

Hebrews 6**Lesson 6
Encouragement To Go On To Maturity****Outline**

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Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter

Hebrews 6:1

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.

This chapter continues the third warning section that began in the previous chapter (5:11-14). There the point was to establish the Hebrews' lack of maturity. Here, the encouragement is given to press on toward the maturity they so needed.

Encouragement to Go Beyond First Principles (vv. 1-3)

The Hebrews not only should know the first principles of the gospel well enough to tell others, but should move beyond those elementary things and grow.

Must leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (v. 1a). "Therefore" points back to the Hebrews' immature state (5:11-14). Because of that, they need to go on to maturity.

Students differ over the meaning of the "elementary principles of Christ." Some think it refers to Jewish practices under the Old Testament.¹ It more likely refers to first principles of the gospel for three reasons. 1. The context is dealing with the immaturity of those who have not grown as they should (5:11-14). 2. This is written to Christians, not to those in Judaism who need to leave that and obey the gospel. 3. These are elementary principles "of Christ." The ASV renders this, "leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ."²

The reader is urged to "leave" the elementary principles. "'Leaving or dismissing' does not imply ceasing to believe in elementary truths or to regard them as important, but leaving them 'as a builder leaves his foundation in erecting his building' (Bruce)."³ Moving beyond the first principles, one should go on to perfection (maturity).⁴

Not laying again the foundation (vv. 1b-2). As in building a house, the foundation is laid and then the structure is built upon it. The builder doesn't stop at that or keep building the foundation. He moves on. Here the foundation is the same as the first principles. There are six elements listed here that are elementary or foundational. This is not exhaustive.

Repentance from dead works (v.1). All sin produces spiritual death (Jas. 1:15; Rom.6:23). Thus, repenting of sin is repenting of dead works. One of the first things one learns in the gospel is that God demands repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31).

Faith toward God (v. 1). Faith involves full trust and confidence in God. One who turns from sin in repentance, must put his full confidence in God (Heb. 11:6).

- 1 Thus, the point would be that these Hebrew Christians needed to leave the Mosaic system (which was the foundation) and press on to maturity in Christ.
- 2 Hebrews 5:12 had just mentioned the "first principles of the oracles of God."
- 3 M. R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft.
- 4 ESV and footnote of NKJV.

Doctrine of baptisms (v. 2). The plural “baptisms” raises some questions for students of the text. Does this refer to the one baptism (Eph. 4:5)? If not, how were there baptisms under the New Testament? In the first century there was the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5-8) as well as water baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). The difference in the two and which one would last (Eph. 4:5) would be part of the basics of the gospel. Also, in the years immediately following John’s baptism people had to be taught the difference in the two baptisms (Acts 19:1-5).

Laying on of hands (v. 2). This probably has reference to how spiritual gifts were imparted by the laying on of the Apostles hands (Acts 8:14-18).

Resurrection of the dead (v. 2). The resurrection of Christ gives us hope that all will be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

Eternal judgment (v. 2). This is the final judgment that all men face that has eternal consequences (Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

This we will do (v. 3). Going on to maturity can and will be done with God being our helper (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13). Opportunities to grow are made possible by God. “It also imparts the sense that the opportunities for the readers to achieve spiritual maturity may not be endless, and the time to be busy growing in the faith is now.”⁵

Encouragement Due to the Dangers of Apostasy (vv. 4-8)

The warning here is that if one does not go on to maturity, it is possible to drift away to the point of no return. The author had previously warned them that one could reach the point of unbelief if he doesn’t take heed (Heb. 3:12).

If you fall away it is impossible to renew (vv. 4-6). If one falls away (v. 6), it will be impossible to bring him to repentance. This is not describing one who drifts into sin and then turns back to God.⁶ Rather, this is a picture of a complete apostate who has renounced the Christ. If one allowed the pressures of persecution to cause him to turn back to Judaism, he would be turning his back on the Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing that makes it impossible is that they turn away from what they already knew to be the truth. They were once enlightened (v.4).⁷ They became Christians and were in the light (Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13). They tasted of (experienced, enjoyed) the heavenly gift (salvation and spiritual blessings). They were partakers of the Holy Spirit (v. 4) which probably refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11). They tasted of the good word of God (v. 5). They had received the word, embracing it as “good.” They also experienced the power of the age to come. The age to come refers to the age of the Messiah. The power may have reference to the power of the Spirit in revealing and confirming the truth. Or, it may

5 David McClister, *A Commentary on Hebrews*, 211.

6 Simon sinned and turned back to God (Acts 8:20-22). Peter did the same (Gal. 2:11-14).

7 Daniel H. King, Sr. argues that this is a reference to their baptism (*The Book of Hebrews*, Truth Commentaries, 177).

have reference to the power to save from sin. The point is that they had participated in the peculiar blessings of the Messianic age.⁸

It is impossible for them to return because they crucify the Son of God again and put him to an open shame (v. 6). That is, they have rejected the Christ and are thus in the same class as those who put him on the cross. They no longer have any trust or confidence in Christ. It is possible to so depart that we reach the point of no return.

