

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

STUDY NUMBER TEN - Hebrews 6:1-8

TEXT:

v. 1 Therefore having left behind the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us be pressing on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

v. 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

v. 3 And this we shall do, if indeed God is permitting.

v. 4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

v. 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age,

v. 6 and then have fallen away, to be renewing them again to repentance, since they are crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to open shame.

v. 7 For land which drank the rain which is often falling upon it and is bringing forth vegetation suitable to those for whose sake it is also being tilled, is receiving a blessing from God;

v. 8 but if it is bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and almost cursed, and its end is burning.

INTRODUCTION:

(The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make by Hans Finzel)

The Rev. Paul, Apostle
Independent Missionary
Corinth, Greece

Dear Mr. Paul:

We recently received an application from you for service under our board. We have made an exhaustive survey of your case and, frankly, we are surprised that you have been able to "pass" as a bona-fide missionary.

1. In the first place we are told that you are afflicted with severe eye trouble which is almost certain to be an insuperable handicap to any effective ministry. We normally require 20-20 vision.

2. Secondly, we take a dim view of a full-time missionary doing part-time secular work, but we hear that you are making tents on the side. You admitted in a letter to the church at Philippi that they are the only group supporting you. We wonder why this is.

3. Further, is it true that you have a jail record? Certain brethren report that you did two years' time at Caesarea and were also imprisoned in Rome.

4. Moreover, it is reported from Ephesus that you made so much trouble for the businessmen there that they refer to you as "the man who turned the world upside down." We feel such sensationalism has no place in missions. We also deplore the "over-the-wall-in-a-basket" episode at Damascus.

5. In one of your letters you refer to yourself as "Paul the Aged." Our new pension policies do not anticipate a surplus of elderly recipients.

6. Your ministry has been far too flighty to be successful. First Asia Minor, then Macedonia, then Greece, then Italy, and now you are talking about a wild-goose chase into Spain. Concentration is more important than dissipation of one's powers.

7. Finally, Dr. Luke the physician reports that you are a thin little man, rather bald, frequently sick, and always so agitated over your churches that you sleep very poorly. He indicates that you pad around the house praying half the night. Our ideal for all applicants is a healthy mind in a robust body. We believe that a good night's sleep will give you zest and zip so that you wake up full of zing.

We regret to inform you, Brother Paul, but in all our experience we have never met a candidate so opposite to the requirements of our mission board. If we should accept you we would be breaking every principle of current missionary practice.

Most sincerely,
J. Flavius Fluffyhead
Secretary, Foreign Mission Board

(Adapted Source Unknown)

pp. 78-79

(Flying Closer to the Flame by Charles R. Swindoll)

This came home to me in a fresh way some time ago when I read about the twenty-year reunion of most of those who were involved in the formation of the old American Football League. The seasoned sports veterans and owners swapped stories and enjoyed an evening of laughter and reflections together. Among those present was Al Davis, currently the owner of the Los Angeles Raiders, who remembered that all those sitting at his table had stared with envy at Nicky Hilton, who was to speak on that eventful evening in 1959 when they first met to form the league. Everyone's feelings of expectation were only heightened when the man was introduced as having recently made \$100,000 in the baseball business in the city of Los Angeles.

Mr. Hilton stood to his feet as the place broke into thunderous applause. Then he stepped to the microphone and said he needed to correct what had been said. It was not he who had had that experience; it was his brother Baron. And it wasn't in Los Angeles, but San Diego. And it wasn't baseball, it was football. And it wasn't \$100,000, it was \$1 million . . . and he didn't make it, he lost it!

p. 218

(Standing Tall by Steve Farrar)

The story is told of a judge in the wild West who had a strange custom. This judge had a practice of giving condemned criminals a choice between hanging and the "big, black door."

The time for execution would inevitably arrive, and the judge would go to the cell of the prisoner. "Well, what'll it be? The rope or the big, black door?" Nearly everyone who was given that option wound up taking the rope.

A sheriff once asked the judge why the prisoners always chose hanging over the big, black door. The judge replied, "They always prefer the known to the unknown. People fear what they don't know. Yet, we gave them a choice."

"What lies beyond the big door?" asked the sheriff.

"Freedom," replied the judge. "But very few men are brave enough to choose the option of the unknown."
pp. 61-62

(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

As we frequently presented to the same group on the same day, I often heard him tell the story of how he and his professional peers would work with rats in mazes. They put the rat at one end of the maze and a piece of food at the other end, and watched the rat as he bumped around until he eventually found the food. The next time they put him in, he bumped a little less and got to the food a little faster. After a while, he got to where he would zip through the maze and have that tidbit in his teeth within a few seconds.

Then they took the food away. For a little while, each time he was put in, the rat kept making a beeline for the end of the maze. But it wasn't too long before he figured out the food wasn't going to be there and so he stopped going.

"That's the difference between rats and people," my friend would say. "The rats stop!"

Although his comments were made in fun, the point this psychologist made was very real. We often get into ruts, on treadmills, caught up in patterns and habits that aren't useful. We keep doing the same things in our lives week-in, week-out--fighting the same alligators, struggling with the same weaknesses, repeating the same mistakes. We don't really learn from our lives.

p. 188

(Final Call by Steven J. Lawson)

Someone has said, when we turn 20 we worry about what people think about us. When we turn 40, we stop worrying about what others think about us. When we turn 60, we realize that no one has been thinking about us at all.

p. 156

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

I can't fully explain what it means to know God. I can use the terms, but it's like defining a kiss. Webster has the terms. He calls it "a caress with the lips; a gentle touch or contact." But anyone who has kissed someone knows that a kiss is really much more than that. You can't fully explain it, but Lord have mercy, it's good when you get it! I can't fully explain what getting to know God will feel like, but I know that you will like it when it happens.

p. 34

WILLING WORKERS

Most church members are 100 percent willing--50 percent are willing to work hard and the other 50 percent are willing to let them.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

OF ALL THINGS

My wife sure is immature. Every time I take a bath, she comes in and sinks my boats.

A tramp knocked at a farmer's door and asked for some food. "Are you a Christian?" asked the farmer. "Of course," said the tramp. "Can't you tell? Just look at the knees of my pants. Don't they prove it?" The farmer and his wife noticed the holes in the knees and promptly gave the man some food. As the tramp turned to go the farmer asked, "By the way, what made those holes in the seat of your pants?" "Backsliding," said the tramp.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

It is terribly unfortunate that there is a chapter division here because the argument is a continuation of the message started back in Hebrews 5:11. The writer has surfaced the problem in 5:11-14 as being one of dullness of hearing due to immaturity and failing to follow the normal growth process.

He is now in chapter 6, going to continue with an admonition and a warning that must be tied together with verses 11-14 of chapter 5.

Let us just review for a moment these verses as they set the stage for what we are going to be considering in chapter 6:

Hebrews 5:11-14

Concerning Him there is much to be said, and it is hard to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing (hard of hearing). For though by this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers, you are having need again for someone to be teaching you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food. For everyone who is partaking only of milk is unacquainted with the teaching about righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice are having their powers of perception trained to discern good and evil.

Charles Ryrie in his book Balancing the Christian Life says:

That word maturity seems to hold the key to the concept of spirituality, for Christian maturity is the growth which the Holy Spirit produces over a period of time in the believer. To be sure, the same amount of time is not required for each individual, but some time is necessary for all. It is not the time itself which produces maturity; rather, the progress made and growth achieved are all-important. Rate multiplied by time equals distance, so that the distance to maturity may be covered in a shorter time if the rate of growth is accelerated. And it will be accelerated if none of the control which ought to be given to the Holy Spirit is retained by self.

p. 13

"PRESSING ON UNTO FULL GROWTH" would be a good title for the book of Hebrews. "Let us press on unto full growth." The Greek word here signifies what we saw in 5:14. The strong meat belongs to them that are of full age. The process of the Holy Spirit within the believer will conform him to the image of Christ in faith, holiness, love and knowledge, as we saw in chapter 5.

Lightfoot points out:

The exhortation begun at the end of chapter 5 continues in the opening of chapter 6. Having severely rebuked his readers for their spiritual lethargy, the author now admonishes them to move beyond the rudiments of Christianity to that stage where they will be able to digest solid food. "Therefore, since growth is demanded of all Christians, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity."

Because this passage of Scripture has been the victim of so many different and divergent interpretations, we must interpret the passage in the light of certain hermeneutical principles:

1. In the light of the book as a whole. It is written to a body of Christians.
2. In the light of the immediate context. It is written to bring them to maturity.
3. We must interpret in harmony with scriptural truth taught elsewhere.

Because the persecution came upon them, those in the synagogue said, "Come back to the temple and the persecution will stop." This is the practical problem in the light of what Christ has done and what they have been taught about the Old Testament sacrifices should they go back to Judaism to ease the persecution. The immature ones could not take their knowledge and solve this problem. They lacked ability to apply the knowledge to solve the problem in light of the truth they possessed. Maturity in Christian experience is not knowledge but ability to use that knowledge to solve situations and problems in relation to daily living. The problem, then, is immaturity--inability to solve their problems in the light of the truths which they had and knew. This is the pivotal point in Hebrews.

Hebrews 6 emphasizes:

THE DUTY OF PROGRESS

and THE PERIL OF RELAPSE.

It points out the impossibility of repeating the past, as even nature shows. The need here, the historical situation, was in reference to those who were playing around with the old order, thinking of alleviating persecution by fellowshiping in the old order. This was the sign of their immaturity. The exhortation: leave the Mosaic order for the reality of Christ. In all of those, the apostle is urging something to be left to go on to the reality in Christ. The purpose of this immediate section is to show the duty of every believer to make progress.

The writer is saying, "I would like to talk to you about Christ's present ministry but I can not because you are hanging around the cross. God will not permit a second smiting of the rock."

Westcott titles these verses:

(2) The duty of Christian progress: the perils of relapse (vi. 1-8).

The apostle bases a general exhortation on the view which he has given of the spiritual degeneracy of the Hebrews. He first (a) enforces the duty of progress, both positively and negatively, and accepts the obligation for himself (1-3); and then (b) portrays the perils of relapse, pointing out the impossibility (from the human side) of repeating the past, and appealing to the stern teaching of nature (4-8).

p. 142

A story from Hughes's commentary:

A well-traveled story that comes to us from the life of the great evangelist D. L. Moody contains wisdom every experienced pastor has come to well regard. As the account goes, Moody was once approached by a stumbling drunk on the street who slurred, "Mr. Moody, I'm one of your converts." To which Moody replied, "You must be, because you're certainly not one of the Lord's!"

p. 153

Richards points out:

We noted in the previous chapter that the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter is addressed were hesitating. They had come to God in Jesus but could not seem to break out of spiritual babyhood. They had not used their potential capacity to discriminate between good and evil; they were not actually experiencing that daily obedience in everything which causes capacity to become ability.

