

Pentwater Bible Church

Hebrews Message 13

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.Mosaic of Jesus Artist Unknown

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Hebrews

Message Thirteen

MATURING IN OUR WALK WITH JESUS

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Hebrews 6:1–8

¹ Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this will we do, if God permit. ⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶ if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. ⁷ For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: ⁸ but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned (KJV).

MOVING FROM BASIC BELIEF TO PERFECTION

This section of scripture makes obvious the need to fully realize the audience that this book was intended to address. Failure to do so will lead to inappropriate interpretations and cause confusion with other passages in the New Testament assuring that salvation is by grace through faith and cannot be lost once a believer truly believes the gospel. Paul in this section of Hebrews treats this group of people as genuinely believing although some may not have been. He addresses them as having genuinely affirmed their belief that Jesus of Nazareth died and rose from the dead. Frequently readers who are untrained in fundamental hermeneutics will divorce passages from their proper context. Lack of understanding regarding the author's intended audience as well as a knowledge of the issues facing them leads to an improper understanding of many passages. This whole book to the Hebrews deals with Jewish believers who were seriously considering returning to the Levitical system to avoid the general persecution imposed by the Sanhedrin, Temple priests, and the Romans. These people thought they could return to the Levitical system and get saved at a later time when the persecution decreased. Thus, they would be Christian apostates which is a massive sin. But in doing so they thought that the new affirmation of faith when they returned to the Church would erase their sin of apostasy.

Additionally, they were demonstrating as seen in the last chapter a very immature view of Christianity. They had not grown in sanctification and were in a state of spiritual immaturity as many in Christianity are today. They had set themselves in a sense of a halfhearted Christian commitment. The hearers were called to move beyond teaching the need to repent of works which lead to death. Instead of involving themselves in dead works, they must respond in faith

to God's provisional growth in Christ. These people were not committed to the doctrines of the Christian faith and stayed in a life style of sin and disobedience. If they did not embrace the advanced doctrine of the Christian faith they could be locked into spiritual immaturity. This receives no blessings from God in this life or the Messianic Kingdom to follow.

Finally, the teaching of salvation and security is abundantly clear from many other passages in the Bible. The hermeneutical principal here is that Scripture does not contradict itself. Therefore, if the majority of passages teach eternal security one verse cannot negate that. The difficult passage which is thought to suggest it must be evaluated and interpreted from the light provided by the clear ones.

Hebrews 6:1

¹ Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God (KJV).

This verse connects the previous chapter and brings out the necessity to leave the first principles of doctrine and move on to more weightier things of Scripture. If they were believers they were babies in these doctrines. They had a spiritual life but it was stuck at the elementary level and that would be harmful to them. He is admonishing them to take the elementary knowledge of Christ and press on to perfection. This is one fundamental purpose for the book of Hebrews to teach the need for believers to press on to spiritual maturity (perfection). There is great peril of relapse to the basic elements if they leave the faith and then return. This verse begins to list some basic doctrine of the faith which must be left behind and advanced from. One of those is *not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God.*

Repentance from dead works, which is, conversion, regeneration, and repentance from a spiritually dead state. In the case of the Jews it was the dead ended Levitical system. Christ fulfilled the Law and it was never meant to be a practice providing salvation. Paul is saying here "don't return to sin again, for then you must have the foundation to lay again." That will lead to a second conversion a repenting not only of, but from, dead works. Life in the Levitical system was temporary. It had already come to an end with the death of the Messiah. While the sacrificial system was still being practiced by unbelievers, it was no longer viewed by God as being effective to please Him or grow in the new Dispensation of the Church Age. The turning of their faith towards God meant that the positive factor in conversion meant the once-for-all time commitment to Jesus is what actually brought them into the salvation they experienced.

The repentance mentioned in verse one describes the very first realization one makes upon belief. When the Holy Spirit enters us at belief He illuminates us to our sinful condition and sets about to convict us whereby we repent of previous sins and our sinful state while on this earth. The apostle describes the process in his second letter to the Church at Corinth.

II Corinthians 7:9–11

⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorrowful in a godly way, that you might not suffer loss in any way through us. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing, which you sorrowed in a godly way: What carefulness it produced in you, what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what intense desire, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In all things you have proven yourselves to be innocent in this matter (MEV).

The apostle is affirming that repentance from dead works is the most elementary affirmation of the beginnings of sanctification and a new life in Christ.

Hebrews 6:2–3

² of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this will we do, if God permit (KJV).

Regarding baptism the use of the plural in the term *baptisms* is indicative of multiple immersions or washings. Because this audience was Jewish is meant ceremonial cleanings presently in uses such as in *mikvahs*. The Christian baptism which is done after belief would make public the newly converted Jew to Christianity and show others their final point of separation from Judaism and the Levitical Law. The event of being baptized by a minister of Christ with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is the outward sign or seal of the covenant of grace, making public the person being baptized affirming their final break with the old life. And the Spirit or inward baptism, of the Holy Spirit brings the justification, and the graces of the Spirit for sanctification. This ordinance of Spirit baptism is a foundation of the Christian faith and is not to be repeated. Even though some Christian groups believe it is to be repeated there is no Scriptural support for this.

Laying on of hands was an Old Testament means of identification either as appointment to an office or association with some sin. A priest was appointed to his office in this manner and it became the means in the New Testament of affirming the chosen men appointed the offices of elders and deacons. One example is the scape goat that was used as a means of transferring sin from the nation Israel to the goat.

Leviticus 16:20–22

²⁰ And when he hath made an end of atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat: ²¹ and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness: ²² and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness (ASV, 1901).

