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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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THE HIGH COST THE JEWS PAID FOR DISOBEDIENCE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 86
HEBREWS 6:7-10

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

HEBREWS 6:7-10 "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

This study brings us to some illustrations because of the failure of the Jews to learn doctrine. In verses 1-6 of Hebrews 6 we saw the list of doctrines the Jews ignored and failed to learn. The Jerusalem Church had become legalistic, had departed from doctrinal truth, and had become a church of compromise. This message in Hebrews was written in 67 A.D. just three years before the Jerusalem Church was destroyed by the Romans. This was their last warning and was written to remind them that they yet had time to repent. This message was the last great appeal to them to correct their apostasy so their decline and fall might be avoided.

The writer reminded them that it was impossible to renew them back into fellowship--

1. Having been once enlightened. This is an aorist--passive--participle. And it means that once in the past they had understood doctrine.
2. Having tasted of the heavenly gift. This is an aorist--middle--participle. And this means that once in the past they had been benefited by learning doctrine.
3. Having been made partakers of the Holy Spirit. This is an aorist--passive--participle. This means that at a point of time in the past when they had been converted, they had received the Holy Spirit. This is a reference to the great events of Pentecost.
4. Having tasted of the good word of God and powers of the world to come. This is an aorist--middle--participle. It means that they at a point of time in the past had been greatly benefited by learning doctrine.
5. Having fallen away. This is aorist--active--participle. This means that on an act of their own, a deliberate act of their own, they had fallen away from learning doctrine and had stopped following the clear teaching of the Word of God.

The basis of their carnality was that they went back to the Levitical offerings and started offering animal sacrifices in the Temple, and thus they crucified Christ afresh. They were trying to add something to the cross. They wanted to stay friendly with all their unbelieving Jewish business associates and they wanted to maintain their social contacts. In other words, they had one foot in Christianity and one foot in Judaism. It resulted in a form of carnality that made the situation impossible. It was absolutely impossible to renew them again into fellowship with God when they continued to ignore Bible doctrine.

Now the picture changes and we are going to have some illustrations of what they should do to get back in fellowship.

HEBREWS 6:7 "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God" Please remember that when Paul made his last trip to Jerusalem, he was out of the geographic will of God. Paul's mental attitude was wrong and God punished him for his disobedience. The Church Age began with the Jerusalem Church and this is where the church had her first great failure. You have often heard people say, "Now let's get

back to the old Pentecostal power". These are people who just don't understand the issue and don't know their church history. Forty years after Pentecost the church in Jerusalem was phased out completely and God had to find his base of operation in another locality. The Jerusalem church proved to be a total failure and found themselves unable to cope with the situation. The Judaisers all came from Jerusalem. The people who were always giving Paul trouble came from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a hotbed of legalism. Legalism is never acceptable to God. God does his work by grace and by grace alone. The Jerusalem Church by her production and apostasy proved her lack of spirituality.

In this seventh verse the word "Earth" is an illustration about believers. "Which drinketh in the rain" is a picture of the believer being filled with the Spirit and producing divine works that are pleasing to God. "Drinking in the rain" means learning doctrine and growing in fellowship with God. Just as the production of a crop it is totally dependent on rain or irrigation, so the life of the believer is totally dependent on the Word of God. The only way the carnal believer can get back into fellowship is to confess his sins. When believers are in fellowship and day by day they learn doctrine, then they produce divine good.

"That cometh oft upon it" is a present--active--participle and means that just as often as you receive the truth of doctrine in your soul, just that often you grow and live relaxed and stay in fellowship with God. Just like the harvest comes in the crop when the rain is adequate, so our lives produce divine good acceptable to the Lord when we are in fellowship and when we saturate our minds with Bible truth.