Now the writer urges, Go on to maturity! Count on your new position as God's sons; rely on Jesus as the divine High Priest; and act in daily trust and obedience.

p. 57

Barclay says:

The writer to the Hebrews was very certain of the necessity of progress in the Christian life. No teacher would ever get anywhere if he had to lay the foundations all over again every time he began to teach. Progress would be impossible if we had to start all over again at the beginning every time.

p. 51

Wiersbe calls the section:

The impossible (1-8). The ABC's of the Christian life are important, but they must be a launching pad and not a parking lot, for the challenge is, "Let us go on to maturity." If we get sluggish (v. 12) and dull (5:11) toward the Word, we may fall by the wayside (v. 6; Gal. 6:1) and stop being fruitful. As long as disobedient believers are bringing shame to Christ, it is impossible to bring them to repentance, and God must deal with them.

p. 817

Lane says:

The warning expressed in 5:11-14 finds an emphatic continuation in 6:1-12. The chapter break is both unwarranted and unfortunate. The initial word dio, "so then," shows distinctly that the writer did not consider the members of the house church to be infants requiring a diet of milk.

p. 139

Pink makes this observation:

That in taking up our present passage it is also of first importance to study its connection with the immediate context, is evident from its very first word, "Therefore." The apostle is here drawing a conclusion from something said previously. This takes us back to what is recorded in 5:11-14, for a right understanding of which depends a sound exposition of what immediately follows. In these verses the apostle rebukes the Hebrews for their spiritual sloth, and likens them to little children capacitated to receive nothing but milk.

p. 273

The sixth chapter of Hebrews does not commence a new section of the Epistle, but continues the digression into which the apostle had entered at 5:11. In view of the disability of those to whom he was writing receiving unto their edification the high and glorious mysteries which he desired to expound, the apostle goes on to set before them various reasons and arguments to excite a diligent attention thereunto.

p. 274

Bruce titles these 8 verses:

NO SECOND BEGINNING POSSIBLE (6:1-8)

p. 137

Lenski points out:

The writer tells his readers that they are again like children who need milk and the ABC of teaching instead of solid food. But he will not dismiss them as such children; this rebuke is to drive the sluggishness out of their ears (5:11) and to make them recover something of their maturity.

p. 174

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

These four verses of chapter v contain a rebuke to the recipients of the Epistle for their failure to progress in their understanding of Christianity. They had gone backwards, not forwards: they needed to learn again the rudiments of their faith. Yet the writer now seems to ignore all this. Far from returning to elementary matters, he declares that he intends to go on to advanced Christian doctrine. Furthermore, he intends to proceed thus as a direct consequence of their need for elementary instruction.
p. 104

Macaulay says:

Two reasons have been presented for going on: the tragedy of arrested development, and the lure of the completed building. Now a third argument is brought forward: the peril of standing still. Actually the peril of standing still is that we do not stand still, but go back. The unfinished building is not only akin to the ruin in appearance, but it quickly becomes a ruin. So a Christian who is not a building Christian is a crumbling Christian.

As the apostolic writer looked upon these Hebrew Christians, at first advancing, then static, then backsliding, he was impelled to warn them that in that direction lay grave danger. Some of them had already reached the danger point, and were standing on the brink of the precipice, playing with the thought of renouncing the Lord who brought them. Seeing this, he was the more urgent to hail them on to a life of progress, the surest safeguard against apostasy.

p. 77

J. Vernon McGee says:

This chapter, by all odds, contains the most difficult passage in the Bible for an interpreter to handle, regardless of his theological position. Dr. R. W. Dale, one of the great minds in the earlier field of conservative scholarship, wrote:

I know how this passage has made the heart of many a good man tremble. It rises up in the New Testament with a gloomy grandeur, stern, portentous, awful, sublime as Mount Sinai when the Lord descended upon it in fire, and threatening storm clouds were around Him, and thunderings and lightnings and unearthly voices told that He was there.

p. 543

v. 1 Therefore having left behind the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us be pressing on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Education is what's left over when you subtract what you've forgotten from what you've learned.

<Unknown>

Sixty years ago I knew everything; now I know nothing; education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.

Will Durant

Is life so wretched? Isn't it rather your hands which are too small, your vision which is muddled? You are the one who must grow up.

Dag Hammarskjold

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

WHEN BELIEVERS FAIL

Paul Ferris tells about a man who went to see his doctor for advice: "I'm losing my memory, Doc," the man explained. A week later he received the diagnosis: 'We cannot help your memory without impairing your eyesight. The choice is yours. Would you rather be able to see or to remember?' The man thought for a minute, fidgeted a little, then replied, 'I'd rather have my eyesight than my memory. I'd rather see where I'm going than remember where I've been.'

Ferris goes on to say: "Too many of us are controlled by where we've been. Overpowered by past failures, we determine to give up. But like the man in the doctor's office, we need to determine to press on.

"John Creasey knew the meaning of pressing on. In his bid to have a book published, John received 753 rejection slips. I'm not sure how many rooms he could have wallpapered with them, but Creasey's mind wasn't on interior decorating. Instead, he sent out one more manuscript. The result? The English novelist went on to publish 564 books.

"Babe Ruth is another example. Most sports trivia buffs can tell you that he hit 714 home runs. But few know that he also struck out 1,330 times!

"Scripture is filled with the stories of saints who struck out. Peter, the disciple who was most vocal in his determination to follow Christ, denied Jesus with an oath. King David was guilty of adultery and murder, yet he is referred to as a man 'after God's own heart.' Both Peter and David understood that failure doesn't come in the falling. It comes in not getting back up."

[Servant, May 1994. Page 2.]

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Hughes titles these verses:

NO SECOND GENESIS.
p. 153

No starting over again!

The word "THEREFORE" points us back to chapter 5:11-14.

Therefore, in view of your present condition, this is what I am asking you to do.

In essence what the writer is saying is:

"On the basis of the fact that the mature individual has his senses trained, we at this time in the growth process must put away the beginning word of the Christ."

And then he exhorts us: "LET US." The author identifies himself with his hearers.

"LET US BE PRESSING ON TO MATURITY."

He first makes a POSITIVE STATEMENT:

"LET US BE PRESSING ON TO MATURITY"

and then outlines 6 THINGS NEGATIVELY that we should not be spending our time on as far as being top priority in our lives.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Somewhat surprisingly, despite his estimate of their spiritual state, the author declined to go over old ground. Instead he urged them to go beyond **the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity**. To have reviewed the fundamentals would only have left them where they were. The author preferred "radical surgery" and decided to pull them forward as rapidly as he could. Indeed this was the solution to their problem. If they progressed properly, they would avoid the danger of **laying again the foundation of repentance**.

p. 793

Bruce points out:

The opening words of this section are surprising. Our author has just told his readers that they are not really able to assimilate the solid food which he would like to give them--the teaching about the priestly order of Melchizedek--because they are immature. We might have expected him to say, as Paul says to the Corinthians in a similar situation: "Therefore I must continue to feed you with milk." But he does not say this; he says: "let us press on." He judged that no good purpose would be served by going over the first principles again. That being so, we might have expected him to say: "You are not ready for solid food yet, you still need milk; nevertheless I am going to press on with the provision of solid food." But he does not say "nevertheless"; he says "therefore." "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and press forward to maturity."

p. 138

A. T. Robertson says this is a:

Volitive present subjunctive passive, "Let us be borne on" (both the writer and the readers). The Pythagorean Schools use pherometha in precisely this sense of being borne on to a higher stage of instruction.

p. 373

Barclay says:

Teleiotes does not imply complete knowledge and complete perfection; what it does imply is a certain maturity in the Christian faith.

p. 51

He says further:

There can be no standing still in the Christian life.

p. 52

Westcott makes the same point when he says:

The goal of this forward movement is 'perfection,' that is for the readers the full maturity of spiritual growth, opposed to nepiotes (v. 13); and for the writer the teaching which corresponds with maturity.
p. 143

Wiersbe says:

No one can escape coming into the world as a baby, because that is the only way to get here! But it is tragic when a baby fails to mature. No matter how much parents and grandparents love to hold and cuddle a baby, it is their great desire that the baby grow up and enjoy a full life as a mature adult. God has the same desire for His children. That is why He calls to us, "Go on to maturity!" (6:1, NIV)
p. 61

Wiersbe says further:

The phrase "let us go on" should be translated "let us be carried forward." It is God who enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word, and act on it. A baby does not "grow himself." He grows as he eats, sleeps, exercises, and permits his body to function. Nature, as ordained by God, carries the baby along day after day, and gradually he matures into an adult. It is normal for Christians to grow; it is abnormal for them to have arrested growth.
p. 62

Thomas says:

At this point the rebuke develops into an exhortation to cease being spiritual babes, and to go on unto a ripe experience. The exhortation, "Let us go on" (Greek, pherometha) is particularly appropriate and forcible at this point.
p. 70

DeHaan says:

It is time to be promoted from the kindergarten and go on to maturity. But if we fail to heed the warning, and neglect His admonition after so much pleading, and continue in disobedience, God may finally cease dealing with us here, and permit us to harden our hearts as in the provocation to die in the wilderness, without ever knowing victory in this life. How tragic the case of those who must thus come under the judgment of God, where having been enlightened and having tasted the heavenly gift, and having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, they fall away and it becomes impossible to renew them again unto repentance. They would not repent and be cleansed here, so they will have to be cleansed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, with all their works of hay, wood and stubble going up in smoke, and they themselves saved by the skin of their teeth, so as by fire.

