

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 July 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Go On unto Completion!

Hebrews 6:1-12

In **Colossians 3:1**, the Apostle Paul wrote, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”* For the true child of God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is something that profoundly affects his daily life, every day of the year. Because Christ died and arose again, we who have believed on Him are now dead to sin and the world, and alive to God. We are walking in newness of life. We now have a desire for the things of God; and we can’t get enough of Him! We want to study His Word relentlessly, so that we can hear His words.

That is the way it is *supposed* to be, anyway. This should be the normal Christian experience. Sadly, though, many Christians are not setting their affections on things above. They are content to stay where they are in their Christian lives. Such was the case with many of the people to whom Paul wrote his letter to the **Hebrews**. Because many were *not* moving forward in their knowledge of the Word, they were now wavering under persecution. To these people, Paul had a message: and it is a message that every Christian needs to this day. The message is *“Move on to Completion!”*

Read Hebrews 6:1-12.

I. It is necessary for believers to press on (vv. 1-3).

If you were here last week, you will remember that at the end of **chapter 5**, Paul was warning the Christians in his audience that it was time for them to grow up spiritually. He told them that it was time to put away the spiritual *“milk,”* and to move on to the *“meat.”* He was disappointed that after having been saved for so long, many of them were still *“babes”* in Christ, and were *“unskilful in the word of righteousness.”* They should have been able to teach others the Word of God by now; yet, they were still having to be spoon-fed the Word.

At the beginning of **chapter 6**, Paul is continuing to talk about the need for Christians to grow up spiritually. In **verse 1** he says, *“Therefore leaving the principles (in other words, “the foundations”) of the doctrine of Christ.”* Paul is saying that “It’s time to move past the ‘ABC’s’ of your faith in Christ. It’s time to move beyond spiritual childhood.”

By the way, there are two ways in which God speaks of “childhood,” in the spiritual sense. In one sense, we *should* be like children! Jesus said, *“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”* (**Matthew 18:3-4**). In order to be saved, a sinner *must* abandon his pride, cynicism, and hard-heartedness, and become believing and credulous, like a little child. Children are much more likely than adults simply to *believe and accept* what God says in His Word, without question

or criticism. This is the way *everyone* must be in order to be saved. Likewise, those who *are* saved should *continue* to have soft, tender, believing hearts, just like little children. We should run to our Saviour for safety and comfort, just as a child would run to his daddy.

When I was just a “little shaver” growing up in the Midwestern state of Ohio, I experienced some frightening lightning storms. Oftentimes, the entire midnight sky would turn much brighter than noonday from a single flash of lightning; and the ground, the house, and every windowpane would shake and rattle violently from the thunder crash. At such times, what did I do? I ran to my parents’ bedroom, and crawled under the covers between my dad and mum! I knew that I was safe there. That is the kind of loving, trusting relationship that God wants to have with His children. Like children, we should also be innocent in mind and heart. The Apostle Paul wrote that we should be **“*simple concerning evil*” (Romans 16:19).**

However, there is another sense in which God speaks of “childhood,” spiritually speaking. In this sense, we should strive to be *adults*. We should move *beyond* spiritual “childhood.” In **1 Corinthians 14:20** Paul says, **“*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding men.*”** Paul also said, **“*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*” (1 Corinthians 13:11).** Like children, we should be **“*simple concerning evil*”**; but like men, we should be **“*wise unto that which is good.*”**

This is the way that Paul is speaking of “childhood” here in **Hebrews 6**. Spiritual childhood should be abandoned. Paul says, **“*Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on.*”** And to *what* should be **“*go on*”**? Paul says we should go on to **“*perfection.*”** And what is **“*perfection*”**? Is Paul talking about “a state of sinlessness”? No! As long as we are in this mortal body, the old sinful nature will be with us. The word **“*perfection*”** (*teleiotes*) simply means “full growth,” or “completeness.” It means to be fully equipped to do God’s will.

