

Hebrews Chapter 6

The readers are encouraged to go on to maturity by leaving the elementary teachings of the Word. The word for “perfection” (Greek teleiotes), has both an absolute and a relative sense. Its relative sense involving maturity is expressed here.

The six representative doctrines listed here involve three sets: the elementary teachings concerning conversion itself, the post-conversion experiences, and teachings on “last things.” Eschatology is included here among the first truths, rather than as deeper truth.

The mere study of last things does not demonstrate spiritual maturity. The practical changes these eschatological truths produce manifest maturity.

Fundamentalism is a movement growing out of the controversy with religious liberalism at the beginning of this century, when godly Christian leaders insisted that certain truths were fundamental to Christianity and could not be compromised.

This included divine substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and physical return, and the existence of a literal heaven and hell. Though good Christians might disagree in other areas, to deny these essentials is to abandon the Christian faith.

History records the sad accounts of some who refused to accept scriptural authority and made shipwrecks of their faith. For example, Diotrephes opposed an epistle from John, and then began harming the ministry of faithful Christians under his influence (3 John 9-10). Christians are wise to build their lives and ministries upon the solid foundation of Christ’s teaching (Matt. 7:24-25).

Hebrews 6:1 "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,"

“Leaving”: This “leaving” does not mean to despise or abandon the basic doctrines. They are the place to start, not stop. They are the gate of entrance on the road to salvation in Christ.

“Principles of the doctrine of Christ”: As “the oracles of God” (in 5:12), refers to the Old Testament, so does this phrase. The writer is referring to basic Old Testament teaching that prepared the way for Messiah, the beginning teaching about Christ. This Old Testament “teaching” includes the 6 features listed (in verses 1-2).

“Go on unto perfection”: Salvation by faith in Messiah Jesus. The verb is passive, so as to indicate “let us be carried to salvation.” That is not a matter of learners being carried by teachers, but both being carried forward by God. The writer warns his Jewish readers that there is no value in stopping with the Old Testament basics and repeating (“laying again”), what was only intended to be foundational.

“Repentance from dead works”: This Old Testament form of repentance is the turning away from evil deeds that bring death. (Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23), and turning to God. Too often the Jew only turned to God in a superficial fashion, fulfilling the letter of the law as evidence of his repentance. The inner man was still dead (Matt. 23:25-28; Rom. 2:28-29).

Such repentance was not the kind which brought salvation (verse 6; 12:17; Acts 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10). Under the New Covenant, however, “repentance ... toward God” is coupled with “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Christ’s atoning sacrifice saves from “dead works” (9:14; John 14:6).

“Faith toward God”: Faith directed only toward the Father is unacceptable without faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; James 2:14-20).

Hebrews 6:2 "Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

In the Old Testament Levitical system, there were many ceremonial cleansings, which were outward signs of heart cleansing (Exodus 3):18-21; Lev. 16:4, 24, 26, 28; Mark 7:4, 8). The New Covenant called for an inner washing (Titus 3:5), that regenerated the soul.

“Laying on of hands”: Under the Old Covenant, the person who brought a sacrifice placed his hands on it to symbolize his identification with it as a substitute for sin (Lev. 1:4; 3:8, 13; 16:21). There could also be a reference here to solemn priestly blessings (Matt. 19:13).

“Resurrection ... eternal judgment”: The Pharisee believed in the resurrection from the dead (Acts 23:8), but were still spiritually dead (Matt. 23:27). They also believed in the judgment of God and were headed for it. It is significant that all of the doctrines listed (in verses 1-2), can be associated with the Pharisees, who were attracted to and sometimes associated with Jesus (Luke 7:36-50; 13:31; 14:1; John 3:1).

Paul was a Pharisee before his conversion (Phil. 3:5). The Pharisees were products of the pursuit of righteousness by works of the law rather than by faith (Rom 9:30-32; 10:1-3). A portion of the Hebrews to whom this epistle was written may have been Pharisees.

We see from this, that basic Christianity includes repentance of sins, being baptized into new life, receiving the promise of the resurrection, being warned of the judgment to come, and even includes the laying on of hands by the presbytery whereby we receive the gifts, of the Holy Spirit. You might say then, what is left that is not basic?

This is where we walk in the knowledge of God producing fruit fit for the kingdom. We have already been saved, now it is time for us to work for the Lord in whatever job He has for us to do. We will find, that we, like the disciples of old, have been given a commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

I said in a previous lesson, that all who have passed beyond the basic Christianity and who have studied and know the Word of God, are obligated to teach those who do not know. This next Scripture tells us exactly what God would have us to do.

Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

We are in a war with the devil. We must do our best to win our young people back to God, before the devil enlists them.

Hebrews 6:3 "And this will we do, if God permit."

“Will we do”: The writer is likely both giving his own testimony about going on from Old Testament teaching to embrace the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, and also identifying himself with the readers. Salvation always requires God’s enablement (John 6:44).

Almost everyone who is studying this Bible study has already gone beyond the step of basic Christianity. We are all seeking for the deeper truths which the Holy Spirit of God teaches us.

