

HEBREWS

Fear to Faith

STUDY 7

Warning!

A. The Price of Christian Perfection & Maturity [5:12-6:3]

5:12,13 Who ONLY should teach in the church? (James 3:1; I Tim.3:2; 2 Tim.2:15; Ezekiel 13:1-9; Mal.2:7; Prov.2:1-5)

[1] [5:12] There has been much discussion as to what should be understood by these terms respectively. The early commentators generally supposed that 'milk,' the food of young converts, was the teaching on 'the Lord's humanity,' and His Resurrection and Ascension while 'the solid food' was the more mysterious teaching on His Godhead. *Brooke Foss Westcott* *Hebrews* p.135

[2] [5:11-14] The idea that ordinary Christians would not be expected to become teachers is quite unwarranted; the word [*didaskalos*] is used here in quite an informal sense, and not of trained catechists or anything like that. It was an axiom of Stoicism that anyone who had mastered true learning was in a position to impart it to others; and it is equally a Christian axiom. *F.F. Bruce* *Hebrews* p.107

"... by this time
you ought to be
teachers ..."

5:14 What else, in addition to 'the word of righteousness', is essential to Christian maturity? (5:8; Mal. 3:1-4)

[3] [5:13,14] Spiritual babyhood is natural and beautiful directly after conversion (1 Pet. 2:1,2), but just as it would be in things physical if a person's development was arrested, and he continued a babe in body and mind for several years, so it is in things spiritual – the spiritual charm of the babe in Christ becomes the very opposite of beautiful if the believer remains a "babe" for years. *W.H. Griffith Thomas* *Let Us Go On Hebrews* p. 68

[4] [5:14] From all this, it is easy to see the perils of stationariness and the sad results of spiritual dullness. Degeneration is harmful to ourselves and others, for one principle of the Christian life is "use or lose." A great pianist once said that if he ceased practicing for one day, he realized the loss; if he ceased for two days, his friends became conscious of it; while if he ceased for three days, the public quickly recognized it. The supreme necessity, therefore, is the "use"

of our spiritual "senses," in order that, through constant exercise, we may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). *W.H. Griffith Thomas* *ibid.* p. 69

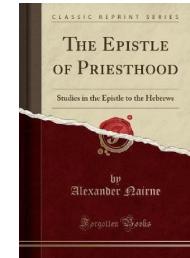
6:1-3 What doctrines are 'foundational'?

[5] It is significant that the points taken as representing the foundation of penitence and faith are all consistent with Judaism. "Doctrine of washings" – how unnatural are the attempts to explain this plural as referring to Christian Baptism; "imposition of hands, resurrection of dead, eternal judgement" – all this belonged to the creed of a Pharisaic Jew who accepted the whole of the Old Testament. *Alexander Nairne* *The Epistle of Priesthood* p.15

[6] [6:1] The opening words of this section are surprising. Our author has just told his readers that they are not really able to assimilate the solid food which he would like to give them – the teaching about the priestly order of Melchizedek – because they are immature. We might have expected him to say, as Paul says to the Corinthians in a similar situation: "Therefore I must continue to feed you with milk". But he does not say this; he says: "let us press on". He judged that no good purpose would be served by going over the first principles again. That being so, we might have expected him to say: "You are not ready for solid food yet, you still need milk; nevertheless I am going to press on with the provision of solid food". But he does not say "nevertheless"; he says "therefore". "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and press forward to maturity." Why "therefore"? Probably because their particular condition of immaturity is such that only an appreciation of what is involved in Christ's high priesthood will cure it. Their minds require to be stretched, and this will stretch them as nothing else can. They have remained immature too long; therefore he will give them something calculated to take them out of their immaturity. *F.F. Bruce* *Hebrews* p.111

[7] [6:1,2] ... there is no indication in the New Testament that the breaking of bread was reserved for those who had reached a prescribed degree of maturity; on the contrary, it was a practice observed by all baptized Christians from the very beginning (Acts 2:42). The simplest explanation is that the subjects listed here in verse 2 were expounded in pre-baptismal instruction, whereas the breaking of bread, which, in contrast to baptism, is not an initiatory rite but a sacrament of Christian growth for the initiated, had its place in post baptismal instruction. It is a matter of some interest, though the case is not entirely parallel, that the Nicene Creed has a clause on baptism but none on the eucharist ... *Philip E. Hughes* *Hebrews* p. 204

[8] [6:3] It was on a foundation already laid in the Old Testament, then, and one on which their way of life was already based, that these people had received the gospel. ... the "Hebrews" were exposed to a subtle danger which could not be experienced by converts from paganism. If a convert from paganism gave up Christianity and reverted to paganism, there was a clean break between the faith which he renounced and the paganism to which he returned. But it was possible for the recipients of this letter, yielding gradually to pressures from various quarters, to give up more and more those features of faith and practice

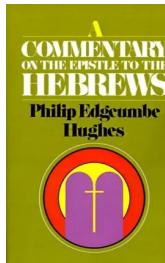


which were distinctive of Christianity, and yet to feel that they had not abandoned the basic principles of repentance and faith, the realities denoted by religious ablutions and the laying on of hands, the expectation of resurrection and the judgment of the age to come. To go on insisting on these things, therefore, would not really help them; it would be better to press on to those teachings which belonged to spiritual maturity, in the hope that the maturity would come with the teachings. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.117

B. The Peril of Not Progressing [6:4-12]

6:4-6 Is this warning a hypothetical case?

