

TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL

1 Corinthians 10:12

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

4-1-18 AM

Imagine that you are given an enormous check. You can deposit it later, when the funds clear. How would you take care of that check? Would you take care to keep it safe, or casually discard it or lay it around? Your faith in Christ is just such a check. We are promised an inheritance in Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit when we obey the Gospel. We can lose that check by Falling Away (also called Apostasy or Forsaking).

1. ANYONE CAN FALL AWAY

The warning about falling away is the most common admonition of the New Testament. There are warnings about this in every NT letter (except Philemon), and in many letters it is a main theme (such as Galatians and Hebrews). One could say that the OT is the story of the fall of Israel; certainly we see this example in the story of Israel in the Exodus (Jude 1:5 *But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe*). We are warned that anyone can fall; devoted disciples can fall (such as Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10); even apostles could fall (1 Cor. 9:27, Gal. 2:11). We need to accept that anyone can fall.

2. FALLING AWAY IS LEAVING CHRIST

In Hebrews 10:25-30 the writer speaks about forsaking the assembly, which might be simplified to describe someone who quits “going to church”. The writer says that this is actually an abandonment of God in Christ; when someone does this they insult the Holy Spirit and insult Jesus. We need to see that when someone gives up on the church, they are actually leaving Christ. It is not the church that they bring reproach upon, but Jesus. We cannot separate the Body of Christ from the Head, who is Christ. To offend one is to offend the other (1 John 4:20).

3. THERE ARE MAJOR CONSEQUENCES TO FALLING AWAY

We can consider that when we depart from Christ, we fall from Grace (Gal. 5:4) and lose our inheritance (2 John 8). But there are consequences now too. When you fall away, you make God your enemy (James 4:2). This means He is no longer supporting you or waling with you; He is working to cause your schemes to fail. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living God in such a condition. Too, even the church must reject you. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14 Paul tells the church that they cannot keep company with a Christian who will not walk faithfully. Yet the worst is to come; the Scripture say that our condition after falling away is worse than if we had never become a Christian (2 Peter 2:20-21).

4. YOU CAN RETURN

When someone leaves, are they lost forever? In one sense the answer is yes, since while they are fallen they have no hope (Hebrews 6:4-6). But when we fall, God is still faithful (2 Tim. 2:13), and if we confess our sins to Him, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). This is

because our salvation is a covenant relationship. When we violate our covenant by disobedience or falling away, we lose the benefit of that covenant. Thus James calls us “adulterers” for turning to the world in James 4. Yet a covenant is still present, and when we repent of our sins, our reward can be returned. This is the lesson of the parable of the prodigal son.

5. IT IS EASIER TO REMAIN FAITHFUL THAN TO FALL AWAY

We often point to statements that warn us of falling away because we are merely inattentive (Hebrews 2:1-3). But there are many statements that declare that if we are faithful to grow ourselves, falling away is not going to happen. In 2 Peter 1:5-11 Peter says that if we are diligent to grow spirituals, we will never stumble. As well, the consequences of staying faithful are better than falling away; our life is easier in Christ than out of Christ.

CONCLUSION

We all need to make sure we are faithful and receive our reward.