and have established a relationship with Him.
- They know in their heart that God has become their heavenly father.
- They are familiar with the presence of the Holy Spirit in their life.

Q – What does he mean when he says they have shared in the Holy Spirit?

- At the moment of salvation the Spirit of God moves into a human heart.
- He promises never to leave them or forsake them and is an ever present help in time of trouble.

Q – What does it mean to taste the goodness of the word of God?

- To have revelation knowledge of the promises of God and see them being played out in one's life.
- An example might be an answer to prayer or
- To know the peace of God in the midst of a crisis or the “storms of this life”.

Q – Tasting the powers of the coming age means?

- Having an assurance of the after life.
- Being confident of spending eternity with God.

Q – How many of you know someone well enough (perhaps yourself) to be confident that they meet this criteria?

- Most of us know or have known a number of people who meet this criteria.
- Let's look at a couple of lives that are representative of people meeting that criteria.

Q – How many of you are familiar with the story behind the song, “It Is Well With My Soul”?

- **Horatio Spafford** (1828-1888) was a wealthy Chicago lawyer with a thriving legal practice, a beautiful home, a wife, four daughters and a son. He was also a devout Christian and faithful student of the Scriptures. His circle of friends included Dwight L. Moody, Ira Sankey and various other well-known Christians of the day. At the very height of his financial and professional success, Horatio and his wife Anna suffered the tragic loss of their young son. Shortly thereafter on October 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed almost every real estate investment that Spafford had. In 1873, Spafford scheduled a boat trip to Europe in order to give his wife and daughters a much needed vacation and time to recover from the tragedy. He also went to join Moody and Sankey on an evangelistic campaign in England. Spafford sent his wife and daughters ahead of him while he remained in Chicago to take care of some unexpected last minute business. Several days later he received notice that his family's ship had encountered a collision. All four of his daughters drowned; only his wife had survived. With a heavy heart, Spafford boarded a boat that would take him to his grieving Anna in England. It was on this trip that he penned those now famous words, *When sorrow like sea billows roll; it is well, it is well with my soul.*
- The Spaffords later had three more children, one of whom, their only son, Horatio Goertner Spafford, died at the age of four, of scarlet fever in 1880.
- In 1881, the Spaffords, including baby Bertha and newborn Grace, set sail for Israel. The Spaffords moved to Jerusalem and helped found a group called the American Colony; its mission was to serve the poor. The colony later became the subject of the Nobel prize winning novel “Jerusalem”, by Swedish novelist Selma Lagerlof.

Q – Is anyone familiar with the life story of Ira Stanphill?

- **Ira Stanphill** was one of Christian music’s most outstanding talents of the 20th Century. During his life, he traveled throughout the United States and in 40 countries, preaching and singing the songs he’d written. Many of his songs have been published in other languages. The depth of his lyrics continue to reverberate in people’s hearts around the world.
- In 1936, Ira launched his own revival campaign. It concluded in Springfield, Missouri, where he agreed to pastor a congregation.
- In Springfield, he met Zelma Lawson. She too had musical skills. They married in 1939. Together, they wrote the song “Room at the Cross for You,” which they sang as a duet. Their voices rang out together on the chorus, “Tho’ millions have come, there’s still room for one. Yes, there’s room at the cross for you.”
- However, Zelma began drifting away from the cross. She started attending nightclubs and seeing other men. She eventually filed for divorce. Zelma remarried and began singing in the nightclubs. Ira eventually gained custody of their son, Raymond. In 1951, a car accident took Zelma’s life.
- Between the divorce and Zelma’s death, Ira reached a personal low in his life. Some criticized him for continuing to preach after his divorce. The voices inside Ira’s head and heart were equally severe. He pondered the direction of his future.
- One day, driving to the church he served at the time, Ira poured out his feelings to God. By the time he reached the church, God had birthed a new song in his heart. The experience didn’t give Ira all the answers he wanted, but it gave him the total trust in God he needed.
- In the decades since, many have experienced fresh faith for the future upon singing or hearing the song, “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow.” The song’s essence is in the words, “Many things about tomorrow, I don’t seem to understand; but I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand.”
- Many of his other lyrics speak volumes to those going thru dark places. For example,
 - “He washed my eyes with tears so I might see”.
 - “I will not question the way He leads.”
 - “This side of heaven we know in part.”
 - “I will not question a broken heart.”
 - “We'll talk it over in the bye and bye.....We'll talk it over my Lord and I”

Q – Who can give us an overview of the story of Job's life?

- I'll paraphrase for the sake of time.
- He was rich and famous but lost almost all except his wife.
- Yet he refused to curse God.
- In the end, God restored all that he had and multiplied it beyond his imaginations.

Q – Do you believe Job had some down days? Some anxious thoughts or questions about what it mean to be a child of God? - I do, he most likely had his faith shaken to the very core.

Q – Does scripture identify tragic and significant events, like the ones we've just discussed, as the primary cause of the love of most Christians growing cold? - No, it says because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:12,13)

Q – What effect does the increase of wickedness have on Believers?

- It's all too easy to become stained by it.
- It can erode values.
- Divert attention.
- Undermine priorities &
- Lure them away from the things of God.

Q – In the parable of the sower, what caused the seed or word of God to become unfruitful? - Mark 4: 18) Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19) but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth

and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Q – Who do we know in scripture that was chosen by God and had a relationship with him but who fell away and was eternally lost? - Both Saul and Judas fall into that category.

Q – Did either of these men fall away because of some catastrophic event or major crisis?

- No, the reasons for their demise falls into the category of the cares of this life the deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things.
- Or perhaps it could be summarized as an increase in wickedness.

Q – Why was the thief on the cross forgiven but Judas was not? - Judas did not **ask** God for forgiveness.

Q – Why didn't Judas follow Peter's example of repentance? - Most likely pride, he couldn't bring himself to the point of asking God's forgiveness.

Q – What does Hebrews 6 say about Christians who find themselves in the position in which Judas found himself? - It is impossible for them to be brought back to repentance. Or as Phillips translates it.....**impossible to make them repent.**

Q – Why?

- Because their hearts have become hardened to the things of God.
- They become insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and will not allow themselves to be brought back.
- Their priorities, pride and ego will not allow it.

Q – Would God take them back and forgive them? - I believe He would, Peter makes this statement in 2 Peter 3:9) The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Q – BTW, Where can we find supporting scriptures for the principles stated in Hebrews 6? - 2 Peter 2:20 In the chapter immediately preceding Peter's statement that **“He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”**.

Q – What must we (you and I) do to keep from falling away?

- Develop and maintain a strong relationship with God.
- Have faith in God. Continue to reinforce your knowledge of God and His principles of operation.
- Spend time in the word.
- Do not forsake the assembly and the association with other Christians.
- Learn to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit and follow His leading.
- Learn some worship songs that reinforce the principals of your faith. Then sing them to yourself as spiritual food for thought and faith building exercises.
- Examples.
 - You are my strength when I am weak, you are the treasure that I seek you are my all in all. When I fall down you pick me up when I am dry you fill my cup, you are my all in all.
 - Emanuel, Emanuel, his name is called Emanuel. God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emanuel.
 - In the presence of Jehovah, God almighty, prince of peace, problems vanish, hearts are mended in the presence of the king.
 - What are the lyrics to your favorite faith building songs?