Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

If They Fall Away
Scripture: Hebrews 5:10-6:12
Code: 1304

Out of our study of 1 John, I have been asked many questions. I think without failure, about the last six Lord's Days, somebody has asked me how to explain Hebrews, Chapter 6. The one that talks about if they fall away, it's impossible to be renewed to repentance. And so, I thought, "Well, maybe we'll have time some day to do that." And then somebody else asked me, "How do you explain John 15, about abiding in the vine, and if you don't abide, you're cast into the fire and burned." Do these passages teach a believer can lose his salvation?

And as we've studied in 1 John, where John says, "Christians love the brothers, and Christians keep the Commandments, and Christians confess their sin," people would say to me, "Well, if a Christian stops doing that, does he lose his salvation?" And so, apparently, this particular subject is kind of worming its ways in the minds of some people. And I thought what we'll do in the next couple of weeks is discuss a couple of these problem passages, so that we can kind of answer this question.

And so, I invite you to take your Bible and turn to Hebrews 5 and 6. Chapter 5, verse 11 is where we'll begin, and we must begin a little bit ahead of the passage in view in order for us to understand it. Hebrews, Chapter 5, verse 11, and we'll be discussing the tragedy of falling away. The tragedy of falling away.

It is a very difficult question to face, the question of the security of the believer, because there's a tremendous amount at stake. Now, I'm convinced that either you can lose your salvation or you can't. Would you say that's fair? So, if somebody is right and somebody is wrong, and I have to believe this, folks. I hope it doesn't sound egoistic, but I have to believe that I'm right, because if I didn't believe that, I'd be wrong. And if I believe I was wrong, I'd believe this way instead, and then I'd be right. But since I already believe this way, I know it's right. [Laughter]

Now, I believe that the Bible teaches that the nature of salvation is that it is an eternal thing. The only fair way to deal with the subject, I think, initially, is to treat the passages that are often used to teach that you can lose your salvation, and to determine what they are saying. One of those passages is Hebrews, Chapter 5, verses 11 through Chapter 6, verse 9. Now, in this passage, we deal with the issue of falling away, and we must understand to whom this applies. Now, the theme of Hebrews is our first consideration. Any time you ever study any passage in a book, you must understand the main theme of the book.

In teaching, of course, that we teach in Logos, the Bible study center on hermeneutics, or principles of interpretation, we say that whenever you go about to interpret a passage, first of all, you draw a very large circle, and that's the book circle. Then you draw another circle around it, and that's the chapter. And then you draw the third circle in the center and deal with the passage itself. But you're never going to be fair with the passage unless you've covered the whole intent of the book.

You must understand what the writer is writing about, what his theme is, what his theme is in the chapter, and then you'll get down to what his theme is in the passage. This is the only fair way. Otherwise, you're guilty of carrying verses out of their context and you can make things mean whatever you want them to mean. There are no boundaries. I always think of the guy who preached on the fact that women not to tie their hair up on top of their head, because the Scripture says, "Top knot come down." [Laughter]

What it really says is, "Let those on the house top not come down." Well, you say, "Nobody would do that." Well, this man did. Nobody in their right mind would do that, but that's an exaggerated form of taking something out of context.

Or, you know, Judas went out and hanged himself, go down and do likewise, and what thou doest, do quickly. Well, that all appears in the same portion of Scripture, but you can't do that with the Scripture. That's why we have cults and isms and schisms and spasms and everything else, [laughter] because people take the Bible out of its context, and they can take a verse and make it mean a whole lot of things, out of context. Just like we read in the newspapers about certain people who say they were misquoted and quoted out of context. Well, God doesn't want to be quoted out of context either. And don't do that with Hebrews 6.

All right. All of that to say there is a basic theme to the book of Hebrews that must be understood. It is this, Christianity is superior to Judaism. That is the theme of Hebrews, over and over and over and over again. In Hebrews, we find the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism. And it is extremely important to use that basic principle as the key to this passage, and to use any other thing on this passage would be forced entry, because that's the key that opens the door. And we do not want to force an entry on this passage. We want to use the key that is the right key, and it is the fact that all throughout Hebrews, there is a contrast between Christianity, which is immeasurably superior to Judaism.

Now, then, as we come to this passage, it is not comparing Christians with Christians. It is not even in 5:11-14, where it talks about babes. It is not referring to Christians. It is referring to those in Judaism. They are the babes, the mature ones are the Christians. That is the constant analogy of the book of Hebrews. And you'll have to trust me on that, and if you're not sure that that is correct, you read it for yourself and I'm confident you'll understand that to be the truth.

Now, all the way through, the writer of Hebrews, and we don't know who he is, we can guess, but we don't know, all the way through the book of Hebrews, we find that Jesus Christ is presented as superior to everything in the Old Covenant. In fact, it begins by saying, "Jesus is superior to angels." And then it says, "He's superior to prophets, to Moses, to Joshua, to Aaron, to sacrifices, to the priesthood that Aaron had." Superior to everything. And that is the point of the book.