It makes me shudder at the very possibility. It makes me cry out to God to keep me from the fate of becoming a castaway.
p. 93

Pink points out:

"Let us go on" is passive, "be carried on." It is a word taken from the progress which a ship makes before the wind when under sail. Let us, under the full bent of our will and affections be stirred by the utmost endeavours of our whole souls, be borne onwards. We have abode long enough near the shore, let us hoist our sails, pray to the Spirit for His mighty power to work within us, and launch forth into the deep. This is the duty of God's servants, to excite their Christian hearers to make progress in the knowledge of Divine truth, to urge them to pass the porch and enter the sanctuary, there to behold the Divine glories of the House of God.
p. 277

English ties this section together beautifully with chapter 5 when he says:

As the initial word of the chapter indicates, the thought that closes chapter 5 carries forward into this one, so much so that many commentators include, in their exposition of chapter 5, the first three verses of this chapter. Without further introduction, accordingly, we take up where we left off at 5:14.
p. 153

Lange in his commentary quotes Hahn, who says:

The realm of truth is very wide. We must not, therefore, stand still, but go on to perfection.
p. 113

"THEREFORE HAVING LEFT BEHIND THE ELEMENTARY TEACHING ABOUT THE CHRIST"

Hebrews 5:12

For though by this time you are under moral obligation to be teachers, you are having need again for someone to be teaching you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have become such as are having need of milk and not solid food.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

Philippians 2:12, 13

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

"THEREFORE HAVING LEFT BEHIND THE ELEMENTARY TEACHING ABOUT THE CHRIST, LET US BE PRESSING ON TO MATURITY"

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 2:2, 3

like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

2 Peter 3:18

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

"THEREFORE HAVING LEFT BEHIND THE ELEMENTARY TEACHING ABOUT THE CHRIST, LET US BE PRESSING ON TO MATURITY, NOT LAYING AGAIN A FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS AND OF FAITH TOWARD GOD"

The writer now turns from the POSITIVE ADMONITION:

"LET US BE PRESSING ON TO MATURITY"

to the NEGATIVE side of the admonition.

There will be 6 PARTS to this NEGATIVE ADMONITION:

1. **"NOT LAYING AGAIN A FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS"**

Stedman says:

To reach this requires leaving behind the principles of the gospel, the ABC's, the elementary truths, the familiar ground by which we came into Christian faith. Not laying again this foundation. Here is another figure of arrested development. A foundation is laid but nothing is built on it. Instead of building on the foundation, the owner tears it up and lays it again. Then he goes back and lays it yet again. There is nothing but a repetitive laying again and again of the same foundation; it is arrested development, Major Ian Thomas once said to me, "You know, I have discovered an interesting thing about American Christians. They do not usually come to church to learn anything. Whatever they do not yet know themselves they think is heresy. What they want to hear is the same old stuff so they can say, 'Amen, brother, Amen!'" That is laying the same foundation over and over again.
pp. 81-82

Owen points out:

The Apostle knew they had been instructed in those truths which are the foundation of a true profession of the gospel, and so he says he will not at this time go over them again. He then proceeds to declare in particular some of those doctrinal principles which he had in general referred to, and which he will not now insist upon.
p. 92

Barclay says:

It may be that the writer to the Hebrews means that the Christian has broken away from the meaningless rituals and conventions of life, to give himself to the things which deepen his character and develop his soul.
pp. 52-53

Westcott observes:

'Repentance from dead works' gives the negative, 'faith towards God' gives the positive side of the Christian mind. The old must be abandoned, the new must be grasped.
p. 144

Pink says:

The six items enumerated--"repentance from dead works," etc.--have nothing to do with the "foundations of Christianity," nor do they describe those things relating to the elementary experiences of a Christian. Instead, they treat of what appertained to Judaism, considered as a rudimentary system, paving the way for the fuller and final revelation which God has now made in and by His beloved Son. Unless the parenthetical nature of these verses is clearly perceived, interpreters are certain to err in their exposition of the details.
p. 278

The BIG QUESTION that is being addressed is:

WHY GO BACK TO RULES AND RITUALS WHEN YOU HAVE THE
REALITY OF A RELATIONSHIP?

Isaiah 29:13

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

There is no rewind button on the VCR of life!

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

If, as verses 4-6 went on to warn, they were to "fall away," then a foundation would have been laid for a new repentance, but such a repentance is "impossible." So advance was their only real remedy.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says further:

The "dead works" expressed in verse 1 . . . occurs again in a context where it seems to refer to the Levitical ritual in 9:14. Here it would be appropriate in the same sense since many of the readers had been converted to Christianity from Judaism. The rituals they had left behind were lifeless ones, incapable of imparting the experiences of life they had found in Christ. The author implied that they should not return to these dead works in any form since to do so would be to lay again a basis for repenting from them. Though such repentance would not be easily reached, however appropriate it might be.

But the foundation they would lay in the unhappy event that they fell away would involve other fundamental truths. These are enumerated in [verses 1-2]. . . . The author clearly implied that all these matters belong to the "elementary truths" (5:12) on which the readers gave every indication of wavering. . . . The return to ordinances, whether in normative or sectarian Judaism, would only be a return to "dead works." One who took that backward step would need to be taught all over again that acceptance was obtained by "faith in God," not by rituals.

p. 793

The problem here is the PROBLEM OF MATURITY, then.

There is the need for progression.

There is the DUTY OF PROGRESS and the PERIL OF RELAPSE.

The leaving of one is necessary to the going on to the other.

These 6 THINGS that are spoken of here in these first two verses explain the "ELEMENTARY TEACHING ABOUT CHRIST."

John Baird, third generation Wyoming rancher put it,

**"You can't ranch cows sittin' in the bunkhouse,
drinkin' coffee and readin' books
about cows!"**

(From Reaching Men Ministries Newsletter, Feb. 1995 issue)

(Let Me Illustrate by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

A little boy constantly fell out of bed. No matter what his parents did, the boy could not sleep without rolling out of bed. An uncle came to visit, and in the middle of the night the usual thump and cry was heard. In the morning, the uncle teased the boy and asked him why he fell out so frequently. The little boy thought a moment and then replied, "I don't know, Uncle, unless it is that I stay too close to the place where I get in."

Certainly, this is the valid explanation of the fall of many Christians. They have come to the place where they have believed in all sincerity that they are lost sinners and that Jesus Christ took their place on the cross to bear the weight of the wrath that was due on account of their sin. They have been seen of God as being in Christ and so have passed out of death into life. The tragedy is that they seem to remain in that same spiritual condition so that no one can really know whether they have been born again or not.
p. 67

Back in the early days of the railroad when they still used steam engines, there was a train that was stopped in the desert. A man came along and asked the engineer if he was out of water. He said, "No, I've got lots of water; it's just not boiling."

That seems to describe well what is going on among these Hebrew Christians who are seriously contemplating returning to the old order.

(Squeeze Play: Practical Insights for Men Caught Between Work & Home by Bob Briner)

Your spiritual survival in the midst of career obligations could very well depend on the quality of Christian fellowship you have. Do yourself a favor and nurture relationships with other Christians. And have fun in the process. You are a much-needed soldier in the Lord's army, but you won't be much good if you try to win the battle alone. Live it up in the Lord!
pp. 65-66

(Living in the Lions' Den Without Being Eaten by William Carr Peel)

The price of greatness is responsibility.
WINSTON CHURCHILL

p. 234

The saints are the sinners who keep on going.
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

p. 234

(Even Eagles Need a Push by David McNally)

If growth and contribution is our primary mission in life, then our commitment must be to follow the paths that lead us to the fulfillment of that mission.

p. 156

(Can We Save the Evangelical Church? by Bill Hull)

What does a pastor do with leaders who cannot lead? Regardless of spiritual qualities or willing hearts, such a group is like ten pygmies becoming a basketball team in the National Basketball Association. It plays hard, gets beaten regularly, and does not enjoy the process.

p. 57

We have failed to install the basic spiritual disciplines as part of the leadership motif. Too few leadership teams are dominated by the members' commitment to Bible study, Scripture memorization, personal and corporate prayer, and meaningful accountability in such areas as finance, mortality, family, and personal witness. Too few evangelical church board members regularly witness.

p. 58

(First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, & Rebecca R. Merrill)

One thing's for sure: if we keep doing what we're doing, we're going to keep getting what we're getting. One definition of insanity is "to keep doing the same things and expect different results."

pp. 30-31

(Knowing the Heart of God by George MacDonald)

The first thing in all progress is to leave something behind. To follow Jesus is to leave one's self behind. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself."

p. 116

v. 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Let us go back to verse 1 now and OUTLINE these 6 POINTS the writer emphasizes here that need to be "LEFT BEHIND" as they press on toward maturity.

"NOT LAYING AGAIN A FOUNDATION OF":

1. "REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS"
2. "FAITH TOWARD GOD"
3. "OF INSTRUCTION ABOUT WASHINGS"
4. "LAYING ON OF HANDS"
5. "THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD"
6. "ETERNAL JUDGMENT"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

To abandon their Christian profession and "fall away" would be to abandon all these doctrines. Whatever the readers had previously learned, they would be giving up. In this sense the foundation would have been laid for relearning them all over again, though the writer held out little hope in his subsequent statements for such a process to take place.
p. 794

Pink suggests:

Let us now, very briefly, summarize what has just been engaging our attention. The Hebrews had confessed their faith in Christ, and by so doing had forsaken the shadows for the Substance. But hope had been deferred, faith hath waned, persecutions had cooled their zeal. They were being tempted to abandon their Christian profession and return to Judaism. The apostle shows that by so doing they would be laying again "a foundation" of things which had been left behind. Rather than this, he urges them to be carried forward to "perfection" or "full growth." That meant to substitute "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18), for "repentance from dead works;" trust in the glorified Saviour, for a national "faith toward God;" the all-cleansing blood of the Lamb, for the inefficacious "washings" of the law; God's having laid on Christ the iniquities of us all, for the Jewish high-priest's "laying on of hands;" a resurrection "from the dead," for "a resurrection of the dead;" the Judgment-seat of Christ, for the "eternal judgment" of the Great White Throne. Thus, the six things here mentioned belonged to a state of things before Christ was manifested.
p. 283

Stedman says:

The foundation is called the elementary doctrines of Christ or, in chapter 5, the first principles of God's word. The elements of it are listed for us, and they fall into three very interesting groups. There are those doctrinal truths concerning conversion; then teaching concerning church ordinances; and doctrine concerning prophetic matters. This is the milk! This is proper for babies, but is very inadequate for anyone who wishes to go on to maturity, to full growth in the Christian life. He does not mean when he says leave these that they are to be forgotten or denied or neglected, but they are no longer to be the chief center of attention. That is the point he is making.