The last two fundamentals were the resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment from the Great White Throne and the Lake of fire were not to be repeated. They should be realized early and then the believer should press on to more mature doctrines. Finally, it is God's will that they move beyond these elementary aspects of Christianity and move on to spiritual maturity. God will not force any to maturity any more than He forces belief. However, one cannot move forward while desiring to stay in the milk stage of belief. It is God's will for them and us to press on. The lack of pressing on, the lack of maturity, the failure to press on is not God's fault. Failure to do so shows personal dullness is not yet irrevocable or irreversible. These believers can still choose to go on to maturity. They have not yet made the decision to go back to Judaism. However, it is still possible for them to move backward in sanctification so far that it will be impossible to make substantive progress toward maturity. They can regress so much that God will not allow them to renew their faith.

Hebrews 6:4–6

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶ if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (KJV).

This is the core section that is important to understand. Paul begins with an affirmation that something is impossible for these Jewish believers. It is a renewal of the basics of Christianity. The readers here experienced five spiritual privileges. What Paul is saying is that it is impossible to redo something that has already been accomplished. These are given in the Greek aorist tense which emphasizes a completed action. These people were regenerated, that is they were saved. They tasted the heavenly gift and truly embraced the Messiah and the salvation He provides. *Tasted of the heavenly gift* means they had a real, conscious experience of the blessings, of grasping this gift and its true nature. They had possession of real spiritual experience of being born again. Since the born-again experience only happens once and its *effect complete*, they could not go back and do it again. Several verses affirm this issue from the New Testament.

John 10:28-29

²⁸ and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand (KJV).

John 3:16.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (KJV).

Ephesians 1:13

¹² that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ: ¹³ in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (KJV).

When we believed and fully trusted that Jesus of Nazareth is exactly who the Bible says He is we received the Holy Spirit. One way of expressing the certainty of the Christian hope is to say that the people of God have been “Sealed with the Spirit.” The term occurs three times in the Epistles; (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). In the Old Testament the literal meaning of *sphragizo* is somewhat more common, but in the New Testament (at times also in the Old) the term is used only metaphorically, in the sense of “ratify”, “confirm”, “attest”. In the three texts in which Paul uses the term it refers to the marking of the believers as God’s property. The Holy Spirit is the mark of the child of God. But the sealing has a reference to the end of the age, for God will deliver all those who have his stamp on them (Revelation 7:4). However, sealing with the Spirit is an assurance of the hope of the believer and can be seen as the “earnest” (deposit) of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21.) for future redemption at the Rapture and Resurrection.

The audience of the Book of Hebrews are not people who only came near to seeing the Holy Spirit work. They were real participants in the Holy Spirit. They had experienced the Spirit baptism with the Holy Spirit. The seriousness and completeness could only come about from an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwelt them.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (KJV).

There almost universal agreement amongst conservative Bible teachers and commentators that this teaches salvation which is not of works, but of faith. However, some who actually believe this, will turn around and teach that, while good works cannot get us saved, bad ones can get us unsaved. This is one of the verses that those who teach that one can lose their salvation have a hard time justifying their illogic.

The Jewish believers had tasted *the powers of the age to come*. They once-and-for-all tasted of the power that they experienced in their realization of the Messianic Kingdom also known as the Millennium. The word *powers* is the same one used of miracles in 2:4. Tasting it means they experienced real Spiritual rebirth in their lives. They were able by way of their new knowledge, to experience *the powers of the age to come* in their lives. The *age to come* was the common Jewish term for the Messianic Kingdom. The Jewish believers did not have the option giving up their salvation, going back into Judaism, and being saved again later because that requires Jesus’ re-crucifixion. Time moves forward not backward. Therefore, Jesus will

not be coming back to be re-crucified. He has already completed the process. He has already saved us believers completely. Their first option was to go back into Judaism. That will not mean the loss of salvation. It could very well mean a loss of their physical lives in the judgment of A.D. 70 though the Romans killed over one million Jews and took down the Temple. The Jewish believers were warned by Jesus the route of escape (Matthew 24:16–20). It would be best though if they made a complete break from Judaism once and for all. For Jewish and Gentile believers, then and today, that comes by means of immersion of water baptism (public declaration of their faith). After that, they need to press on to maturity. The rest of chapter six is trying to encourage them to do just that—to press on to maturity.

The term “if they shall fall away” is not speaking of the termination of their salvation, but rather of their failure to continue toward maturity. Maturity will be demonstrated by faith in God in their present trying circumstances. A serious warning of the consequences of such a failure to walk by faith is given “It is impossible ... to renew them to repentance.” Just as that generation from Egypt permanently lost the blessings provided by God to those who demonstrated their faith in Him by their obedience to His command to enter the land, so these (by a definitive decision to return to the outward forms of the Judaism that they had renounced at their baptism) would permanently lose the blessings and privileges promised to those who walk by faith.

The greatness of the sin of apostasy is *crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame*. This affirms that they approve of the Jews crucifying Christ, and that they would do the same thing again. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself. They represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing and would have him to be a public shame and reproach. This is the nature of and great misery of apostates. It is impossible to renew a sanctifying faith again unto repentance. The sin here mentioned is plainly apostasy both from the truth and the ways of Christ. God can renew them to repentance, but he seldom does it; and with men themselves it is impossible. Even though they were saved and will be in Heaven there will be no growth in sanctification and its blessings, which include crowns here and position in the Messianic Kingdom.

Hebrews 6:7–8

⁷ For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: ⁸ but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned (KJV).

Even as the apostle says about our works receiving a payment in I Corinthians here those who do not perform in the exercise of the gifts we are given to build up the Church will be treated as wood, hay, and stubble. Here they are called thorns and briers. When the fire of judgment is applied then the loss of sanctification time spent in apostasy will yield the works being burned up, but we shall still be saved (I Corinthians 3:15).

Next message: THE BLESSED ASSURANCE OF JESUS

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