

This Is Not Us Hebrews 6:1-12

Hebrews 6 is a pivotal part of the book. The “let us go on” is its main theme. Let us go on from the Temple to Christ. And now, having come to Christ, “let us go on” to maturity.

Now that we’ve settled the superiority of Jesus above all other OT shadows, let’s begin the journey of living in Christ.

“About this...” about Melchizedek and Jesus’s heavenly priesthood.

And so he begins to turn a corner with verses 12-14 – *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

On that basis...of moving toward Christian maturity

First: 6:1

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Four things should be noted about this verse.

1) The author does not approach his audience as one who lords his maturity over the babes in Christ. Rather, he invites the immature to journey together with him into maturity in Christ. This is an important point for us to remember. We should encourage immature believers to journey with us and not lord our knowledge of doctrine over them. We are all in different places and in different places by grace. At the same time, we must be assured that grace will move us from place to place.

V 3 – *“And this we will do if God permits”*

2) Secondly, by not lording his maturity over the audience, the author creates a sense of community. It is not that it is the author who is carrying his audience forward into maturity. Rather, it is implied that both the author and the audience are carried forward into maturity by God. God — especially as the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit — is thus implicitly portrayed as the agent of spiritual growth. This is important because of the warning against apostasy the author gives. Though the author knows some might fall away, he is also confident that some will not fall away completely (6:9). The author knows that the Holy Spirit truly has regenerated some, if not all, of the audience, and he knows that those who have been truly regenerated will never fall away finally. Rather, those who have been regenerated will persevere. Our trust too, must be in God.

V 3 – “*And this we will do if God permits*”

3) Going on to maturity means leaving the elementary doctrine of Christ (6:1).

This does not mean we abandon the basic truths of Christianity, for indeed all Gospel truth is built on these fundamental principles. Rather, it means “not laying again a foundation of repentance,” which includes “repentance from dead works and faith toward God,” as well as other doctrines that we will examine as we study the following verses.

4) We should all fear and teach those we love to fear “dead works.”

This is how the unsaved save themselves. Christians “repent” of dead works – salvation by self/works and choose “faith toward God.” We cast ourselves upon the mercy of God and the mercy of God only.

Ephesians 2:1-10 - And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- God’s love
- Our death
- Jesus’s life
- This is what it means to be saved by grace

Second: 6:2

...and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

- a) *Instruction about washings* = A reference to OT washings replaced by baptism
- b) *Laying on of hands* = gifts received after baptism

1 Timothy 4:14 - *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

2 Timothy 1:6 - *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands...*

c) *Resurrection of the dead & eternal judgment* = things about which we can do nothing

Third: 6:4-6

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Basis of interpretation: These verses do not describe believers but unbelievers

a) Those who have once been enlightened

Enlightened = photizo = light by knowledge/teaching. It is knowledge and not salvation. It is never used once of salvation.

Matthew 4:16 – (Isaiah 9:1-2) - *the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*

John 1:6-9 - *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

b) *who have tasted the heavenly gift*

Taste = sample and not consume

c) *and have shared in the Holy Spirit*

Shared = metochos = associated versus contrasted with possessing

Luke 5:7 - *They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.*

Partners = metochos = emphasis is on “in the other boat”

d) *and have tasted the goodness of the word of God*

Acts 3:1-2 - *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.*

Mark 6:20 - *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.*

Acts 26:28 - *And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"*

Acts 17:32-34a - *Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst.³⁴ But some men joined him and believed*

(Contrast "we will hear you again" versus "But some men joined him and believed")

e) *and the powers of the age to come* - these are miracles

Many of these same people heard of or actually saw Jesus and all that he did.

Summary:

These people cannot have been Christians and then lost their salvation. This is contrary to the entire plan and work of God who is "reconciling all things to himself."

Colossians 1:19-20 - *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

Philippians 1:6 - *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 1:13-14 - *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

Romans 8:31-39 - *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be^[i] against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.^[j] ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

6:13 - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,*

Our salvation is a promise God made to himself!

Fourth: vs 6-8

and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

a) Many people want the previous verses to identify believers who lose their salvation but, if this is true, v 4 – *“it is impossible... v 6 -to restore them again....”*

Why? Because v 4 - *“it is impossible”* v 6 – *“to crucify once again the Son of God”*

b) Losing salvation would “hold him up to contempt”

John 17:11b-12 - *Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

c) The metaphor in verses 7 and 8 define the difference between “*a crop useful*” and “*worthless and near to being cursed.*”

Fifth: 9-12

Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

a) “yet in your case,” “your work,” “you still do,” “each one of you,” and “you may not”

contrasts his audience with

“those,” “them,” and “they” of the previous verses.

b) “earnestness” = “assurance of hope until the end”

c) “faith and patience inherit the promises”

Conclusion: There is a great danger in playing church. There is great joy in knowing Jesus.