

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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What about Those Who Turn Back ?

This originally was a response written to a student who asked, "What about people who used to be Christians - but they've turned back to the old lifestyle - are they still going to heaven?" while making reference to Luke 9:62.

To begin, let me simply say that once a person is a possessor of His life, that person is always a possessor of His life. It is impossible to think of a true believer as no longer possessing that life. Eternal life is a relationship with God as Father through

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Jesus Christ - John 17:3. When a person repents and accepts Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord, God makes that person a true child of God - John 1:11-13; Galatians 4:6-7. Again, all is by grace. Now it is possible for a person to participate in the blessings of the new age of the Spirit by associating with a community of believers and yet never make a personal commitment to Christ. Rather, such a person eventually chooses to turn away from Him as though his salvation must be found in another. For such a person, there is no hope, for there is no other Name given under heaven whereby a person can be saved. See Hebrews 6:4-8;10:26-31 with Acts 4:12. Such a person has never been changed within; all was simply external to him. Like those

teachers who knew of the truth yet did not love the truth in order to be saved, such a person is like a sow that has been washed returning to wallow in the mud or a dog returning to his vomit. Their actions simply reveal their true character from the start. See 2 Peter 2 with 2

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Thessalonians 2:10-12.

Now, the demands of discipleship do not make a disciple but prove the reality of the profession of faith. If a man says he will follow Christ yet turns back from Him when the going gets tough, then the test proves the absence of true faith. Such was the case with those in John 6:60-71. Some forsook Him early; one betrayed Him later. Yet, the ones who stayed with Him because their faith was real said, "Lord to whom shall we go?"

You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now, obviously, such faith would not always express itself in a manner that could be known to men, but God knew and still knows all that are His - Luke 22:31-34; 2 Timothy 2:19. He, alone, knows the wheat from the tares; Matthew 13:24-30. Those who are true will be known;

those who are false will be judged as such. No man can fool God. The true, of course, will give glory to God, for they will be with Him forever not due to their own merits but due to His great work for and in them - Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 4; Titus 3:3-8; Revelation 5:9-10.

Yes, when we know Him as He is and for all He has done, is doing, and yet will do for His people, we worship Him and follow Him out of love, not fear. As another student wrote to me, "We need not fear

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Someone Who loves us so perfectly." Yet, on the other hand, we are to have a healthy fear of Him, that is, a respect for His Person and authority in our lives, that acknowledges that someday we must all give an account to Him of what we do in these bodies - Romans 14:9-12; 1 Peter 1:17. I

say that this is a healthy fear because such an attitude is found in all godly men throughout the ages. See Abraham (Genesis 22:12) and our Lord Himself (Isaiah 11:1-5). It is a courageous fear because it motivates a man toward righteousness in a world that is so full of evil. It is a productive fear because it motivates a man to listen to and obey the Word of God. When we truly love someone, we desire to do that which is pleasing to him. If that someone is our Father, we know that we must ultimately give an account to Him for all we do.

In reference more specifically to Hebrews, a careful Bible student must read the passages in Hebrews 6 and 10 in the context of the entire book. If this is done, the meaning of these passages will become clear. Pay special attention to Hebrews 3:7 through 4:2 and compare this passage with Numbers 14:20-25 which helps to explain how people can be addressed as they

were in Hebrews 6:4-8 and Hebrews 10:26-31. Also, please notice how the writer of Hebrews shifts to those who have faith in Hebrews 6:9-12 and Hebrews 10:32-39 ("now followers of the crucified and risen Christ") after addressing those who had associated themselves

For now, the true and the false must grow together, but in the conclusion of this age all will be made manifest. No man can fool God.

with the believing remnant because of the perceived blessings they were experiencing only to turn back when the going got difficult, that is, persecutions came. The fact that they turned back proved that they did not have faith or share in His life. His children who sin are disciplined in order to live a holy life -

Hebrews 12:3-11. A true believer will be exercised by this discipline - Psalm 119:67, 71. Thus, the key to understanding the writings revealed in Hebrews is to see that the Lord is addressing a mixed multitude of Jewish people (both believers and unbelievers) and that He issues severe warnings to those who do not believe to not turn back but to go on to a full acceptance of their Messiah and the accompanying persecutions that are occurring.

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