

Chapter 6

Good morning and thank you for joining us! This morning we're in Hebrews 6 if you would please turn in your bibles there.

Now last week in chapter 5 we saw the warning from the author of Hebrews saying I wanted to give you deeper truths, but you guys were too immature in the faith to handle these deeper realities of Christ. And we saw how he compared them to babies, unable to handle the nutrition of real food, they were toothless, and could only handle milk.

And as chapter 6 opens we'll see three pairs of "basics" that Christians should move beyond. We should have these down, so that we may grow in our maturity.

In this chapter we see not only one of the harshest and most direct warnings in all the Bible, but also some of the most encouraging words as well

We're gonna study all of chapter 6, and the title of this mornings message is ANCHORED

Lets pray

I mentioned last week that Hebrews 6 contains some of the most difficult verses in all of the scripture. And we'll get there this morning, but first it's important to note a couple of things.

SHOW SLIDE You'll notice in verses one to three, the author of Hebrews speaks in the first person. We, us. Let us do this.

As we get to the more difficult part of this chapter, the direct warning, verses 4 to 6, the author switches to the third person. He speaks about they and them and those.

When he gets back to verse 9, he includes himself again with we.

CLOSE SLIDE

The whole purpose of this section of Hebrews is the author is pleading with the audience that they grow up in Christ. There needs to be maturity, they can't keep acting like immature, baby Christians.

The reason this is such a big deal, why this message of Christian maturity has such a thrust to it, is because the world around them, and us is not going to be passive towards our faith.

We are not of this world as believers, which means the world around us is going to drag us down into the undertow if we don't strengthen ourselves and we don't grow.

As you study the Bible, you'll notice throughout there is this theme for all of us of progressing, of growing in spiritual maturity. Everything in the Bible leads us toward mature faith.

Which reminds us of 2 important truths. On this side of eternity we never fully arrive in the Christian faith. And the other truth is that the growing Christian is reaching forward, not resting on what has already happened.

Let's begin our study

1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, Since they needed to grow spiritually, these Christians, in fact all Christians, need to "press on to maturity."

And notice-**let us go on to perfection**. The writer included himself in this charge because even mature believers, like himself, can become more mature. We never gain perfect spiritual maturity in this lifetime.

And again remember the context here of this letter. These are men and women who are saved. They are genuine believers. Their need is not more knowledge, rather, they need to use the knowledge they possess so that they may grow.

2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. The writer presented the six foundational teachings in verses 1 and 2 in **SHOW SLIDE** three pairs: (1) "repentance from dead works," and "faith toward God" (v. 1), both referring to our relationship to God,

(2) instruction about "baptisms," and "laying on of hands" (v. 2a), which refer to one's relationship to the church,

and (3) instruction about "the resurrection of the dead," and "eternal judgment" (v. 2b), both pointing to future life.

These are basic truths regarding Christianity. And the writer of Hebrews seems to be saying that they needed to move beyond these elementary teachings and to press on to maturity in Christianity. **CLOSE SLIDE**

3 And this we will^[fn] do if God permits.

How does growth toward maturity take place? It happens when, by God's grace, each Christian responds positively to further revelation beyond the basics.

Sadly there are plenty of churches that only look to tickle ears and just teach the basics repeatedly. And the problem is that this leads to ears becoming dull, folks stop growing, and it then becomes easy for them to turn away from the faith.

Christians such as yourselves who, by God's grace, put themselves under the challenge of more advanced sound teaching, and respond properly to it by applying it in their lives, grow more mature.

Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

All Christians should be growing, maturing, and pressing on!

And now in verse 4-6 he gives the warning about what can happen if Christians don't mature. Let's read v4-6

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away,[fn] to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

Now I'll tell you this is one of the most debated sections among scholars in all of the Bible. **SHOW SLIDE** There are typically 3 different interpretations for these verses

- 1) This is speaking of those who were never Christians
- 2) This is hypothetical situation
- 3) This describes apostates

CLOSE SLIDE

There are those who say Hebrews 6 is talking about people who were never saved-about people who just sort of dabbled in Christianity. They came to church occasionally on Sundays. They had devotions if they weren't too busy. But they weren't really plugged in. Yes, they tasted of the heavenly gift and of the Word, but they never really sank their teeth into it, never digested it.

