

Hebrews 6:1-8

“Move On Into Maturity”

Today we turn to what many consider to be the single most troubling text and certainly one of the most controversial passages in the whole bible. What the scriptures seem to say to us here has this way of making commentators cringe; it has this way of exasperating expositors, of leaving scholars uncertain. I studied this passage, and studied this passage, and then I studied it some more, I read several very decisive directives from several solid fellas, guys who had very resolute resolve. The problem I encountered seemed to lie in getting 2 of those guys to agree.

But I have discovered over my brief yrs of bible study that if you have a preappointed position of theology, what you believe fits in this box and there's no room for thought outside that box. That when you come to a passage of scripture that “rocks” your perspective you have to labor to get that passage to fit with in the parameters of your perspective. For instance as you well know 2 very popular schools of theology would be a “Calvinist” position and an “Armenian” position. and To keep it brief the Calvinist would take the position that says that you have been elected of God from before the foundation of the earth, appointed sovereignly to salvation. and If you never come to Christ it's because God hasn't appointed you to salvation, it's not about man's choice, it's about God's choice. Now granted that's an incredibly basic description of their theological position but that more or less communicates the idea. Well, when a Calvinist comes across scripture that seems to point to man's freewill, that he can choose Christ, accept Him or reject Him, that God's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Well, they have to go a long way around the bend in order to make those areas of scripture fit with in the confines of their predetermined position. The Armenian says, “Man can come to Christ, or he can walk away from Christ, it's up to him to accept Him or reject Him God has nothing to do with it, He simply honors man's choice.” Again, basic but you get the idea. Well, when they come across scripture that says things like, “You didn't choose Me (Jesus said) but I chose you.” Or that speaks of our being foreknown, predestined, and elected from before the foundation of the earth, man they've got to do some serious stretching to make that fit in where they stand. It's tough to make everything the bible says fit in our little box, what's become our comfort zone of theology; understanding God's ways, God's word.

So I have found it best to simply not be one who subscribes to any particular preappointed position of theology. and That allows me the freedom to simply flex with what the bible says. Why put yourself in that prideful position that says, “I know that's what the bible says, but I don't believe that so it must really be communicating something else.” I don't have to understand it all, God never asked us to understand it all. (As a matter of fact He's been very upfront with us that we won't). He's simply asked us to *believe* it all, to come to Him, and believe in Him and in His word by faith. One has said something to the effect that if God was small enough to comprehend He wouldn't be big enough to be God. Charles Spurgeon (the prince of preachers) once said, “We had better far be inconsistent with ourselves than with the inspired Word. I have been called an Arminian Calvinist or a Calvinistic Arminian, and I am quite content so long as I can keep close to my Bible.”

That's where it's at, just teach and preach and believe God's word, not your personal position, line yourself up with God's word rather than seeking to align God's word up with yourself. and with regards to this passage of scripture Spurgeon said, "We come to this passage ourselves with the intention to read it with the simplicity of a child, and whatever we find therein to state it; and if it may not seem to agree with something we have hitherto held, we are prepared to cast away every doctrine of our own, rather than one passage of Scripture."

We don't want to water down the word of God, we're definitely never going to *apologize* for the word of God, we just want to receive the word of God, and if we can't get it to fit our personal perspective, that's ok we'll just humbly change our perspective. But we're going to let the word of God be the word of God to our lives.

You know a lobster lives in shell, but in order to grow it has to leave its shell. If they don't abandon it, that shell will become a prison to them and eventually a casket; they have to shed the shell if they want to grow. But once that shell is discarded, before the new one forms they're incredibly vulnerable, all kinds of creatures ready to make them apart of the food chain. and I have no doubt that a retreat to the old shell at times seems tempting. But you know we're not too different from that, if we want to grow, if we want to change, sometime we have to shed that shell we've been living in, that framework, or structure we've been depending on. But that's called discipleship, it's being so *committed to Christ* that when He bids us to follow, we'll leave behind whatever it may be, we'll change, we'll risk, we'll grow, we'll shed our shell and follow Him. Look at these 1st few Vs.

