

Better

A Study of Hebrews • Lesson 5

Hebrews 6 - “A Better Promise”

Chapter 6 opens with a continuation of the warning made in Chapter 5 to leave behind the elementary things and move forward towards maturity. The joyful task of this life is to grow in our knowledge of who God is in order that our hearts might change who we are and how we live.

Hebrews 6:1-3 The author lists these as the foundational things:

1. Repentance from dead words
2. Faith toward God
3. Instructions in washings
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal judgement

To our ears these do not sound elementary, but these are actually references to Old Testament practices in Judaism that pointed towards the fulfillment in the New Covenant

1. Repentance from dead works is reference to the Mosaic Law—the 10 Commandments—Thou Shalt Not. In the New Covenant, it becomes Grace by the Spirit enabling you to live a life of godliness—Thou Shalt—Blessed are you who—the Beatitudes that were taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Move from prohibition to exhortation.
2. Faith in a Monotheistic God—the Shema—Hear O Israel, the Lord Your God is One—but our God is Triune Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with special focus on the Son who is Jesus
3. Ceremonial washings were a large part of life in general and especially temple life but they were an external cleansing required to come before the Lord. Under the New Covenant we are cleansed from the inside.
4. The Laying on of Hands referred to the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would lay hands on a goat and symbolically transfer the sins of the people onto the goat, who was then cast into the wilderness—The Scape Goat. Lev 16:21. Under the New Covenant, Jesus Takes on our Sins
5. Resurrection of the dead made possible by Jesus = fulfillment
6. Again Jesus takes on the punishment for us

So, the Holy Spirit enlightens and reveals understanding of all these things.

Hebrews 6:4-8

Thorns and Thistles reminds us of the Parable of the Sower- Seed falling on rocky ground represents those people for whom the word never reaches the heart or changes lives—this is a warning to those people.

“once been enlightened” reference to those who shared in conversion/baptism, shared in Holy Spirit, and communion - it was an external sharing - the witnessing of these things happening, maybe during Jesus’ ministry or the Acts of the Apostles ministry.

Those who had tasted the goodness of God – who know about Him in their heads

The power of the age to come – a reference to miraculous works

It is impossible to restore someone like this who has learned of the better thing and fallen back to the old thing - he is saying these Jewish Christians are acting just like those who had crucified Jesus—they had tasted the better thing and then turned away. Either His death will free us from guilt or it will condemn us as murderers. When we love the shadow more than the fulfillment we are just like them - those who crucified Him.

A prime example of this is Judas. Judas had every benefit of the fulfillment and still rejected it.

How do we know that this chapter does not represent a pattern for losing your salvation? Because the Bible is clear that once you have received the Holy Spirit, you can’t lose your salvation. He finishes what He starts. This is the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. Here are just 2 verses showing this:

Romans 8:29-30 *29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

John 10:28-29 *28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.*

Don’t look around at others but self reflect:

- Do I love the former things more than what they point to?
- Do the benefits of my salvation matter more than God?
- Do I want peace and security more than Him?
- Like Israel in the Wilderness, do I doubt that He will provide food even after miraculous delivery?
- Am I more concerned about my immediate needs than with my ongoing relationship with Jesus?

Hebrews 6:9-10 This is a reassurance. God will not reject you. But there is a danger in fearing man more than God.

Hebrews 6:11-12

Abraham lived as an alien and stranger but the least alien trait is laziness. (Sluggish = lazy)

Laziness is the most common human trait we all share, especially with regard to our spiritual condition—that we resist working at it with eagerness, forgetting that those who through faith and patience will inherit the promises

We should imitate the faithful and drive towards diligence

We are as image bearers, created to imitate. This is made possible by Christ's atonement. We imitate the faithful. Each looks to the one who has gone before them, and someone is looking to us! Someone is watching me to know what is true about Christ.

We become what we behold—whatever we spend time thinking about. You are the belated announcement of what you have been thinking about for the past 30 days.

Hebrews 6:13-18 Abraham, already proven faithful, received an oath from the Lord

We swear an oath by something greater than ourselves in order to add weight to the oath. God can't swear by anything greater than Himself. That is, the absolute truth of His covenant combined with the absolute authority to make it come to pass.

The Abrahamic Covenant shadows the New Covenant. It was fulfilled in Christ. For example, the Land promised to Abraham is the rest that we receive in Christ. Jesus is the offspring who crushes the head of Satan. We are the descendants more numerous than the stars. Christ is the blessing to the entire world.

Abraham is an example to us of perseverance and a paramount example of faith. He was expectant in His faith, dying before seeing the promises fulfilled in His lifetime. He was anchored. Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things unseen.

Hebrews 6:19-20 Steadfast anchor in the holy place—more temple language—Jesus was the forerunner—the trailblazer—giving access to the Throne of God. Christ is the bedrock to which we are anchored in the chaos/storms of life. (The ocean is a metaphor for storms and chaos of life).

The Mediterranean Sea has a sandy bottom to which you can't anchor a boat. The harbors have bedrock. So, a smaller ship has to bring the anchor in before the ship to set into the place of rest and when the storms pass, the ship can follow it in. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand. He is faithful to His oath and His Covenant. He can be fully trusted. The anchor holds.

On Christ the Solid Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVE-xXFDOwg>