So this first interpretation is that Hebrews 6 doesn't apply to a born-again believer.

I have difficulty with this argument because back in chapter 2, we read how Jesus Christ tasted death for all men (2:9). Does that mean Jesus merely dabbled in securing our salvation, that He didn't pay the full price? Of course not.

When Scripture says Christ tasted death for all men, it means He fully took our punishment. He died in our place. **2 Cor 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

I personally can't support those who use the word "taste" lightly in reference to Hebrews 6-I have problems in their position.

A second group says that, based on the word "if" in verse 6, Hebrews 6 presents nothing more than a hypothetical situation. **6 if they fall away,**

In other words, if there was someone who really experienced the Holy Spirit and tasted of the good Word of God, and if it were possible that they would fall away, then they would re-crucify Christ and put Him to open shame.

But I personally can't subscribe to this explanation either. Because if this is something that's hypothetical, something that really can't happen to a believer, why in the world did the author put the most severe warning in the New Testament into the letter if it could never happen? Just to give them Agita? I don't believe this can just be hypothetical because it's a genuine warning.

The 3rd interpretation, the one I ascribe too, is that these verses are a literal, actual warning. Because at the time it was written, there were Jewish believers who were turning away. Remember they were turning away to go back to judaism, to go back to religious rituals.

And when they turned away, they wanted nothing to do with Christ. And when you do that, you go back to sacrificing lambs and the religious systems, and that's putting Christ to open shame, crucifying the Son of God afresh.

I believe Hebrews 6 speaks of those who leave the simplicity of Jesus Christ.

I want to be clear. The Bible is certain-you cannot lose your salvation-but you can leave it because God won't force eternal life on anyone. Lets read v4-6 again.

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away,[fn] to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

So what does it mean when it's saying it's impossible?

It is impossible for people who have professed to be Christians and have experienced all of the beautiful gifts described in v4-6, then have turned away from Christ, its impossible for them to turn

around and repent again since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. It is impossible because these people show contempt for Christ through their deliberate actions.

Now there are some who argue this passage to prove that a backslider cannot be restored.

But “backsliders” are not the subject here. This passage refers to people who walk with Christ for a while and then deliberately turn around and walk the other direction, rejecting Christ.

1 Tim 4:1 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

These verses don't say it's impossible for those who fall to be renewed again. It says it's impossible for those who fall away, and it's the only time that word is used in the New Testament. It's par-ap-ip'-to

These people can never be restored because they don't want to be restored. They have chosen to harden their hearts against Christ. It is not impossible for God to forgive them; rather, it is impossible for them to be forgiven because they won't repent of their sins.

If you've been with us in our study we've seen in this letter the writer had warned his Christian readers about drifting away from

the truth through negligence back in chapter 2. He had also warned them about failing to continue trusting God—failing to walk by faith in chapter 3. Now he gives the harshest warning—don't fall away.

It says in Isaiah that God loves the backslider and will heal him. So this is not saying when someone falls, there's no way for that person to return. This says when someone falls away.

It doesn't say in Revelation chapter 2 you've lost your first love. It says you've left your first love.

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

This is a picture of somebody who turns away from Christ,

V7-8 he gives an illustration to describe all of this

7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. Even here we see grace. It's coming near to cursing. Doesn't say immediate curse. God gives them chance after chance.

SHOW PIC When the earth receives rain and bears useful plants, it fulfills its purpose and justifies the blessing of rain sent upon it.

SHOW PIC But if the ground bears thorns and briars, it is rejected. No one blames the farmer for burning the bad crops.

