

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Part II

STUDY NUMBER TEN - Hebrews 6:1-8

Today we have a difficult passage.

The book of Hebrews is an unfolding of the person of Christ and the superiority of Christ.

He is superior to the angels.

He is superior to Moses.

He is superior to the law.

He is of a superior priesthood.

The author last week said,

“You’ve become sluggish of hearing.”

In other words, you’ve become lazy, you’re deaf.

You should be growing up and giving help and instead you’re still needing it.

You’re still little babies, who need milk and not meat.

And the last verse we looked at, verse 14, he says,

“mature people are people who have their senses trained, to discern between good and evil.”

We also said, there are two characteristics of people who are grown up in their relationship to Christ.

1. They are people who are in training.
They spend time in the Word of God.
2. They get to know Him and they walk with Him.

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,

“Therefore” in view of your condition.
In view of your sluggishness of hearing.
In view of your immaturity,

I’m going to ask you, to do something with me.

Notice he uses the word “let us.”

We’re going to do this together.

The author and the readers.

We are going to “be pressing on to maturity.”

This is in the present tense.

That means you don’t ever have a day, that you’re not pressing on, towards spiritual growth and maturity.

Maturity is a time word, isn’t it?

It’s the work of the Spirit in your life over a period of time, that brings you to a level of maturity.

Where instead of receiving help,
you are giving help to others.

You have grown up in your relationship to Him.

And all he's saying to them is "let us leave behind the ABC's, the elementary things, and let us be going on to maturity."

So he's saying, there's no standing still in the Christian life. Let's get with the program, "Therefore having left behind the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us be pressing on to maturity."

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

**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”**

Ray 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

“NOT LAYING AGAIN A FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS”

What are the “DEAD WORKS”?

The “DEAD WORKS” are the works of the Law.

You could never do a work of the Law and cover everything.

John Baird is a third generation Wyoming rancher. And he said:

“You can’t ranch cows, sittin’ in the bunkhouse, drinkin’ coffee and readin’ books about cows!”

You just can’t do that.

And neither can you do it, as far as maturing in Christ. There is a process that takes place.

Stephen Covey in his book called *First Things First* says this:

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.

Then he made this observation:

“That’s the difference between rats and people,” my friends. “The rats stop!”

And he says:

Although [those] 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.

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.”

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

There are some things that you have to leave behind. And these are the foundational things that he’s going to talk about. And there are six of them.

They’re the same for Judaism as they are for Christianity. So you’ll recognize most of these things.

“Not laying . . . a foundation of” again for:

- 1. “repentance from dead works,” verse 1**
- 2. “faith toward God,” verse 1**
- 3. “of instruction about washings,” verse 2**
- 4. “laying on of hands,” verse 2**
- 5. “the resurrection of the dead,” verse 2 and**
- 6. “eternal judgment.” verse 2**

Now, let’s hone in on those six things for just a moment.

“Repentance from dead works.”

**The “DEAD WORKS” are the works of the Law.
Why do you leave that behind?**

**Every one of us if we’re sitting here today
with a relationship with Christ, came to a time,
when we finally realized, it was not our human works,
but it was a relationship.**

**And that no matter how many sacrifices we made,
no matter how many gifts we gave,
how much volunteerism we were involved in,
how many church boards we served on,
no matter how much work we did,
that had nothing to do with the establishment
of a relationship.**

And so what’s the conclusion you come to?

**Finally you come to reality and the relationship
of recognizing that Jesus Christ, wants a relationship,
not a performance.**

And I, “repent from my dead works.”

We put those behind.

**Now, these Jews have had to do exactly the same thing.
Their whole lives are built on the keeping of the law.
And doing, doing, doing. You did this, you did that.
And you were obedient, God blessed. It was a
conditional kind of a relationship that the Jews had.**

And they too, when they became Christians, had to leave behind the repentance from dead works, of going through all the motions.

Secondly, “faith toward God.”

What unlocked the door for your relationship?

You turned and by faith, took hold of what Christ did for you on the cross.

That’s faith toward God in what’s done.

Now, did the Jews exercise faith toward God? Why yes. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Faith to the Jew was faith in the sacrifice that the priest was offering in his behalf.

And it maintained the relationship.

So that’s in common.

Third, “of instruction about washings.”

We’re not talking about baptisms here.

Everything in the Jewish law was almost accompanied by washing.