Now, the basic question of this passage is whether you are a Jew still holding on to Judaism, or a Christian. A babe is a Jew in Judaism. A mature man is a Christian. That's the issue of the passage. What he's really saying here is, when he says in Chapter 6, verse 1, "Let us go on to perfection. Let us go on to maturity." He's not saying, "All right, you baby Christians. Grow up." He is saying Jews holding on to the ABC's of God's revelation, let's go on to the full revelation, which is Jesus Christ. So, he's inviting them to be saved.

There are a series of warnings in the book of Hebrews. This is one of them. All of them are evangelistic, and this one, to be consistent with the rest, is evangelistic as well. All of them are inviting Jews, who are intellectually convinced that Christianity is true, to come to Christianity and not stop right at the gate. Now, that is the basic thesis of the book, and the basic thesis of this particular passage.

Now, the Old Covenant, or the Old Testament, was like the ABC's. The feel that Old Testament is full of pictures. You know, when we bought the first book for Melinda, you know, after she got to the place where she looked at it instead of tearing it. For your little children, you do the same thing. You buy them a book without words, with pictures, don't you? And pretty soon, it's ducky, bunny, doggie, ball. You know, that thing. You buy the kind of thing where the child can see the picture. But you don't expect your high school kid to come home, sit at the dining room table, and go ducky, doggie, ball. That is a little bit serious. If that's occurring in your house, you're in real trouble. It'll be all right. He'll get through college on an athletic scholarship. I did.

Now, you see the Old Testament is the ABC book. There are pictures. All that you have in the Old Testament, like the types and the ceremonies and the feast days and the Holy days and the sacrifices and the analogies, you know, the tabernacle. It's a whole lot of pictures of Christ. The temple, pictures of Christ. These things are the picture books. But when the New Testament arrives, the message is put away the baby books. See? Stop being babies and come to maturity. Maturity is in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And so, the call here is to the Jews to drop the primer and come on to the deep thing. To give away the milk and come to the solid food. And it is not the way Paul uses it in Corinthians. It is different. It is not talking about Christian babies becoming grown up Christians. It is talking about those who are babes, in terms of belying to the Old Covenant, becoming mature in terms of belonging to the New

Covenant.

Now, as we look at the passage, let's go to verse 11, Chapter 5, and we'll see, first of all, the first point in out outline, the problem. The problem is in verses 11 to 14. Here is the problem the writer faces. You'll notice verse 10, and you'll see the name of a man. What is the name? Melchizedek. Now, Melchizedek is a very important man. He was a priest in the Old Testament that happened to have an encounter with Abraham. At that point, he was introduced as the King of Salem, or the King of Jerusalem, and also was introduced as a priest of the most high God. A most unusual man.

Now, one of the very important heartbeats of the book of Hebrews is the priest character of Jesus Christ. We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, when all points tempted like as we are, and all of that. We have a high priest that has passed into the Heavens, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and so forth. So, all of the things about the priesthood of Christ are very important, and one of the things that the writer of Hebrews wants to do is illustrate the kind of priest that Jesus is by using Melchizedek.

He wants to show the people that Jesus is a priest like Melchizedek was. But the argument is a very technical one, and it's not easy to understand. So, he starts in verse 10 by saying, "Now, there was a priest and Christ was a priest after the same order," verse 6 says, "And it was the order of Melchizedek." Verse 10, he repeats the same thing. "Now, there was this priest, and Christ was like him, and his name was Melchizedek." Now come to verse 11. "Of whom we have many things to say." Now, the "of whom" applies to whom? Melchizedek.

Now, I want to say a lot of things to you about Melchizedek, and believe me, he does. In the very next chapter, the seventh chapter, he really takes off on Melchizedek. But before he can do anything, he says this, "I want to say a lot about Melchizedek, but these things are hard to be uttered, seeing that you are dull of hearing." Now, here is his problem. He has some things to teach that he knows some of them will never be able to learn. Why? They're dull of hearing. I want to teach you about Melchizedek. I want you to know about him, and I want you to see the relationship between our Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest, and the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek. It is an important point, but you can't handle it, some of you. Why? You're dull of hearing.

Dull is from nothros. It means stupid. It could be translated "sluggish." The literal Greek is no push, from two Greek words. There's just no drive. It's just slow, stolid, sluggish, stupid. He says, "I can't tell you these things because you are sluggish and stupid in your apprehension." You make it very difficult for me to teach you these things.

Now, it wasn't always this way. He actually says in verse 11, "You are," it should be translated, "You are become." There was a time when they weren't so dull. You know what had happened? Let me give you a little background. Some people had arrived in the community where these Hebrews

existed, and they bore the Gospel with them. They were the early preachers of the New Testament age. And they came and they preached the Gospel, and you know what happened among these people? There was a tremendous response. Mighty signs and wonders.

