

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

“LET US PRESS ON”

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

“**Babes in Christ . . . grow in grace.**”

“**Enlightened,**” but unregenerated, souls, beware apostasy!

Believers in Christ, rest in eternal security.

The long parenthesis of Hebrews 5:11-6:20 might be summarized in the above exhortation, warning and encouragement.

Or, to consider it in even more detail, we find here a rebuke, an appeal, a warning and an encouragement. According to this fourfold division, read carefully this often misunderstood portion of the Word of God, together with the related passages listed here:

“**Ye are dull of hearing . . . babes in Christ**” (5:11-14; cf. I Corinthians 3:1-3).

“**Let us go on on unto perfection,**” growing in grace (6:1-3; cf. II Peter 3:18).

“**Those . . . once enlightened** [but unregenerated] . . . **crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh**” (6:4-8).

“**But, beloved . . . we** [the saved] **have . . . an anchor of the sold . . . sure and steadfast**” (6:9-20).

There will be no conflicting interpretation of Hebrews 5:11-6:20 by those who remember that, except for 6:4-8, this entire parenthesis was addressed directly, that is, in the second person, to Hebrew Christians, who, though saved and, therefore, eternally secure in Christ, were still spiritual babes; and that 6:4-8 was written in the third person about the “**enlightened,**” but unregenerated. Accordingly, to the babes in Christ the inspired writer said “**Ye . . . beloved,**” also classifying himself with them as a fellow Christian by using the terms, “**let us**” and “**we.**” Only in 6:4-8 did he refer to the enlightened, but unregenerated, as “**those**” and “**they**” who were outside the Church. Note especially, by way of contrast, the significance of 6:9,

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.”

Because **“those”** apostates were unsaved, they were in terrible danger; hence the searching warning of 6:4-8. But the danger which prompted this warning could not possibly apply to born-again souls, to whom, in 6:9-20, the Holy Spirit addressed one of the strongest passages in all the Bible concerning the eternal security of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself! And to say that Hebrews 6:4-8 teaches that the sinner who has been saved by faith in the finished work of Christ can be lost, is to make God a liar! This very lesson tells us that it is **“impossible for God to lie”** (6:18)! (Cf. John 5:24; 10:27-30)

Remember always to consider every portion of the Word of God in its context. To take a passage out of its inspired setting, perverting it to fit into some man-made theory, is to **“wrest . . . the scriptures.”** This is what **“they that are unlearned and unstable . . . do . . . unto their own destruction”** (II Peter 3:16).

Now read again Hebrews 5:11-14. The inspired writer had begun to tell the Hebrew Christians of their Great High Priest, even Jesus. When he told them that the risen Lord was saluted by the Father when He ascended into heaven as **“an high priest after the order of Melchizedek”** (5:10), he realized that these babes in Christ were not able to understand the deeper truths concerning the person and work of their Great High Priest. That is why he said to them:

1. **“Ye are dull of hearing . . . babes in Christ”** (5:11-14; cf. I Corinthians 3:1-3).

Reminding them that they should have grown in grace enough to be teachers (v. 12), he rebuked them for needing to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. They lacked spiritual growth, with its accompanying discernment and ability to take in the strong meat of Christian doctrine (v. 14). It was needful to continue to feed them with milk.

Does this description not fit the average church member of this twentieth century?

Have you ever heard a Christian say, “I can’t understand Hebrews”? Are you a mere babe in Christ? You need not be if you continue diligently to search the Scriptures, if you spend much time in prayer, and if you seek to do God’s will as He makes it known unto you. Then you will become **“of full age”** (v. 14), ready to heed the exhortation of 6:1-3:

2. **“Let us go on unto perfection,”** *growing in grace* (6:1-3; cf. II Peter 3:18).