They had a laver sitting right out in the middle of the courtyard near the altar of sacrifice. And then beyond the curtain in the holy of holies is the ark of the covenant.

But here's the laver in the center of everything. Why? Because they washed their feet, they washed their hands, they washed their faces, they're always washing, washing, washing. It was a vital part of the ritual. So let's leave those behind.

Fourth, "laying on of hands." What's that? Well, we know in the book of Acts that they laid on hands on guys that were going out to service.

When Paul and Barnabus got ready to go on that first trip along with John Mark, they laid their hands on them and then, they went out and served.

But to the Jew, what is "laying on of hands?" They brought that little lamb in and got it ready for the sacrifice.

They put their hands on that sacrifice indicating the transference of their sin, on the lamb before he was sacrificed by the priest for their sins. So it was the transference of sin to the lamb.

Did they believe in "the resurrection of the dead?" Most of the Jews believed in resurrection from the dead.

And #6, they believed in "eternal punishment."

**Now, you know what's interesting?
All six of those things, are milk for babies.**

**Rather than going on to some stuff in the Word of God,
that's going to produce growth, and
is going to challenge your mental faculties, and
make you get after it, instead
they are sitting around drinking milk.**

**Tony Evans has the greatest way of saying it. He says
it's like getting a kiss. This is what he says:**

**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.**

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

**Notice the word "we" again.
"Let us be going on to maturity."**

**Now leave out all six of those things.
"Repentance toward dead works" and "
faith toward God."**

Leave all those out and put the sentences together.

“Let us, we, go on to maturity and this, going on to maturity, we shall do, if indeed God is permitting.”

Does God want you to go on to maturity? Yes.

The neat thing about the author at this point is, He recognizes that God is sovereign and there is no specific particular pattern, to grow up.

You can't say, “So & So, how did you grow up in the Lord? I want to do exactly the same thing.” Forget it.

You are a unique person and you have unique gifts and abilities. And God wants you to use them.

He wants to grow you up, by the people and the circumstances and the environment around you, to make you a very unique, special, fruitful person.

And that's exactly what He means here.

The Father has a plan.

He has all the provisions.

He has all the power that's necessary, and He hasn't lost one yet.

And in full recognition of His sovereignty, He will work all things together for good, in your life to grow you up in Jesus Christ.

He will accomplish it. He has a purpose and a plan.

God does things in His sovereignty on purpose. He does not allow chance happenings, there is no luck, no mistakes, no accidents.

**You can have confidence, when you pray,
“Lord, I’m excited to see what You’re going to do.
So I trust You and You’re going to grow me up.”**

(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

That’s the apostle Paul.

Philippians 3:13

**“Forgetting those things which are behind,
I press toward those things which are in front.”**

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

Adelaide Pollard was a dear Bible teacher. She had a passion for the world and she had an opportunity to go to Africa but she couldn't raise enough funds. So she comes to the little prayer group on Wednesday night without adequate funding to go to Africa. She's kind of feeling bad inside because she felt like this was going to be a great opportunity for ministry. And a dear elderly lady stood up to pray and she said in her prayer: "It really doesn't matter what you do with us Lord, just have Your way in our lives." This spoke to Adelaide to the point that she was prompted when she went home to sit down and meditate and pray over why she was so bitter over the lack of funds to go to Africa. And then after some time of contemplation and devotional reflection, before she went to bed, she sat down and wrote all four stanzas of:

**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.
p. 246**

In verse 4 we see the reason why we want to go on to maturity.

(Read verses 4 and 5 together)

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,

It's changed from "us" to "those."

The Greeks with their language and their word order in a sentence, always place the most important word at the first of the sentence.

You call that the emphatic position.

The powerful emphasis of verse 4 is in the single word "*Adunaton*" which is "impossible."

The writer is so concerned that they get this message, that he starts the sentence with the word "impossible."

If I translated this correctly I would say "impossible it is." Now, that's serious business.

The word "impossible" can best be illustrated by this statement:

There are no rewind buttons on the VCR of life.

You cannot go back and reverse and replay.

They are getting ready to do that or try to do that.

They've come out of Judaism, into a relationship with Christ, and it's impossible to run it in reverse, and go back under Judaism.

You cannot reverse a relationship.

To do that, there are some very, very serious consequences, which is the rest of the verses that we have.