Is it not rather startling that these are often the sole topics on which many ministers dwell? They preach them over and over, and call them "the simple gospel." Because this simple gospel is preached unendingly in our churches, we have Christians who are weak, childish and immature. I have long been convinced that the greatest cause of the weak state of evangelical Christendom today are preachers who never realize that, in preaching what they call the simple gospel, they are feeding their people upon milk. They never get beyond the foundation.

p. 82

English says:

Since these things be so in respect to the two central elements of the six delineated, that is, that their application is more suitable to Judaism than to Christianity, what of the other four components: repentance, faith, resurrection, and judgment? Here again it becomes clear that the allusions are to teachings of the old economy rather than of the new. Indeed, repentance, faith, resurrection, and judgment do pertain to Christianity, but the description of these doctrines, as given here, seems to come short of what the New Testament reveals.

p. 157

Draper observes:

When the writer of Hebrews uses the term "principles," he has six foundational truths in view. These are grouped in pairs--two are initial experiences, two are symbolic expressions, and two are future events. They are things some people spend their entire lives developing, although they are urged to leave them, to move on, to grow up, and to mature.
p. 140

MacArthur says:

It is the provisions and principles of the Old Covenant, of Judaism, that are to be dropped. It is not a question of adding to what one has. It is a question of abandoning what you have for something else. This is precisely what the Holy Spirit asked the Hebrews to do--to abandon the shadows, the types, the pictures, and the sacrifices of the old economy and come to the reality of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. A paraphrase could be, "Leave the pictures of the Messiah and go on to the Messiah Himself," or "Drop the Old Covenant and accept the New."
p. 137

These six doctrines were the basics of Judaism that were to be laid aside in favor of the better things that come in Christ. The Old Testament is incomplete. It is true. It is of God. It was a necessary part of His revelation and of His plan of salvation for man. But it is only partial revelation, and is not sufficient. Judaism is abrogated. Judaism is nullified. It is no longer a valid expression of worship or of obedience to God. It must be abandoned.
p. 141

Griffith Thomas says:

Another reason for thinking these elements are Jewish, not Christian, is that the word "baptisms" is in the plural, and is also not the one that is ever found elsewhere to describe Christian baptism. The term, therefore, appears to refer to Jewish "washings."
p. 71

Wiersbe says:

The writer lists six foundational truths of the Christian life, all of which, by the way, are also foundational to the Jewish faith. After all, our Christian faith is based on the Jewish faith and is a fulfillment of it. "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). If the readers of this epistle went back to Judaism in order to escape persecution, they would only be abandoning the perfect for the imperfect, the mature for the immature.
p. 62

Bruce says it well:

It was on a foundation already laid in the Old Testament, then, and one on which their way of life was already based, that these people had received the gospel. All these things were now given a fresh and fuller significance because of the coming of Christ into the world. But the "Hebrews" were exposed to a subtle danger which could not be experienced by converts from paganism. If a convert from paganism gave up Christianity and reverted to paganism, there was a clean break between the faith which he renounced and the paganism to which he returned. But it was possible for the recipients of this letter, yielding gradually to pressures from various quarters, to give up more and more those features of faith and practice which were distinctive of Christianity, and yet to feel that they had not abandoned the basic principles of repentance and faith, the realities denoted by religious ablutions and the laying on of hands, the expectation of resurrection and the judgment of the age to come.
p. 143

Lane says:

Accordingly, in 6:1-2 the writer is not asking the community to discard one aspect of Christian instruction for another but to build upon the solid foundation already laid for them.
p. 140

McGee points out:

There are six foundational facts in the Old Testament which prefigure Christ in ritual, symbol, and ceremony:

- (1) REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS - These works were the works of the Mosaic Law.
- (2) FAITH TOWARD GOD - The Old Testament taught faith toward God.
- (3) DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS [washings] - It has nothing to do with New Testament baptism. They refer to the washings of the Old Testament ritual, and there were many of them.
- (4) LAYING ON OF HANDS - This was also an Old Testament ritual. When a man brought an animal offering, he laid his hands on its head to signify his identification with it. The animal was taking his place on the altar of sacrifice.
- (5) RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD - taught in the Old Testament, but now they needed to come up to the resurrection of Christ.
- (6) ETERNAL JUDGMENT - taught in the Old Testament.

(Paraphrased from J. Vernon McGee's commentary)
p. 543

Just as the author has graphically described in the previous chapters the terrible consequence of failing at Kadesh Barnea to trust God and move forward into the possession of the land, of surrendering the opportunity for a rest that could have been theirs to wandering in the wilderness of their own making and dying as evidence of divine disqualification, he now is challenging them in the same way. They are standing in a similar position. They are refusing to go on in Christ and are tempted to go back to the old forms of their religious profession.

This reminds me of the passage where Jesus commands the disciples to launch out into the deep and let down the nets. They will be buffeted by the winds and the waves but the Lord still says, "Launch out"; just as He says to us, "Let us go on to maturity." It would be far easier to clutch our security blanket and just be content to be dependent babies when God would long for us to be fruit-bearing fathers and mothers.

Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

The challenge is presented: "Having been washed by the blood of the Lamb" and given new life in the power of the Holy Spirit to go on from here. To grow up and to mature in this relationship rather than to return to the old RULES and RITUALS.

(Final Call by Steven J. Lawson)

Many ignore or neglect Revelation, assuming it is too hard to understand. They view it like Churchill viewed the Russians--a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma. But God promises a special blessing to those who answer its call.

p. 21

v. 3 And this we shall do, if indeed God is permitting.

Once again, the author identifies with the reader and makes this FOLLOW-UP STATEMENT:

"THIS WE SHALL DO, IF INDEED GOD IS PERMITTING."

This takes us back to verse 1 and that is:

"let us be pressing on to maturity"

The author is in full recognition of God's sovereign purpose and also the process involved in spiritual growth.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

What he wanted them to do was to press forward. But he was perfectly aware that this required more than his effort to challenge his readers to make progress. God must help and He alone could help them achieve these goals. The writer had said, "Let us . . . go on to maturity" (v. 1), but in a spirit of dependence on divine aid he then added, **and God permitting, we will do so.**

And this pressing on to maturity we will do.

Maturity is possible because of what they now have.

The Lord knows best how to grow us up.

His PLAN,

His PROVISIONS

and His POWER

are all available to produce Christlikeness in each of us.

One cannot be brought to maturity without leaving dullness and indifference.

The text suggests God will not compel us to go on to maturity.

Lane says:

The writer is confident that those he has addressed in 5:11-6:2 will recognize that their regression and withdrawal from contact with others is untenable, despite the risks entailed in the resumption of a bold stance for Christ in a hostile world.
p. 140

Draper says:

If God permits, if God gives his permission for our growth, let us go on to maturity. If we are going to move on to perfection, we must be obedient to God. We must be open to God, willing for God to have his will in our lives. As we make our commitments to Christ, we will have taken that step of willingness and obedience that will enable God to lead us on to perfection, to maturity, to the fulfilled purpose for which he has saved us.
p. 147

English says:

God will permit; in fact, He will bear His own along the way, by His Spirit. May none of us fall short of the knowledge of the completeness of His revelation in Christ.
p. 158

Owen says:

That is, we will "go on to perfection," I in teaching and you in learning. I will for the time present leave the foundation principles of the gospel, and I will proceed unto the mysteries of the gospel, especially those which concern the priesthood of Christ, and thereby raise up the building of your faith and profession upon the foundation that hath already been laid, whereby, through the grace of God, you may be carried on to perfection, and become skilful in the word of righteousness.
p. 95

Phillips says:

Thus the writer exhorts the weak. Their immaturity is disgraceful and even dangerous. They must make up their minds to go on.
p. 90

Hughes observes:

This is a warning and call for all of us to make progress in our faith. The undeniable spiritual axiom is, where there is life there is growth! If we are not more knowledgeable in the faith now than a year ago, if we are not growing in holiness and commitment, we had better check what is going on inside. Even more, if we are sliding, losing our grasp on things that were once clear, caring less about God and holiness and the world, we had better drop everything and tend to our souls.
p. 156

Here the author then gives full recognition of God's sovereignty.

Isaiah 46:10

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Romans 8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

God is God and can do what He wishes, as He wishes, when He wishes, wherever He wishes, as long as He wishes, with whomever He wishes.
p. 240

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

YOUR CHOICES WILL NOT DETERMINE
WHETHER GOD WINDS UP WHERE HE
WANTS TO GO. HE WILL ARRIVE AT HIS
DESTINATION . . . EITHER THROUGH
YOU, AROUND YOU, OVER YOU,
BY YOU, OR IN SPITE OF YOU.

p. 92

I like the story of the cowboy who applied for health insurance. The agent routinely asked him, "Have you ever had any accidents?"

The cowboy replied, "Well no, I've not had any accidents. I was bitten by a rattlesnake once, and a horse did kick me in the ribs. That laid me up for a while, but I haven't had any accidents."

The agent said, "Wait a minute. I'm confused. A rattlesnake bit you, and a horse kicked you. Weren't those accidents?"

"No, they did that on purpose."

p. 92

His sovereignty means He allows no chance happenings, no luck, no mistakes, no accidents. You can have confidence, "Lord, You did what I thought You weren't going to do. That's because You want to do something else in my life, and I'm excited to see how You are going to use what You just did to do what You want to do. So go ahead and do Your thing."

p. 100

(Broken in the Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

Mature people are perpetual learners. They are always growing. They press forward. They are progress-oriented. They use the past to provide wisdom for the future. They get on with life. They do not rest on past laurels. They quit licking yesterday's wounds. The world is full of people bitter over ex-spouses, former pastors, unreasonable parents. Someone ought to tell the complainer to get off his or her cross because we need the wood. People who have been broken in the right place keep their gaze on the future. They exude hope, and hope is always out in front of us--Hanging On to Positive Expectations. There is a contemporariness about them. Yet, they have also learned daily contentment.

p. 156

(The Mature Man: Becoming a Man of Impact by David DeWitt)

A patriarch is not an old fuddy-duddy living in the sun someplace, retired, complaining about all the new-fangled ideas, while spending his children's inheritance. A patriarch is on the front lines of life, ever growing, learning, contributing, and challenging the socks off his wife, his children, his grandchildren, and everybody else who knows him.
p. 182

(The Pleasures of God by John Piper)

God does in fact do all his pleasure. He is free in that he has no deficiencies that make him dependent, and he is sovereign in that he can act on his delights without being stopped by powers outside himself. "All that he pleases he does." Thus his freedom is a sovereign freedom.
p. 52

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

An elderly woman at a prayer meeting one night pleaded, "It really doesn't matter what you do with us, Lord, just have your way with our lives." At this meeting was Adelaide Pollard, a rather well-known itinerant Bible teacher who was deeply discouraged because she had been unable to raise the necessary funds for a desired trip to Africa to do missionary service. She was moved by the older woman's sincere and dedicated request of God.

