For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.
Philippians 1:29

Prayer Study #516

HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Going on to Maturity

6 *Therefore let us get past the elementary stage in the teachings about the Christ, advancing on to maturity and perfection and spiritual completeness, [doing this] without laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,* ***2*** *of teaching about washings (ritual purifications), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. [These are all important matters in which you should have been proficient long ago.]* ***3*** *And we will do this [that is, proceed to maturity], if God permits.* ***4*** *For [it is impossible to restore to repentance] those who have once been enlightened [spiritually] and who have tasted and consciously experienced the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit,* ***5*** *and have tasted and consciously experienced the good word of God and the powers of the age (world) to come,* ***6*** *and then have fallen away—it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance, since they again nail the Son of*

God on the cross [for as far as they are concerned, they are treating the death of Christ as if they were not saved by it], and are holding Him up again to public disgrace. ***7*** *For soil that drinks the rain which often falls on it and produces crops useful to those for whose benefit it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God;* ***8*** *but if it persistently produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

This chapter of scripture, especially verses 4 through 6, is one of the most difficult scriptures of the New Testament to interpret. J. Vernon McGee writes of this passage: "This chapter, by all odds, contains the most difficult passage in the Bible for an interpreter to handle, regardless of his theological position…Every reverent person has come to this section with awe and wonder. And every sincere expositor has come to this passage with a sense of inadequacy, and certainly that is the way I approach it.

The first verse tells us that we must grow up and get past the elementary principles of the Christian living. These principles are important and are the very foundation of our faith, but it is time to move on to deeper truth. The Message Bible translates the first verse this way: *So, come on, let's leave the preschool*

fingerpainting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ!" Dake speaks of this verse: "In view of your lack of progress, let us leave the babyhood stage of Christian experience and become adults."

The Greek for *advancing on* (or in other translations, *go on)* is the word *phero,* which means *to be borne along as a ship driven by a wind*. The Spirit is the power that moves believers forward.

We do not need to keep teaching the doctrines of the faith to people who are walking already in spiritual maturity, since that foundation has already been laid. The six foundational facts in the Old Testament that point to or prefigure Christ in ritual, symbol, and ceremony are the following:

a. Repentance from Dead Works (The works of the Mosiac Law) (The New Testament equivalent is Repentance towards God.)
b. Faith toward God (Approaching God through Temple Sacrifices) (The New Testament equivalent is Faith in Christ.)
c. Doctrine of Baptisms (Washings of the Old Testament rituals) (There are at least six baptisms, counting John's Baptism, in the New Testament, but only the first one listed is necessary for salvation: Baptism in the Body of Christ and done by the Holy

Spirit; Also, Water Baptism done by a fellow believer; Holy Spirit Baptism done by Jesus; Baptism in Fire; Baptism into His Sufferings-Luke 12:50:

d. Laying on of Hands (Laying hands on the head of an animal sacrifice, thus signifying that the animal was taking the place of the person on the altar of sacrifice)
e. Resurrection of the Dead (by Faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)
f. Eternal Judgment (under Old Covenant and without Christ)

The Old Testament application of these six principles were prophetic symbols pointing to the coming of Christ. They were works of the old nature or flesh nature, trying to earn salvation through keeping the law, something which is virtually impossible. We have Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, who has bought us and redeemed us from the curse of the law, thus making it unnecessary to adhere to these Old Testament principles. These six fundamental principles do have a New Testament application but are not a requirement for salvation and are observed only in the light of Christ.

THE PERIL OF FALLING AWAY

4 *For [it is impossible to restore to repentance] those who have once been enlightened*

[spiritually] and who have tasted and consciously experienced the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ***5*** *and have tasted and consciously experienced the good word of God and the powers of the age (world) to come,* ***6*** *and then have fallen away—it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance, since they again nail the Son of God on the cross [for as far as they are concerned, they are treating the death of Christ as if they were not saved by it], and are holding Him up again to public disgrace.* ***7*** *For soil that drinks the rain which often falls on it and produces crops useful to those for whose benefit it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God;* ***8*** *but if it persistently produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