Vs1-3

Now when he says, "We'll leave the elementary principles if God permits" he's not saying that God may, or *may not* be willing to allow growth and development, but if He's willing to allow us to grow, we'll go on. But rather this is a simple humble acknowledgment that it's in Him that we live and move and have our being. That every aspect of life in Christ is a gift of His grace, He's the vine we're the branches, any growth, development, or fruit that comes forth from us is because of His life flowing into, and through us. It's not a matter of *if* God wants us to grow, but rather a humble acknowledgment that it's through Him that we *do* grow. If we press on to maturity it's the result of God's grace in our lives.

Now, as we enter in to Ch 6 here let's be reminded of the fact that the writer has been rebuking his readers for their present position of immaturity spiritually speaking. He wanted to take them and teach them about some incredible things regarding the High Priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek. But he couldn't do that because they weren't in a place whereby they could really receive it, understand it and be changed by it, they were too immature.

It's not that immaturity is a problem if you're but a babe (or baby) in Christ, it's to be expected. But when a significant amount of time has passed and you haven't gotten a grip on God's word, God's word doesn't have a real grip on you, you don't really apply it to your *own* life much less show it *to* and share it *with* others that's a problem. and That's where his readers were at, and the exhortation here is to *move on into maturity*.

So he says here in Vs 1, "...leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection." and There are a couple things we do well to note here before we *go on* into the next area. There are 2 things he says here that we need to do as believers. Taking for granted that we're at a place whereby we've been well instructed in the fundamental, foundational aspects of the faith he says, (#1) "Let's leave the discussion of that, and (#2) Let's go on to perfection." Now with regard to the 1st exhortation there is a key word that needs highlighted there, it's the word "discussion." We never come to a point in our relationship with the Lord where the basics are no longer needed, it's not that the mature no longer have a need for them, but there comes a time when it's time to begin to build *upon* them. It's like the building of a house, you need the foundation, it's essential with out there can be no forward progress, but if we never progress beyond the foundation, we're never going to have a house.

So it's essential *to* the house, but it doesn't make for the house in and of itself, other things need placed and built upon it. So we don't leave the foundation, but it doesn't always need to be the central focus of our time and attention or else nothing will ever be built upon it, so we never *leave it* we only build *upon* it. Or as he puts it here in the form of his 2nd exhortation, "...let's go on to perfection." Or "Move on to maturity." There's not a hint of sinless perfection being implied here, it's an exhortation to get beyond the basics, there's a desired end here and it's our maturity as believers. When you have a baby it's a beautiful thing, but your desire to see growth and maturity in the baby is only right, it's natural, it should be happening; same thing spiritually. So let's *move on into maturity* shall we? "...not laying again the foundation of..." (read through vs2).

6 Things here the author lists as the ABC's or basic fundamental, foundational truths. and He sorta pairs them up 2x2 in 3 categories; we have "repentance from dead works and faith toward God" those 2 sorta go together. We have, "the doctrine of baptism, and the laying on of hands" they basically go together (I'll develop that a little farther in just a moment). and We have the, "resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment" and they basically go together.

But what it may surprise you to realize is that as we evaluate this list there's nothing overwhelmingly or distinctly "Christian" about it. Oh it certainly takes on special meaning with in the Christian context, but its not exclusive to Christianity. There's no mention of the cross of Christ, salvation by grace through faith in Christ, you could essentially believe and practice all of these things and still not be a believer. and What I want you to realize (and we'll develop this as we move along) is that these are things that are common to Judaism as well.

You say, “Well what difference does that make?” It makes a lot of difference when you keep in mind that he’s writing to a group of people who’ve come *out* of Judaism and are considering retreating back *into* certain aspects of Judaism because of certain pressures and persecutions. and They’re looking for ways to help justify their position by saying, “Well, we’ll still practice repentance and faith toward God, we still believe in the doctrine of baptism and laying on of hands, we still look forward to the resurrection we believe in eternal judgment, I mean those are the important things aren’t they?”