There were mighty miracles. Read them in Chapter 2, verses 3 and 4, it tells about them. Mighty things happened, and the people were awed. And they responded and they said, "Tremendous!" And there was a fresh working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. And they were responding to the Holy Spirit. Intellectually, they were saying, "Hey, this is true. This really sounds right." And there was that vitality of just sort of tasting the Gospel, and they were right on the edge of believing. And you know what happened? Their Jewish friends started saying, "Oh, no. You better not get into that deal. That's heresy. You'll forfeit your Jewish relationships, you'll be kicked out of the family, you'll lose your standing in the community. You'll ostracize yourself from your friends. Man, that's bad news."

And so, here they were, teetering on the edge, intellectually convinced that Christianity was true. Having tasted, in a sense, the realities of Christianity. Having been exposed to the miracles of the Holy Spirit. Having seen the tremendous power that God displayed to those early Apostles and prophets. And they were hanging on the border, and they had hung there so long, that they were growing spiritually sluggish. They were getting stupid from the standpoint that they had heard it and heard it and heard it and heard it, and all of a sudden, it was just dull stuff. They had put it off so long, so long, so long, that they were getting very, very sluggish about any kind of response.

You know, that's very, very often the case. There are people who can exist in the church, if they can get by the first couple of years of the Gospel, they can pretty well settle into the thing and stay there the rest of their life without ever knowing Christ. You know that? It happens. That's why the Bible says you may not be able to ever separate them until the Lord separates the wheat from the tares. They can get so comfortable in a situation by just sort of hardening to the thing.

And that's what was happening. The longer they stood on the edge, the harder they got, and the more spiritually sluggish and stupid they got, and he says, "You're getting this way, and I know you're not going to have that fresh comprehension of what I'm going to say." The Greek indicates they were in a settled state and spiritual stupidity. There was a time when the sacrifice of Christ was fresh in their minds, when the information about the new birth was fresh in their minds, when the Gospel was kind of exciting and kind of inviting and kind of interesting. But now they were growing stupid.

Now, verse 12. "For when for the time you ought to be teachers." As long as you've been hanging around the Gospel, you ought to be teaching it. That's quite an indictment. They must have been around awhile. "But, instead, you have need that somebody teach you again." Isn't that something? You've been hanging around this thing long enough to have had enough information to be a teacher, but instead, you have to be taught the basics all over again. For the time, chronos. Chronologically, they had been around long enough, they had been under the instruction of the teachers presenting

the Gospel and the New Testament truth long enough that they should have been able to teach it.

That doesn't mean they were Christians. They just had had enough of it and been around a long time, they could have been able to be teachers. But they were not. In fact, they needed somebody else to teach them, watch this, the first principles of the Oracles of God. Boy, you'd need to go back to the first principle. You know what they needed to do? They needed to go back and get the baby book again.

Have you ever learned something that you forgot? People ask me all the time, do you remember all the Greek you studied? Are you kidding? I told somebody the other day, I am at the point now where I would love to take first year Greek all over again, just to review the basics. I mean, you even use it, speak English and speak it well, don't remember the grammatical rules. And if you sit down to write, like I may sit down and write a book and write a manuscript out, and I forget how the construction should be. Well, the same is true in Greek. I can pick up my Greek New Testament and I can read it to a degree, but, you know, we were talking that I don't know, I can't remember how you recognize an objective genitive or a subjective genitive, and how you know which different ablative you've got, and all that. I need to go back and go through the primer.

Well, they were in the same situation. They had not used those things. They had just let them bang and clang in their minds, to the point where they all of a sudden had lost the grasp of the ABC's. Not even the ABC's of the Gospel, friends, but the first principles of the Oracles of God. Now, the word principles, stoikaia, is used to speak a very, very basic things. In grammar, it means the ABC's in the Greek language. The Greeks also used it in physics to speak of the basic elements. They used it in geometry to speak of the basic things, such as the point in a straight line. They used it in philosophy to speak of elementary principles for beginning students. So, you need to go back to the ABC's. You need to go back to the baby book.

The baby book. What is the baby book? The first principles of the Oracles of God. You know what the Oracles of God are? I'll show you. Romans 3:2 tell us what the Oracles of God are. Paul just pretty well destroyed the security of the Jews. The Jews hoped in their salvation, on the basis of circumcision and the fact that they were God's chosen people and had received His Word. And Paul had just shot that all down. So, Chapter 3 of Romans, verse 1, the Jews said, "What advantage is it to be a Jew? I mean, you just told us it doesn't do any good to be circumcised. It doesn't do a whole lot of good to possess God's Word. What good is it to be a Jew? What prophet is there?" And this is his answer. "Much every way," verse 2. "Chiefly because unto them we're committed," what? "The Oracles of God."