I believe that this is the most controversial passage in the New Testament. C.I. Scofield gives the main interpretations of verses 4-8:

a. The warning is directed to Jewish people only who professed to be believers but stopped short of having faith in Christ.
b. The situation is a hypothetical case, i.e. if one *<u>could</u> fall away,* it would be impossible to renew him again to repentance, for in such an instance, it would be necessary for Christ to be

crucified a second time. Obviously, this will NOT occur (Hebrews 10:12 & 14. Thus to fall away is impossible.

c. The warning is directed toward believers who have fallen into sin to such an extent that they have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and are therefore disapproved and will lose their reward. The writer is thus writing about rewards and not about salvation.
d. The warning is to those who are believers in Christ and are in danger of falling away, through unbelief or sin, and losing their salvation.
e. The phrase "*and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit*" might be paraphrased "*and were willingly being led toward the Holy Spirit.*" The warning is issued to those who have been instructed and even moved by the Holy Spirit but have never committed themselves to Christ. The experiences outlined in the passage may precede and even accompany salvation, but they do not always result in salvation.

Scofield is a strong believer in the Christian's eternal security and says, for him, this passage may not be interpreted as teaching that believers in Christ can lose their salvation. He cites John 3:15-16 & 36; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:35m 37-39; Ephesians 1:12-14;

Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 10:12-14; 1st Peter 1:3-5.

There are other interesting viewpoints:

a. The word *impossible* refers to impossible for man, but it is not impossible with God.
b. The passage is about the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation. If our work has been done in the flesh rather than in the power of the Spirit, we will have nothing but wood, hay, and stubble that will all go up in smoke.
c. The writer of Hebrews is warning the Jewish believers who were returning to the temple sacrifice at that time. It was wrong for them to return to sacrifices because Jesus had become the Sacrifice once and for all.
d. Finally, have we really experienced the powers of the age to come. I personally don't see anywhere where people are walking in that kind of power to any great extent. Do we meet the conditions? I doubt it.

Verses 7 & 8 give a picture of the faithful Christian believer and the apostate. The faithful Christian brings forth fruit (herbs). The apostate brings forth the fruit of thorns and briers, which will be burned away.

Better Things for You

9 *But, beloved, even though we speak to you in this way, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and of things that accompany salvation.* ***10*** *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown for His name in ministering to [the needs of] the saints (God's people), as you do.* ***11*** *And we desire for each one of you to show the same diligence [all the way through] so as to realize and enjoy the full assurance of hope until the end,* ***12*** *so that you will not be [spiritually] sluggish, but [will instead be] imitators of those who through faith [lean on God with absolute trust and confidence in Him and in His power] and by patient endurance [even when suffering] are [now] inheriting the promises.*

13 *For when God made the promise to Abraham, He swore [an oath] by Himself, since He had no one greater by whom to swear,* ***14*** *saying, "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you."* ***15*** *And so, having patiently waited, he realized the promise [in the miraculous birth of Isaac, as a pledge of what was to come from God].* ***16*** *Indeed men swear [an oath] by one greater than themselves, and with them [in all disputes] the oath serves as confirmation [of what has been said] and is an end of the dispute.* ***17*** *In the same way God, in His desire to show to the*

heirs of the promise the unchangeable nature of His purpose, intervened and guaranteed it with an oath, ***18*** *so that by two unchangeable things [His promise and His oath] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled [to Him] for refuge would have strong encouragement and indwelling strength to hold tightly to the hope set before us.* ***19*** *This hope [this confident assurance] we have as an anchor of the soul [it cannot slip and it cannot break down under whatever pressure bears upon it]—a safe and steadfast hope that enters within the veil [of the heavenly temple, that most Holy Place in which the very presence of God dwells],* ***20*** *where Jesus has entered [in advance] as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

The fruit of salvation should be clearly discerned in the believer's life. The writer of Hebrews believes that his readers are not apostates but genuine believers because there is evidence in their lives. They have shown real love to other Christians and have especially ministered to the poor saints (2nd Corinthians 8:9-15). Man may show no appreciation, but God does not forget, and you will reap what you sow into the Kingdom. Ministering to the saints may not be easy, and

we might have to patiently endure, but we will eventually inherit the promises.