At home that evening Miss Pollard meditated on Jeremiah 18:3, 4:

Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels, and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Before retiring that evening, Adelaide Pollard completed the writing of all four stanzas of this hymn as it is sung today. The hymn first appeared in published form in 1907.

Often into our lives come discouragements and heartaches that we cannot understand. As children of God, however, we must learn never to question the ways of our sovereign God--but simply to say:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Search me and try me, Master, today! Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now, as in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Wounded and weary, help me, I pray! Power, all power, surely is Thine! Touch me and heal me, Savior divine!

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being absolute sway! Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see Christ only, always, living in me!

p. 246

(31 Days of Praise: Enjoying God Anew by Ruth Myers)

I praise You for Your sovereignty over the broad events of my life and over the details. With You, nothing is accidental, nothing is incidental, and no experience is wasted. You hold in Your own power my breath of life and all my destiny. And every trial that You allow to happen is a platform on which You reveal Yourself, showing Your love and power, both to me and to others looking on. Thank You that I can move into the future non-defensively, with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead, for You hold the future and You will always be with me, even to my old age . . . and through all eternity.
pp. 50-51

v. 4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

v. 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary calls the verses from 4-8:

THE ALTERNATIVE TO PROGRESS.

In an extremely solemn pronouncement, the author then set forth the tragic alternative to the progress he desired his readers to make. If they did not advance, they would retreat. Should anyone so retreat, his situation would be grim indeed.
p. 794

I think what we need to recognize here, again, there is no rewind button on the VCR of life.

YOU CANNOT REVERSE RELATIONSHIPS!

I think it is important for us to make an observation here that the author has changed from "WE" in verse 3 to "THOSE" in verse 4.

Just as there were 6 FOUNDATION STONES back in verses 1 and 2, the author now has 5 THINGS that are said about these people:

- 1."WHO HAVE ONCE BEEN ENLIGHTENED"
- 2."HAVE TASTED OF THE HEAVENLY GIFT"
- 3."HAVE BEEN MADE PARTAKERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"
- 4."HAVE TASTED THE GOOD WORD OF GOD"
- 5."HAVE TASTED THE POWERS OF THE COMING AGE"

When one has tasted it (watermelon) he knows what the angels eat.

Mark Twain

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Lane says:

The reason for the writer's resolve in v 3 becomes clear when it is linked to the warning in vv 4-6 by the conjunction gar.
p. 141

Lane says further:

The adunaton, "impossible," which is placed emphatically at the beginning of the sentence, is created and conditioned by an event and by facts. A firm and vital relationship has been established between God and the community.
p. 141

Wiersbe says:

It is probable that he is describing a hypothetical case to prove his point that a true believer cannot lose his salvation. His statement in verse 9 seems to support this interpretation: "Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case" (NIV). His argument runs like this:

"Let's suppose that you do not go on to maturity. Does this mean that you will go back to condemnation, that you will lose your salvation? Impossible! If you could lose your salvation, it would be impossible to get it back again; and this would disgrace Jesus Christ. He would have to be crucified again for you, and this could never happen."

In verse 4, the writer changed the pronouns from "we" and "us" to "those." This change also suggests that he had a hypothetical case in mind.

However, there is another possible interpretation that does not require a hypothetical case. You should note that the words "crucify" and "put" in verse 6 are, in the Greek, present participles: "while they are crucifying . . . and while they are putting Him to an open shame." The writer did not say that these people could never be brought to repentance. He said that they could not be brought to repentance while they were treating Jesus Christ in such a shameful way. Once they stop disgracing Jesus Christ in this way, they can be brought to repentance and renew their fellowship with God.
pp. 65-66

Pink says:

They had no other Gospel in reserve, no further motives to present. Christ crucified had been set before them. Him they now denounced as an Imposter. There was "none other name" whereby they could be saved. Their public renunciation of Christ rendered their case hopeless so far as God's servants were concerned. "Let them alone" (Matt. 15:19) was now their orders: compare Jude 22. Whether or not it was possible for God, consistently with His holiness, to shame them, our passage does not decide.
p. 296

Barclay says:

We may note one final thing. It has been pointed out that in the letter to the Hebrews there are four impossible things. There is the impossibility of this passage. The other three are: (i) It is impossible for God to lie (6: 18). (ii) It is impossible that the blood of sheep and goats should take away sin (10: 4). (iii) Without faith it is impossible to please God (11: 6). pp. 59-60

Westcott says:

The necessity of progress lies in the very nature of things. There can be no repetition of the beginning. The preacher cannot again renew to 'repentance', a complete change of the intellectual, moral, spiritual state. He must go on to the completion of his work.
p. 147

Lane observes further:

The assertion "it is impossible to restore them to repentance" is parallel to the notion of laying again the foundation concerning repentance in v 1. There the primary word concerning Christ was the foundation, which had to be left standing and which could not be recast. This thought is reiterated precisely in v 6; it is impossible to seek to lay another foundation than the one that has been laid and is sustaining the people of God.
p. 142

The Bible Knowledge Commentary confesses that:

These three verses can be interpreted in four ways: (1) the danger of a Christian losing his salvation. Of course, we recognize that salvation is a work of God and cannot be reversed. (2) This is a mere profession of faith short of salvation, or tasting but not really partaking. (This is the position of The New Scofield Reference Bible.) (3) Taking it hypothetically, if a Christian could lose his salvation, there is no provision for repentance. This is The Ryrie Study Bible. (4) That a warning is given of the danger of a Christian moving from a position of true faith and life to the extent of becoming disqualified for further service and for inheriting millennial glory. The latter is the interpretation adopted here. The entirety of these verses constitutes a single sentence in Greek as well as in the English of the NIV. The central assertion is: **It is impossible for those who have . . .to be brought back to repentance.**
p. 794

As we look more closely at these verses we recognize the fact that the ball is in the believer's court. We can say of verse 3:

If God is permitting, and He certainly is, the fault is theirs and not God's.

And here in verse 4:

To prove that their immaturity is not because some blessing has been withheld from them. It is not God's fault.

The solution to the whole problem is for these believers to use what they already have.

The passage is a warning against a failure to progress.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Following the words "those who" is a description of the persons whom the writer affirmed cannot possibly be brought back to a state of repentance. The description he gave shows that he had Christians in mind.
p. 794

Let us look for a brief moment at these 5 CHARACTERISTICS that are given in verses 4 and 5.

CHARACTERISTIC #1:

"THOSE WHO HAVE ONCE BEEN ENLIGHTENED" - This speaks of conversion.

2 Corinthians 4:3, 4

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Hebrews 10:32

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

CHARACTERISTIC #2:

"THOSE WHO HAVE TASTED OF THE HEAVENLY GIFT"

According to The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

This too refers to conversion.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:8, 9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary also speaks with regard to the word "TASTED" since that has been one of the words used in promoting the possibility of profession without possession.

Hebrews 2:9

But we are seeing Jesus who for a short time has been made lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, having been crowned with glory and honor, in order that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one.

1 Peter 2:3

if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Psalms 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

CHARACTERISTIC #3:

"PARTAKERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary takes us back to Hebrews 3:1:

Therefore, holy brethren, sharing in a heavenly calling, contemplate Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

Hebrews 3:14

For we have become partakers of Christ, if indeed we hold firm the original confidence steadfast until the end;

CHARACTERISTIC #4:

"THOSE WHO . . . HAVE TASTED THE GOOD WORD OF GOD"

Jeremiah 15:16

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.

Psalms 19:7-11

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.
 The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
 The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.
 The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
 The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.
 The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.
 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
 they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.
 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

1 Peter 2:2

like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

CHARACTERISTIC #5:

"THOSE WHO HAVE . . . TASTED . . . THE POWERS OF THE COMING AGE"

Hebrews 2:4

God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and various works of power and by distribution of the Holy Spirit according to His own will?

YOU CANNOT BE SAVED TWICE!

Philippians 3:13, 14

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul follows this with an ADMONITION in verses 15 and 16:

Let us therefore, as many as are mature, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

(Measuring the Days: Daily Meditations with Walter Wangerin, Jr. by Walter Wangerin, Jr.)

Persistence

Douglas Lander drove the mule that pulled the plow that broke the earth to dig the hole on which was built Grace Lutheran Church. They dug that hole twice. The flood of 1937--when folks boated above such streets as Governor and Garvin--filled it in the first time. But Douglas was ever an even-tempered man and would do the same thing six times over uncomplainingly if five times first it failed.

"You can't command a mule," he chuckled even to the end of his days, "until you got its attention. An' you know how you get a mule's attention?" It was a tired joke; but Douglas was so sweet in its delivery, so pacific a man himself, so neat and small a ginger stick, that people grinned on the streets when he told it. He was a pouch of repeatable phrases. Besides, it was understood that he meant more than mules: the younger generation, the government, some recalcitrance in human nature, cocky young preachers--whatever the topic of his present conversation. He could trim a joke to any circumstance. "Hit it with a two-by-four."
p. 260

(God Isn't in a Hurry by Warren Wiersbe)

Ambrose Bierce defined prejudice as "a vagrant opinion without visible means of support." Prejudice is often a child of ignorance, and it can be stubborn and unmoving.
p. 109

v. 6 and then have fallen away, to be renewing them again to repentance, since they are crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to open shame.

J. Vernon McGee says:

The whole tenor of the text reveals that he is speaking of rewards which are the result of salvation. In verse 6 he says, "If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance"--not to salvation, but to repentance. Repentance is something that God has asked believers to do. For example, read the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia, as recorded in Revelation 2 and 3. He says to every one of the churches to repent. That is His message for believers.