Now, what are the Oracles of God, then? The Mosaic Law, the Old Testament. So, now go back to Hebrews 6, verse 12. "For the time that you've been around Christianity, you ought to be teaching it. But instead, you have to be re-taught the Mosaic Law. And not just the Mosaic Law, but the ABC's of

it." What he's saying is this. You have been around Christianity long enough to be teachers of Christian truth, but instead, you are so infantile, you need to be taught the ABC's of Old Testament truth again, because you don't understand the meaning of that.

Listen, if a guy understood the picture book of Old Testament sacrifices, he'd come to the New Testament and accept it, wouldn't he? You don't even understand the ABC's of the Old Covenant, the Oracles of God. You're like those who need milk and not meat. What is that? That's a baby. You need to go back to the spiritual goo goo stage and pick up the baby book again and look at the pictures.

So, he is referring here, friends, to Jewish people who are stuck right at the crossroads of coming to Christ. And they've been hardened and dulled by hearing and not responding. Now, he says, you've even forgotten the significance of your own ABC's. Somebody needs to set you down and teach you Mosaic Law, because if you could really learn the Mosaic Law, you'd know that the New Testament was right. Jesus, when He taught the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, opened the Scriptures and talked about of Moses and the prophets, the things concerning Himself. If they knew that, they would know Him.

Jesus said to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they that speak of me." John 5. You need to go back to the Mosaic Law again, which you pride yourselves on. You're like those that can only have milk and not solid food.

Verse 13, he describes them further. "Every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." Now, notice this verse very carefully. The word unskillful, aparus, means without experience. Everybody in your situation, back with the ABC book, using the milk, is inexperienced in a doctrine about righteousness. There's no definite article in the Greek. What it says is, people in your situation are inexperienced in righteousness.

Now, tell me this. Can a Christian be inexperienced in righteousness? No, not in the technical sense, because when you were saved, you were granted the righteousness of Christ, right? You've experienced it firsthand. He's not talking about Christians. He's saying, "You people are still stuck in the Old Testament, and you have never experienced true righteousness." That comes in receiving Christ. You're stuck there.

One way to translate the verse would be this. Everyone who is continually on a milk diet, is completely without experience in the teaching about righteousness, he is a babe. These people were still stuck in the Old Testament, needed to relearn the ABC's of the Old Testament. Never really experienced righteousness. They were not redeemed people.

Now, notice the word babe, and I will make a couple comments about it. The word is nepios, and I know that people have used this passage to teach about Christian maturity, and they say a babe is a young Christian. Well, in other passages, that is true. But, beloved, the word "babe" does not have any salvation connotation at all. The only thing the word "babe" really connotates is a little, squalling baby. But the word can be made analogous to anything you want to illustrate. And so, here we cannot assume that just because the word "babe" is here, it has to mean you're saved. The word nepios is used elsewhere in the New Testament. There's several words that are used for the word babe, or little child. But the word nepios is used elsewhere in the New Testament, now mark this, and it refers to a state of spiritual immaturity. It refers to a state of spiritual stupidity or ignorance.

Sometimes, it is used of Christians, yes. Sometimes it is used of non-Christians. Could a non-Christian be spiritually ignorant? Could a Christian be spiritually ignorant? Yes. It's two different things, but the illustration could go either way. Let me show you what I mean by that.

Look at Romans 2:20. Here, you have the same word used here, "babe." It says this, "The Jews prided themselves on the fact that they were guides of the blind, lights to them in darkness." Now, Romans 2:20. "In structures of the foolish, a teacher of nepian, of babes." Does "babes" there mean Christians? Did the Jews pride themselves that they were teachers of Christians? I hope to tell you they didn't. They prided themselves on the fact that they were the teachers of the spiritually ignorant.

So, all the passage is saying here, in Romans 2:20 is that "babes" refers to somebody who doesn't know much. They're spiritually ignorant. It is so used that way again in Galatians as well. There is no way that you can make the word "babe" in the New Testament always refer to Christians. It just doesn't do that.

It does refer to Christians in 1 Corinthians, doesn't it? Where it says, "You're babes and I can't give you meat. I have to give you milk because you're carnal," et cetera. It's talking about Christians. But here, it simply means this. You people, who are still back in the Old Covenant, who even have forgotten the meaning of the pictures of the Old Covenant, by rejecting the New Covenant, you show us that. You are inexperienced in true righteousness. You are spiritually stupid. And this has nothing to do with Christians. It has to do with these Jews.

Verse 14. "Solid food belongs to them that are grown up. Full age. Those, who by reason of use." That is, those who have experience enough to make decisions about good and evil. One thing a baby can't do is that. Would you agree to that? Can a baby make a decision about what's right and what's wrong? They don't know what to keep in their mouth and what to spit out. They don't know what to put in and what not to put in. They don't know what's good and what's bad. They don't make decisions. They have never exercised their senses to the place, where by experience and use, they know the difference between good and evil.

