

Text: Heb 3.6

Today brings us to the last message I've been thinking about from Heb 3.1-6, and that is this one from v. 6:

Holding Fast Our Confidence

Let's read the passage again, and then focus on v. 6, which is our text.

Read Heb 3.1-6, txt 6

Heb 3.6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

What do you think of the last part of that verse?

The wording suggests the possibility that someone could slip in holding his confidence, which implies that it might be possible to lose one's salvation.

This type of warning occurs frequently in Hebrews, so we are going to confront this question again and again.

Let's talk first of all about the doctrine of salvation. Consider Ephesians 2.

Read Eph 2.1-10

A summary of the points:

- All of us were dead in our trespasses and sins, Jew and Gentile alike (1-3)
- God is the one who saved us: he made us alive (5), he raised us up (6), in order to show off his grace towards us at the end of days (7) — (4-7)
- By grace we are saved (totally a gift) (8)
- Through faith, not works (8-9)
- Works follow faith, not precede it (10)

Now back to Hebrews

Heb 3.6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

What is the author describing here? What is the opposite of "holding fast our confidence" and the opposite of "holding firm our boast"? What happens to us if we don't do these things? Are we saved by faith and kept by works?

Proposition: The critical component in our salvation is faith firmly rooted in the good soil of God's promises.

I. Defining our terms [confidence/boast]

A. The confidence of which Hebrews speaks

1. The Greek word has a Greek history¹

- a. The word especially meant “freedom of speech”
- b. Could also mean free to speak in a bad sense, “license of tongue”
- c. Metaphorical meaning: “freedom of action”
- d. Further metaphor: “liberality, lavishness” – freedom to act so as to bestow much on someone

Characterized “men of Athens” – free citizens, free to speak

2. Boldness of speech in the NT

- a. Often used in John's gospel of “open, public speech” – Jesus spoke to them “plainly” or “boldly”
- b. In Acts, Peter speaks confidently that David was dead and buried and his tomb remained to their day (Ac 2.29)
- c. Apostles seen to bold/confident in their public preaching [though untrained] (Ac 4.13)
- d. Paul tells the Corinthians that he spoke with boldness (2 Cor 3.12)
- e. Paul continued in Rome, speaking the gospel with great openness (Ac 28.31)
- f. In prison, Paul closes Ephesians asking for prayer that he may speak with boldness (Eph 6.19)

¹ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Revised and Augmented Throughout*, ed. Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940) <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dparrhsi%2Fa>, (accessed 2023/03/31).

g. In prison, Paul plans to continue speaking boldly for Christ (Phil 1.20)

3. Confidence with God in the NT

- a. Commenting on deacons who serve well, Paul says they have high standing and great confidence in the faith (1 Tim 3.13)
- b. Hebrews exhorts us to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (Heb 4.16)
- c. Since we have confidence to enter the holy place (Heb 10.19), let us draw near, let us hold fast, let us consider how to stimulate one another

We will come back to this passage later.

- d. Confidence in the day of judgement (1 Jn 2.28, 4.17)

Freedom of speech, confidence before God, these are the themes this word touches on in the NT.

B. The boast of our hope

1. This is the only place in the NT where this word combination occurs

2. "Our hope"

- a. Jesus is "He on whom we have set our hope" (2 Co 1.10)
- b. Paul speaks "of Christ Jesus, *who is our hope*" as he opens 1 Timothy (1 Tim 1.1)
- c. Paul labors and strives because he has fixed "our hope on the living God" (1 Tim 4.10)
- d. Hebrews also exhorts us to hold fast "the confession of our hope" (Heb 10.23)

3. Paul speaks of "the blessed hope" of the return of Christ (Tit 2.13)

4. Conclusion: boasting in hope

- a. Boasting is a kind of speaking
- b. Believers don't "boast in my faith" or "boast in my gifts"
- c. Believers boast in their hope, freely speaking of the great benefit Jesus conveyed to them

C. If you are in His house

1. You have confidence to preach the gospel
2. You exult (boast) in your hope in Christ

II. Recalling the Hebrews' temptation

A. We believe the audience of the book of Hebrews consists of Jewish believers

1. The title, "to the Hebrews," appended in the late 2nd c. "indicative of its contents"²
2. Many internal references to Jewish rituals, persons, etc., suggest a Jewish audience
3. They are under pressure
 - a. Tempted to "drift away" (2.1)
 - b. Tempted to "harden their hearts" (3.7)
 - c. Tempted to "forsake the assembly" (10.25)
4. The pressure appears to be persecution (though they had endured persecution in the past)

B. Consider the reminder of chapter 10.32-38

1. Remember your sufferings just after your conversion (32)
2. Remember how it came on you, and on those about you (33)
3. Remember how you succored prisoners without fear (34)
4. Remember how you endured loss of property with rejoicing (34)
5. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence [there is our word again] (35)
 - a. Speak up for Christ freely in public
 - b. Speak up to Christ constantly in prayer
6. You have need of endurance, don't shrink back (36-38)

Now we have set the stage, what are we to make of the possible failure of confidence, the loss of the boast of our hope?

² David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 62.

III. Considering the soils (Mk 4.13-20)

- A. The parable of the Sower and the Seed has various interpretations, but let's look at Jesus' interpretation
1. The seed is the word, the sower is anyone who spreads the word (14)
 2. Of those sown on the roadside, the seed is immediately taken away (16)
 3. Of those sown in the rocky places: (16-17)
 - a. The seed springs up, seems to flourish
 - b. They have "no root in themselves"
 - c. When affliction or persecution comes, "they fall away"
 4. Of those sown among the thorns: (18-19)
 - a. They heard the word (hearing implies receiving)
 - b. The worries of life, the deceitfulness of riches, desires for other things choke the word
 - c. The word becomes unfruitful
 5. Of those sown in the good soil, much fruit (20)
- B. Comparing the soils to the Hebrews
1. The word was sown among them
 2. They responded to the word (and bore fruit, see ch. 10) – this eliminates the "pathway option"
 3. Persecution has arisen: which way will they go?
 - a. Fall away
 - b. Become unfruitful
 - c. Suffer, endure, bear fruit
- These are the three possibilities that remain
4. Those who fall away "had no root in themselves" – no genuine faith
 5. Those who become unfruitful have not lost what they had, but failed to live up to what they had for "reasons"

C. Look again at our passage:

Heb 3.6 but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

1. The warning here isn't falling away, it is a loss of identity
2. No longer speaking boldly, to men or God
3. No longer boasting in hope
4. With the metaphor, "stepping outside the house"

For a believer to be outside the house must be a lonely existence indeed.

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn in two. (Mt 27.51)

Mt 27.51 ¶ And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

This symbolized the opening of the way to God: no longer needed a priest, you can go direct to God.

If a believer were to step back into Judaism, it would be as if they had stepped outside the veil, no longer had access to God.

I don't think this passage is talking about loss of salvation, but it is ambiguous. One writer says nothing can be concluded about it:

"There is simply not enough information in this verse, or in the paragraph for that matter, to interpret these words to mean that failure to hold on would result in the loss of salvation."³

There is enough information to exhort believers to hold fast to their confidence and their boasting.

³ Allen, 248–49.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The critical component in our salvation is faith firmly rooted in the good soil of God's promises.

Heb 10.19-25 ¶ Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,²¹ and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God,²² **let us draw near** with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope** without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;²⁴ and **let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,**²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.