So the writer of Hebrews is talking about the fruit of salvation, not about the root of salvation.
p. 546

Delitzsch says:

The work of grace in spiritual renovation begins with the root of our moral nature in the nous [or the mind], by rescuing a man's inward life, his self-conscious thinking and willing, from its degradation in God-forsaking selfishness and worldliness, and so transforming it into another and a new life.

p. 281

For the regenerate man is not therefore wholly and irrecoverably lost "who" (as he describes) "gives place to the evil one, and, growing faint in the fight, suffers himself to be entangled in some more subtle snare of Satan--some more specious lie (or, as in the case here supposed, by a seeming pious love for the institutions of the Old Testament)." Such a man is not therefore irrecoverably fallen: he may possibly, by the might of grace, regain his hold again, tear asunder the web of deceit, and again recover himself out of the snare of the devil (2 Tim. ii 26).

p. 288

Parker says:

The passage thus rendered is supported by all the experience of life. It is impossible for any man who has fallen from sobriety to be renewed again to temperance, so long as he is debauching himself night and day with the drink which overcame him; if he will set it down, and retire from it, he shall yet be a sober man, but if he mean to recover his sobriety by drinking more deeply, then manifestly he is perpetrating an irony that is ridiculous and shameful. If any man have fallen from honesty it is impossible to recover him so long as he continues to steal. He must drop the action, he must feel burning shame on account of what he has done, and when his felonious hands would go forth to repeat the nefarious deed, he must draw them back and say, No: I will cry mightily unto God if haply I may yet be an honest man. Thus talking there should be no doubt about his honesty. The Apostle's reasoning then is simply this: that if we continue to sin we cannot repent; whilst we are in the very act of crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, it is impossible for us to repent, to pray, to return.

p. 186

Draper says:

This passage also refers to the collapse of repentance. I want you to notice the writer of Hebrews did not say, ". . . renew them again unto salvation." He said, ". . . renew them again unto repentance" (6:6). Repentance is a daily experience for the life of God's children. We repent when our hearts betray us. We repent when temptation befalls us and we yield to the tempter's snare. We repent, confess it to God, and are restored. When we turn away from God, when we rebel against him and refuse to hear this voice, when we refuse to do what is the plain will of God for our lives, there is a collapse of our ability to repent. We become unable to recognize sin as God views it. Our spiritual discernment collapses.

p. 153

Stedman says:

The tears coursing down His face, He wept for the city. One week later He was nailed to a cross outside that very city's gates. Where was the multitude that greeted Him when He came on the triumphal entry? Oh, they were there, but they were the ones who were now crying out, Crucify Him, crucify Him! He said He was the Son of God, let Him save Himself!
p. 89

Bruce says:

The margin of the ERV/ARV suggests an alternative rendering which may appear to moderate the gravity of our author's words: "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, the while they crucify to themselves the Son of God. . . ." By suggesting that these people cannot be brought back to repentance so long as they repudiate Christ, this rendering might be thought to imply that when they cease to repudiate him repentance will be possible. But this is certainly not what is meant. To say that they cannot be brought to repentance so long as they persist in their renunciation of Christ would be a truism hardly worth putting into words. The participle "crucifying" is much more appropriately taken as causal than as temporal in force; it indicates why it is impossible for such people to repent and make a new beginning. God has pledged himself to pardon all who truly repent, but Scripture and experience alike suggest that it is possible for human beings to arrive at a state of heart and life where they can no longer repent.
p. 149

Lange in his commentary says:

The Aor. particip. points to the fact that this breaking off from all fellowship with Christ is a single and once for all accomplished act; while the following Present Participles express the condition which follows upon this falling away, characterizing its state alike of utter hopelessness and self-condemnation.
pp. 114-5

Lange says further:

It is not, however, said that this condition has in the case of any one already taken place. The reader is only warned, but this in the most startling manner, against sinking into this state as one that threatens him.
p. 116

DeHaan rightly observes:

The writer of Hebrews six is not talking about losing salvation. He is talking about repentance. It does not say, "It is impossible to renew them unto salvation." What a gloomy Gospel it would be--telling people in this day of grace that it is impossible for them to be saved. I trust you have followed us thus far. As we study the context of the entire epistle we must conclude that the author is writing to believers who have been born again. This is evident from the many fruits of the Spirit which had been present in their lives. Moreover, these believers had been saved a long time, and had progressed far on the way of Christian growth. And then they had lost their first love and instead of going forward, they began to fall behind.
pp. 98-99

He says further:

He is speaking of Christians who began the race, but fell by the wayside. There comes a time when after repeated warnings and admonitions the Christian continues in disobedience and "willful" sin, until God shelves him, to deal with him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The passage refers to the sin unto death, the result of presumptuous, willful, continued disobedience against better light. Such may never repent here below, but be among those who shall be "ashamed at His appearing."

It is a serious thing to be a child of God. It carries grave responsibilities; and willful continuance in known sin against clear and better light must call for the chastening of the Lord. The Bible admonishes us:

Let a man examine himself . . .

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world

(I Cor. 11:28, 31, 32).

p. 101

F. B. Meyer says:

To fall away is to go back from the outward profession of Christianity--not temporarily, but finally; not as the result of some sudden sin, but because the first outward stimulus is exhausted, and there is no true life beating at the heart, to repair or re-invigorate the wasting devotion of the life. It is to resemble those wandering planets, which never shone with their own light, but only in the reflected light of some central sun; but which, having broken from its guiding leash, dash further and further into the blackness of darkness, without one spark of life, or heat, or light. It is to return as a dog to its vomit, and as a sow to her filth; because the reformation was only outward and temporary, and the dog or sow natures were never changed through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. It is to be another Judas; to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost; to lose all earnestness of feeling, all desire for better things, all power of tender emotions; and to become utterly callous and dead, as the pavement on which we walk, or the rusty armor hanging on the old castle's walls.

p. 28

This passage has nothing to do with those who fear lest it condemns them. The presence of that anxiety, like the cry which betrayed the real mother in the days of Solomon, establishes beyond a doubt that you are not one that has fallen away beyond the possibility of renewal to repentance. If you are still touched by Gospel sermons, and are anxious to repent, and are in godly fear lest you should be a castaway, take heart! These are signs that this passage has no bearing on you. Why make yourself ill with a sick man's medicine? But if you are growing callous and insensible under the preaching of the Gospel, look into this passage and see your doom, unless you speedily arrest your steps.

p. 29

There are many decisions that we make in our lives that we wish we could undo. But once those decisions have been made they cannot be unmade.

We have already seen this in the children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea. The next day they wanted to undo the decision not to go into the land. But God had already said, "I swore in My wrath, they shall never enter My rest."

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.

Matthew 23:37, 38

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

We all have choices to make. We all have decisions to make. Some of those choices and decisions we live with and wish that we could change, but there is no possibility.

For ESAU when he sold his birthright for just a bowl of chili, he wished often that he could undo that decision.

Hebrews 12:16, 17

that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

How SAMSON must have grieved while he was blind and grinding in the prison of the Philistines, being made a public spectacle because he made some wrong choices.

SAUL himself had the kingdom ripped from him because of some poor choices.

JUDAS ISCARIOT went out and hung himself because of some poor choices.

BELSHAZZAR was weighed in the balances and found wanting.

PHARAOH hardened his heart, lost his first-born son and his own life as well.

How many times during the forty years of wandering the wilderness did the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL wish they had made the right decision when they came to Kadesh Barnea?

F. B. Meyer says in his book Israel: A Prince with God:

But the "repentance" mentioned here is not repentance to salvation; but the power of reversing the past. Esau could not undo what he had done. . . .

The sinful past is irrevocable. Eve might bitterly regret her choice; but as she stood with Adam outside the cherub-guarded gate, with the faded rose in her hand--of which Rabbis tell us--her bitter regrets could not replace the apple on the tree, or reinstate her within the golden bowers of Paradise. Peter went out and wept bitterly; but those tears of uncontrollable anguish could not recall the words of denial, or blot from his memory that look of pain. The Virgins might beat their breasts in bitter self-reproach; but no complaints, however pitiable, could reverse the decision of the Bride-groom's lips. . . . You cannot undo.

p. 25

The cry of Esau in Hebrews 12:17 came too late to alter the consequences of his rash act. He found no place of repentance, no way to change his father's decision though he sought it carefully with tears.

Romans 1:24, 26, 28

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

(Mama, Get the Hammer! There's a Fly on Papa's Head! by Barbara Johnson)

She is so right, and her words remind me of a little prayer:

LORD, WHEN I AM WRONG, MAKE ME WILLING
TO CHANGE;
WHEN I AM RIGHT, MAKE ME EASY TO LIVE WITH.

p. 73

GETTING UNSTUCK

Carolyn Koons writes: "I was told, after the fact, that the Kings River was flooded 13 feet above its normal water level. It didn't occur to me to ask why we were the only people attempting white-water rafting that day.

"Some of our group decided not to join the rest of us in the raft. They preferred to hike along the canyon cliffs and experience the river through the lens of a camera.

"Our guide prepared us for the trip by explaining that when we hit the rapids, water would rush down, then shoot up into a 'haystack.' The trick to riding haystacks was to pull up on the front of the raft so the water would lift us up instead of crashing over us.

"Soon came the test. The flooding river roared into a canyon. We hit a mega-haystack, and the guide shouted, 'Pull! Pull!' We pulled with all our strength and all our adrenaline and all our desperate will to survive the monstrous rapids. We pulled and pulled and pulled . . .

"No one told us it was possible to flip a raft upside down. We found ourselves fighting for air, battered by rocks, and holding on for dear life. Finally, we wrestled the raft over to a small ledge on the side of the river. The cliff behind us went straight up 150 feet. What would we do now? We were terrified. There was no way out.

"Our friends hiking along the cliff saw our plight and shouted the only solution: 'GET BACK IN THE RIVER!'

"Back in the river? None of us wanted to fight that battle again. One woman panicked and refused to move. The rest of us put on our bravest faces to try to convince her it was our only hope. She refused to move--paralyzed by fear. Two hours later, she faced reality. And although it was one of the scariest things we had ever done, we all got back into the river. Our raft shot out of the canyon to safety, and we were thankful for having survived a life-threatening adventure."

Koons continues, "You and I are on a river, and the river is called life. Do you know what the problem is? We think we are sitting on a sailboat, and we expect life to be smooth and calm. The reality is that we are white-water rafting. Rapids are built into life, and we can handle them better if we learn to expect them as a natural feature of this river.

"Have you ever found yourself washed up on the side of the river? Many of us are sitting on the edge of life, exhausted from our last battle with the rapids, watching other people go down the river. We are hurt, we're angry and frustrated. Or maybe we have been sitting here awhile now. We are rested and safe, but bored and hopeless."