So here is a contrast. The believer out of fellowship cannot produce. The believer in fellowship can produce. Then the question arises, What kind of production do you have? There is no place in the plan for human good. The "herbs" mentioned here means divine good that is produced by the Christian in fellowship with God. In verse 8 we will meet "thorns and briars" and this refers to human production. There is no place for human good in the plan of God. You don't get salvation by works, you get salvation by the grace of God. You don't get into heaven by work. It, too, is given you by the grace of God. Then in phase two, which is life in this world and the life you live between the time of salvation and the time you go to Heaven, you serve by grace, you are led by grace, and you produce by grace. It is all the work of God in you, and it can never be your work in the energy of the flesh. When at the time of temptation we go on negative signals in our volition, the old sin nature moves in and takes over and immediately we are out of fellowship. In this condition our prayers, our witnessing, all our Christian service makes no points with God at all. The sum total of accomplishments during our period when we are out of fellowship adds up to exactly zero. It is only when we are in fellowship that we can perform divine good. We have to break out from under the control of the old sin nature in order to perform divine good. You may perform some amazing service while you are carnal and with your Dale Carnegie personality and your Madison Avenue techniques you may impress many people with your great achievements. But all such accomplishment is as filthy rags in the sight of God. It all adds up to human good. It is all unacceptable to God and here in our passage human good is called by two words--thorns and briars. When you get back in fellowship and your sins are forgiven you can perform exactly the same type of service, pray the same prayers and do the same kind of witnessing and this very same service will produce divine good. "Herbs" in this passage stand for divine good, but "thorns and briars" represent human good. These Jerusalem believers were moral, they were self-righteous, they observed the Sabbath, but they had one foot in the church and one foot in legalism. They were playing with the Levitical sacrifices and it was displeasing to God. Christ will not share his place in your life with any other God. Jesus said it this way--"No man can serve two masters". This is exactly what the Jerusalem believers were trying to do. They wanted to retain a good relationship with

all their unsaved relatives and Jewish business associates, and they wanted to maintain their social life which means so much to them. So they would show up at the Temple and offer animal sacrifices, while at the same time they pretended to be followers of Christ. They were actually saying by their deeds that they believed in the cross plus something. To them it was the cross plus animal sacrifices. But to God it is the cross plus nothing.

The word for herbs here comes from "botane" from which we get the word botany. So the believers who stay in fellowship and produce divine good receive blessings from God. They shared in the bounty from God. They were partakers in the great blessings that came from God. God is the ultimate source of blessings and when you are in fellowship then you are living in the perfect plan of God. This kind of living can give you perfect peace and poise in any sort of difficulty. The reason these people in Jerusalem were falling apart was their failure to learn Bible doctrine. As a result, they went on negative signals and did their own will instead of the will of God.

HEBREWS 6:8 "But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Now we come to the contrast. That which beareth thorns and briars is disapproved. So here we have the contrast of the spirit filled life and the carnal life. The person in fellowship produces herbs. That is verse 7. Now in verse eight we meet the believer out of fellowship and he can only produce thorns and briars. Thorns are usually used in Scripture to denote that which was cursed. In Genesis 3:18 thorns designate God's curse for sin. In Numbers 33:55 thorns are used to denote God's judgment. The word "thorn" is used throughout the Bible to call attention to the curse which falls on man because of sin. Isaiah 55:13 uses the word "thorn" to refer to the discipline which came to the Jews for their disobedience. Jesus wore a crown of thorns to show that he was being made a curse for us. Therefore human good, when accomplished when you are out of fellowship, is referred to in this passage as thorns. You can't bribe God in order to get a blessing. But human good does not impress God. The word for briars is "Tribolos" and in this passage refers to dead works. In Heaven all human good will be eliminated.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:11-15 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Let us look for a moment at this passage. These verses remind us that no human good is acceptable to the Lord. Human good is wood, hay, stubble and this is not acceptable to God. All that we accomplish in the strength of the flesh is to be burned. No human good will ever find a place in Heaven. This passage tells us that every believer, before he enters Heaven to spend eternity with God, will stand before Christ for evaluation. He cannot be judged for he was judged at the cross at the time of his salvation. But his work will be evaluated and the wood, hay, stubble will be burned up.

Look at 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Here we have the reason for our divine production. When the Holy Spirit is given control of your life you cannot produce human good, only divine good.

Now let us return to our passage in Hebrews. The passage says, "And is near unto cursing". It means that you are near the standard of evil. In the end, all human works will be burned.

HEBREWS 6:9 "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Now in this verse we have another conjunction of contrast. This verse is really saying this--"Look, you don't have to stay out of fellowship. You can rebound and get back in fellowship". The language here really means that the author of Hebrews realizes that they are capable of better things. Divine good produces things that are worthy of those who are saved.

HEBREWS 6:10 "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." This is the conclusion of this illustration. Here we have a reference to the righteousness and justice of God. Everything God does is perfect. God will fairly and accurately evaluate your work and each one is to be rewarded justly. The emphasis of this verse is this--It is never too late to get back in fellowship with God and start producing divine good.