Just as God pledged Himself to Abraham, so He also has pledged Himself to us. He promised Abraham blessings, and He promised to multiply him, a promise that started to be initially fulfilled through the birth of Isaac. Isaac's birth was the promise to Abraham spoken of here.

God has placed limitations in Himself, including the one which says, "God cannot lie." Dake gives us 30 of these limitations:

He cannot:

a. Break His own laws (119:89)
b. Lie (Hebrews 6:17-18
c. Deny Himself (2nd Timothy 2:13)
d. Have respect of persons (Romans 2:11, James 2:9-10
e. Save one soul apart from grace and faith in Christ (Romans 3:26, John 3:16)
f. Be unrighteous (Romans 9:14)
g. Bless men apart from faith (Hebrews 11:6; James 1:5-8)
h. Curse men when they meet His terms (1st John 1:9)
i. Do away with or change His own eternal plan (Acts 15:18; Ephesians 2:7; Ephesians 3:11)
j. Save rebels who persist in rebellion, refusing to meet His terms (Proverbs 1:22-

23; Proverbs 29:1; Mark 18:3; John 3:3,5)

k. Be tempted with evil (James 1:13-15)
l. Tolerate hypocrisy (Isaiah 1:13)
m. Spare Himself or Christ in the redemption of the human race from eternal hell (Matthew 27:42)
n. Turn down one soul that comes to Him according to His terms (John 6:37)
o. Judge the righteous with the wicked (Genesis 19:22; Revelation 20:5-6, Revelation 11-15)
p. Fail to answer prayer when unwavering faith is exercised (Matthew 17:20; 21:22; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:12-15; 15:7 & 16)
q. Forgive one unconfessed sin (Luke 13:1-5; 1st John 1:9)
r. Keep one saved who lives in sin (Romans 8:12-13)
s. Automatically cancel the death penalty when men sin and incur that penalty (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:1-13)
t. Do away with free moral agency and moral responsibility (Romans 6:16-23; Romans 8:1-13; Galatians 5:19-21; 1st John 1:7)
u. Make one a slave to Himself so that he can never go back into sin if he chooses (Romans 6:16-23; Romans 8:1-13; Hebrews 6:4-9; Hebrews 10:26-29; 1st John

1:7)

v. Guarantee that every saved man will continue in Christ (John 15:1-8Romans 6:16-23; Romans 8: 12-13; 1st Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20; 9:27; Galatians 1;6-8; Galatians 5:4; Exodus 32:32-3; Exekiel 33:12-20).

w. Make any man a son of God in the same sense Jesus is (John 1:18; 3:16; Romans 8:14-16)

x. Look upon the sins of the saved as being unreal or deal with them on a different basis from those of the unsaved (Romans 6:16-23; Romans 8:12-13; 1st Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-8).

y. Cancel any reaping for what is sown (Romans 8:12-13; Galatians 6:7-8)

z. Force a man to serve Him against his own will (John 3:1`6; 7:17; 8:34; 1st Timothy 2:4; 2nd Peter 3:9; 1st John 1:7; Revelation 22:17)

aa. Recognize any man as His child or His servant who serves sin and the devil (Matthew 6:24; Romans 6:16-23; 8:1-13; 1st Corinthians 3:16-17; Galatians 5:19-21; 1st John 3:8-10)

bb. Keep the saved from sin if he chooses to go back into sin (Romans 6:16-23; 8:1-13; 1st Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:9-10; 6:19-20; Hebrews 6:4-9; 10:26-29; James

15:19-20; 1st John2:1-2; Ezekiel 33:12-20; 1st John 2:1-2; Exodus 33:12-20)

cc. Keep one from incurring the death penalty should he go back into sin (Exodus 32:32-33; Ezekiel 18:4; 33:12-20; Romans 6:16-23; 8:12-13; 1st Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-8; Hebrews 6:4-9; 10:26-29; James 5:19-20)

dd. Be lenient with any who sin or encourage anarchy in moral government (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4; 33:12-20; Romans 1:18-31; 5:12-21; 6:16-23; 8:1-13; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-8; James 5:19-20)