The solution is to get back into the river!

[Pursuit, Vol 3, No 2, 1994. Pages 5-6.]

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(The Last Bus to Albuquerque by Lewis Grizzard)

Deck Sellars, a famous songwriter, wrote this: "Time moves like molasses when you are children, but it rages like a river when you're grown." p. 43

(The Life God Blesses: Weathering the Storms of Life That Threaten the Soul by Gordon MacDonald)

Mr. Bridge's nocturnal thoughts are not unique. Poet Ed Sissman had similar ideas when he wrote,

Men past forty,
Get up nights,
Look out at city lights
And wonder
Where they made the wrong turn
And why life is so long.

p. 114

(The Things that Matter Most by Cal Thomas)

I recall an exchange I once had on Phil Donahue's show. Phil said to me, "The trouble with you conservatives is that you have such simple answers to complex problems." I replied, "The trouble with you liberals, Phil, is that you've ignored the simple answers and that's why the problems have become complex."
p. 134

"The danger when men stop believing in God," said G. K. Chesterton, "is not that they will believe in nothing, but that they will believe in anything." This summarizes the point at which our modern culture has arrived.
p. 108

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Those who renounce their Christian faith are, with respect to their own conduct and attitude, taking a step that amounts to a fresh public rejection of Christ. When they first trusted Him, they thereby acknowledged that His crucifixion had been unjust and the result of man's sinful rejection of the Savior. Rejection reaffirms the view that Christ deserved to die on the cross.

That this was most serious was precisely the writer's point. Such persons could not be won back to the state of repentance which marked their original conversion to Christianity. The author's words suggested a deep hardening of their hearts against all efforts to win them back, not to Christian conversion, but to Christian commitment.
p. 795

Ryrie says:

If it were possible to fall away and then be saved again (which it isn't), then you could start all over and remove your mistakes. But since it isn't, then you must be warned about how you are now living and you must go on. Consequences of neglect will be dealt with at the judgment seat of Christ.

From the point of salvation onward, a person will be held responsible. At the judgment seat of Christ he must bear the responsibility for his failure to progress and his present state of immaturity.

It is impossible to remove failure by another experience of salvation. Therefore, the only thing you can do is to progress.

This is definitely not a matter of salvation but a matter of chastening, not condemnation but judgment of their sins. It is a solemn warning against the sin unto death.

Let us remind ourselves of God's 3-FOLD PROGRAM FOR RECOVERY of His erring children:

- 1.CIRCUMSTANCES - God the Father cultivates the circumstances around us to get a favorable response from us with regard to the direction we need to be going.
- 2.CHASTENING - He disciplines us for the purpose of seeking a peaceful fruit of righteousness from us.
- 3.COME ON HOME - This is the sin unto death.

Just as it is not possible to have a second PHYSICAL birth, so it is not possible to have a second SPIRITUAL birth.

When the gun sounds, the marathon begins and the clock starts. Try as you will you cannot stop the clock or the race. The only alternative is to go on and finish.

The same thing is true in our space program. As the space capsule sits on the launching pad, there is a countdown to ignition and launch. That is the experience of new birth. When the landing takes place, that is heaven. The end of the mission.

"AND THEN HAVE FALLEN AWAY, TO BE RENEWING THEM AGAIN TO REPENTANCE, SINCE THEY ARE":

1."CRUCIFYING AGAIN TO THEMSELVES THE SON OF GOD"

2."PUTTING HIM TO OPEN SHAME"

Before we leave the exposition of the 6th verse, I want to consider the 2 PRESENT PARTICIPLES that are used here in the conclusion of verse 6:

1."CRUCIFYING AGAIN"

2."PUTTING HIM"

I really believe there is a possibility and a place for looking at these as TEMPORAL PARTICIPLES. If this were the case, we would then translate:

"SINCE"

as:

"WHEN THEY ARE CRUCIFYING AGAIN TO THEMSELVES THE SON OF GOD"

or:

"WHILE THEY ARE CRUCIFYING AGAIN TO THEMSELVES THE SON OF GOD."

What we would then be saying is that while all of this is going on it is impossible "TO BE RENEWING THEM AGAIN TO REPENTANCE." There are some things that they must deal with before they can come to repentance.

Let me remind you of a couple of verses from the gospel of Luke:

Luke 15:17

"But when he came to himself"

. . . (that is, the prodigal son in the pig pen), he then prepared the soil for going home to his father. And in an act of repentance, experiences restoration.

Luke 22:31, 32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Before a person who is having an affair can come to repentance, he must forsake the other party.

Before an alcoholic can get on a constructive path he must forsake alcoholic beverages.

It is impossible to renew to repentance an unbroken spirit, an arrogant attitude.

It is impossible to renew to repentance someone who is living in denial.

Genesis 4:6, 7

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

These Jewish Christians changed teams and declared publically that Christ deserved the crucifixion and that He was not who He said He was. There will be dire consequences for that action. They have to renounce and return so that repentance and restoration can take place.

The computer printout on our lives after the day of our new birth will continue to pump out the record. No matter what we do we cannot erase the record.

2 Timothy 4:10

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Revelation 3:11

'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.

1 Corinthians 9:27

but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

THE CHRIST-LIFE FOR THE SELF-LIFE

The Castaway

Look for a moment upon the pages of Scripture and see how they are littered with castaways.

Take the first case, that of Esau. He comes in from hunting. He is born to the birthright. The birthright includes the power of standing between God and the clan, speaking to God for men. He is famished. Yonder is the steaming bowl of pottage prepared by his brother, Jacob.

"Give me that red lentil pottage," he cries.

Jacob, crafty in heart, bargains. "Give me your spiritual birthright."

Have we not in the past had some steaming bowl of pottage appealing to the senses? Almost all of us have been tempted by some temptation to sense.

If we glance back at our past, many of us must admit that we have yielded--not once or twice, but oftener--to the appeal to the senses. We have indulged some appetite and have despised our birthright.

"Give it to me. I must have it. I cannot live without it. Even though I have not quite the spiritual power that I had, give it to me." It may be some silent, beautiful form that allures you from your heart's true love. The temptations of pleasure, wealth, and fame have pulled many a man from his family and his God.

So men despise their birthright still, and they are cast away. Esau became a prince in this world, and the father of a line of dukes, and all the world flattered him and thought him a prosperous successful man, but God wrote over him the awful epitaph:

"This man is a castaway. He did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way: thus he despised his birthright." Do not despise your relationship with God to live for yourself. He offers far more than the world can give.

F. B. Meyer

11/20

F. B. Meyer in his book Israel: A Prince with God says:

Learn to master appetite in Christ's strength; this will serve thee better far than warding off its urgency for a time, leaving it to return with whetted hunger, like a pack of wolves which have tasted blood. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

p. 24

v. 7 For land which drank the rain which is often falling upon it and is bringing forth vegetation suitable to those for whose sake it is also being tilled, is receiving a blessing from God;

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

An illustration from nature now drives home the writer's point. Whenever **rain**-soaked ground is properly productive, it **receives the blessing of God**. Here the writer compared the spiritual privileges he had just enumerated (vv. 4-5) to a heavenly rain descending on the life of a Christian. Their effect should be a **crop useful to those for whom it is farmed**--a reference perhaps to the way other Christians benefit from the lives of fruitful believers. Such productivity brings divine blessings on fruitful believers' lives.

p. 795

We look for certain results from certain conditions. Some believers take the blessing of their salvation and go on to maturity, while others are immature.

Stedman says:

The last word on this is **the illustration of its reality**, the account of the two plots of land which have drunk in the rain. It is a very simple illustration, and it parallels the parable of the sower that our Lord told. There were two plots of ground, side by side, both containing good seed. The rain falls on each. One brings forth fruit but on the other the good seed sprouts but because it has no root, some of it dies. The thorns and thistles take over and choke out the rest. The rain pictures the Spirit-given blessings of verses 4 and 5. What good does more rain do on ground like that? It can only mean more thorns and thistles. This is why God will not permit someone to go on in truth until they cease their own works and depend on His. It is the principle of faith that alone will receive anything from God. The whole of Scripture testifies to it. For those who refuse to act on that, the end is to be burned.
pp. 89-90

J. Vernon McGee says:

Now notice that he is illustrating the fruit of the Christian's life: "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: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (vv. 7-8). If the believer's life brings forth fruit, it receives blessing from God; if it brings forth thorns and briers, it is rejected.
p. 546

Lane says:

The agricultural illustration clarifies the appropriateness of the warning in vv 4-6. The recital of the blessings and advantages enjoyed by the community in vv 4-5 demonstrates that they are like land that receives frequent rain and is cared for by God.
p. 143

Westcott says:

We look for certain results from certain general conditions; and not only so but we regard certain results as naturally appropriate to certain objects. . . . The comparison between processes of agriculture and moral training is common in all literature.
p. 151

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

There follows an illustration of this terrible warning, taken from agricultural life. In the gospels many parables of husbandry can be found. Their original object was usually to focus attention on the yield of the harvest. Our author, however, characteristically uses his illustration in order to point out what happens when there is no harvest at all.
p. 110

Lenski says:

The rain keeps coming upon this piece of land (present, iterative); it drank all of this rain (aorist, fact). It continues to bear herbage that is suitable for those on whose account it is being cultivated, namely the owners who do the cultivating themselves or have their servants do it. While it is in this condition the land partakes of blessing from God as serving the purpose of God. Land is blessed when it does this. The illustration is so to the point because land could not do this on its own accord; it is like us who must receive God's light, gift, Spirit, etc., (v. 4, 5) and besides these the cultivating care of the church, its ministry, and its membership. So land must receive God's rain and the farmer's cultivating care. It is God's intent that such land produce what its cultivators need.
pp. 187-8

Richards says:

From Hebrews 6:7-8 we learn that the issue is one of fruitfulness. God is (and we are to be) concerned with the products of maturity. Land producing only thorns and thistles (all that we are able to produce in an immature state) may be purged by burning. With the old dead works purged, the land may become productive again.
p. 63

Hewitt says:

An illustration from nature is now discussed to show the unnaturalness of those who fall away and the reasonableness of God's judgment--the impossibility of a renewed repentance. Here are two pieces of ground subject to the same favourable conditions. One responds to these conditions and brings forth fruit; but the other does not and remains unfruitful.
p. 109

Wuest says:

In these verses the writer presents an analogy in nature. The abundant and frequently renewed rain, represents the free and reiterated bestowal of spiritual enlightenment and impulse to these Hebrews. One piece of ground reacts by producing herbage good for food. This is the Hebrew who accepts the New Testament by faith. On the other hand, the ground that receives the same rain, but produces thorns and briers, is likened to the Hebrew who being the recipient of the pre-salvation work of the Spirit, yet turns his back on Him and goes back to the First Testament sacrifices, the apostate who can look for nothing but certain judgment (10:26-31).
p. 119

v. 8 but if it is bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and almost cursed, and its end is burning.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

But suppose the land that has received this "rain" is unproductive? . . . The point is that when a plot of ground that has been rained on is productive, God blesses it. But if it only **produces thorns and thistles**, it is **worthless** (adokimos is translated "disapproved"). . . . The metaphor suggests that an unproductive Christian life ultimately ("in the end") falls under the severe condemnation of God and is subject to His blazing wrath and judgment.
p. 795

The burning of a field was to destroy the rank growth.
p. 796

The point is, you can receive the blessing of God and use or misuse it.

