

Hebrews: Chapter 6

Heb 6:1 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 toward God,

- principles of the doctrine of Christ- Thayer- “i.e. the instruction concerning Christ such as it was at the very outset”. Following what the writer said in the previous chapter, he instructs the Hebrew Christians here on how there is more to those basics that are necessary if they have the desire to go on to perfection; a more mature level in their faith. To leave the basics doesn’t mean they were to forget them either. Staying in their present understanding was keeping them from pressing “on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (*Php 3:14*). Peter said that we are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (*2 Pet 3:18*), Paul adding “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ” (*Eph 4:13*). How can such be attained without growth in knowledge?

- foundation- Gk.2310- something *put* down, that is, a *substruction* (of a building, etc.). They weren’t to continue laying down what was already understood as basic just as in construction of a building you don’t continue laying one foundation on top of another, on top of another, etc.; repentance from dead works (*Rom 6:6-14*) and of faith (*Gk.4102-**moral conviction [of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God) toward God*) were basically understood and needed no repetition.
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Heb 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

- baptisms- Thayer- “which seems to mean an exposition of the difference between the washings prescribed by the Mosaic law and Christian baptism”; indicating here that these Jewish brethren felt it necessary to repeatedly explain the difference between what they were taught from O.T. rituals and what they now understood in the New; from Aaron and his sons’ initiation into the priesthood (*Exo 29:4*) to the washing of the sacrifices (*Ex 29:17*), to washing clothes that were unclean because of touching a dead body (*Lev 11:28*), etc., to finally, the “washing of regeneration” (*Titus 3:5*).

- laying on of hands- Both Testaments taught this concept to be incorporated in various circumstances. Under the O.T., Arron laid his hands on the scapegoat (*Lev 6:21*), the Levites laid their hands on the bulls used to make atonement for their sins (*Num 8:12*), also in *Deu 34:9* where Moses commissioned Joshua as the new leader of the Israelite nation going forth into the promised land, etc. Under the N.T., the apostles laid hands on those who were to “serve tables” (*Act 6*). Peter and John went down to Samaria to lay hands on the brethren there so that they would receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (*Act 8*). The church at Antioch laid hands on Barnabas and Saul to be sent out as missionaries (*Act 13:2-3*), etc. It served as a commission of purpose given by those of authority.

- resurrection of the dead- This is one of the basic principles of the Christian faith upon which the hope of the church stands. There must have been converts from among the Sadducees and Pharisees at Jerusalem, among whom a continual discussion of the resurrection and future state of the soul existed. The converted Sadducees, who would

now have believed in the resurrection (*Act 23:8*), would have made this an ongoing dialogue that the writer must have felt was becoming too repetitious.

- eternal judgment- Gk.166/2917- *perpetual*/(Thayer) *vindication of one's right*, to vindicate one's right by taking vengeance or inflicting punishment on another- Rev 18:20." (*2 Thes 1:6*) This goes along with the discussion of the resurrection of the dead (*Act 17:31*), which disclaims the "doctrine of annihilation" (*complete and final destruction of the lost with no eternal punishment*) that is taught by certain cult religions.

Joh 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him Who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

2Th 1:9 They (*the persecutors of the faith*) will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, 10 when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

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Heb 6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.

- To go on to perfection is what the writer is here referring to. Ultimately their lives were in God's hands, so they needed to continue to trust in Him since they were but "a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"; just as the Israelites were to trust God for their daily portion of manna (*Deu 8:3*). Therefore, if the Lord permitted whatever they were doing to continue, it would (*Jas 4:13-15*).

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Heb 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,

- impossible – Gk.102- unable, that is, *weak* (literally or figuratively); passively impossible. Speaking to Jewish converts, who were once practitioners of the Mosaic Law, this impossibility of restoration has a condition attached (*v. 6*). Were they being so persecuted by their Jewish brethren that they would return to a system that could not save them (*9:12*)?

