

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 22ND–23RD, 2025 // HEBREWS

BEYOND THE BASICS (HEBREWS 6:1–3)

“THEREFORE...” (V. 1)

Chapter 5 concludes by pointing out the spiritual immaturity of these Believers.

- They had grown too lazy to understand (dull of hearing) and their immaturity about the things of Christ was displayed in their desire to return to the practices of Judaism (lack of discernment).
- God wanted more for these Believers than just to stay where they were.

“...LET US LEAVE BEHIND THE ELEMENTARY TEACHING...”

Foundations (“elementary teaching”) are good and necessary for building, it is just that once they have been set up, there is no need to set them up repeatedly.

- God wants us to build on spiritual foundations concerning the basics of the Christian faith so we can go on to maturity.

What follows is a series of 3 couplets related to the practice of the Christian faith that the writer of Hebrews wants the reader to move beyond.

- Here's what's interesting—there is nothing on this list that is explicitly or distinctly “Christian.”
- In other words, every item on this list could have its place in an orthodox Jewish community.
- One could believe and practice these things and still not be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Repentance and Faith in God—this is an obvious essential to both the Jewish and Christian faith, and without it, we do not have either religion at all.

- “Ritual washings, laying on of hands...”—Jewish rituals of cleansing (Mikvah) and Christian baptism are both external practices, as are the laying on of hands (either for blessing or prayer).

“The resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment”—both 1st century Jews and Christians believed the dead would rise and Yahweh would judge the righteous and the unrighteous.

- All these foundational, elementary teachings are necessary, good, and essential to beginning a life of faith in God (both from a Christian and Jewish perspective).

One could technically “practice the Christian faith” (by agreeing to some of these elementary teachings) without rocking the boat too much with their Jewish community.

- Those living with a minimal Christian commitment to avoid persecution and alienation from the Jewish community are essentially being told, “It is time to go all in!”
- Maturity is going “all in” with Jesus.

GOING ALL IN.

If we are growing in Christ, there comes a point in our journey where we must stop caring what it might cost us, take the leap of faith, and surrender everything to Jesus.

- We can settle for a kind of tame, domesticated, socially acceptable, privatized, Christ-haunted “religion” that doesn't cost us much...
- ...or we can become a follower of Christ.

THE POINT OF NO RETURN? (HEBREWS 6:4–8)

WHY SO MANY MISUNDERSTAND THIS PASSAGE

1. An incomplete and immature understanding of Christian salvation:

- We often view salvation in a very transactional manner; like a ticket to be punched. This diminishes our relationship with Christ to be a one-and-done experience.
- We are saved, being saved, and will be saved; transformation is the proof of that process.

2. Our inclination to read into the text our own (or our tribe's) unique theological distinctives:

- Often, we are more concerned about how the Scripture fits into our particular system of theology than we are about what it actually says.
- Whenever we do that, we miss out on what God wants to say to us through His Word because we've already decided what He's allowed to say.

“IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW TO REPENTANCE...”

The phrase “it is impossible” is used four times in Hebrews (6:4–6,18; 10:4; 11:6), and each time, it literally means “impossible.”

- This focuses on the impossibility of restoring to repentance those who were once enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift. Once someone turns from Christ and hardens their heart against Him, they reach a point of no return.

“THOSE WHO WERE ONCE ENLIGHTENED...TASTED THE HEAVENLY GIFT, WHO SHARED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT...”

To be “enlightened” carries with it the idea of having the light come on—to know and understand in some way the truth of the gospel.

- To taste the heavenly gift and **share** in the Holy Spirit conveys having some sort of spiritual experience (**tasting** may carry with it the idea of testing the waters).

“...TASTED GOD'S GOOD WORD AND THE POWERS OF THE COMING AGE...”

This could describe someone who has experienced the goodness and blessing of God's Word and has experienced, in some way, the supernatural work of God.

- Applying God's truth to our life actually works! It results in displays of God's power and grace.

“...WHO HAVE FALLEN AWAY...THEY ARE RECRUCIFYING THE SON OF GOD AND HOLDING HIM UP TO CONTEMPT.”

In its immediate context, **falling away** would be someone leaving the Christian faith to return to Judaism. In a broader context, it speaks of those who deny and turn away from faith in Christ.

- For someone to **fall away** and leave the Christian faith is to pour contempt on Jesus, which is equivalent to crucifying Him all over again.

The big debate is this: Are the people described in verses 4–5 actual Christians or those who simply appeared to be Christians?

- When someone apostatizes and turns away from the Christian faith, did they lose their salvation, or did they reveal their salvation was never authentic or real to begin with?

