

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part X: Encouragement To Mature To Obtain God's Great Rewards"
(Hebrews 6:9-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In last Sunday's message that warned of God's capacity to punish the believer by a premature physical death for not going beyond just holding to basic doctrines and applying them to live by faith, I used two very ominous illustrations.

One reported on a young man who stood up against the Scriptural convictions and administrative decision of a pastor and Board. The young man reportedly lost his life as divine judgment by refusing to relent from the Biblical teaching and admonitions of the pastor and Board.

The other one had to do with the sad outcome of a girl in the Youth Group of a Church in which I was involved years ago. I believe that outcome came as a result of her refusing to apply passages she knew like 1 Corinthians 10:13 to overcome her temptation to commit immorality.

Well, in both of these cases, the guilty parties involved had to do something UNCOMFORTABLE to be upright: (1) The young man had to SUBMIT to the DECISION of the pastor and board members, and (2) the young woman had to lean on God's promise in His Word to AVOID fulfilling her lusts.

Thus, are we to gather from these illustrations that for us to MATURE in applying Scripture, we have to put up with a DEPRESSINGLY painful life of hardship instead of having lots of "fun" and enjoying the lusts of this world?!

"If SO, what value is there to maturing?" we may ask.

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "If (as we learned) God calls us to cease fixating on basic beliefs to LIVE by faith OR be severely punished, should I expect maturing to be OPPRESSIVE? If so, WHY mature, and HOW?!"

- I. **The author of Hebrews followed his WARNING of God's discipline by DEATH with an ENCOURAGEMENT that his readers were not YET so HARDENED that they could not GROW, Heb. 6:4-10:**
 - A. As we learned from the Hebrews 6:4-8 passage in the last message, a truly saved believer can become so hardened against applying basic doctrines to life and live by faith that God must punish him with death.
 - B. However, the author of Hebrews was confident his readers had not yet reached that hardness level, and encouraged them to mature, Heb. 6:9:
 1. Though speaking of God's discipline of death for hardness, the author expressed confidence of better things from his readers, 6:9.
 2. He was convinced of things of "salvation," a term referring to practical blessings attained versus experiencing divine discipline:
 - a. Though we today might use "salvation" to refer **only** to one's coming to faith in Christ, the author of Hebrews uses it in Hebrews 1:12 to picture **future** blessings for **believers**.
 - b. This concept is typical of the **Hebrew** use for "salvation" in the Old Testament where **God's people** awaited deliverances based on a life of faith, compare **Bib. Know. Com., N.T.**, p. 782-783.
 - c. Thus, the author used "salvation" to mean attaining blessings for living by faith versus judgment by death like the unbelieving generation in Israel that died in the wilderness! (Heb. 4:11)
 - C. Indeed, the author mentioned the favorable track record of godly works in his readers to encourage them to continue growing, 6:10!
- II. **Then, to MOTIVATE his readers to WANT to MATURE, the author pictured the example of ABRAHAM who through difficult long-suffering FAITH inherited blessings so very WORTHWHILE:**
 - A. The author called his readers to avoid stalling in their growth and to mimic godly forerunners who through faith and long-suffering inherit God's wonderful, **worthwhile** promises, Hebrews 6:11-12.
 - B. Then, he picked out the example of Abraham in Genesis 22 as follows:
 1. God made a very strong, astounding promise to Abraham that He would vastly multiply his seed, affecting the world's **history**, 6:13f.
 2. What is so **fascinating** about **this** promise is that it came **after** Abraham had **already** known **many great trials** in a **life of faith**:
 - a. Sarah, Abraham's wife, had suffered the **culturally painful** state of childlessness long before the son, Isaac was born, Gen. 11:30.
 - b. This pain was so intense that Sarah gave her mistress, Hagar to Abraham to bear a son to remove her cultural disgrace, Gen. 16.
 - c. Through many hard events, God revealed He would raise up a child through Sarah in her **post-child-bearing age**, Gen. 12-17.