How, then, do we *become* fully equipped to do God’s will? Through the Word of God! **The Word of God brings us to spiritual completion.** Of course, it is helpful to read sound Christian materials which *explain* God’s Word. In fact, we *should* read good Christian literature. (That’s why we have a library here!) However, good books should *never* take the place of Scripture. Other books should be judged by God’s Word, and not the other way around. I’d rather have the Word of God than a warehouse full of biblical commentaries! Dig into God’s Word, Christian! Make it primary in your life. This is the only way we can distinguish truth from error. **“*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 4:16-17).**

Now, let’s return to **Hebrews 6:1**. After stating that he would **“*not*”** lay again the **“*foundation*”** of certain doctrines, Paul gives us six examples of “foundational” doctrines which his readers should have already known well. He’s saying, “We aren’t going to hash over these doctrines again. You know these things. Let’s move on to deeper truth.” What *are* these foundational, elementary truths that Paul says we should know?

First of all, there are the foundational doctrines of **“*repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.*”** Now, obviously, these are important doctrines. Why, then, did Paul say that he was *not* going to cover these doctrines again? Because these are basic teachings, which every

Christian should know! These are the very first truths that a person understands when he is saved. In fact, until a person comes to understand these things, he can't *be* saved.

First, there is repentance. **“Repentance”** means “turning around.” It is a complete change of mind and heart toward God. It isn't “turning over a new leaf” or “getting a clean start.” In other words, repentance is not “striving for salvation by doing good works.” It's just the opposite! Repentance is a turning *from* **“dead (or “worthless”) works.”** To repent means to agree with God about your sinfulness, and your need of a Saviour, and to cry out, “Lord, I know that my goodness is like a pile of filthy rags. I know I am a sinner, and that my sin has earned me hell. I turn away from my efforts at saving myself, and I ask *you* to save me!”

Now, coupled with doctrine of repentance is the doctrine of **“faith toward God.”** This is the next “foundational doctrine” in Paul's list. For a person to be saved, he must turn away from his works, and place his faith (his complete trust, or confidence) in Jesus Christ *alone*.

Read Galatians 3:10-13.

My friend, if you are trusting in anything other than Christ alone to save you, you are lost! You must repent of your dead, useless good works, and trust in Christ to save you. If you have never done this, I urge you to do so today!

Now, what is the next “foundational truth” which every Christian should know? It is **“the doctrine of baptisms.”** Baptism is a doctrine that a Christian should understand well, from the earliest days of his Christian life. To begin with, a true believer understands that baptism is *not* something that saves him, but rather an outward declaration of his faith in Christ. Every young Christian should also understand that baptism is a vital first step of obedience in the Christian life. **Romans 6:4** says, **“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”** Every Christian should gladly *submit* himself to this ordinance soon after salvation, and thus join himself to a local church.

The next foundational doctrine that Paul mentions is the **“laying on of hands.”** Now, this could refer to a couple different things. Paul could be talking about the **“laying on of hands”** that a church does when it commissions one of its members to go out from their congregation as a pastor or missionary. It could also refer to the **“laying on of hands”** that a church does when it prays for the healing of the sick. Either way, it is a function of a *local church*.

A new believer should soon develop a sound understanding of *all* these teachings. (This means that he should be willing to be *instructed* in them.) First, every believer should become well-grounded in the doctrine of repentance and faith unto salvation. A new believer should then understand the need of baptism, and should submit to it. He should then become involved in the life of his church. He should help to send out labourers into the harvest, and should join with other church members to pray for people. These are all basic, foundational truths of Christian living. This is “ABC” Christianity. Sadly, though, many Christians today are uncommitted “church hoppers,” with no church home. Or, if they have been baptised into a church, they won't get very involved, or committed. Brethren, this ought not be!