- This is a topic of very serious and heated debate within Christian theology.

We must avoid so-called “straw man” logical fallacies when we are having this discussion. Responsible, mature, Jesus-loving, Bible believing Christians can arrive at different conclusions as to exactly what happens when someone commits apostasy.

- It is obvious from Scripture that someone can have very impressive “spiritual experiences” without truly being a Christian.
- Matthew 7:21–23 (NIV)

Jesus told a parable about the “seed” of the gospel being sown into the hearts of humanity.

- Some seed thrown onto rocks and among thorns gave the appearance of depth and growth, but ultimately those plants withered and died.
- It is possible for someone to display some fruit or spiritual growth and then go on to and die spiritually, showing that the soil of their heart was never right (Mark 4:16–19).

A PICTURE OF TWO FIELDS—ONE FRUITFUL, ONE BARREN.

What is the difference between those who merely profess Christian salvation and those who actually possess salvation from Jesus?

- Lasting, enduring, spiritual fruit—the fruitful ground proves that the soil is good and life is there. The ground that produces thorns and thistles proves that the soil was never good.
- One will be blessed, the other will be burned.

SOMEONE CAN NEVER COME BACK?

In its immediate context, it means “It is IMPOSSIBLE for you to find salvation in practicing the Jewish faith if you turn your back on Jesus. Denying Him after you know what He did for you would be like crucifying Him all over again!”

- The emphasis is less on “if you fall away, God will prohibit you from coming back to Jesus,” and more on the nature of the human heart.

God will pardon all who truly repent, even those who have denied Christ and turned away from Him (Simon Peter).

- It is possible for a person to so resist the grace of God that they arrive at a state of heart in which repentance is an impossibility.
- It is not impossible because God is not willing, it is impossible because that person is too hardened (Romans 1:28).

DEMONSTRATE DILIGENCE (HEBREWS 6:9–12)

There are serious consequences for turning back and denying Jesus, and we need to be warned about those consequences.

- But the writer of Hebrews is confident that His readers are going to continue in Jesus (v. 9).
- One of the things that pertains to salvation is this kind of perseverance. In other words, we demonstrate saving faith when we keep holding on to Jesus throughout our lives.

Why else was the writer of Hebrews confident that his readers were truly Believers who would continue following Jesus?

- First, their work demonstrated saving faith (v. 10).
- Serving others (especially the “saints”), righteous living, and doing the work Jesus called us to do demonstrate that His eternal life is within us.
- Secondly, their love for others was demonstrably evident in their lives.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR FAITH WITH DILIGENCE (V. 11)

The writer urges his readers to remain diligent in their walk with God.

- “The full assurance of your hope” refers to the confidence we can have in salvation when we trust, follow, and obey Jesus.
- Our walk with God must continue “until the end.” The Christian life is not about momentary emotional experiences, but a lifelong pursuit.

DON'T BE LAZY/SLUGGISH! (V. 12)

The ones who “inherit[ed] the promises” (the patriarchs and heroes of the OT) received God's promises—not through passivity, but through faith (trusting God) and perseverance (continuing in obedience).

- We are invited to be imitators of those who display an active faith, not people who are lazy, sluggish, and passive in our spiritual lives.

1. HEED THE WARNING SERIOUSLY (BUT DON'T LIVE IN PARANOIA).

- There's a difference between healthy, watchful concern, and unhealthy, paralyzing fear.
- Passages like this should stir within us self-examination and perseverance in our faith.
- If you are not sure you are saved, do not leave here today without having settled that question in your heart and mind by turning to Jesus!

2. DISCERN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STRUGGLES AND APOSTASY.

- Satan tries to get unbelievers to think they have salvation when they actually do not and true Believers to doubt salvation they actually have.
- All Believers, at times, will wrestle with doubt, sin, and spiritual dryness. Don't stop wrestling!
- There is a difference between struggling and surrendering to a complete rejection of Christ.

3. REMEMBER—SALVATION IS ROOTED IN CHRIST'S WORK, NOT OUR PERFORMANCE.

- Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–9): we can rest in Christ's finished work while we also heed the biblical warnings.
- Resting in Christ does not mean passivity; it means trusting Him as we walk in obedience.
- Examine yourself regularly (not obsessively) and avoid spiritual complacency.

4. CONTINUE GROWING IN YOUR FAITH AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO REMAIN FAITHFUL.

- It is time to move beyond the foundational truths about the basics of Jesus and grow up by going all in with complete and total surrender.
- Growing up in Jesus means daily surrender, staying in the Word, being diligent in prayer, and staying in Christian community.
- Are you growing? Or are you drifting?