Here the inspired writer, including himself among the Hebrew Christians addressed, exhorted them to go on from infancy and the elementary teaching of Judaism, which the ministry of John the Baptist emphasized, to press on from the childhood of Pentecostal miracles, to the full manhood, or **“perfection,”** to which the heavenly doctrine of the priesthood of Christ would lead them. Only by such progress in their Christian experience could they leave their spiritual babyhood for mature growth.

Little babies are among God's priceless gifts to man; but nothing is more pathetic than a physically mature person with a child's mind. Do you see the picture? We are not content to spend our adult days playing with toys; then, spiritually speaking, let us press on to know the Lord in ever increasing measure—the wonders of His person and the efficacy of His work. This is the message of our text.

Six fundamentals of Judaism

(6:1, 2):

As you remember that the Christ-rejecting Jews were still continuing the Temple worship when this epistle was written, the appeal of 6:1, 2 will be seen in its true significance; for Judaism was the very system which the Hebrew Christians were being exhorted to forsake for the deeper things of Christ, pressing on to maturity in the faith. They were to forsake the ritual of the shadows and types for the reality. Christ had fulfilled the law, and set aside its ceremonies (Romans 10:4). Therefore, they were to progress from the first principles of the oracles of God unto perfection.

And what are the six fundamentals of Judaism named here?

a. **“Repentance from dead works”** (v. 1)

For fifteen hundred years the redeemed in Israel had evidenced repentance from dead works by their offerings on the Jewish altar; but now the Lamb of God had offered Himself once for all. To continue to take the lambs and calves and goats and turtle doves and young pigeons to the brazen altar, was to reject Christ's finished redemption. True repentance will lead the sinner to Calvary!

b. **“Faith toward God”** (v. 1) Abel, Abraham, David, the prophets—all the Old Testament saints had believed in the Saviour to come. Now that the cross and the empty tomb were facts of history, believers in Jesus as Israel's Messiah were to go on with Him unto perfection.

c. **“The doctrine of baptisms** [or, ‘*washings*’]” (v. 2).

The Greek word used here for **“baptisms”** is plural, as also in Hebrews 9:10, where **“divers washings”** are mentioned. It refers to the ceremonial cleansing of Judaism. But now that Christ had come, the ceremonial washings at the brazen laver were done away!

d. The **“laying on of hands”** (v. 2)

The picture here is that of the repentant Israelite who took his burnt-offering and sin-offering to the brazen altar, laid his hand on the head of the victim and confessed his sins (See Leviticus 1:4; 4:4 and related passages). In this God-given ceremony he was symbolically acknowledging his faith in the Saviour to come, figuratively transferring his sins to his Substitute, believing that **“the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity off us all”** (Isaiah 53:6). This ceremony also was done away in Christ.

e. **“Resurrection of the dead”** (v. 2)

Judaism taught a bodily resurrection.

- Abraham believed in this fundamental doctrine (Hebrews 11:17-19).
- Elijah raised the son of the widow of; Zarephath from the dead (I Kings 17:17-24);
- Elisha, the son of the Shunammite woman (II Kings 4:18-37).
- David foretold the resurrection of Christ in Psalm 16:8-11; compare Acts 2:25-31; 13:35-37.

This cardinal truth was one of the **“first principles”** of Christianity, and every spiritual babe believed in it. Holding to that belief, he was to grow in grace.

f. **“Eternal judgment”** (v. 2)

The Old Testament, as well as the New, teaches eternal judgment (Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 18:8). This doctrine, therefore, was held by the adherents of both Judaism and Christianity. Proclaiming the gospel of the only Saviour from the wrath to come, the Hebrew Christians were to press on in the faith.

“And this will we do, if God permit [or, ‘the Lord willing’]” (6:3).

By the mercy of God, the apostle concludes, we will press on unto perfection, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18).

3. **“Those . . . once enlightened [but unregenerated] . . . crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh”** (6:4-8).

“Those” apostates had been granted special privileges, four of which are mentioned here:

a. They were **“enlightened”** (v. 4).