He says, "You're like babies. You don't even know what's good. You can't even make a right decision. You're so infantile, your senses have never been exercised to decisions about right and wrong." Now, you see his problem? "I want to tell you about Melchizedek. I can't tell you about Melchizedek. You're too spiritually stupid. And instead of being in a place, you've been around long enough you should be teachers of this kind of truth, but instead of that, you've hung around so long, rejecting this truth, you've become dull, sluggish, slow, and stupid. And now you need to be reviewed on your ABC's, and if you really knew your Old Covenant ABC's, you'd open your arms to the New Covenant. But instead, you're like those people who can only have milk and not meat. You're just little babies. You haven't had your exercises. You don't know how to use your senses, and so you can't even tell the difference between good and evil."

Friends, that is the classification of an intellectually knowledgeable Jew, who has had the information put in his head. He's got a head knowledge of the truth, but he sits there in indolence and indifference and indecision, and hardens and stupefies himself. And remaining holding on to the Old Covenant, not willing to forfeit the Old Covenant, he is nothing but a baby, and he can't be taught the more advanced information of the New Testament. Now do you see the point? That's the problem. How am I going to tell you people about Melchizedek?

All right. Here's the solution. Point two. Chapter 6, verses 1 to 3. Here comes the solution. "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on in the perfection. Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God of the doctrine of baptisms and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit."

Now, he gives them a simple solution. People, leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Let us go on to perfection. Grow up, will you? Listen, growing up is tantamount to getting saved. The word "perfection," now mark this, this is a good footnote and one you must keep in mind. The word "perfection" is always, always, always used in Hebrews to speak of salvation, never spiritual maturity. Always salvation.

Say, "Now, wait a minute, John. Where do you get that?" Look at Chapter 7, verse 11. Everywhere, I could take you to every time it's used and it always means the same. Verse 11, "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should arise?" Now, what does that verse mean? If you can get saved under the Levitical priesthood, you wouldn't need Jesus, right? If you read it this way, if therefore, spiritual maturity were by the Levitical priesthood, that doesn't make any sense, does it? There weren't even any Christians under the Levitical priesthood, in the sense that we know Christianity in New Covenant time.

No. The word means salvation. If a man could reach salvation, if a man could reach maturity in God's eyes, by the Levitical priesthood, he wouldn't need Christ. Look at verse 19. "For the law made nothing perfect." Perfect, there, my friend, means salvation. The bringing in of a better hope it did make something perfect. The better hope being Jesus Christ.

Now, look at Chapter 10, verse 14, another time it's used. "For by one offering," that's the death of Christ, "He hath perfected forever." Did you hear that? When you receive Jesus Christ, were you instantly a mature Christian? No, that isn't what the word means. When you receive Christ, were you instantly saved? That's what the word means, and how long were you saved for? Forever. "For by one offering hath He saved forever," and that was set apart unto Him.

So, you see, the word "perfection" is always used, without exception, in the book of Hebrews, to speak of salvation. That's the writer's usage of it. Now, notice, let's go back to 6:1. "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let's get saved." Now, wait a minute. How could it be? How could you leave Christ and get saved? That's a hard thing to answer. Let me show you.

The word ephiemyis used here for leaving. It means to forsake, to put away, to let alone, to disregard, to put off, detach. The preposition at the beginning of the word implies separation and the basic idea is the separation from an original condition. Ephiemy is used, for example, in Matthew 13:36 and in Mark 4:36 to speak of a multitude that was sent away, put off, departed. Expositor's Greek New Testament translates this way. Let us abandon the principles of Christ. Leave them alone. Move away from it.

Alford says in his Greek testament, "Leaving behind and done with, in order to go to another thing." It is detaching and going to another thing. That's leaving. Say, "But, John, how could you possibly say we should leave, detach ourselves, cut ourselves off from the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and then get saved?" That does sound strange, doesn't it? Well, let's go a step further.

It's this what it says. You say, "It certainly couldn't be talking about Christians." I mean, they would never say to Christians, "Now, what you need to do is leave the doctrine of Christ." People say, "Well, this is saying Christians are to go on to perfection." Yeah. You mean they're to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to perfection? You mean rub out the foundation?

Paul says, "I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Folks, that's foundation. Well, He never left it, did He? What happens if a Christian leaves the foundation? You have nothing. No, it would never be said to a Christian, "Leave the basics about Christ." And it wouldn't really be very - cause this is to say to a non-Christian, "Leave Christ and then get saved." Well, you say, "What in the world is it saying?" Well, let's find out.

Let us go on. Interesting. That's a passive. Let us be borne along, and verse 3 explains it. "We will be borne along if God permits. It's God's power that carries us along to maturity." Well, let's look at the term the principle of the doctrine of Christ. That's the key.

