

6. God's Promise Is Certain to Those Who Do Not Fall Away

Hebrews 5 closed with the statement that when by reason of the time the Hebrew Christians ought to be teachers, they needed to be instructed in the elementary teachings once again. Without being equipped in the teachings about righteousness, which is described as solid food, people are unequipped to distinguish between good and evil. This argument, which juxtaposes the elementary principles against teachings about righteousness, continues into the next chapter. Indeed, their frailty, resulting from this failure to grow spiritually, led to their falling away and binding the Jewish teachings upon Christians.

Leaving the Elementary Teaching

Heb 6:1-3

6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

In the beginning passage, the writer tells the Hebrews directly to leave the elementary teachings. By identifying the elementary teachings as the foundation, he does not minimize their importance in the overall scheme of redemption. These elementary principles were the very principles preached to convert the Hebrews and the Gentiles in the first place. One need only to look to the sermons in Acts to find these principles preached repeatedly. Indeed, they are the foundation of our faith:

- Repentance from acts that lead to death: Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30.
- Faith in God: Acts 2:37; Acts 10:43; Acts 16:31-34.
- Instructions about baptisms: Acts 1:4; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; Acts 22:16.
- The laying on of hands: Acts 8:12-23; 1 Cor 12:4-11; 1 Cor 13:8-10.
- The resurrection of the dead: 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:13-18
- Eternal judgment: 1 Cor 5:10; 2 Thess 1:6:10

Christians must move on to maturity—mastering and maintaining the teachings about righteousness.

The Danger in Drifting and Falling Away

Heb 6:4-8

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

Becoming a Christian follows an enlightenment about what God has done for us and about what we must do. Jesus taught in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This is the free gift of God, according to Rom 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." As Christians, we share in this gift from God and taste of the promised Holy Spirit, as Paul described in Eph 1:13-14: "Having believed, you were

marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.” We have also tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age. Once we have been so enlightened, if we fall away it is impossible to renew us to repentance. All of this occurs because we are crucifying the Son of God all over again and once again subjecting him to public disgrace. We continually reject the word of God and the Spirit that delivers it. The sin is without forgiveness. Jesus taught in Mark 3:28-29, “28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”

By analogy, the state of the man so fallen from the grace of God is the same as the fate of a worthless field of thorns and thistles. They will both burn.

Making Your Hope Sure

Heb 6:9-15

9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case – things that accompany salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

The writer is confident of better things of them—the things that accompany salvation. God is just, and He will treat them fairly. However, Christians must be as diligent at the end as they were at the beginning. This is how they make their hope sure. Do not be lazy, but imitate the faith and patience of those who inherit what God promised. The immediate example is the example of Abraham. God swore by himself—there is none greater—and Abraham who waited patiently received what God promised.

Hope an Anchor for the Soul

Heb 6:16-20

16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

This passage teaches that there are two unchangeable truths: the nature of God's purpose is unchangeable, and it is impossible for God to lie. The first of these—the nature of God's purpose—God made clear to the heirs, “we who have fled the world to take hold of the hope offered us.” The heirs have an anchor for their soul: God's purpose will not change, and God confirmed this with His very own oath. God cannot lie. Therefore, the anchor is firm and secure. The writer says, “It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain.” The antecedent of *it is hope*. That is that we, as Christ before us, might enter into the sanctuary. The spiritual sanctuary is heaven where Christ now performs the functions of high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

This passage prepares the reader for the discussion that follows about how Christ is a superior high priest.