

Hebrews: No Turning Back

Week 4

Main Scripture: Hebrews 5:11–6:12

Hebrews contains several strong warnings to believers, and this passage is one of the most challenging. The original audience was facing opposition because of their faith in Christ, and some were beginning to shrink back. The writer challenges them to grow spiritually, examine the reality of their faith, and remain diligent to the end.

The warning is serious, but its purpose is not simply to create fear. It is a call to spiritual maturity, genuine faith, and perseverance.

Spiritual maturity prepares and equips you to endure difficulty.

Read Hebrews 5:11–14; 6:1–3

The writer tells his readers that they have become "dull of hearing." They had followed Christ long enough that they should have been able to teach others, but instead they still needed to be taught the basics.

The problem was not simply a lack of biblical information. Their spiritual immaturity left them unprepared for the opposition they were facing. When difficulty comes, an immature believer can easily default to fear, comfort, approval from others, or the thinking of the world.

Spiritual maturity prepares us to stand firm. As we grow in our understanding of God's Word and put it into practice, we become better equipped to distinguish good from evil and remain faithful when our faith is challenged.

Discuss:

1. What does spiritual maturity look like in the life of a believer?
2. Why can spiritual immaturity make us more vulnerable when we face opposition or temptation?
3. Hebrews 5:14 connects maturity with the constant use of God's Word. What is the difference between simply knowing Scripture and putting it into practice?

4. Where do you need to grow so that you are better prepared to remain faithful when difficulty comes?

3 Main Viewpoints of Hebrews 6:4–6: Hypothetical, Actual, Apparent

Read Hebrews 6:4–6

This is one of the more difficult warning passages in Hebrews. It describes people who have been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, experienced the goodness of God's Word and the powers of the coming age, yet have fallen away.

The sermon emphasized that "falling away" here is not simply struggling with questions, experiencing doubt, or going through a difficult season spiritually. It describes an intentional and willful decision to abandon Christ.

Three primary viewpoints were presented for understanding this passage:

Hypothetical: The writer is not saying that a true believer actually can fall away. Instead, he is showing what the consequences would be if that were possible.

Actual: A person can genuinely receive salvation and later reject Christ, losing that salvation.

Apparent: A person can appear to be a Christian and experience many of the blessings surrounding the Christian faith without ever truly being born again. Eventually, walking away from Christ reveals what was actually true in that person's heart.

The sermon emphasized the **Apparent** view as being most consistent with the larger teaching of Scripture. Jesus' Parable of the Soils in Matthew 13 illustrates that some receive the Word with joy but never produce lasting fruit. Other passages such as Philippians 1:6, John 10, Romans 8, and Jude 24 point toward God's power to keep those who truly belong to Him.

Discuss:

1. Why is it important to understand what the writer means by "fall away" in this passage?
2. What differences do you see between struggling with faith and intentionally rejecting Christ?
3. How does the Parable of the Soils in Matthew 13 help us understand the warning in Hebrews 6?

4. How can passages such as Philippians 1:6, John 10, Romans 8, and Jude 24 give assurance to a genuine believer?

It is possible to go to church, hear the gospel, live a moral life, but never fully embrace Christ.

Read Matthew 7:21–23

One of the most sobering truths from this passage is that outward religious activity is not the same thing as genuine salvation.

A person can attend church, hear the gospel, recognize that the gospel is good, and even live what appears to be a moral life without ever personally surrendering to Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself warned that some would call Him "Lord" and point to religious things they had done, yet He would say, "I never knew you."

The warning of Hebrews should lead us to examine our own hearts rather than simply evaluating the faith of others. The question is not merely whether we have been around Christianity. The question is whether we have truly embraced Christ and been transformed by His grace.

Discuss:

1. Why can outward religious activity sometimes give someone a false sense of security?
2. What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and truly knowing Him?
3. What role does spiritual fruit play in giving evidence of genuine faith?
4. When you examine your own life, what evidence do you see of Christ changing your heart, priorities, and actions?

Don't quit. Be diligent. Finish well.

Read Hebrews 6:9–12

After giving a serious warning, the writer changes his tone. He tells his readers that he is confident of better things for them, "things that have to do with salvation."

He remembers the fruit already evident in their lives and encourages them to continue with the same diligence until the end. The warning is therefore not simply meant to frighten them. It is meant to wake them up and move them forward.

Don't quit. Be diligent. Finish well.

For someone who has grown spiritually apathetic, that may mean renewing a commitment to God's Word and prayer. It may mean reconnecting with Christian community and becoming intentional about spiritual growth again. For someone who has been around Christianity but has never truly trusted Christ, the response is to stop relying on religious activity and fully embrace Jesus.

Discuss:

1. What are some signs that spiritual laziness or apathy may be developing in our lives?
2. What does diligence in your relationship with Christ look like practically?
3. Is there an area where you are tempted to shrink back or quit right now?
4. What is one step you can take this week to renew your commitment to following Christ?
5. If you were to "finish well," what would you want faithfulness to Christ to look like over the rest of your life?

Take It Home

Hebrews gives us a warning because warnings can protect us. Sometimes we need a spiritual wake-up call that causes us to examine where we are and reorient our lives toward Christ.

Ask yourself:

Am I eagerly growing in my faith, or have I become spiritually complacent?

Am I simply around Christianity, or has Christ genuinely transformed my life?

Where am I tempted to shrink back instead of remaining faithful?

What do I need to do now so that I can finish well?

Spiritual maturity prepares us for difficulty. Genuine faith produces fruit. And those who belong to Christ can trust that the God who saved them is powerful enough to keep them.

Don't quit. Be diligent. Finish well.