Now, the last two “foundational” doctrines that Paul mentions are the doctrines of the **“resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”** A person *cannot* be saved if he deny that there is an eternal judgment for his sin, called “the Lake of Fire.” More and more so-called “evangelical” leaders deny this doctrine. This reveals that they are lost men. A person who has truly been saved accepts what the Bible says about the penalty of sin! It’s the same way with the doctrine of the **“resurrection of the dead.”** You cannot be saved without knowing, and believing, that *Christ* is risen bodily from the dead. Even *our own* bodily resurrection from the dead is a basic, foundational truth, which every new Christian should quickly learn and grasp. Why? Because the *Christian’s* future bodily resurrection is directly linked to *Christ’s* bodily resurrection. Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the *guarantee* of the believer’s future resurrection. We will not be spirits floating around in Heaven for eternity! We’ll have real, resurrected, immortal, glorified bodies!

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

We have now seen the six foundational doctrines. Having laid out these doctrines, Paul now says, **“And this will we do, if God permit.”** What is it that we will do? Paul is talking about going on **“unto perfection.”** Paul is saying, “I am now going to endeavour, by God’s grace, to move you on to a state of *perfection* in your Christian life.” Just a few verses earlier, Paul had almost seemed to *hesitate* as to whether his hearers were even *able* to endure strong meat. However, he is now saying, “Look, I’m going to put the milk away now. You *must* start to eat strong meat. You cannot afford to remain in a state of spiritual infancy any longer!”

In the last half of this chapter, Paul will be getting back to that “strong meat” doctrine of Christ’s high priesthood, and of the order of Melchisedec. However, before returning to that subject, Paul is about to pause, once more, to give his readers a warning. This time, he is addressing those in his audience who are not really saved. To those who had not truly crossed over the threshold of salvation, Paul says this:

II. It is impossible for those who fall away to repent (vv. 4-6).

(Read verses 4-6.) Sadly, many people use these verses to teach that a true Christian can lose his salvation. They point to phrases such as **“those who were once enlightened,”** and **“have tasted of the heavenly gift,”** and they say, “See? This is talking about a saved person who gets into destructive sin, and **‘falls away.’** This means that Christians can lose their salvation.”

Brethren, nothing could be further from the truth! First of all, you’ll notice that not once in these verses did Paul state that these people were actually saved, or born again. Paul doesn’t even say that they had “believed” on Christ. That’s significant! Secondly, how badly must a Christian sin to lose his salvation? God’s Word says that even the smallest sin is deadly. All sin merits eternal separation from God! In order to say that a Christian can *lose* his salvation, one must also say there are some sins that *don’t* really deserve eternal punishment, and others that do. This is utterly contrary to the Bible! God says, **“The wages of sin is death”!**

Thirdly, if Paul *were* teaching that a genuine Christian can *lose* his salvation, it would mean that those who *do* lose their salvation would never be able to get their salvation back again! Why? Because Paul says that it is *impossible* to **“renew them again unto repentance.”** If that statement apply to believers, then those who lose their salvation would be irrevocably

doomed. It would be “One strike, you’re out!” Clearly, this is not what Paul is saying! If it were, it would mean that salvation is gained and kept by our good works.

So, then, what *is* Paul saying? Well, remember that Paul is writing to Jews. *As a nation*, the Jewish people had once been “**enlightened.**” They had been given the very oracles of God on Mount Sinai! No other nation on earth had the Word of God in their possession, or the Holy Spirit to enlighten them as to the meaning of the Scripture, except the Jews! They were incredibly privileged. Moreover, they had tasted of the “**heavenly gift**”—the heavenly manna that came down from the sky every morning for forty years while they were in the wilderness. Generation after generation of Jews had heard and learned about that “heavenly gift.”

What’s more, the first-century Jews to whom *Paul* was writing had had the Gospel clearly presented to them. They had been made “**partakers of the Holy Ghost**” in that they had, *to an extent*, cooperated with the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The word for “**partakers**” comes from the Greek word *metachous*, which literally means “going along with.” In their hearts, they had been enlightened to the truth of salvation; and for a while, they had listened to the Spirit’s wooing. They had also “**tasted the good word of God.**” They had heard it again and again; and they were convinced that it was “**good.**” Furthermore, they had tasted “**the powers of the world to come.**” In other words, they had witnessed the Apostles and prophets performing great signs and miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Jews had had all these privileges. Yet, many of these Jews who had made a *profession* of repentance and faith in Christ, and who were going through the *motions* of Christianity, had not *truly* repented and believed. They had come right up to the threshold of salvation; but they had not truly been saved. Paul was warning them that they were in grave danger of “**falling away**”—of passing a point of no return, when they would no longer *be able* to repent!

