

A Study of Hebrews

Lesson 6

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

Call for a Mature Faith

(Hebrews 5:11-6:8)

This passage begins with a warning about failing to mature in the Christian faith. Those who should by now be capable of teaching are not able to handle the basic principles of the faith. There is a contrast between what the Hebrew writer calls **milk** and **solid food**. The recipients of this letter had become “dull of hearing.” This dullness means that were not receptive to Biblical teaching. The word can carry the idea of laziness or negligence.¹

1. Read 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; and Ephesians 4:13-14 and write below what you learn about spiritual maturity.

The Christians first addressed in Hebrews needed to grow on to *maturity*. This simply means that they needed to grow up so that they were able to handle more than the basic teachings of the faith.

2. What is it that makes one capable of handling solid food? (Hebrews 5:14)

3. Other than what is listed in Hebrews 6, what types of subjects might fall under the category of “milk?” What subjects might be considered “solid food?”

6 EXAMPLES OF ELEMENTARY DOCTRINES

1. REPENTANCE FROM GOOD WORKS
2. FAITH IN GOD
3. BAPTISMS
4. LAYING ON OF HANDS
5. RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD
6. ETERNAL JUDGMENT

¹ Ellingworth, Paul. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*.

The warning given in Hebrews 6:4-8 is very harsh. We are especially struck by the word *impossible* in verse 4. Those who were Christians, but fall away completely, are in the most serious of conditions because they can no longer be brought to repentance.

Some go to elaborate lengths to say that Hebrews 6:4-8 teaches something other than what it says. There are those who teach that it is impossible to fall away from Christ or to become an apostate. F.F. Bruce writes, *"This warning has been both unduly minimized and unduly exaggerated."* The warning is minimized when it is taught this is a hypothetical situation and that falling away is not really possible. The warning is unduly exaggerated by those who believe that no sin following baptism can be forgiven.²

As God's people we are protected from those who would harm us (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:38-39) and no one can snatch us from the hand of God . . . however, if we choose to remove ourselves from the hope we have in Christ we can do so.

Previous Condition of Those Who Have Fallen Away (Hebrews 6:4-8)	Current Condition of Those Who Have Fallen Away (Hebrews 6:4-8)
Once been enlightened	Crucify again the Son of God
Tasted the heavenly gift	Hold Christ up to Contempt
Shared in the Holy Spirit	Like a Worthless Land of Thorns and Thistles
Tasted the goodness of the Word of God	Like Worthless Land, Destruction by Fire Awaits
Tasted of the Powers of the Age to Come	

4. What is the difference between "falling away" or "apostasy" and committing sins after falling to temptation? (Read also Hebrews 10:26)

Lightfoot reminds us, *"We should also emphasize the meaning of this passage for its original readers. If they are wobbling between things Jewish and Christian, they must face the peril of their situation. So the author brings them to the edge of the cliff in order that they might look below and see the dismal end of apostates."*

5. What might be some of the warning signs of apostasy?

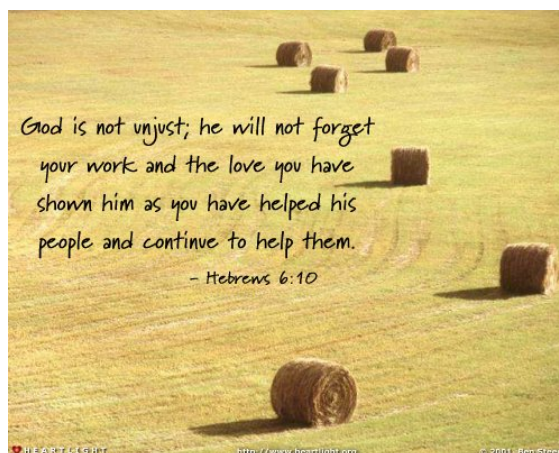
² Bruce, F.F. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*.

A Word of Encouragement

(Hebrews 6:9-12)

The Hebrew writer now moves to some encouraging words. Even though there is danger in apostasy, the author believes that something much better is in store for these Christians. He has confidence that they will remain faithful.

6. Why is “work” and “love” coupled in Hebrews 6:10?



Dionysius is quoted by Eusebius as saying of the Roman Christians in the 2nd century, *“This has been your custom from the beginning, to do good in manifold ways to all the brothers, and to send contributions to the many churches in every city, in some places relieving the poverty of the needy, and ministering to the brothers in the mines.”*³

The word translated as “sluggish” in 6:12 (ESV) is the same Greek word that was translated as “dull” in 5:11. Those who avoid becoming dull or sluggish are those who serve others and are earnest to receive the hope that is promised.

The Trustworthiness of God’s Promises

(Hebrews 6:13-20)

The reason that Christians can be confident is because we trust in a God whose promises are always to be believed. In fact, God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). The name of Abraham was great among the Israelites because God made the great promise to him that he would have a son (Genesis 12:1ff), a great nation would come from him (Genesis 12:2), that they would be given a land, and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

7. What are the two unchangeable things in Hebrews 6:18?

8. Who has fled to a refuge and what is the refuge in Hebrews 6:18?

³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23.10.

LESSON 6

9. What is the anchor for the soul in Hebrews 6:19 and why is an anchor used as the appropriate metaphor?
10. Where is the inner place that Jesus has gone before (Hebrews 6:19-20)?
11. In what way is Jesus our forerunner?