John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles had preached the gospel to them. They were intellectually convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of whom Moses and the prophets had written.

b. They had **“tasted of the heavenly gift, and . . . the good word of God”** (vv. 4, 5).

They were not in heathen darkness. They had witnessed the miracles of Christ—the heavenly Gift, only **“tasting,”** not partaking. They had merely tasted the good Word of God; they had not fed their souls on the Bread of Life; they had not quenched their spiritual thirst with the Living Water.

They were not born again. (Cf. John 6:51-66.)

c. They **“were made partakers of the Holy Spirit”** (v. 4).

The Greek here means “*going along with*” the Holy Spirit. *It is one thing to be an observer of the miracles wrought by the Spirit of God; it is another to be baptized by the Spirit, forever indwelt by Him.* At least some of “**those**” apostates had doubtless witnessed the miracles on the Day of Pentecost, yet “**mocking, said, These men are full of new wine**” (Acts 2:13).

d. They had “**tasted . . . the powers of the world [age] to come**” (v. 5).

Evidently the miracles of Christ and His apostles, which those apostates had witnessed, will be duplicated in the Millennial Age.

The Holy Spirit was not describing backsliders here; for no saved soul, however self-willed and unfruitful in service, could ever “**crucify . . . the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.**” Only apostates could do that, for they do not love the Lord. Such were Judas Iscariot, those referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23, and those whose hearts He compared to stony ground (Matthew 13:5, 6).

The Christ-rejecting Pharisees and Sadducees who observed the Lord’s earthly ministry were among the apostates described here. Their nation had often received visitations from heaven: the prophetic witness of John the Baptist, the personal ministry of Christ, the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the marvelous days following the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost! They had been told the blessed consequences of the glorification of the once crucified Messiah in heaven. If, in spite of these credentials of the divine nature of Christianity, they refused their witness and remained unbelieving, what more could God say to them? There was no hope for them. They were crucifying the Son of God afresh. The most convincing evidences possible were offered to them. They professed to have tested them out and found them unworthy of acceptance. Judicial blindness and hardness of heart were the inevitable consequences. It is the scientific law of atrophy in operation in the realm of the spirit. Alas! This is the state of the Jewish nation today, except for a believing remnant; and so it will continue to be until the day when the regenerated remnant will become the nucleus of a new Israel.

4. “**But, beloved . . . we [the saved] have . . . an anchor of the soul . . . sure and steadfast**” (6:9-20).

The contrast between the description of apostates and the babes in Christ is striking. The latter were born again; for concerning them the inspired writer was “**persuaded better things . . . things that accompany salvation**” (v. 9). As other Scriptures point out, the things that accompany salvation are: the Spirit of sonship, “**whereby we cry, Abba Father**”; the crucifying of the flesh with its affections and lusts; and being taught of God to love one another (Romans 8:15; Galatians 5:24 I Thessalonians 4:9).

Not only were these babes in Christ saved, but their righteous God would surely reward their work and labor of love because they had ministered and continued to minister to the saints (v. 10). Then, as if to reassure them of their eternal security, the Holy Spirit exhorted them “**to the full assurance of hope unto the end,**” bidding them to be diligent—not slothful, exercising faith and patience as their fathers had done of old.

Three great sources of encouragement follow this exhortation to assurance of salvation:

a. **“Two immutable things”** (vv. 13-18)

(1) *The divine promise to Abraham*

(2) *The divine oath, confirming the promise*

On these the faith of Abraham rested.

Do you know when God confirmed His Word to the patriarch by His oath? It was after Abraham had obeyed the Lord fully on Mount Moriah, even though he believed his obedience would mean the offering of Isaac on the altar (See Genesis 22:15-18).