Now, does this mean that God did not *desire* to save them? Of course not! Christ has made full atonement for *every sin that every person has ever committed*; and the offer of salvation always stands. The problem is that many people *will not receive* that gift. Having been fully exposed to the truth for a time, they finally turn away from it. In doing this, they are taking their part with those who crucified Christ: and they will not be moved. Why? Because they are now crucifying to themselves “**the Son of God afresh,**” and putting Him “**to an open shame.**” At one point, they were *close* to repentance; but they have now drifted irretrievably beyond that point. They have hardened their heart to the point where they *cannot repent*. I personally know people who, at one time, had made a *profession* of repentance and faith; but their total lack of any sign of repentance or spiritual fruit makes it evident that they were never truly saved. Sadly, I fear that their hearts might now be hardened to the point of no return.

Now, maybe you’re thinking, “Wait a minute, Pastor! I thought that the Holy Spirit *convicts* people’s hearts, so that they *can* repent!” Yes, He does. No one could be saved without the Spirit’s conviction. However, the Holy Spirit doesn’t *force* people to repent. People can reject His conviction if they choose. If they continually harden their hearts, there may come a time when the Holy Spirit will not bother them anymore! For those who continually reject His pleading, God has nothing more to offer. Christ already died for them once, and He isn’t going to die again. If they won’t receive His salvation, there’s nothing more that can be done for them. Consider Simon the Sorcerer. He is sad example of one who “fell away.”

Read Acts 8:9-24.

Clearly, Simon the Sorcerer was never truly saved. He was a baptised church member; but he wasn't saved. He had "believed" on Jesus with a head belief; but it wasn't heart belief. There was no repentance there; and the fact that he desired occultic power for himself was the "tip-off" for Peter. Now, when Peter confronted Simon about his iniquity, it *appeared* that Simon was repentant. But was he? No. We know, from extra-biblical records, that this same Simon the Sorcerer became a fierce opponent of Christianity. Not only did he return to his witchcraft, but he claimed to be the reincarnation of Jesus! Yet, at one point, this man had been "enlightened" by the Word of God to the point of "believing" (intellectually) that Jesus is God. He had "gone along with" the conviction of the Holy Ghost to an extent. He had tasted the Word of God; and he was *very* interested in the "**powers of the world to come.**" However, his lust for occultic *power for himself* revealed that he was still in spiritual bondage.

You know what's truly scary, though? A person doesn't have to be off the "deep end" of the theological spectrum in order to be hell-bound. A person can drift through life with orthodox beliefs about God, with good morals and family values, and with his name on a church membership role—yet still miss Heaven. Why? Because he never truly repented of his sin and placed his full trust in Jesus alone. He hardened his heart to the point where he could no longer respond to the Holy Spirit. This was the same point to which Israel, as a nation, came.

Read Isaiah 5:1-7.

In this passage, we find a frightening truth: at this point, God was *giving up* on the unbelieving house of Israel. He was not spending any more effort on them. No matter how much "rain" of God's Word, and the Holy Spirit, that He sent upon the land, and no matter how much care and toil He expended on them, they refused to believe on Him, and to bring forth the fruit of righteousness. Thus, He decided to leave the land alone, and to let the "briers" cover it, spiritually speaking. I believe that this is the Old Testament Scripture that Paul had in mind as he wrote these words in **Hebrews 6:7-8. (Read verses 7-8 again.)**

Those in Paul's audience who were truly saved had already brought forth the fruit of righteousness in their lives, and would continue to do so. Their hearts had truly repented and received the Word of God—just as good ground drinks in rain. God had brought forth true righteousness in their lives. On the other hand, if there were any among them who had *not* truly been saved, and who had now hardened their hearts to the point of no return, then they simply would have to be left alone. There was nothing more that could be done for them. Instead of bringing forth the fruit of righteousness (which comes from *salvation*), their hearts had brought forth thorns and briers; and their end was "**to be burned**" in the Lake of Fire.