The author is saying that if a piece of land bears a certain kind of fruit it must undergo a certain kind of experience. The ground is treated according to the character of its fruit. When a Christian is properly fruitful, he can expect the blessing of God. Conversely, if not, he can expect judgment. If our lives are fruitful, we can look to God for mercy and grace available.

Conversely, verse 8 looks at the harmful fruits:

"THORNS AND THISTLES."

When the land bears this kind of fruit, it is adokimos, which is the same word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9:27:

I treat my body roughly and make it serve me, lest when I have preached to others, I may be ordered to stand aside (disapproved).

And this is an inherent danger.

(Mama, Get the Hammer! There's a Fly on Papa's Head! by Barbara Johnson)

I wish I was a teddy bear

1. Everybody likes 'em.
2. Nobody cares how fat they are.
3. The older they are, the more they're worth.

Remarkable Things

p. 113

(When God Whispers: Glimpses of an Extraordinary God By an Ordinary Woman by Carole Mayhall)

EMPTY: CONTAINING NOTHING;
HAVING NO WORTH OR PURPOSE;
USELESS AND UNSATISFYING;
WITHOUT MEANING OR FORCE.

FATHER, THAT'S EXACTLY HOW I FEEL!
HELP ME, PLEASE!

p. 102

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

It is the prime condition of fruitfulness. Have we conformed to it? Is there a glad acquiescence to God's every command? Have we presented ourselves as a living sacrifice? Are we willing that God should have all? Do we recognize His will as the one blessed code of life? And are we prepared to walk like this, step by step, though the feet bleed as we pass over the jagged rock? Then take heart, for it is to such that God says, "I will make thee exceeding fruitful."

12/4

F. B. Meyer

(The Source of My Strength by Charles Stanley)

A GOD-GIVEN SENSE OF FRUSTRATION

There are times when a sense of irritability is not rooted in your sense of failure, inadequacy, or desire for perfection, but a sense of frustration is placed in your spirit by God.

This type of frustration can be differentiated by four qualities:

1. You are not trying to beat or conquer anybody or anything.
2. The onset of the frustration is usually quite sudden and intense--and even upon careful inner evaluation, there doesn't seem to be a cause for it.
3. The frustration is not with anybody else but with yourself alone.
4. Once you move into the new path that God is leading you to walk, the frustration ends.

When that type of frustration manifests itself in your life, rejoice! God is plowing up your soul and forcing you to confront and face a deeper part of your character. God is seeking to forgive, resolve, or transform a new area of your life. He is stirring you up, keeping you agitated until you face your problem, your sin, your error, your very nature. He won't let you be at peace until you face yourself squarely, but once you do, you'll find that the Lord is doing a work in you that is for your growth and, ultimately, your eternal good.

pp. 144-5

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalms 71

Just as each day brims with your beauty,
my mouth brims with praise.
But don't turn me out to pasture when I'm old
or put me on the shelf when I can't pull my weight.

p. 100

(Perilous Pursuits by Joseph M. Stowell)

Oswald Chambers observed, "The one great passion of the saint is that the life of the Lord Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh."

p. 153

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The big question that should be on our minds is, Are we growing in our relationship to Jesus Christ?

LESSON #2: The command of verse 1 is: "Let us be pressing on to maturity."

LESSON #3: There is no rewind button on the VCR of life.

LESSON #4: God is indeed sovereign, and He is constantly concerned about our growth to Christlikeness.

LESSON #5: You cannot reverse relationships.

LESSON #6: There are some decisions that you make that you can never undo.

LESSON #7: You cannot be saved twice.

LESSON #8: We must first deal with the negative things in our lives before we can experience the positive act of repentance toward God.

LESSON #9: The Father's supreme desire of us is that fruit might be borne in and through our lives.

LESSON #10: Our longing desire ought to be to hear at the judgment seat of Christ, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Griffith Thomas says:

In the light of this warning and exhortation, the supreme thought to be emphasized is that occupation with Christ, His Person, and Work, is the secret of progress and the safeguard against failure.
p. 75

Lane has this sobering reflection:

It is possible that in vv 7-8 the writer was thinking of the infamous cities of the Jordan plain, which were "well watered like the garden of the Lord" (Gen 13:10) but which were subsequently judged by God and were destroyed by fire (Gen 19:24). These cities were held up to the covenant people to illustrate the expectation of those who abandoned God and who expressed contempt for the covenant.
p. 143

Draper says:

We must grow up spiritually. We must mean business for God. We must realize that he wants us to strengthen our spirits and our souls. We must live in his Word. We must devour the eternal message of God as we put it into our hearts and into our lives to be strengthened and grow up in him. If we refuse, if we are just going through the ritual and through the motions, we open ourselves for the kind of rebellion against God that can cause the judgment of God to fall upon us as Christians.

Remember--these words are not here for us to judge others. They are for us to look into our own hearts. They are for us to allow the Spirit of God and the Word of God to deal with us. They are for us, in the solitude, quietness, and privacy of our hearts. There we are to see ourselves as God sees us.
p. 156

F. B. Meyer says:

There are many in these days, filled with questionings about the clean heart, the extent to which we may be delivered from sin, and such like speculations. To these we say:--Cease to think of cleansing, and consider the Cleanser; forbear to speculate on the deliverance, and deal with the Deliverer; be not so eager as to the nature of the salvation, but let the Saviour into your heart; and be sure that so long as He is in possession, He will exert so salutary an effect, that sin, however mighty, shall instantly lose its power over the tempest-driven soul that comes through Him to God, the source of holiness.

p. 30

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

If you emptied the Pacific Ocean, the largest body of water in the world, and piled it full of sand as high as Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, you would have a pretty big sand pile. Now suppose you got a bird and trained it to pick up one grain of sand every million years. How long would it take that bird to empty that sand pile? A long time. We probably don't have numbers to count that high.

But guess what? When that bird has picked up that last grain of sand, you will have only spent your first second in hell. That's what I call an eternity!

A tombstone in an old cemetery reads this way.

Pause stranger when you pass me by.

As you are now, so once was I.

As I am now, so you will be

So prepare for death and follow me.

Someone came by one day and read the inscription, then picked up some chalk and wrote underneath it:

To follow you, I am not content.

Until I know which way you went.

You'd better know who you are following because the issue is your eternal destiny. Don't follow your relatives to hell. Don't follow your friends to eternal torment. Don't let people lead you down the path to eternal destruction, because God is a God of wrath.

p. 245

(When God Whispers Your Name by Max Lucado)

Like John, Paul shaped history. And like John, Paul would die in the jail of a despot. No headlines announced his execution. No observer recorded the events. When the ax struck Paul's neck, society's eyes didn't blink. To them Paul was a peculiar purveyor of an odd faith.

Peer into the prison and see him for yourself: bent and frail, shackled to the arm of a Roman guard. Behold the apostle of God. Who knows when his back last felt a bed or his mouth knew a good meal? Three decades of travel and trouble, and what's he got to show for it?

There's squabbling in Phillipi [sic], competition in Corinth, the legalists are swarming in Galatia. Crete is plagued by money-grabbers. Ephesus is stalked by womanizers. Even some of Paul's own friends have turned against him.

Dead broke. No family. No property. Nearsighted and worn out.

Oh, he had his moments. Spoke to an emperor once, but couldn't convert him. Gave a lecture at an Areopagus men's club, but wasn't asked to speak there again. Spent a few days with Peter and the boys in Jerusalem, but they couldn't seem to get along, so Paul hit the road.

p. 29

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 26

Examine me, Yahweh, from head to foot,
order your battery of tests.

Make sure I'm fit
inside and out

So I never lose
sight of your love,
But keep in step with you,
Never missing a beat.

p. 37

Psalm 13

I've thrown myself headlong into your arms--
I'm celebrating your rescue.
I'm singing at the top of my lungs,
I'm so full of answered prayers.

p. 19

Psalm 118

Oh my God, I lift high your praise.
Thank Yahweh--he's so good.
His love never quits!

p. 163

(Measuring the Days: Daily Meditations with Walter Wangerin, Jr. by Walter Wangerin, Jr.)

Doncha Love It?

Shortly after my father's retirement from the ministry, the whole Wangerin family gathered in the Colorado Rockies for a reunion. Talitha was four. This was the trip when she drove her brothers crazy by her happiness, loving everything under the sun.

On Sunday the family worshiped outside, under a scrubbed sky, a light wind whistling the pine boughs. Dad climbed a crag in order to see and be seen in order to preach. I imagine that he had bowed his head a long, long time, searching the words to give us. Precious words. I remember them exactly.

The man on his mountain, as oracular as the prophets, lifted his voice and called loudly: "I have thought of the best legacy that I could leave my family."

There was, of course, no money. Dad had spent his energies as a parish pastor, a college president, an editor of Christian educational materials, a foreign missionary. Who pays dearly for such dear labors? Mom probably made more money than he. Well, and there was little property: a house in Colorado, books, an excellent desk; I already had his Underwood typewriter. What sort of legacy, then?

The wind blew his hair into a morning halo, a sunlit cloud around the old man's skull.

"This I know," my father shouted, "and this I beg you to receive. Please! I can bequeath you with nothing richer or nobler than the Lord Jesus Christ and faith in him."

Little Talitha leaped to her feet, threw open her arms, and yelled as loud as her grandpa: "Doncha love it?"

Her grandpa loved it. He grinned then and hitched his jeans and finished his sermon with joy.

pp. 210-11