- enlightened- Thayer- "*to enlighten spiritually, imbue with saving knowledge*; with a saving knowledge of the gospel: hence of those who have been made Christians". The context refers to Jewish Christian converts, the initial receivers of this missive. The writer is using an incident that his audience must have been familiar with, i.e., there must have been some of their number that left the faith.

- tasted- Gk.1089- to *experience*. As it refers to Christ, they have experienced the hope of eternal life through His sacrifice and resurrection (*Titus 1:2; 3:7*).

1Pe 2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation-- 3 if indeed you have tasted (*Gk.1089*) that the Lord is good.

- heavenly gift- This must refer to God's gift of "His only begotten Son" (*Jn 3:16*).
- partakers (*Gk.3353- participant*) of the Holy Ghost- This began at Pentecost when Peter answered the Jews' question "what shall we do?" He told them to "Repent and be

baptized every one of you in the name (*authority*) of Jesus Christ for (*Gk.1519-denotes looking forward to receiving something*) the forgiveness of you sins (*purpose*), and you will receive the gift (*Gk.1431- gratuity*) of the Holy Spirit” (*Act 2:37-38; Rom 8:9*).

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself **bears witness with** our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (*emp. added*)

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Heb 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

- These have *experienced* the *virtuous use* of the word of God which proclaims “liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (*Lk 4:18*). They found it “sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb” (*Ps 19:10*).
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- They had also *experienced* “the kingdom of God (*church*) after it [came] with power” (*Mk 9:1; Rev 21:2*). This was post Pentecost during the age of miracles (*2:2-4*) because of the powers (*Gk.1411- specifically miraculous power*) that were yet still being performed that had already introduced the kingdom (*Act 2:1-4*). Temple worship was still being observed by the Jews in Jerusalem (*pre-70 AD*) where these converts were living, and the sacrificial system was still being practiced. The Christian dispensation was in its infancy but the Mosaic was soon “to vanish away” (*8:13*), which was reason for this warning. The world (*Gk.165- by extension perpetuity; specifically, a Messianic period [present or future]*) to come (*Gk.3195- [through the idea of expectation]; to intend, that is, be about to be, do, or suffer something [of persons or things, especially events; in the sense of purpose, duty, necessity, probability, possibility, or hesitation]*) had to do with the expectation of the old sacrificial system being completely done away with and the promise of the N.T. in Christ’s blood (*1 Cor 11:25*) finally being understood (*11:40*) once “the partial [passed] away” (*i.e., the miraculous ended*) and “the perfect (*complete written word*) [came]” (*1 Cor 13:10*). The writer here had the same goal John did while on Patmos, his was to warn the seven churches of Asia (*Rev 1:14*) whereas this writer was to warn the church that was in Jerusalem. In the Revelation John was told to “Write therefore the things that you have seen” (*Rev 1:19*). He wrote of the destruction of Jerusalem (*Rev 7-10*) and the end of the sacrificial system which was in the past to him. The writer of Hebrews, in penning his letter, was warning the saints living in Jerusalem of that then yet future (*to come*) event that was on the horizon.

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Heb 6:6 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.

- The doctrine of “perseverance of the saints”, that teaches “once saved always saved”, is contradicted here by the truth. To fall (*shows possibility*) away- *Gk.3895- to fall aside*, that is, (figuratively) to *apostatize*. They had to be a part of something in order to fall away from it. You can’t fall from something you have no part in. The only religious system that can save is Christianity, and Judaism (*evidently there were Judaizers among them as were at Galatia- Gal 1:7*) can/could not do it (*10:4*).
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- The impossibility of verse 4 is further explained here. To renew anyone again unto repentance, while presently (*they crucify*) denying the Savior (*Mat 10:33*) without *compunction* (for guilt), would be absolutely impossible, while in that state of mind. This is not to be considered the unpardonable sin of *Mat 12:32* where they blasphemously

gave credit to Satan for a miracle that was performed by Jesus via the Holy Spirit. Jesus said of that sin that it “will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come”. Here, repentance would have been possible, but not in the state of mind where they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Their apostasy here was akin to shaming Christ publicly since they had prior touted Him as their Savior.