What does it mean? What are the stoikaia? What are the basic ABC's of the doctrine of the Messiah? They are sacrifices, right? Ceremonies, washings, feast days, Holy days, all the whole Jewish system that pictured Messiah. Those are the elementary pictures concerning the teaching about the Messiah. Christ is the Old Testament name. It doesn't say, "Leave the principles of Jesus." It doesn't say, "Leave the principles of the Lord Jesus Christ." It says, "Leave the principles of Messiah."

What were the basic, elementary ABC's of the Messiah? The Old Testament pictures. What is he saying to them then? Leave the Old Testament system and come to Christ. Get saved. That's perfection. Now, do you see? The problem, you can't understand. The solution, you must leave the old picture book, the ABC book, and get on to salvation in Jesus Christ.

Now, what were the things that were connected with the old? He says, "We've got to leave these things." Lay aside, don't lay these things down again. Don't keep going over the same old ground. What are they? Repentance from dead works. Friends, that isn't equal to salvation. No, that isn't the same as salvation. Repentance from dead works, that's an Old Testament characteristic. John the Baptist preached this, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Repentance means to turn from sin. Salvation is to turn from sin toward Christ, right? That's just the Old Testament part of it. Leave the basic Old Testament thing.

And the second one, faith toward God. Does a man save the day because he believes in God? There are a lot of people that believe in God. A man has saved the day because he believes in God, manifest in the flesh, right? Jesus Christ. So, he says, "Let's not get stuck on laying again the same thing, like a half way repentance, and a half way faith."

The third one, the doctrine of baptisms. The King James translators didn't do us any favors at all in the translation of this term. Does the new American standards say washings? I'm sure it does. The word baptismas is used four times in the New Testament. Three times, it's translated washings. Once, here, somebody translated it baptism, just so they could fit it into their misinterpretation of the text. It doesn't mean baptism, it means washing.

What did the Jews do? They had all kinds of ceremonial washing. What he's saying is get on from teachings about washings, and also, their foundation was laying on of hands. That has nothing to do with ordination. That has nothing to do with New Testament, laying on of hands. We see the Holy Spirit.

Now, it has to do with the Old Testament, Leviticus 1 and Leviticus 16. The sacrifice put on the altar, what did the priest do? Laid his hands on the sacrifice as a point of identification, identifying with the sacrifice. What he's saying is, "Look, leave the Old Testament half way things, leave the Old Testament sacrificial system, the partial teaching of the resurrection of the dead. Come all the way to Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. Leave the partial teaching of eternal judgment in the Old Testament, and come all the way to the full teaching of the entire end times that Christ has revealed."

Don't go laying the same old thing down again. Leave the ABC's of repentance from dead works, for the New Testament teaching of repentance toward Christ. Leave the ABC of faith toward God for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as God. Leave the ABC of ceremonial washing for the cleansing of the soul by the Word. Leave the ABC of laying hands on the sacrifice, for by faith, laying hold of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Leave the ABC's of resurrection of the dead for the full revelation of the future life in Jesus Christ. Leave the ABC of eternal judgment for the full truth of judgment and reward revealed in Christ. You see the point?

Come on. Get away from the Old Covenant thing. Have you noticed how closely, though, the Old Covenant truth is tied to the New Covenant truth? We don't say those things are not true, we just say they're incomplete, right? "Let's go," he says. Detach from incomplete things and attach to complete.

Third thing is the warning, versus 4 to 6. He says, "Now, this is why you ought to do this, cause if you don't, trouble." Verse 4. "It is impossible for those who are once enlightened, tasted the Heavenly gift. May partakers of the Holy Spirit have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, that they shall fall away. It's impossible to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucified to themselves, the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

Now, stop there. Here is the warning, or the reason. The problem, the solution, and the warning. "You do this," he says, "You come. Let's go. Leave those things. Come on, get saved. Come all the way. Don't get hung up on the borderline, and don't be hardened as you continue to reject. Come all the way to Christ, because if at that point you happen to fall away, you'll never get saved." You say, "Why?" Because if a person rejects again and again, against the full revelation of God, there is no way he can be saved, right? If he's reached the pinnacle of all revelation, it's like Matthew 13. "When they saw what Jesus did, they heard what Jesus said, they said, 'You're of Satan.' He says, 'You're hopeless. You can never be forgiven.'"

It's like 2 Peter 2:20. "Some people there escaped the pollutions of the world and the corruptions of the world. They attached themselves outwardly to Jesus Christ." And then you know what they did? They turned around and they went back into their old ways, and He said, "You're like dogs. You've gone back and licked up your vomit."