The two immutable or unchanging things are the promise and the oath. A promise is something that one says he will do but it has no legal standing. People break promises all the time and don't go to court or jail because of it. An oath is more serious and has legal consequences. People who break oaths can go to court or even jail. God is a God who cannot lie, so we know that all of His promises will never be broken. The writer in Hebrews takes it a step further and says that not only did God promise but He guaranteed His promise, (the promise being eternal life where the believers will inherit the blessings of the promise), by making a legal oath that cannot be broken. This unchanging oath gives the believer hope,

no matter how rough things get, and guarantees that we have a place of refuge in Him where we will find great encouragement and strength.

The promise to Abraham was the supernatural birth of Isaac. The promise to us is the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

There is an allusion to the cities of refuge where people who fled found safety and could not be arrested. The sinner can flee to Christ and find eternal refuge and safety. The writer then changes the allusion in verse 19 from the safety of the city of refuge to a ship reaching harbor after a tempestuous voyage, knowing that her anchor is now steadfast and sure and all are safe. So it is with the believer who has the hope of eternal life anchored safe in heaven.

Jesus is our Forerunner to heaven and our High Priest to represent us until we are safe in heaven with God the Father.

We have had some excellent teachings on Melchisedek, perhaps the most mysterious figure in the whole Bible. We will discuss this character more thoroughly in the study of the next chapter. For now, I will give to you ten facts about Melchisedek from Finis Dake:

a. King of Salem, ancient Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18)

b. Priest of God in Abraham's day (Genesis 14:18)
c. Met Abraham returning from his military victory (Genesis 14:16-18
d. Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils (Genesis 14:16-24)
e. Called King of righteousness (Hebrews 7:2)
f. Called King of Salem or King of Peace (Genesis 14:18)
g. Had no recorded descent, no recorded father or mother, no recorded birth or death (Hebrews 7:3)
h. Made a type of Christ so that Christ could be made a priest after his order (Hebrews 5:6; 7:1-10; 7:15-21)
i. He was an ordinary man (Hebrews 7:4)
j. Greater than Abraham (Verse 7:4-7)

<u>Who is Melchizedek?</u>

In his excellent book *The Order of Melchizedek,* Dr. Francis Myles gives four possibilities of this mysterious man:

1. The First Adam
2. Shem, the son of Noah
3. The priest-king of ancient Salem
4. The pre-incarnation appearance of Christ.

According to Dr. Myles, the reason people say he was Adam is because Melchizedek had no earthly genealogy since he was the first man. Myles says that he could not be

Adam because Adam fell and was thus not the King of Righteous. Also, Adam died and Melchizedek did not.

Shem was a priest and king and the son of Noah and tradition says this was Melchizedek. Shem, however, had a genealogy, and he would have had to be very old if he lived in the time of Abram. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that Shem died.

The third possibility also is not plausible since every human born of a woman is born into sin. Also, if the priest-king of ancient Salem had been a mortal and Melchizedek, he would have been the best candidate to be the father of many nations, instead of Abraham.

Myles concludes that Melchizedek has to be Christ Jesus manifesting Himself in bodily form to Abram before the virgin birth. Indeed, even Jesus said in John 8:56, "Abraham saw my day." Melchizedek literally means *King over the whole domain of righteousness.* We know that our righteousness is as filthy rags, so only Jesus could qualify as the *King of Righteousness.*

Melchizedek brought bread and wine. Jesus Himself said, "*I am the **bread** of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."* (John 6:35) And in Matthew 26:27-28 he says: *And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God*

and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.

Give Them All To Jesus

Are you tired of chasing pretty rainbows?
Are you tired of spinning round and round?
Wrap up all those shattered dreams of your life
And at the feet of Jesus, lay them down.

CHORUS

Give them all, give them all, give them all to Jesus
Shattered dreams, wounded hearts, and broken toys.
Give them all, give them all, give them all to Jesus

And He will turn your sorrows into joy.

He never said you only see sunshine,
He never said there would be no rain.
He only promised a heart full of singing
About the very thing that once brought pain.

Matthew 11:28
"*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"