Before Abram had left his native city of Ur of Chaldea, God had promised him a son, through whom the nation should be established which would give to the world the Redeemer (Genesis 12:1-3). How long Abram stayed in Haran, on the way to Canaan, we are not told; but he was seventy-five years old when he left Haran; one-hundred, when Isaac was born (Genesis 12:4; 21:5). Again some years passed before he was tested at Mount Moriah. More than twenty-five years had passed since God’s promise had been given. In Isaac all the hope of fulfillment of that promise rested; yet Abraham was obedient to God, believing that He was able to raise Isaac up, **“even from the dead”** (Hebrews 11:17-19). Then it was that the Lord confirmed His promise by His oath:

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed [Greek, ‘mediated’] with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong consolation [encouragement], who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” (6:17, 18).

Now **“the heirs of the promise”** of the Saviour to come through Isaac’s line are all who have **“the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”**—Jews and Gentiles—who love the Lord Jesus. (See Romans 4:16).

“Christ hath redeemed us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13, 14).

And to **“the heirs of promise”**, God’s infallible Word confirmed by His oath guarantees eternal security—**“a strong consolation,”** immutable, authoritative, and divine.

b. *A refuge in Christ* (v. 18)

The Hebrew manslayer had a city of refuge to which he could flee for safety (Numbers 35; Joshua 20:7, 8).

Likewise, the Hebrew Christian, owning his nation's guilt, flees to the refuge provided in Christ, whose death was **"by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"** who on the cross prayed, **"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"** (Acts 2:23; Luke 23:34). There was no refuge provided for the intentional murderer—only for the unwitting manslayer. In that light divine mercy regards the Jewish people.

If you are not familiar with the record concerning the cities of refuge read Numbers 35, noting especially verse 25, where the manslayer was told that he should abide in the city of refuge **"unto the death of the high priest."** Likewise, the sinner saved by God's grace is safe from the enemy of the souls of men as long as his Great High Priest shall live, even forevermore! (Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 1:18)

c. The Forerunner inside the veil of the heavenly sanctuary (vv. 19, 20)

Christ, in entering the glory, carried the anchor of our souls in with Him, and fastened it securely to the blood-stained mercy seat.

" . . . which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec" (vv. 19, 20).

In these wonderful words the Holy Spirit returns to the discussion from which He digressed to rebuke, exhort, warn and encourage in this long parenthesis of 5:11-6:20. The Christian's assurance of eternal security rests in the Lord Jesus, the Great High Priest, who alone can guarantee a refuge and an anchor of the soul.

The word **"forerunner"** is a nautical term, suggesting to the early Christians a light vessel, which crossed the sandbars that often cut off the Greek harbors from the sea, *took the anchor of the larger ship, and dropped it safely in the harbor.* What, then, if the storm did rage? The vessel was anchored in the harbor; and as soon as the full tide came in the sandbars could be safely crossed.

Christ is the believer's Forerunner; heaven is his harbor; linked with Him who is the pledge of entrance into heaven itself, the believer is eternally secure from all the storms of the wilderness journey. And when the full tide of blessing is realized in the glory, the sinner saved by grace will behold his Forerunner, his eternal, unchanging Great High Priest, throughout the endless ages.

When Christ poured out His holy soul as an offering for sin; **"the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom"** (Matthew 27:51). That was no work of man; God did it—**"from the top to the bottom."**

The veil was a type of **"his flesh,"** torn and bruised for all who would accept His atonement for sin (Hebrews 10:20). The veil of the Temple had warned a guilty people not to approach a holy God until a full atonement had been made; the rent veil invited them to draw near unto Him—by faith in their Forerunner **"within the veil,"** at the Father's right hand.

There He, “**a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec,**” continues His Priestly work of intercession for His redeemed, continues His Priestly ministry of bearing gently with the ignorant and erring.

His blood is a sufficient sacrifice; His prayers avail; His compassion never faileth; for He is the eternal Son of God who became Man, that He might be “**a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.**”

The anchor of the ship is cast without the vessel. Even so, the believer’s eternal security depends, not on his own feelings, not on his own works, but on the “**anchor of his soul,**” the Lord Jesus.