In the tenth chapter here, you have the same thing, in Hebrews. The same exact situation, verse 20. "If you sin willfully, after you've received the knowledge of the truth. Not after you've received the truth. Not after you've been redeemed, but after you have a head knowledge of the truth, and willfully turn your back on it, there is no more sacrifice for sins. You're hopeless." And your punishment will be much more sore, Verse 29 says, "Because you have purposely trodden underfoot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant with which He was sanctified and unholy thing, and done despite of the spirit of grace, and vengeance belongs to the Lord, and He'll repay you for such acts."

That's what He's saying here. "Look," he says, "You better come, because if you don't, you'll harden and with all the revelation you have, if you harden against that and fall away, you'll never be saved." You can never have more light than you've got now."

Now, let me add something, folks. Some people say the passage teaches you can lose your salvation. If it does, then it also teaches you can never get it back again. See the word "impossible." So, if anybody wants to use this passage to try to show you that you can lose your salvation, you just say, "Well, that's funny, because if anybody ever does, it's impossible for them to get it back." And they will never allow for that.

Say another thing they do. Very often, in interpreting the passage, they change the word "impossible" to "difficult." And they say it's difficult to get saved again. That isn't what the word is. The word is impossible. It's used three other times in Hebrews. Chapter 6, verse 18, Chapter 10, verse 4, Chapter 11, verse 6, and it always means impossible.

You notice something else there. It is impossible for those. Have you noticed how he detaches himself from those to whom he speaks? But verse 9 says, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you." Remember the difference between the those and the you. Have you ever been vaccinated? You know what a vaccination is, an immunization? You know what they do? They give you a little bit of the disease and then you never catch it. You know, there are a lot of people like that, who got a little bit of Christianity and got inoculated against it. They got just enough of it, you know, to sort of get a mild case of Christianity.

Hebrews, we're in this situation. Now, look at the advantage they'd have. Look at verse 4. "They were enlightened." What is enlightenment? Head knowledge. They were enlightened. It refers to the light of knowledge and teaching. It's the natural knowledge of truth, acquired through the senses.

The Gospel had broken on their minds and they understood it. In fact, it even says once enlightened, and the word is once for all. They, at one time, were so informed on the Gospel, that there was nothing more to say. They intellectually comprehended every bit of it. They understood it in their minds.

There are plenty of people like that. They know the Gospel. They know it completely. They just are on the borderline, and they've never committed themselves to it. They were enlightened, head knowledge.

All right, second thing about them. They tasted the Heavenly gift. Now, what is the Heavenly gift? I'll tell you what it is. Just read 2 Corinthians 9:15, and it says, "God has given unto us His unspeakable gift," and who is it? Christ.

Tell you another thing. Ephesians 2, "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves." It is a gift of God. The Heavenly gift is salvation in Christ. That's what it is. In some cases, we could interpret the Holy Spirit, but in this passage, it's very apparent that he's talking about salvation.

You say, "Well, what do you mean, they tasted salvation?" Well, they had a smattering of it. It doesn't say they devoured it. It doesn't say they made it their own. It doesn't say, like, John 4, where Jesus said, "You must drink. You must take me in." Tasting is the first thing. You know how you taste something, you don't know what it is, and if you like what it tastes like, down it goes.

That's the analogy. He got a little taste of salvation, the Holy Spirit was working in their life. They could see the lives of other Christians, and they kind of felt what was going on, the potentials of salvation were in their mind. That's happened to everybody who's ever gotten saved, do you know that?

As you come closer to salvation, you begin to sense what salvation is like. You kind of get a pre-salvation sense, and they were stopping short of it because of peer pressure. They were like the spies, you know, at Kadesh Barnea. Saw the land, had its fruits in their hand, and then turned back.

So, they had tasted it. They hadn't drunk of it, just tasted. It says then in the third place, "They were partakers of the Holy Spirit." The word is metacost. It does not mean partners. It does not mean possessors. It means associates. They were associated somehow with the Holy Spirit. That means they had something in which they commonly participated.

You know something? You know, there are a lot of people who could associate with the Holy Spirit? You know, there are some of you sitting here this morning that don't know Jesus Christ, and in a sense, you're associating with the Holy Spirit this morning, because you're involved in what He is doing as He is speaking, teaching the Word of God through me or whatever other teacher is around. And if the Spirit of God is convicting your heart, and speaking in your mind in the sense, He's associating with you.

Would you say that Christians are in association with the Holy Spirit? No, I would say they are indwelled by Him, wouldn't you? If you were going to use Biblical terms. Do we say, "I am an associate of the Holy Spirit. I bump into Him now and then." No.

These people had an association with the Holy Spirit how? Listen, do you think the people on the hillside the day that Jesus fed the 5,000, had an association with His power? They ate the food He made. And when the Gospel arrived to these people, it arrived with miracles and signs and wonders and diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit. It says in Chapter 2, verse 4, "They saw the Holy Spirit in operation. They were associating with the miracles that He did."