III. It is impossible for God to be unfaithful (vv.9-12).

(Read verses 9-12 again.) In these verses, you'll notice that the tone has suddenly changed again. Paul is now turning his attention back to the true believers in his audience. He says, "**But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.**" He's saying, "My purpose is not to scare those of you who are saved. I know that you *will* press on for Christ. *Your* end is not to be burned; your end is to bring forth fruit unto God."

Do you see why Paul was determined not to go over these elementary truths anymore? If there were any who had already rejected the Holy Spirit beyond the point of return, then it was impossible to retrieve them, anyway. No amount of time, energy, and care could make their hearts repentant, and fit to bring forth fruit. They must be let alone to their end, which is “burning.” On the other hand, the true Christians needed to be grounded in the truth, so that they would not waver. They needed to be encouraged to endure for Christ.

By the way, I had initially thought of entitling this point “**It is possible for believers to endure.**” However, this would have been the wrong focus. What we need to realise is that we are *able* to endure because **God is faithful!** *He* is the one who does the good work *in us*.

Read Philippians 1:6.

Christ is the one who made it possible for us to believe and be saved; and He is the One who enables us to endure until the end. With this in mind, let us return to **verse 10.** (**Read Hebrews 6:10-11 again.**) What is Paul saying here? He’s saying that God would not forget the spiritual fruit that these Christians had already brought forth for Him. Even though they were weak and weary, he was *commending* them for the fruit that they had already produced. Nevertheless, Paul says, “The labour of love that you have wrought for Christ is good. You have been diligent in your service. However, you also need to be diligent to keep your ‘*assurance of hope,*’ so that you won’t grow slothful in your service.” What is the “*assurance of hope*”? And how do we guard it? Paul answers this at the end of **chapter 6.**

Read Hebrews 6:19-20.

Brethren, *Jesus* is our Anchor! *He* is our Hope. *He* is the One who has steadfastly secured our place in heaven. Nothing can change that fact. However, what *can* change is **our assurance of that fact.** The Anchor doesn’t waver; however, our *confidence* in our Anchor *can* waver. How, then, do we increase our confidence in our Anchor? By reading His Word. By learning more and more about our Saviour. That is why Paul is giving his readers these deep doctrines about Christ from the Old Testament! These believers had produced *genuine good works* in their lives; however, if they did not remain *solidly grounded in the Word*, then eventually, their fruit would begin to wane; and they would lose much reward.

Knowledge of God’s Word produces *enduring* Christians. If you aren’t reading God’s Word, you will begin to lose confidence in your Anchor; and before long, you will stop trying to serve the Lord. Why? Because Christians who have lost their confidence in the eternal hope of their salvation are *very prone* to backslide. Because they have lost confidence in Christ’s power to save *and* keep them, they are filled with doubt and frustration; and they stop trying to serve God. They know, deep inside, that they are trying to do an impossible task--the task of trying to “stay saved.” Eventually, they sink into despair; and they float through life without any power to serve God. Folks, no Christian needs to live this way! If you have been saved, you are *risen with Christ!* He has saved you for time and eternity, and has given you the power to bring forth fruit in your life. That is why you *must* keep moving on to completion!

Conclusion: As we close this morning’s message, I would ask a couple questions. First, I would ask, “Do you need to be saved?” If you know that you need to be saved, yet you are putting it off, please do so no longer! If you continue to harden your heart to the Spirit’s calling, there may come a day when He

won't convict you anymore. Stop playing church, and repent and believe on Christ today! My second appeal is to Christians. Brethren, it is time to move past infancy. Perhaps you *have* moved past infancy, and you have moved into a more mature stage in your Christian life. If so, that's wonderful. However, don't become content where you are. Move on to perfection, so that you can live a fruitful life for God!