The writer here is issuing an emphatic “No! They’re not the essential things they’re the basics, they’re common ground, you can do these things and still not know Christ.” Now when it mentions here “baptism” don’t think of baptism like you know baptism. It’s actually the word for “ceremonial washings” such as were common to Judaism and the laying on of hands is a reference to the transaction that would take place as you would offer a sin offering and you’d lay your hands on the animal symbolizing your sin being transferred to the animal and then it would be slain on your behalf. and So you can perhaps sense that the author here is preparing to dive headlong into some serious issues. Because both a Christian and an orthodox Jew would believe in repentance, would believe in faith toward God, would believe in a ceremonial cleansing, certain aspects of laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. and So there is a sense in which they would be able to sorta “camouflage” their Christianity and not be pressured or persecuted with in the circle of Judaism.

Where this hits home for you and me is that they weren’t willing to stand up and stand out for Christ, they just sorta wanted to blend in with the general populace and not ruffle feathers, not rock the boat, because it made life a lot eazr for them. It’s common ground for all kinds of people to acknowledge they pray, but coming to God in Jesus name isn’t common ground. It’s common for people to say that they believe in God. But to say that you believe that Jesus is the way the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father but by Him, that’s not a popular message. Be careful regarding the temptation to simply want to blend in to your surroundings thereby keeping yourself in a comfortable position.

These guys were still wanting to be sorta “spiritual” but not so dogmatic about Christ, just sorta slip subtly back into a few of their former practices while still maintaining a fairly “religious” appearance. and The writer here is issuing a huge “danger” alert regarding their thought process.

Now this brings us to this passage I’ve been preparing you for from the beginning. and When we read it I want you to know that we’re just going to read it and teach it for what it says. I’m not going to try and manipulate the text to fit a particular position; we’re just going to receive it unbiased. and I’m not saying that a system of theology isn’t important, but a right system of theology *begins* with a right understanding of scripture, not one that bends a text to fit into a system.

Having said that let me say this; Satan is a bible scholar, he knows the word better than you or I ever will in this life. and There are certain passages that he loves to preach on and this is one of them, but whenever we come across an obscure passage it's best to interpret it through the obvious passages. In other words where there are clearly defined positions of scripture we know that the bible doesn't contradict itself or that God has said one thing here and another thing somewhere else, He's consistent. He has said in His word, "...*I am the LORD, I do not change;*" Mal 3:6 and So we read.

Vs4-6

Wow! Seems obvious as to why this text has troubled so many doesn't it? and You can see how Satan just loves to get a hold on someone and beat them down with these words, "Give up, it's too late for you, you can never be saved, you've blown it too bad, you may as well reject Christ and go for the gusto because you're going straight to hell now anyway." So let's take a bit here and just see what it says and how it is that we need to receive it.

The very 1st thing we need to realize that to whom this may concern it involves an emphatic absolute. Right out of the shoot there in Vs 4 he says, "It is *impossible*..." and you can do all the word study on this word "impossible" you want but you're going to find that there's no way around it. It doesn't mean "difficult" it doesn't mean, "really, really hard but perhaps if you try long enough." It means "impossible, not going to happen." This same word is found in the 18th Vs of this same Ch; look at it (read). What does that mean, that it's "difficult" for God to lie? That it's "really, really hard" but eventually He might if He stays at it? No, it's never going to happen, He can't lie, it's impossible. In the 10th Ch of this book it looks like this, "...*it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*" Heb 10:4 That doesn't mean that it's really difficult for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, or that it might happen if they just tried hard enough. No, it means it'll never happen it's an impossibility.