- d. When the son, Isaac finally came, God **tested** Abraham's faith, asking him to *slay* that beloved son on an altar, Gen. 22:1-2!
- e. We know from Heb. 11:19 that Abraham thought since God had **initially** created Isaac out of "**dead**" reproductive systems, He could raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill His promise to use Isaac to create a nation. Thus, Abraham picked up the knife intending to **slay** his son followed by Isaac's resurrection, Gen. 22:10!
- f. God then **hindered** Abraham from killing Isaac, and rewarded his **faith** by promising to **multiply** his seed, Gen. 22:15-18.

3. **So as a REWARD, God took a couple despairing of having a child to promise their offspring would be dominant in history!**

- C. Thus, the author called his readers to **shoulder** the *trials* of faith as did **Abraham** to enjoy **God's invaluable compliments** and **long-term USEFULNESS** of our lives of faith, Hebrews 6:15! (1 John 2:17)

III. **As added encouragement, the author of Hebrews dwelt on the CERTAINTY of REWARDS in living by faith as they are backed up with great divine INSURANCES of rewards, Heb. 6:13, 16-18b:**

- A. God **insures** blessings of our future by **promising** blessings for the obedience of living by faith, Hebrews 6:13a.
- B. God **ADDS** the **excessive insurance** that we will be blessed for living by faith by taking an **oath** regarding the whole issue, for it is impossible for God to lie, Hebrews 6:13b, 16-18b!
- C. **ALSO**, the author of Hebrews revealed that in **ADDITION** to the (1) promises **and** (2) God's **excessive** oath insurance, **we** have (3) **JESUS** Who **helps** us **function** as we live by **faith**, for He intercedes for us through His Priestly role before the Father, 6:19-20.

Lesson Application: *As in Abraham's case, though it may COST all we have in this life, the (1) REWARD of God's COMPLIMENT for our growth in faith and (2) His USE of that growth to affect SO MUCH even BEYOND our transient lifetimes (3) as backed up with all the insurance of promise God can muster makes the TRIAL of living by faith wonderfully worthwhile! Thus, we are urged to shoulder the yoke of living by faith to obtain God's great rewards!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

One Wednesday evening in 1902, a frail, elderly woman who believed in Christ as her Savior attended a church prayer meeting. When it came time to offer public prayer, she couldn't think of much to say, and so led in prayer, using these words: "It really does not matter just what you do with us, Lord -- have your way with our lives."

Now, I doubt that this elderly, frail woman at that meeting had the faintest idea that what she had prayed would move the Christian world. I doubt that she even viewed her attendance at that ordinary mid-week church prayer service as a "high" in her life! However, forty-year-old Adelaide Pollard who was sitting next to her was deeply moved by that woman's prayer. Adelaide had come to the meeting very despondent, for she had just received word that her goal to become a missionary to Africa was not about to come true. Her financial support had not been provided for that venture. Adelaide had showed up for prayer meeting too depressed even to pray. But when this elderly Christian sitting next to her led in her simple prayer about letting God have His own way in her life, Adelaide Pollard came under conviction.

Later that night, she committed her life to serve the Lord as God chose rather than plan her own ministry route. At home that evening, as reported in Ideals' Hymns of Faith & Inspiration, p. 24-25, Adelaide Pollard wrote the following poem expressing her decision:

"Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!

Thou art the potter, I am the clay!

Mold me and make me After thy will,

While I am waiting, Yielded and still."

Adelaide's poem is now a song in our hymn book. It has proved useful to many in heading them into the **Lord's** will. **It turned out to be the most effective act of Christian service that Adelaide Pollard ever achieved even though she later got to serve God in Africa.**

All because a frail, elderly woman in an ordinary, mid-week church prayer meeting expressed a short, simple prayer in **pure faith!**

It is astounding what God WILL achieve as a REWARD with the seeming little, unheralded or "hard" efforts of a believer that are done in FAITH in what God has said in Scripture!