End is to be burned (vv. 7-8). Here the author illustrates the consequence of apostasy with ground that is unproductive. A plot of ground that is fruitful receives a blessing from God (v. 7). It is spared from destruction. But, a field that produces thorns and briars is rejected and burned (v. 8). The application should be obvious. The Christian that is fruitful and productive (goes on to perfection) will be blessed of God. However, the Christian who falls away is like the field of briars that is “near to being cursed”⁹ and will be burned. Apostasy has eternal consequences.

Encouragement Based on Confidence in the Hebrews (vv. 9-12)

Persuaded better things of the Hebrews (v. 9). This points back to being burned (v. 8). The writer is persuaded that will not happen to them. He has confidence that they will grow and progress. The “things that accompany salvation” refers to the maturity that goes with salvation that he expected to see from them. He has confidence in them even though “we speak in this manner” (v. 9). The warnings that are given doesn’t mean that the author thinks they are not going to persevere.

You have worked and labored (v. 10). His confidence is based on what they had done in other areas and done quite well. They had cared for those in need. Since we believe this letter to be sent to the church at Jerusalem, the situations in Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-27 and 6:1-8 may be what the author had in mind.

Show the same diligence unto the end (vv. 11-12). He urges them to show the same diligence in other areas (such as growing in their knowledge and maturity) that they had shown in the area of benevolence. They are urged not to be sluggish¹⁰, but rather follow the example of those who had endured through faith (v. 12). Abraham is such an example as seen in the following verses.

Encouragement Based on the Promises of God (vv. 13-20)

The writer now focuses on the promises of God. Like Abraham, the Hebrews can put their trust in the promises of God and persevere and be rewarded.

God’s promises confirmed by an oath (vv. 13-18). When God makes a promise and confirms it with an oath there can be no greater assurance.

8 These verses obviously refute the Calvinistic doctrine of once saved always saved. One of the arguments the Calvinist makes is that if one falls away that is proof that he never was really saved in the first place. These verses show that is not the case.

9 “The fact that they are only *near* being cursed points to the fact that as long as one lives he may decide to repent” (McClister, *ibid.*, 221-222).

10 Lazy. This is the opposite of diligence in verse 11. This is the same word for “dull” (5:11).

Promise to Abraham was confirmed and received (vv. 13-15). God made a promise to Abraham and swore by himself since he couldn't swear by any greater (v. 13). His promise (found in Gen. 22:16-17) was "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."¹¹

Abraham patiently waited on the fulfillment of his promise. "Abraham maintained his confidence in spite of the long and perplexing delay in the realization of God's **promise**. It must be remembered that his first child was born to him when he was one hundred years old, and a very long time after his wife could have expected to give birth to children. Moreover, his grandchildren were not born until he had attained the age of one hundred and sixty (Gen. 25:26), just fifteen years before his death (Gen. 25:7). Truly, he had **patiently endured**."¹²

By the time of his death Abraham had seen enough of the promise being fulfilled that the writer could say he obtained the promise (v. 15). He saw enough to be assured of the rest being fulfilled.

Assured by two immutable things (vv. 16-18). When man gives an oath it is an appeal to a higher authority (God) in order to confirm what he has said. The intent is to end all argument or dispute (v. 16). Thus, God, wanting to show that his counsel (his promise) was immutable (unchangeable), he confirmed it by an oath (v. 17).

Since it is impossible for God to lie (v. 18), we have strong consolation by two immutable (unchangeable) things: God's promise and God's oath. We have the same assurance that Abraham had. Just as the guilty fled to the city of refuge to escape death (Num. 35), we have fled from the consequence of sin to the hope that is before us. That hope is assured by the promises of God.

Hope is the anchor of the soul (vv. 19-20). As an anchor is to a ship so is hope to our soul. It holds us sure and steadfast. Our anchor is fixed behind the veil (in heaven) where Christ, our forerunner¹³, has gone and become our High Priest. With that, the author is ready to return to the subject of Christ being a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Chapter 7).

Use of the Old Testament in this Chapter	
Verse in Chapter 6	Old Testament Reference
v. 14	Genesis 22:16-17

11 "'Blessing I will bless' is a Hebraism, emphasizing the idea contained in the verb" (M. R. Vincent, *ibid.*).

12 King, *ibid.*, 192.

13 "An old word used for a spy, a scout, only here in the New Testament. Jesus has shown us the way, has gone on ahead, and is the surety *enguos* (NT:1450), Heb 7:22) and guarantor of our own entrance later" (A. T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright (c) 1985 by Broadman Press).

Questions

1. What are the “elementary principles of Christ” (v. 1)? Give evidence for your answer.
2. In what sense are we to “leave” the first principles?
3. What is the doctrine of baptisms (v. 2)?
4. Who is under consideration in verses 4-8 (the one that is impossible to bring to repentance)?
5. What makes it impossible for the one in verses 4-8 to repent?
6. What did the writer expect out of the Hebrews?
7. What had the Hebrew done in the past that gave the writer confidence in them?
8. What was the promise to Abraham?
9. What is the point about Abraham in verses 13-18?
10. What are the two immutable things (v. 18)?