Now, here's where it gets tricky for people, because it seems obvious enough that it's possible for one to find themselves in a position whereby there's no hope for salvation. The question is, "Who is this referencing?" and There are those who say, "Well it's talking about someone who flirted with Christ but never came to a saving faith in Christ." Of course that would be those who lean toward a Calvinistic approach to eternal security. If you believe that then these people can't have been saved in the 1st place because your salvation can't stand in jeopardy if that's your theology. Of course the Armenian would say you *can* lose your salvation, but the buckshot found in that position regarding *this* passage is that no Armenian would say, "If you walk away you can't come back." This very clearly says, "If you're found in *this* position there's no hope of true repentance for you." Others say this is a hypothetical scenario that "if" you *could* do this you'd find yourself in this position but it can't happen in reality but the warning is there to keep people moving forward.

That just seems ludicrous to me why waste your ink warning people about something that could never happen? You have to stretch *hard* to read that into *this*. No, these are true believers here, how do I know, well look at their résumé. We see 5 descriptive qualities about this person. #1 They were “once enlightened.” That word “once” means “once for all” and the word “enlightened” means to be “infused, or permeated through with saving knowledge.” It speaks of the person who’s stepped out of the darkness of sin and into the light of Christ. Next we see that they’ve *tasted* the heavenly gift, speaking of the gift of God which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. and This is where some object, they say, “Well, you see they only *tasted* they didn’t swallow, they didn’t really take in and receive it.” Well, let’s consider again another instance in which the writer used this same word in this epistle, it’s found in Ch 2 and Vs 9 speaking of how Jesus *tasted* death for everyone.

What does that mean? Did Jesus just “sample” death, or press it like a popsicle to the tip of His tongue but not really experience it fully? No, He was fully engulfed, experienced death to the full for you and me, He tasted death. This person *tasted* the heavenly gift; had become a partaker of the Holy Spirit. The word “partaker” speaks of having a “share in.” You don’t take part with the Holy Spirit if you’re not saved, light doesn’t join itself to darkness. and Vs 5 They’ve tasted the good word of God, they’ve seen the power of God’s Word at work in their lives, they’ve taken part in the supernatural work of God in their lives, “the powers to come.” Then we come to Vs 6 (read).

So the question confronts us, “Is it possible for one who has come to Christ to *fall away*?” I don’t see any way around answering “Yes.” Paul told Timothy, “*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith,*” 1 Tim 4:1 He said regarding one of his own partners in ministry, “...*Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world,*” 2 Tim 4:10 Now, before we get too far into this let me just say that if you may be worried about being in such a place, the fact that you’re worried about it testifies in and of itself, you’re not. You’re not beyond the reach of repentance, if you *were* beyond the reach of repentance your heart and your conscience would be so seared, so calloused that you wouldn’t even be thinking about it, you just wouldn’t care.

Something else I would say is that there is a huge difference between “falling” and “falling *away*.” I can’t think of a better illustration that perhaps Peter and Judas, both denied the Lord, both felt horrible over what they’d done, but one was a godly sorrow, the other a worldly sorrow. Peter fell to be sure, but Judas *fell away*. The bible says, “*For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity.*” Prov 24:16 There’s only one place that you’re never going to sin again and that’s called heaven, so we do well to realize there is a marked difference between falling, sinning, and falling *away* that is turning my back conscientiously, willfully against Christ never to return. Remember when I spoke of translating the obscure through the obvious? We know that Jesus taught a parable on leaving the 99 sheep to pursue the 1 who’d gone astray. We have the parable of the prodigal son going away, but then coming to his senses and returning to his father. Jesus said, “...*the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” John 6:37

So the bottom line is that we realize that if you're willing to come to Christ, He's willing to receive you. The person in view here isn't looking to Christ, they're looking for salvation, for the remission of their sin somewhere else. and The bottom line regarding what's being said here is that if you look to *anything* or *anyone* other than Christ for acceptance before God, it's never going to happen.