The most important statement in this short verse above is, “if God permit”. Without His permission, we would not even wake in the morning. The first thing for a true Christian to do, is turn our will over to God.

James 4:15 "For that ye [ought] to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

Verses 4-6: This passage does not teach that one can lose his salvation through disbelief or apostasy. These verses refer to a hypothetical situation whereby the author stresses what would happen to a saved person if he could fall away.

The author does not believe one can lose his salvation or that his readers had (verse 9); but he so speaks to demonstrate the folly some might have in imagining that they can turn back to Judaism without suffering loss. Though the author is not writing about his readers (verse 4; “those”), he still is writing for their sakes (verse 9; “you”).

“If they shall fall away” is the translation given to the fifth participle of the passage. This is a legitimate and even grammatical usage by the author within the warning passages (2:3; 10:26; and even 6:8). The first four participles refer to actual blessings whereas number five describes a potential situation, and so can be translated unlike the first four.

The important point about Hebrews 6 is that it agrees with the general tenor of Scripture concerning the security of the born-again believer. One basis for the security of the believer involves the promises recorded in God’s Word (verses 18-20; 7:24-25; 8:12; 10:10-14; John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; Phil. 1:6; 1 John 5:13).

Yet, an even stronger basis for security is found within the nature of the new life God gives. Though conversion involves man's will, it is God's will that produces regeneration (John 1:13).

Thus, salvation is infinitely more than a decision that one can make and then break. It is the work of God that transforms one from darkness to light (1 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:13), from death to life (John 5:24), from a child of the Devil to a son of God (Rom. 8:14-17).

It is a completed, regenerating work (10:14; Eph. 2:8 "you are saved," or "you have been saved and stand saved", Greek perfect tense).

Verses 4-6: Five advantages possessed by the Jews are yet insufficient for their salvation.

Hebrews 6:4 "For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,"

"Enlightened": They had received instruction in biblical truth which was accompanied by intellectual perception. Understanding the gospel is not the equivalent of regeneration (10:26, 32). (In John 1:9), it is clear that enlightening is not the equivalent of salvation (10:29).

"Tasted of the heavenly gift": Tasting in the figurative sense in the New Testament refers to consciously experiencing something (2:9). The experience might be momentary or continuing. Christ's "tasting" of death (2:9), was obviously momentary and not continuing or permanent. All men experience the goodness of God, but that does not mean they are all saved (Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:25).

Many Jews, during the Lord's earthly ministry experienced the blessings from heaven He brought, in healings and deliverance from demons, as well as eating the food He created miraculously (John 6). Whether the gift refers to Christ (John 6:51; 2 Cor. 9:15), or to the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 1:12), experiencing either one was not the equivalent of salvation (John 16:8; Acts 7:51).

"Partakers of the Holy Ghost": Even though the concept of partaking is used (in 3:1; 3:14; and 12:8), of a relationship which believers have, the context must be the final determining factor. This context (in verses 4-6), seems to preclude a reference to true believers.

It could be a reference to their participation, as noted above, in the miraculous ministry of Jesus who was empowered by the Spirit or in the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), which obviously can be resisted without experiencing salvation (Acts 7:51).

Hebrews 6:5 "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,"

"Tasted": This has an amazing correspondence to what was described (in 2:1-4). Like Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), these Hebrews had not yet been regenerated, despite all they had heard and

seen (Matt. 13:3-9; John 6:60-66). They were repeating the sins of those who died in the wilderness after seeing the miracles performed through Moses and Aaron and hearing the voice of God at Sinai.

Hebrews 6:6 "If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [him] to an open shame."

“Shall fall away”: This Greek term occurs only here in the New Testament. In the LXX, it was used to translate terms for severe unfaithfulness and apostasy (Ezek. 14:13; 18:24; 20:27). It is equivalent to the apostasy (in 3:12). The seriousness of this unfaithfulness is seen in the severe description of rejection within this verse: they re-crucify Christ and treat Him contemptuously.

Those who sinned against Christ in such a way had no hope of restoration or forgiveness (2:2-3; 10:26-27; 12:25). The reason is that they had rejected Him with full knowledge and conscious experience (as described in the features of verses 5-6). With full revelation, they rejected the truth, concluding the opposite of the truth about Christ, and thus had no hope of being saved.

They can never have more knowledge that they had when they rejected it. They have concluded that Jesus should have been crucified, and they stand with his enemies. There is no possibility of these verses referring to losing salvation.

Many Scripture passages make unmistakably clear that salvation is eternal (John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35, 38-39; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:4-5). Those who want to make this verse mean that believers can lose salvation will have to admit that it would then also say that one could never get it back again.

John 15:6 "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast [them] into the fire, and they are burned."

To abide means to dwell continuously. It is not possible to have your name blotted out of the book of life. You have to be saved for your name to be written in the book of life. Read this Scripture and you will see it is very important to continue with Christ after you have received Him.