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Heb 6:7 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:

- Comparing Christians to the physical earth was/is to simply show how a cultivated mind can produce an abundance of knowledge. Just as the farmer receives (*accepts*) the *benefit* of his labors from God, so does the student of Scripture. A well cultivated and fertilized soil is what Jesus likened to the good soil (*mind*) of “the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit...” (*Mat 13:23*). To desire to understand anything takes a lot of work.

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Heb 6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

- Jesus went on to speak about the word “sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of sin choke the word, and it proves unfruitful” (*Mat 13:22*). This was a warning against complacency. They had been warned about the fall of Jerusalem in this letter but were they taking it for granted? Were they not remembering what Jesus Himself said in *Mat 24* over three decades before this? Were they going to suffer with the rest in Jerusalem when the Romans burned the city as a farmer burns his weeds? History says they did not (*Ray Murray, Jr.- The Destruction of Jerusalem*), so they must have heeded this warning.

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Heb 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

- The writer states here that we (*here in company with fellow believers*) are *convinced of nobler abilities* from you relating to salvation if even we thus speak. Using what may have been received as harsh speech, the result obviously led them to do even greater than what they were already doing (*12:7*). The same method was used by Paul in his letter to the Corinthian church (*2 Cor 10:9*).

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Heb 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

- These Christians suffered economic hardships due to their leaving Judaism, but they continually *attended* to acts of *benevolence* concerning the needs of their fellow saints in Jerusalem, just as Paul was encouraged to do (*Gal 2:10*). This was a show of their piety and respect for the *authority* of God and He was not unrighteous to neglect it.

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Heb 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

- The writer *longed* for these brethren, that every member of the congregation would display the same *eagerness* (*i.e., perseverance*) with *entire confidence* of *expectation*

until their *goal* was met. Paul wrote to Timothy that he “fought the good fight [and] finished the race [having] **kept the faith**” (2 Tim 4:6). (*emp. added*)

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Heb 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- That- shows reason for their perseverance. As Paul wrote to Corinth, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Their goal was through (*avenue*) faith and patience to imitate the moral *conviction* and *forbearance* of those who were *heirs* of the divine assurance of good (*as the Hebrew Christians at Rome were- Rom 7:1*), in other words, believers (*especially of the O.T.; for context see chapter 11*) who were stronger (*spiritually*) than they were, yet “apart from [them] they should not be made perfect” (11:40). They (*as we*) were not to be imitators of those who were slothful (*Gk.3576-lazy*) in the faith.

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Heb 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself,

- Even though Christians are not supposed to swear by anything (*Mat 5:37*), in introducing Abraham the writer understood these Jewish converts’ affinity toward the father of the Jewish faith. The promise God made to Abraham was reiterated by Zechariah, the father of John the Immerser, who “was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying... the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days” (*Lk 1:67-75*).

- He swore by Himself- There is none greater than the Creator through whom God could enact a covenant by.

“In an oath of this kind God pledges His veracity; declares that the event shall be as certain as His existence; and secures it by all the perfections of His nature. The usual form of this oath is, ‘As I live, saith the Lord;’ see Num 14:21, 28; Eze 33:11.”

Albert Barnes

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Heb 6:14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

- Part of the promise God made to Abraham was to protect his offspring that He was going to multiply. That promise was fulfilled through the nation of Israel being multiplied from the loins of “one man, and him as good as dead, [but] were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven...” (11:12).

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Heb 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

- patiently waited- Abraham was told when he was 75 years old that God would “make of [him] a great nation” (*Gen 12:1-5*).
- obtained the promise- For twenty-five years he waited until he was one-hundred years old before God kept His promise with the birth of Isaac (*Gen 21:1-5*).

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Heb 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

- If one were to swear “by Joe”, it would be restricted by the limitations Joe has. But to swear by the greater, one would have to swear by someone or something ‘further up the food chain’ that is more powerful than self in order to establish anything (*see Jas 5:12*). Whatever would be an end of all strife, an oath (*Gk.3727- restraint*) was necessary for confirmation of a promise made by one party to another, backed by collateral that was greater in value than the oath itself. Since God is omnipotent, there would be nothing greater that He could perform His oath by.

