

*School of the Word*  
**Hebrews**  
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### HEBREWS 5:11-6:20

#### Sequence

- ▶ Hebrews 5:11-6:20
- ▶ Reading and reactions
- ▶ The place in the letter
- ▶ Audience again
- ▶ Commentary
- ▶ Conversation

#### Hebrew 5:11-6:20

Heb 5:10 and he was designated by God as high *priest in the order of Melchizedek*.

Heb 5:11 On this topic we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing. 12 For though you should in fact be teachers by this time, you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God's utterances. You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food. 13 For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice to discern both good and evil.

6:1 Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, 2 teaching about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this is what we intend to do, if God permits.

4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, 6 and then have committed apostasy, to renew them again to repentance, since they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt. 7 For the ground that has soaked up the rain that frequently falls on it and yields useful vegetation for those who tend it receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is useless and about to be cursed; its fate is to be burned.

9 But in your case, dear friends, even though we speak like this, we are convinced of better things relating to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints. 11 But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfilment of your hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises.

Heb 6:13 Now when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly." 15 And so by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and the oath serves as a confirmation to end all dispute. 17 In the same way God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable, and so he intervened with an oath, 18 so that we who have found refuge in him may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us through two unchangeable things, since it is impossible for God to lie. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became a *priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*.

### Audience again

- ▶ Mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians, experiencing some kind of harassment
- ▶ Mostly like written to Roman Christians by a Roman Christian teacher from abroad
- ▶ “Christians” for some time
- ▶ Undergoing a weakening of the faith
- ▶ Experiencing suffering
- ▶ Issues: money and hospitality

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6:1 Therefore we must progress beyond the **elementary instructions** about Christ and move on to **maturity**, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, 2 teaching about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this is what we intend to do, if God permits.

4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, 6 and then have committed **apostasy**, to renew them again to repentance, since they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt. 7 For the ground that has soaked up the rain that frequently falls on it and yields useful vegetation for those who tend it receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is useless and about to be cursed; its fate is to be burned.

9 But in your case, dear friends, even though we speak like this, we are convinced of **better things relating to salvation**. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints. 11 But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfilment of your hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be **sluggish**, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises.

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### Hebrew 5:11-15

- ▶ Varies with encouragement
- ▶ Confesses the challenge
- ▶ Reproves them
- ▶ Backsliding of some kind
- ▶ They’ve become beginners!
- ▶ God’s utterances (*logia*)
- ▶ Scripture as a whole
- ▶ In *understanding*
- ▶ In *living*
- ▶ Practice (*hexis*)

**Hebrews 6:1-3**

6:1 Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, 2 teaching about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this is what we intend to do, if God permits.

- ▶ From “you” to “we”
- ▶ Movement / progression
- ▶ Metanoia: once for all
- ▶ Works — meaning?
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Immersions?
- ▶ Laying on of hands?
- ▶ Resurrection
- ▶ Final judgment
- ▶ NB: author’s resolve!

**Hebrew 6:4-8**

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, 6 and then have committed apostasy, to renew them again to repentance, since they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt. 7 For the ground that has soaked up the rain that frequently falls on it and yields useful vegetation for those who tend it receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is useless and about to be cursed; its fate is to be burned.

- ▶ Personal to impersonal
- ▶ Gk: “impossible” / “renew”
- ▶ List of gifts: to do with Christian initiation
- ▶ NB the two reasons given
- ▶ Anastauroun? Shame!
- ▶ For themselves / in regard to themselves
- ▶ Apostasy then and today?
- ▶ Once the grounds for repentance have been denied, then conversion makes no sense

*Thorns and thistles*

I will make it a wasteland; no one will prune its vines or hoe its ground, and thorns and briers will grow there. I will order the clouds not to drop any rain on it (Isa 5:6)

A fire has gone out from its branch; it has consumed its shoot and its fruit. No strong branch was left in it, nor a sceptre to rule.’ (Ezek 19:14)

But to Adam he said, “Because you obeyed your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ cursed is the ground thanks to you; in painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, but you will eat the grain of the field. (Gen 3:17–18)

**Hebrew 6:9-12**

Heb 6:9 But in your case, dear friends, even though we speak like this, we are convinced of better things relating to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints. 11 But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfilment of your hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises.

- ▶ A bit more encouraging!
- ▶ Dear friends = beloved, the only time in Hebrews
- ▶ Salvation: Heb 1:14; 2:3, 10; 5:9; 6:9; 9:28; 11:7.
- ▶ NB “Better” in Hebrews
- ▶ Reason 1: God’s faithfulness
- ▶ Reason 2: Their work and love
- ▶ Notice: faith, hope and love all get a mention.

### Hebrews 6:13-18

Heb 6:13 Now when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, 14 saying, **“Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly.”** 15 And so by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and the oath serves as a confirmation to end all dispute. 17 In the same way God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable, and so he intervened with an oath, 18 so that we who have found refuge in him may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us through two unchangeable things, since it is impossible for God to lie.

- ▶ Back to Abraham (not Moses)
- ▶ Promise / oath / covenant
- ▶ Cf. Genesis 22:16
- ▶ Persevering: ten tests of Abraham
- ▶ Extended reflection on the oath of God
- ▶ God is “true” – emeth

### Hebrews 6:19-20

Heb 6:19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became **a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.**

- ▶ Anchor for the soul
- ▶ Veil
- ▶ Forerunner: *prodromos* (hapax)
- ▶ For our sake: throughout Hebrews
- ▶ Back to Melchizedek, forming a frame with 5:10

### Conversation