Revelation 3:5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

We must walk daily in the salvation that we have received.

Hebrews 10:29 "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" This says it all.

Verses 7-8: Here are illustrations showing that those who hear the gospel message and respond in faith are blessed; those who hear and reject it are cursed (Matt. 13:18-23).

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:"

We hear so much about the devil being in control of the earth, but he has to get God's permission for what he does. Jesus is the ruler of the earth.

Philippians 2:10 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;"

Notice also, that God is the one who allows the rain.

Matthew 5:45 "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

We know that God withholds the rain, sometimes for years to cause repentance of the people.

Deuteronomy 11:17 "And [then] the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and [lest] ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you."

The earth receives the blessings of rain from God, just as our blessings come from God. We could go into this in greater detail by telling how Jesus told the sea to be still and it had to obey. Do not be deceived, God is in control of everything.

Hebrews 6:8 "But that which beareth thorns and briers [is] rejected, and [is] nigh unto cursing; whose end [is] to be burned."

"Rejected (or worthless)". See the use of the term (in Rom. 1:28 "depraved"; 2 Cor. 13:5). "Fail the test"; and (2 Tim. 3:8), "rejected".

The easiest way to explain this, is, by their fruits you shall know them. Thorns and briers are part of the curse on the ground when Adam fell. They are of no use to anyone, so their fate is burning to get rid of them.

Genesis 3:17-19 "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life;"
"Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;"
"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

We see here, that he is not just speaking of just plants which are thorns, but people, as well. As we said before, it is terribly important that we be doing the work God has called us to do. We

want Him to say when we stand before Him, Well done thy good and faithful servant. The fruit that should be showing in our life is spoken of in these next two verses.

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," "Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

We can easily see from this what God has in mind for useless things. Are you a fruit bearer?

Hebrews 6:9 "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

“Beloved”: This term shows a change of audience and a change from a message of warning to a message of encouragement. That the address is to believers is further confirmed by the expression of confidence that “better things” could be said of them (as compared to those who were being warned in the preceding verses).

The “things that accompany salvation” are their works which verify their salvation (verse 10; Eph. 2:10; James 2:18, 26). The very statement implies that the things described (in 5:11 - 6:5), do not accompany salvation but are indicative of unbelief and apostasy.

“Though we thus speak”: Though it had been necessary to speak about judgment in the preceding verses; the writer assures the “beloved”; those who are believers, that he is confident of their salvation.

We need to be working to get as many more people in the kingdom as we can, when the Lord returns. Some of us work in small places and may just have a few, but the angels in heaven rejoice when you bring one sinner to Jesus. There are a few more Scriptures here that I will give you on this subject.

Titus 2:11-14 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;" "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Hebrews 6:10 "For God [is] not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

“Work and ... love”: 1 Thess. 1:3-4.

“Toward his name”: Throughout this epistle “name” has the Hebraic sense of the authority, character, and attributes of the Son of God (1:4) or of God the Father (2:12; 13:15; and John 14:13-14).

“Saints”: All true Christians are saints, or “holy ones” (13:24; Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2).

Everything we are doing in the name of the Lord here on the earth is being recorded right now in heaven. Your rewards will be in heaven. Jesus said, In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me. These Scriptures in Jesus' own words say it much better than I can.

Matthew 25:35-40 "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:" "Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink?" "When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]?" "Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me."

I will end this lesson by saying, if we are to be like our Savior (Jesus Christ), then we must forget about ourselves and the so-called pleasures of this world, and spend every extra moment telling someone about Jesus. Won't it be wonderful to see the people you brought to Christ in heaven? Lay up your treasures in heaven; not on this earth.

Hebrews Chapter 6 Questions

1. In Hebrew 6:1, we are told to leave the principles of doctrine and go on to what?
2. Name some of the things that are covered in basic Christianity.
3. When we go beyond basic Christianity, what is left?
4. What are we Christians, who have already received basic Christianity, and have studied the Word, obligated to do?
5. What are three very important words found in Hebrews 6:3?
6. What happens when a seasoned person, operating in full knowledge, chooses again a sinful way of life?
7. What does enlightened mean here?
8. This person spoken of in question 7, not only sins, but it is the desire of their _____ to sin.
9. John chapter 15 verse 6 says, what happens to those who do not abide in Jesus.
10. Who shall be clothed in white raiment in heaven?
11. Who is really in control of the earth?

12. Philippians 2:10 says, who must bow to the name of Jesus?
13. Who does God send rain on?
14. Where in Deuteronomy do we read that God would not let it rain because of His wrath?
15. In Hebrews chapter 6 verse 8, we read that worthless things shall be _____.
16. Who brought the curse of thorns and briars to the earth?
17. Are you a fruit bearer?
18. What fruit should be showing in a Christian's life?
19. How does Titus chapter 2 say we should live?
20. What are we Christians to be zealous of?
21. When will you reap the rewards for what you have done on earth?
22. What does the 25th chapter of Matthew teach about doing for others?
23. If we are to be like Jesus, what must we do?
24. Where should our treasures be?