What it's saying is you are responsible. You have head knowledge. You have even had a taste of the pre-salvation concept. You have even seen and felt the ministry of the Holy Spirit, like Simon Magus in Acts 8, who wasn't a Christian, but, boy, did he ever get in with what the Holy Spirit was doing. Tried to buy it.

Further, verse 5. "You had tasted the good Word of God." They even had had a taste of the truth, the principles were told to them. But unlike Jeremiah, who said, "Thy words are found and I could eat them." They only tasted. They were even tasters of the powers of the age to come. What is that? What's the age to come? The Kingdom. What's the power of the Kingdom? Miracle power. They saw miracles.

You guys have seen miracles. All of this. Look what you have. Your head knowledge. You've even tasted salvation. You have even associated in the work of the Spirit. You've tasted the good Word of God. You've heard good teaching. You've heard the Gospel. You've heard the instruction, and you've even seen the display of God's divine power, to be fully displayed in the Kingdom. All of this you have, and my friend, verse 6 then says, "If you fall away from all of that, you're hopeless. To try to renew you again to repentance is impossible, because you have crucified to yourselves." That is, in your own judgment, Jesus deserved to be crucified. You take your place with the crucifiers and you say, "It isn't true. I stand with them. He was a fake, and He deserved to die."

Jesus said this, "You're either for me or against me," right? You either stand with those who loved Him, or you stand with those who killed Him. If you fall away, at that point of full revelation, hopeless.

Now, publicly, what it says, to put Him in open shame means you publicly declare that you take your stand with the crucifiers. You publicly proclaim Jesus to be deserving of His death. Let me add this. In all these verses, there is no term ever used in the New Testament elsewhere in reference to salvation. That's right. Do you see the term saved? Do you see justified? Do you see righteous? Called, elect, believers, Christians, sons, redeemed, sanctified, adopted, chosen, bought, regenerated, born again? Any of them? None of them. Those are all pre-salvation ministries,

preparing them to believe.

Take, for example, the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Do you see any of that? Born of the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit, and dwelt by the Spirit? Anointed by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit. Is that there? No. Just tasting and feeling, seeing. They're not Christians. They're right up to the edge. If you fall away, tragic. Tragic loss.

And so, He closes in verses 7 and 8 with an illustration. And the illustration seals this interpretation. Look at it. "For the Earth, which drinks in the rain that comes down upon it and brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it is tilled, receives blessing from God. That which bears thorns and briars is rejected, is near to cursing, whose end is to be burned." He says, you know, it's like the raindrops. The rain drops down, hits the field, and you know, when the rain hits the ground, some things grow up. And they're a blessing to the person who tilled them and blessing comes from God. Other times, the rain makes thorns and briars grow, and they're gathered and thrown into the fire. That's the whole point.

The abundant rain, what is it? It's the revelation of God. God's revelation comes down and it hits the earth. One piece of ground springs forth in herbs, produces fruit. That's the positive response to the Gospel, salvation. Another one, thorns and briars, the rejection of the goodness of the rain, and that's cast into hell. See, He's only talking about two kinds of people. He's saying, "Don't have the gentle rain of revelation fall on you, and spring up as a thorn or a briar, to be cast aside."

And so, all of this is a warning to unbelievers, right on the edge. Then He turns to Christians in verse 9. Look how He introduces them. "But, beloved, we are persuaded of better things of you, and the things that accompany salvation." We're not in this boat, and there He turns the corner and talks to the believers.

We know your work firsthand, your labor of love. We know what you're like. You're not like they are. You're not in infancy, you're in maturity. Not on milk, on solid food. Not inexperienced in righteousness, but perfectly righteous. Non-repentance from dead works, but repentance toward God in Christ. Not faith toward God apart from Christ, but faith in God as Christ. Not external washing, but internal transformation. Not repeated identification with sacrifices, but union with Christ. Not the ABC's of resurrection and judgment, but the full revelation of the blessed hope.

Yours is not enlightenment, yours is regeneration. Yours is not tasting, yours is feasting on. Yours is not partaking of the Spirit, yours is being indwelled by the Spirit. Yours is not getting a taste of God's good Word, but drinking it all in. You're not just seeing miracles, you are one. You see the difference? That's what the passage means.

A warning is this. I pray no one leaves this place this morning who has been doused in the gentle rain of God's revelation, and who finds himself by continual indifference and indecision, hardening and hardening until he comes forth as a thorn and a briar, to be gathered and burned in an eternal hell. That's the message of this passage. That's God's message to you today. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you this morning for the clarity of the Word of God. We ask that it would penetrate our hearts, and that those people who are here, who have not yet decided for thee, who have not yet activated the will for thee, would be moved upon by the Holy Spirit. They would spring forth as herbs, pleasing the one who tilled the ground, receiving blessings from thee. Not as thorns and briars, to be cut down and burned. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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