[9] [6:4-6] In the next [4th] century both Ambrose and Jerome state that sects such as the Montanists, who denied the possibility of repentance in the case of church members who had fallen into serious sin, and the Novatians, who denied that those who had lapsed under persecution could be restored to fellowship, claimed that their rigorist position was justified on the basis of the apostolic teaching of a passage like Hebrews 6:4-6. Indeed, the favor with which groups like this that had been denounced as heretical regarded the Epistle to the Hebrews is said by Filaster (d. ca. 397) to have been a cause of the difficulty this writing encountered in gaining admission to the New Testament canon. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 214



[10] [6:4,5] On the other hand, our author's meaning can be exaggerated to the point of distortion when he is understood to say that for sins committed after baptism there can be no repentance. ... according to Tertullian, the writer of this warning passage (identified by him with Barnabas), "who learnt this *from* apostles, and taught it *with* apostles, never knew of any second repentance promised by apostles to the adulterers and fornicator." But the writer to the Hebrews himself distinguishes (as did the Old Testament law) between inadvertent sin and wilful sin, and the context here shows plainly that the wilful sin which he has in mind is deliberate apostasy. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.123

[11] [6:6] It is significant that in the enumeration of the divine gifts received by those who are conceived as afterwards falling away there is no one which passes out of the individual. All are gifts of power, of personal endowment. There is no gift of love. Under this aspect light falls upon the passage from Matt. 7:22f.; 1 Cor. 13:1f. In this connexion it will be noticed that it was the presence of love among the Hebrews which inspired the Apostle with confidence (v. 10). **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.152

6:7,8 A peculiarly Jewish illustration? (Isaiah 5; Matt.13:1-23; 24:36-25:46)

[12] [6:1-8] The apostasy described is marked not only by a decisive act ... but also by a continuous present attitude, a hostile relation to Christ Himself and to belief in Christ ... **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.167

6:9,10 Yet why is the writer confident regarding his audience? (Matt.25:34-40)

[13] [6:10] See c. 10:32 ff. Compare Rom. 15:25. The thought is of service to Christians as Christians, c. 13:24 (3:1); and not to Christians as men. Love of the brethren (c. 13:1) is crowned at last by love (2 Pet. 1:7). **Brooke Foss Westcott** *Hebrews* p.157

6:11,12 What, then, is the first requirement if we are to have 'full assurance'? (1 Cor.9:24-27)



[14] What is the truth taught here, but that most solemn one, that there is a semblance of conversion, of faith, of preaching, of works, in which there is no truth, substance, and life; that there is a counterfeit of conversion and renovation; that many profess and think they have been pardoned and accepted, of whom yet Jesus says, "I know you not"? ... Our election of God is a secret, and to make our election sure is the constant desire, aim, and prayer of the godly. **Adolph Saphir** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* Vol.1, p. 321

c. The Anchor of Our Hope - God's Immutability [6:13-20]

6:13-15 What else is essential if we are to have 'full assurance'? (v.12; Matt.24:13; 24:48-51; 25:3,26)

6:13-18 What, though, is the REAL foundation for our 'full assurance'? (Ex.22:11; Genesis 48:15,16; Malachi 3:6,7a)

[15] [6:17] ... the dominant Biblical sense of 'inheritance' is the enjoyment by a rightful title of that which is not the fruit of personal exertion. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *Hebrews* p.170

6:19,20 How can we be sure that our 'anchor' will hold? (7:25; 9:12,24; 1 Jn.2:1,2)

[16] [6:19] The Anchor, which is not mentioned in the O.T., is the familiar symbol of hope. Clement of Alexandria mentions it as a device on Christian rings. ... It occurs commonly with the [ichthus] on epitaphs. And the names of hope (Elpis, ... Elpidius) are very frequent. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *Hebrews* p.165

[17] This anchor is sure, it never yields even to the strongest pressure; it is stedfast, it never moves from its place, it never varies with the changing condition of our feelings. **Adolph Saphir** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* Vol.1, p. 335

Can the redeemed fall away finally?

[18] [6:4-6] Finally, when the redeeming blood of Christ is applied by the Holy Script to the very heart of a man's being, it is a work of God that cannot fail. This means that those who are genuinely Christ's do not fall away into apostasy. ... Thus Paul is assured that God who began a good work in the Philippian believers will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6); and he encourages Timothy, at a time when he is faced with the defection of Hymenaeus and Philetus, with the reminder that God's foundation is firm and secure, bearing the seal: "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Philip E. Hughes *Hebrews* p. 221

[19] The exhortation must be viewed in connection with the special circumstances of the Hebrews. After the rejection of the Messiah by Israel, the gospel had been preached unto the Jews by the apostles, and the gifts and power of the Holy Ghost had been manifested among them. The Hebrews had accepted the gospel of the once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, who sent down from heaven the Spirit, a sign of His exaltation, and a pledge of the future inheritance. Having thus entered *into the sphere of new covenant manifestation* any one who wilfully abandoned it could only relapse into that phase of Judaism which crucified the Lord Jesus. There was no other alternative for them, but either to go on to the full knowledge of the heavenly priesthood of Christ, and to the believer's acceptance and worship through the Mediator in the sanctuary above, or to fall back into the attitude, not of the godly Israelites before Pentecost, such as John the Baptist and those who waited for the promised redemption, nor even into the condition of those for whom the Saviour prayed, "for they know not what they do;" but into a state of wilful and conscious enmity against Christ, and the sin of rejecting Him, and putting Him to an open shame. ... It has been asked whether the description here given is the description of a truly converted and renewed soul. While some, remembering the Scriptural truth, that the sheep of Christ can never perish, and that the children of God are born of incorruptible seed, have attempted to explain the terms used, as not reaching fully the description of regeneration by the Spirit; others have insisted on the expressions denoting unmistakeably the renewal of the heart by the grace of God. The true explanation seems to be, that the apostle uses expressions to describe what the Hebrews were in profession and outward appearance. **Adolph Saphir** *Hebrews* Vol.1, p. 316