CLOSE PIC

This of course echoes Jesus' words in

John 15 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

And in verse 9, then he comes back to being included again, back to the first person

9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. Though he just got done giving this incredible warning, the writer to the Hebrews was confident His readers would continue on with Jesus.

They needed warning, but also needed some Godly comfort.

And now v10 we have one of the most comforting verses in all the scriptures

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. When we're discouraged, we sometimes think God has forgotten about us. We

can think God has lost track of all we've done for Him and for His people.

But if God forgot about all we've done for Him, v10 tells us that would be God denying His own nature if He forgot (He would be unjust). God sees and remembers what we do for Him.

So think for a moment about what God's word tells us about what God remembers and what God forgets.

As Christians, God remembers our sin no more

As Christians, God remembers every work we do for Him

Sometimes our fear that God forgot our work and labor of love comes from relying on the attention and applause of people. It's true that most people will forget your work and labor of love, but God never will.

Matthew 10:42 "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." God will never forget a single cup of cold water you've given.

11-12

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, Pause here. The writer of Hebrews sounds a lot like a coach here. He's encouraging, and he's urging these Christians to press on.

Because every one of us in this room knows what it's like to have discouragement settle in, and take hold. And when that happens, our tendency is then to get sluggish for the things of God. We know what we should do, we know what we ought to do, but the tight grip of discouragement makes us wanna focus inward, instead of upward.

Let's read all of v12 **12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** Instead of giving in to discouragement, we're to imitate those who found the key to gaining God's promises — faith and patience, as demonstrated by Abraham.

So how do we fight discouragement, and ensure we don't get sluggish for the things of God? **1 Samuel 30:6 Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.**

It's a blessing when others encourage us, but we don't have to wait for that. We can encourage ourselves in the Lord.

The rest of the chapter we see how we're not to be discouraged, because God's promises are reliable.

13-14

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely

blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”[fn] 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. This oath from Genesis 12 showed that God’s promises (like His character) are unchanging. We never have to worry about God not fulfilling His promises
16-18

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might[fn] have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. The two immutable (unchanging) things are God’s promise and God’s oath. It is impossible for God to lie in either of these two things.

And notice the words strong consolation. God doesn’t just want to give us a little bit of consolation, He wants to give us strong consolation.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, As Christians we’re anchored to something we can’t see with our physical eyes. We’re anchored not to a political party, or an investment strategy. We’re anchored to Christ!

SHOW PIC And if you’ve ever been out on a boat, you know an anchor is critical isn’t it? The rougher the weather, the more important your anchor is. Our anchor for the soul is Jesus Christ.

CLOSE PIC

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Old Testament high priest entered the veil only as a representative. But Jesus has entered into the immediate presence of God the Father so that His people, that's you and I as His disciples, can follow Him there to heaven. Now next week we'll dive into Melchizedek.

Hebrews 6 is a plea for these believers, and for you and I, to go on to maturity. Because the reality is the world is always pulling against us, and we need to fight it.

Our anchor is in Christ. And you know it's tragic when people will say their anchor is Christ, yet they are weighed down by things that have happened to them in the past, they are trapped by something that's pulling them down.

For the Hebrews, it was the lure of going back to a religious system. But people do the same thing today. Instead of the freedom and strength of being anchored in Christ, they allow their anchor to be a past trauma. "I grew up in an abusive home so I can never say Our father. I just get mad if I try."

"Or I grew up with an alcoholic parent or I was abused or I went through this or I went through that. All of the social ills that are unfair have made me the mess that I am."

And when a person says that what they're saying is the injuries of the past are more powerful in your life than the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and the hope that He sent in front of us.

What they're saying is that they can't be emancipated from your pain and your hurt and your past and your religiosity because Jesus Christ and His Word and His Lordship and His Spirit are not powerful enough. And that just isn't true.

Through the scripture, you look at those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

Let Christ be the anchor. He's the one that defines who we are, and I'm so grateful He says I'm forgiven.