This is why I spent all that time in the beginning showing you the common ground between Judaism (from which these readers came) and Christianity. They were wanting to retreat back into Judaism, and in order to do that by the very fact that they would be willing to go back to those things, ceremonial washings, the laying on of their hands upon a sin offering to be sacrificed for their sins...

The author here is saying, "You may as well go back to the cross where Jesus hung and spit in His very face while He hangs there, because by going back to animal sacrifice you're saying that it was a mistake for you to acknowledge Christ as sufficient to deal with your sin and you need the blood of bulls and goats to take care of you. and You put Him to an open shame, you confess that they were right, He's not the Messiah, your bad, can I come back to the sacrificial system?" and He says, "If you go back to that, you turn your back on Christ, you can cop to the fact that you still have faith toward God, that you still believe in the resurrection and eternal judgment, that you think repentance is important, but you've turned your back on Christ, those things can't save you."

Now there's something else that I think is important to see before we wrap up and wind down and that is this. The words "Crucify" in Vs 6, and the single word that has been translated into English, "put Him to an open shame" are in what's known as the "perfect" tense. Which speaks of a present ongoing action, what's my point? My point is this, it doesn't seem to me to be saying that God will prohibit a persons repentance should they at some point turn away from Him. Again we have so many other areas of the bible that say, "If you'll come to Christ, God will receive you." But it seems to be saying (to me) that if you turn your back on Christ, don't expect to find salvation anywhere else, no other form of "repentance" is adequate in the sight of God unless it's that of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ Now, should one come to that point whereby like the prodigal he says, "What am I thinking, I need to get back to my Father's house, I need to humble myself and get right with Christ." Is God going to say, "Too bad so sad, you blew it, it's over." I just don't see that throughout the scriptures, but as long as you turn your back on Christ, look for redemption in something other *than* Christ and in so doing you're making an open mockery *of* Christ, there's no repentance (That God will acknowledge) for you. For true repentance demands a turning *from* sin and a turning *to* Christ.

Can you *lose* your salvation? No, the bible is clear that nothing can separate you from God's love, nothing will snatch you out of the hand of Christ. Can you *leave* it, I have to say, "Yes" God won't force you to abide in Christ, and that my friends is the safety zone. Why mess around with the edge with this stuff? Just abide *in* Christ, walk *with* Christ and you won't have to worry about it. What's the evidence of true repentance, abiding *in* Christ, walking *with* Christ? There will be fruit being brought forth from the field of your heart, and your life.

Vs7-8

Jesus said that you'll know those who are legitimately His by the fruit of their lives. What fruit? Oh there's all kinds but I suppose a good place to start would be right there in Gal 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. and Again you won't be perfect in these until you're with Christ, for when you see Him *then* you'll be like Him. But are there fingerprints of these things in your life? and It takes time for fruit to bear, it comes in seasons, I'm not putting you up against the mirror of God's word and wanting to show you all your blemishes. But rather encourage you to see and submit to Christ in your life.

Move on to maturity, maturity is found in the common ground basics that could apply to almost any "religious" individual. But it's in those things that distinctively and decisively point you to the person of Christ as the only sufficient sacrifice for the sin of humanity, and that salvation is found in no other.

If you're looking to something else in your life to make you right with God, be it good morals, or a religious life, or how much you *sacrifice* for others, don't buy the lie that those things will constitute acceptance in the sight of God. You can "repent" all you like in that context but God won't acknowledge it, He wants to forgive you of your sin, make you brand new in Him. But that's only found with repentance toward Him, and faith toward Jesus Christ, trusting in Him, and His sacrifice as sufficient for you. Let me encourage you to quit struggling, and simply surrender to Jesus.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for the powerful, and very pointed principle found in Your Word that convinces us over and over, reassures us again and again that Christ is the only way, and that no one come to You but through Him. and I pray that knowing Him, having received Him would be a very practical reality for each of us here, and if not that You might change that today, that we all might leave this place knowing You, and loving You more. Thank You Jesus for being more than enough to satisfy the penalty of our sin, help us to trust You more.