What more could the child of God ask?

Therefore, let us press on, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us not be content to be babes in spiritual discernment. We shall grow in grace only as we allow His Holy Spirit to teach us to understand His Priestly person and work, remembering that we are eternally secure in His finished redemption.

Assignment for Exam 5

1. Be sure to review your earlier lessons from time to time. Can you remember?
 - a. The occasion for the Epistle to the Hebrews?
 - b. The general content of seven Old Testament prophecies of the eternal Son of God quoted in Hebrews 1?
 - c. The four Old Testament prophecies of the perfect humanity of the Son of Man quoted in Hebrews 2?
 - d. In what ways the Jewish Tabernacle was a type of Christ and His church?
2. Why was the long parenthesis of Hebrews 5:11-6:20 necessary?
3. Complete Exam 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE MOODY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL FOR GRADING OF YOUR EXAMS – IF YOU WISH TO COMPLETE THEM, CONSIDER THEM AS AN OPEN BOOK EXAM

1. In the blank space write the letter of the correct answer. (40 points)

(1) Hebrews 5:11-14 is speaking of

- (a) The elderly believers**
 - (b) The unsaved**
 - (c) Christians lacking spiritual growth**
 - (d) The believers' small children**
- _____

(2) The exhortation, "Let us go on unto perfection" (Hebrews 6:1), means

- (a) Mature growth in Christ**
 - (b) Perfect animal sacrifice**
 - (c) A faultless life**
 - (d) Perfect knowledge of the law**
- _____

(3) To "wrest. . .the. . .scriptures" (II Peter 3:16) is to

- (a) Tear leaves from our Bibles**
 - (b) Refuse to believe the Scripture**
 - (c) Take a passage out of its setting to prove a theory**
 - (d) Argue the authorship of the book**
- _____

(4) The "city of refuge" (Numbers 35) was

- (a) A refuge for intentional manslaughter**
 - (b) The place to hide from justice**
 - (c) The home of the high priest**
 - (d) A place of safety for someone who accidentally killed a person**
- _____

(5) The "city of refuge" is a type of

- (a) The Church**
- (b) Christ**

- (c) heaven
- (d) Jerusalem

2. In the right-hand margin write “True” or “False” after each of the following statements. (20 points)

- a. Christians on a spiritual milk diet are skillful in the Word of God. _____
- b. When Christ died, the ceremonial washings were to be discontinued. _____
- c. Upon His ascension to the Father, Christ was “saluted” as “an high priest after the order of Melchizedec.” _____
- d. “If God permit” (6:3) implies that God might not be willing for the Hebrew Christians to leave Judaism. _____
- e. The believers were to proclaim Jesus as the Saviour from wrath to come. _____
- f. The writer to the Hebrews states that Pharisees and Sadducees were among those referred to in 6:4-6. _____
- g. Hebrews 6:4-6 describes the condition of the Jewish nation today. _____

3. Which two of the following statements are true? Place the two correct letters in the blanks. (10 points)

- a. The phrase, “two immutable things” (6:18), refers to God’s promise and His oath.
- b. When God first promised Abraham a son, He confirmed this promise by His oath.
- c. Abraham feared that God had forgotten His promise when he was asked to offer up Isaac. _____
- d. God promised that the Redeemer would come through Abraham. _____

4. With a word or phrase complete the following. (10 points)

- a. The Hebrew manslayer remained in the city of refuge as long as the high priest _____
- b. A small boat that safely anchored a ship in the harbor was called _____
- c. The “anchor of the soul” is both “_____” and “_____”

5. a. State in a few words how the following fundamentals of Judaism have been fulfilled in Christ. (20 points for a and b)

- (1) “Repentance from dead works

(1) “Repentance from dead works

(2) “The doctrine of baptisms”

(3) “The laying on of hands”

b. Name the four special privileges which the apostates were guilty of rejecting.

- (1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
(4) _____

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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