

Introduction

- People we've known back-sliding
 - guy I was on Exec with at Uni...
 - tricky & painful issue for us to deal with!!
- He's wanting the Christians he's writing to to "keep on growing"
 - where he's going with that is an exploration of Jesus as priest in the order of Melchizedek, in chapter 7
 - but as he's winding up to that he realises that this is a **step up** for them to take in!
 - and as he reflects on that he touches on the fact that **some folk don't appear to keep on growing...**

Growth or leaving faith? (vs.1-6)

- Babies and solid food - need to push it so they learn!
 - solid food here is OT teachings applied and seen through the lens of Jesus as Son of God and great high priest
 - growth doesn't just happen!
 - often times the will is involved...
- We've all known people apparently converted, perhaps enjoying the spiritual experience of a group...
 - and yet it not lasting!
 - the genuineness of the conversion, the regeneration, is partly proved in the persistence of that faith
 - cf God knowing the reality behind the level of faith possible for a child
 - God also and only knows the level of faith someone truly has...
- How terrible such a situation is - to knowingly turn back on what was previously accepted!
- **Paradox**
- Paradox of God's firm grip on us - he will not ever let us go...
 - while at the same time we still have freedom of choice
- Gate to salvation: my choice; from other side: his choice!
- I am content to leave the final judgement to God...
 - ...while working with the passion engendered by a concern not to fall away
 - ...and the confidence that God will never let me go!

Good or Bad soil (vs.7-8)

- **Link verses in 7-8** between the warnings of 1-6 and the encouragements of 9-20
- Choice image - one way or the other - good or bad - on the one hand, on the other hand
 - **image is a farming one**

Encouragements (vs.9-20)

- First for their faith - 9-10
 - he expresses confidence, he's seen their faith in action and is confident that they are doing well
 - things that **accompany** salvation - that go hand in hand with lives bathed in grace
 - **work for the gospel, love shown, help to God's people**, etc!
- Second, his desire that they continue in that faith - 11-12
 - press on in that
 - an encouragement to press on couldn't come if they weren't already doing it!!
 - "**keep at it**" implies they are already **at it!!**

- Third, basis of our hope is God's firm promise - 13-20
 - this faith we have is not fanciful, but grounded in something firm...
 - ...namely God's promises
 - God swore on himself, since there is nothing firmer!

Conclusion

- Carrots and sticks!
 - some of us respond better to one, some the other, and most of us a mixture of both!!
- And that's exactly what the writer is doing here:
 - using a mixture of carrots and sticks - [encouragements and warnings](#)
 - [because faith in Jesus is too good to miss!](#)