

Lesson 5

The Unchangeable Promise

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

As we take a close look at what many have labeled the most difficult passage of the New Testament, let's remember a few things. First, the author of Hebrews wants to encourage us. He said it himself. Second, it is important to look at each passage of Scripture in the context of the entire Word of God. We should not expect any part of God's Word to contradict what He has said elsewhere. Finally, God does not desire to confuse or discourage us, but He may intend to stretch us as He allows us to press on to maturity.

With that in mind, take some extra time today and ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you through His challenging words in Hebrews 6. May all that He reveals cause you to love Him more!

“And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Matthew 13:23

1. This is a good time to remember the purpose of the author's letter to the Hebrews. What is his purpose according to Hebrews 13:22?

Pressing on to Maturity

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:20 and focus especially on 5:11-14.

2. What does the author give as his reason for this break in his discussion of Jesus and Melchizedek?
3. Compare the immature believers of Hebrews 5:11-13 with the mature believers of verse 14.

4. What are the six elements of “elementary teaching” listed in 6:1-2? See question 7 if you are having trouble or want to check your answers.

5. Do you think that God wants us to “leave” the basics of our Christian faith – like repentance? What does He want us to do according to Revelation 2:4-5?

6. How does Galatians 3:24 refer to the Law?

The author of Hebrews is writing to Jewish believers, and the principles listed refer not only to the New Testament teachings that are more familiar to us today but also to Jewish traditions under the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic (or Levitical) Law was a list of regulations for holy living under the Old Covenant, which was given to the Israelites through Moses by God. The Old Covenant was in effect from the time of Moses until the inauguration of the New Covenant with Christ’s death and resurrection. The recipients of this letter were Jews who had been living under the Old Covenant and were learning to live under the New. It is likely that the author of Hebrews is encouraging the believers to move from the Old Testament understanding of these principles into the maturity of the New Testament fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

7. Compare the Old Testament teachings under the Law with the New Testament fulfillments under Christ in the following principles which are listed in Hebrews 6:1-2:
 - ❖ **Repentance from dead works:**
 - ❖ Read Ezekiel 18 (especially verses 4-9, 24-28 and 30-32). What were the Israelites judged by under the Law according to Ezekiel 18:30?

 - ❖ In Hebrews 9:13-14 and Ephesians 2:8-9, by what are we saved under Christ’s law?

 - ❖ **Faith toward God:**
 - ❖ How did the Israelites demonstrate their faith toward God under the Mosaic Law according to Deuteronomy 6:4-19?

 - ❖ According to John 14:6, how do we demonstrate faith under the New Covenant?

❖ **Instructions about washings (“baptism” in some translations):**

- ❖ Until when were the washings and regulations of the Law imposed according to Hebrews 9:6-10 (especially verse 10)? See Numbers 19 for examples of these washings.
- ❖ Since Christ’s resurrection, who washes us? See 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5.

❖ **Instructions about laying on of hands (refers to Jewish sacrifices):**

- ❖ Looking at Leviticus 1:4 and 3:8, on what did the priests’ lay their hands?
- ❖ Who is our sacrifice under the New Covenant? See Hebrews 9:11-12.

❖ **Resurrection of the dead:**

- ❖ The Israelites living under the Law before Christ did not know much about resurrection of the dead. How is it mentioned in Job 19:26?
- ❖ How is that teaching expounded upon in John 11:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-21?

❖ **Eternal judgment:**

- ❖ What did those living under the Law know about judgment according to Ecclesiastes 12:14?
- ❖ How does Jesus explain the eternal judgment in John 5:21-27?

8. Now, what do *you* think the author meant when he encouraged the audience to “leave the elementary teachings about the Christ” (Hebrews 6:1)?

Convinced of Better Things

Read Hebrews 6:4-6.

Notice that the author shifts between verses 3 and 4 and starts speaking generally rather than by directly addressing his audience. There is controversy here about whether the author is warning true believers that they can lose their salvation or is warning those who are not yet believers to choose to accept salvation before it is too late. As you look at these verses and consider the following questions, consider for yourself what you think the author meant.

9. What are the characteristics of the people that the author describes in Hebrews 6:4-6?

10. What is the result of their situation (Hebrews 6:6)?

11. Does the author of Hebrews appear to think that believers in Christ can lose their salvation? See Hebrews 9:12 (how is the redemption described?); 10:14 (how long has He perfected those He has sanctified?); 10:39 and 13:5.

12. Do you think Scripture as a whole testifies to the fact that believers in Jesus Christ can lose their salvation? See John 6:37-40; John 10:27-29; Romans 8:35-39 and 1 Corinthians 1:7-9.

13. So what do you think? Are these verses teaching that believers can lose their salvation?¹

Read Hebrews 6:7-8.

14. Describe the two different fields – their circumstances and the outcomes.

¹ This has not been an exhaustive discussion of this topic, and very godly people come down on both sides of the argument. If you are struggling with this question, ask the Lord to continue to reveal His truth to you as you study His Word more.

15. Read Matthew 13:1-9 and 13:18-23. What are the four outcomes to hearing the gospel and how are they depicted in this parable?

16. How have you responded to hearing the gospel?

The Source of Hope

Read Hebrews 6:9-20.

At this point in the text there is another shift, and the author resumes speaking directly to his audience of Jewish believers.

17. How does the author address the audience in Hebrews 6:9?

18. List some of the encouragements that the author gives the believers in Hebrews 6:9-10.

19. In Hebrews 6:11-12, what will be the result of the believers' diligence?

The same assurance that was given to the people in Hebrews applies to us.

20. Who does the author give as an example of one who inherited a promise? How did he obtain the promise according to Hebrews 6:15?

These promises are a part of the Abrahamic Covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis, long before the Old Covenant was established through Moses. The covenant with Abraham and the Old Covenant *are not* the same thing.

21. In Hebrews 6:13-18, who did God swear by? How is that a comfort to you?

22. Read Romans 4:16-22. How old was Abraham when he received the fulfillment of the promise? What was he certain of according to verse 21?

23. How is that an encouragement to you in your life today?

24. What is the anchor of our soul in Hebrews 6:19? How is it described?

25. Who gives us the hope the author refers to in Hebrews 6:17-20? How?

Prepare for Life Question:

If you *know* you have already accepted God's gift of salvation:

26. According to Hebrews 6:3 and 1 Corinthians 3:5-7, what role does God play in our maturation? What role do you think we play?

27. If you desire to mature in Christ, take some time now to pray that He would continue His good work in you that He has begun (Philippians 1:6).

If you aren't sure that you've accepted God's gift of salvation:

28. Have you been enlightened and now desire to respond? Have you tasted of the heavenly gift but desire to eat of it more fully? Have you been a partaker of the Holy Spirit but desire now that He would come and live within you? Have you tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the age to come? As long as you desire to turn to the Lord with a repentant heart and receive His gift of salvation, it is never too late to find refuge in Him! Please refer to Appendix I about salvation. If you respond to Him this week, it would benefit you to find someone that you know is already a believer and share your decision with them. It will bless you both!

Lecture Notes:
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