

# Bible Study March 8, 2023

## HEBREWS 6 (AMPLIFIED VERSION)

### The Peril of Falling Away

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore let us get past the elementary stage in the teachings about the Christ, advancing on to maturity and perfection and spiritual completeness, [doing this] without laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, <sup>2</sup> of teaching about washings (ritual purifications), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. [These are all important matters in which you should have been proficient long ago.]**

Certain basic teachings are essential for all believers to understand. These basics include the importance of repentance from sin, the foolishness of trying to be saved by good deeds, the meaning of baptism and spiritual gifts, and the facts of resurrection and eternal life. To go on to maturity in our understanding, we need to move beyond (but not away from) these basic teachings to a more complete understanding of the faith. And this is what the author intends for readers of this letter to do (6:3). Mature Christians should be teaching new Christians the basics. Then, acting on what they know, the mature will learn even more from God's Word.

**<sup>3</sup> And we will do this [that is, proceed to maturity], if God permits.**

These Christians needed to move beyond the foundational teachings of their faith to an understanding of Christ as the perfect High Priest and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. Rather than arguing about the respective merits of Judaism and Christianity, they needed to have a deeper understanding of Christ and how to live effectively for him.

**<sup>4</sup> For [it is impossible to restore to repentance] those who have once been enlightened [spiritually] and who have tasted and consciously experienced the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and have tasted and consciously experienced the good word of God and the powers of the age (world) to come, <sup>6</sup> and then have fallen away—it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance, since they again nail the Son of God on the cross [for as far as they are concerned, they are treating the death of Christ as if they were not saved by it], and are holding Him up again to public disgrace.**

This teaching assumes that a person who truly comes to Christ would never want to leave. This does not mean that a true follower can lose his or her salvation. This refers to people who, having been enlightened regarding God's truth, experienced some of the benefits of Christianity in worship and the Lord's Supper and then chose to turn away. A pagan or Jew who investigated Christianity then returned to paganism or Judaism was making a clear break with the church. In reality, such a person was never a true believer at all. Jesus taught that some people who hear the Good News will turn away. They will be like seed falling on shallow soil or among thorns (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23). Lack of deep roots, fear of persecution, worries, and the pursuit of wealth can cause some to fall away. They will not enter God's rest (Hebrews 4:3, 9-11).

This verse warns of the danger of the Hebrew Christians returning to Judaism and thus renouncing faith in Jesus. Some apply this verse today to superficial believers who renounce their Christianity, and some to unbelievers who come close to salvation and then turn away. Either way, those who reject Christ will not be saved. Christ died once for all. He will not be crucified again. Apart from his cross, there is no other possible way of salvation. The author does not indicate that these

particular readers were in danger of renouncing Christ (see 6:9); however, the author is warning against the hardness of heart that causes sinners not to repent. The impossibility of restoration lies within the heart of the person who turned away, not with God (see 2 Peter 3:9).

***<sup>7</sup> For soil that drinks the rain which often falls on it and produces crops useful to those for whose benefit it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God; <sup>8</sup> but if it persistently produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.***

The writer uses an analogy from agriculture to make a simple point. Real seeds (the gospel) given genuine care by the farmer (God) and planted in a fertile field (a person's heart and life) will produce a bountiful crop (spiritual maturity). Weeds (temptations) will threaten to overwhelm the crop. If the field ends up producing only weeds, then the seeds are lost and the field ruined.

God wants us to have productive and fruitful Christian lives that result in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and in love and service of others. You have been watered by God's grace with clear and abundant teaching and preaching. Don't be a Christian in name only. Make sure your life bears fruit (see John 15:1-5).

### 3 Keys To Knowing If Someone is Fruitful

1. They have the characteristics of the tree
2. The fruit is visible
3. Their fruit benefits others and not themselves

### Better Things for You

***<sup>9</sup> But, beloved, even though we speak to you in this way, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and of things that accompany salvation. <sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown for His name in ministering to [the needs of] the saints (God's people), as you do.***

It's easy to get discouraged, thinking that God has forgotten us, but God has not and will never do that. He is never unjust or cruel, and he never forgets or overlooks our hard work for him. Presently you may not be receiving rewards and acclaim, but God sees your efforts of love and ministry. Let God's love for you and his intimate knowledge of your service for him bolster you as you face disappointment and rejection here on earth.

***<sup>11</sup> And we desire for each one of you to show the same diligence [all the way through] so as to realize and enjoy the full assurance of hope until the end, <sup>12</sup> so that you will not be [spiritually] sluggish, but [will instead be] imitators of those who through faith [lean on God with absolute trust and confidence in Him and in His power] and by patient endurance [even when suffering] are [now] inheriting the promises.***

The certainty of our hope keeps us from becoming lazy or feeling bored. Hope requires both an attitude of expectation for what God will do and confidence that we will have eternal life with new bodies in a new earth, as he has promised. Like an athlete, train hard and run well, remembering the reward that lies ahead (Philippians 3:14).

**<sup>13</sup> For when God made the promise to Abraham, He swore [an oath] by Himself, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, <sup>14</sup> saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU." <sup>15</sup> And so, having patiently waited, he realized the promise [in the miraculous birth of Isaac, as a pledge of what was to come from God].**

Abraham waited patiently—25 years passed from the time God promised him a son (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-16; 15:4-5; 17:16) to Isaac's birth (Genesis 21:1-3). Yet God delivered on his promise. Intense trials and temptations can last for years, and waiting for relief can be difficult. But time does not weaken the strength of God's promises. Both the Bible and the testimonies of mature Christians encourage us to trust in God's timing, even when our needs seem too great to wait any longer.

**<sup>16</sup> Indeed men swear [an oath] by one greater than themselves, and with them [in all disputes] the oath serves as confirmation [of what has been said] and is an end of the dispute. <sup>17</sup> In the same way God, in His desire to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable nature of His purpose, intervened and guaranteed it with an oath,**

God's promises are unchanging and trustworthy because God is unchanging and will never break them. When promising Abraham a son, God took an oath in his own name. The oath was as good as God's name, and God's name is as good as his divine nature.

**<sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things [His promise and His oath] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled [to Him] for refuge would have strong encouragement and indwelling strength to hold tightly to the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup> This hope [this confident assurance] we have as an anchor of the soul [it cannot slip and it cannot break down under whatever pressure bears upon it]—a safe and steadfast hope that enters within the veil [of the heavenly temple, that most Holy Place in which the very presence of God dwells],**

These two unchangeable things are God's promise and his oath. God embodies all truth; therefore, he cannot lie, and we can be secure in his promises. We don't need to wonder if he will change his purposes and plans. Our hope of heaven stands secure and immovable, anchored in God, just as a ship's anchor holds firmly to the seabed. To someone truly seeking who comes to God in belief, God gives an unconditional promise of acceptance. When you ask God with openness, honesty, and sincerity to save you from your sins, he will do it. If this truth gives you encouragement, assurance, and confidence, grasp it. Don't let go no matter what happens around you.

**<sup>20</sup> where Jesus has entered [in advance] as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.**

A curtain hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, God's inner sanctuary. This curtain prevented anyone from entering, gazing into, or even getting a fleeting glimpse of the interior of the Most Holy Place (also see 9:1-8). The high priest could enter there only once a year to stand in God's presence and atone for the sins of the entire nation. But Christ dwells in God's presence at all times—not just once a year—as the High Priest who continually intercedes for us.