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Heb 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:

- Relating to what was stated, God was *willing*, in a *more superabundant* way, to *exhibit* to the *possessors* of the divine assurance of good, His immutability (*Gk.276- unchangeability*) of *purpose*, *ratified* it by a (sacred) *restraint* (specifically *oath*).

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Heb 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

- two immutable things- God’s **oath** and His **promise**. We understand that “God is not a man, that He should lie, or the son of man, that He should change His mind. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not fulfill it?” (*Num 23:19*) Some things God cannot do and lying is one of them.

- fled for refuge- Once again speaking to a Jewish audience, the reference is to the cities of refuge where the one who committed unpremeditated manslaughter fled to escape “the avenger of blood” (*Num 35*). While he remained in the city he might (*it was conditional, i.e., he had to remain there until the death of the high priest- v. 25*) have a strong consolation that he was rescued from the avenger of blood. Just as that city protected the manslayer from death, Christ is our refuge (*Jer 16:19; “Passover”- 1 Cor 5:7*) in Whom we have escaped the fate (*which we only deserve*) that we all share apart from Him, that is, death (*an eternal separation from God- 2 Thes 1:9*). While we remain in Christ (*also conditional*) we also have a strong consolation... to lay hold upon the hope (*Gk.1680- confidence; here pertaining to the anticipation and expectation of eternal life*) set before us (*see also 12:2*). Paul, speaking to the Gentiles at Ephesus, said...

Eph 2:12 remember that you (*Gentile Christians*) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope** and **without God in the world**. 13 But now **in** Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (*emp. added*)

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Heb 6:19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

- anchor- Thayer- “Figuratively, any *stay* or *safeguard*: as hope.” A ship’s anchor holds the vessel *secure* and *stable* just as hope does for the soul in keeping it calm when tempests (*trials*) arise.

- within the veil- Referring to the Holy of Holies where only the high priest was to enter on The Day of Atonement (9:25) and is alluding to where God abides; Heaven. It is ultimately where our hope lies.

“That Holy Place was emblematic of Heaven; and the idea here is, that the hope of the Christian enters into Heaven itself; it takes hold on the throne of God; it is made firm by being fastened there.”
Albert Barnes

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Heb 6:20 Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

- Jesus told His disciples that He was going “to prepare a place” for them and that if He went to prepare such a place, He said He “will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also” (Jn 14:2-3). This is in reference to the church that He went back to Heaven to prepare (see notes on Rev 12) after His ascension, sent her back on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2; Rev 21) and will come to retrieve her when He comes for the last time.

Joh 3:13 No one has ascended into Heaven except He Who descended from Heaven, the Son of Man.

Eph 4:9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He Who descended is the One Who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

- Forerunner- Gk.4274- (figuratively *precursor*), i.e., with the idea that others would follow. From His position, “at the right hand of God” (Mk 16:19), Jesus “always lives to make intercession” (7:25) for us.

- order of Melchizedek- See notes on 5:6, 10.

Worksheet Hebrews: Chapter 6

1. What does the phrase “principles of the doctrine of Christ” mean?
2. Why not lay down repeatedly what was already understood as basic?
3. What was the “instruction about washings” and “laying on of hands” referring to?
4. In the context here, what was wrong with teaching the “resurrection of the dead” and “eternal judgment”?
5. Explain the condition that some of the Hebrews were in that made it “impossible... to restore them again to repentance”.
6. What does the use of the metaphor for the physical earth represent in verses 7-8?
7. Even through their persecution, what were some of the Hebrew saints doing that the writer encouraged the rest to participate in?
8. What is the significance of God swearing an oath by Himself?
9. What are the “two unchangeable things” that God rests His oath upon?
10. Explain the meaning of “refuge” in verse 18.
11. Explain the meaning of where “hope” lies “behind the curtain”.

12. As “a High Priest forever” explain why Jesus is also called “a Forerunner on our behalf”.

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