Now notice one other thing.

We have changed from the little word "we" to the word "those."

It's not "let us."

It's not "we shall do this if God is permitting."

It is now "it is impossible for those who are contemplating doing this." These are serious matters.

Just like we had 6 foundation things that we left behind in verses 1 & 2, you have 5 little phrases that characterize these people.

Because these people are really Christians, then the rest of the message, guess what? Applies to you and me!

**There are 5 little words that are described there.
Look at them.**

- 1. “who have once been enlightened”**
- 2. they “have tasted the heavenly gift”**
- 3. they “have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit”**
- 4. they “have tasted the good Word of God” and**
- 5. they “have tasted the powers of the coming age”**

If I took those five characteristics out of the verses and added verse 6. It would sound like this:

“It is impossible for those to be brought back to repentance.”

It’s impossible for those, all these people described here, to be brought back to repentance once they have fallen away.

Now, that’s the basic storyline.

Let’s look at these five characteristics, and understand the seriousness of what is being said.

- 1. “those who have been once enlightened”**

So when you become a Christian, what do you do?

2 Corinthians 4:4

“Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.”

The light shines to you.

It makes sense for the first time.

You realize you're beginning to walk into the light, and you're waking up to the reality, of a relationship with Christ. You come to the light.

You have been enlightened.

2. you “have tasted the heavenly gift.”

Who is the heavenly gift?

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” John 3:16

We also read in Ephesians 2:8, 9:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

You've been enlightened.

You've accepted the gift. Next one.

- 2. You have become those
“who are partakers of the Holy Spirit.”**

**The Spirit of God is the regenerator.
The Spirit of God comes to dwell within me.
I’m sealed by the Spirit when I become a believer.**

- 4. For those who “have tasted the good Word of God”.**

**Just like you all in this room today.
You are feeding on truths from the Word of God.
You’ve not only tasted it, you’re chewing on it.
It’s becoming a part of your life.**

That’s Psalm 1:

**Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.**

- 5. Those who “have tasted the powers of the coming
age.”**

**Now that phrase is a little hard.
You need to realize that these Jewish Christians,
when they became Christians, Hebrews 2:4 says:
God bore them witness with signs, wonders and
various works of power.**

There were some miraculous things that took place, in the early church, to verify the fact, that the relationship was the real deal.

Now you can't be saved twice.

You can't reverse the button.

You can't go back and do all of this over again.

The writer is saying, "It's impossible!"

And then you get to verse 6.

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.

"And then having fallen away(living under Judaism, renouncing your faith), to be renewing them again to repentance, since they are crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to open shame."

It is impossible to renew those (who have fallen away) to repentance,if this has gone on.

There is no way they can be renewed again, to a place of repentance.

Not salvation. Repentance.

Repentance is a vital part of your life as a believer, if you're growing in the Lord.

We should be constantly coming to Him day after day, and repenting over the fact of what we did, and what we allowed, to happen in our life.

There are some decisions in your life that you cannot undo.

You have done some things and I have done some things, that I wish I could undo.

But there's no way, the computer print out just keeps going.

And the only way we can handle that is to forget and to press on.

You have to let it go!

Satan wants you to stop and to move into more of a comfortable mediating position with botched up priorities, rather than pursuing and persevering with a passion, the plan the Father has for you.

We make decisions in life and you wish so many times, you could undo them.

Can I give you some biblical illustrations because the Scripture is full of them?

Probably the most relevant one is Esau because he's mentioned in Hebrews 12:16, 17.

**Remember the story of Esau?
Esau comes in from a hunting trip,
he's starved to death.
And Jacob is in the kitchen, getting his
Texas chili cook-off dish ready.**

**So Esau wants some.
And Jacob says, "Give me your birthright and
you can have it."**

**Esau says, "You got it! Give me the chili."
And that's the end of the birthright.
He made a decision, that he wished he could undo.**

**Now later at the time of the blessing, when it's all gone,
he's begging with tears that it could be, but it can't be
because the decision's been made.
You can't undo some decisions in life.**

**What about Samson sleazing around in the lap
of Delilah.
And then he ends up blind, grinding grain
in the Philistine prison.
Do you think he ever regrets, the decision he made?
Do you think he ever called to God,
"Oh God I'd like to be strong again!"
He did. And even in suicide, God let him be strong
but he lost it.**

Disapproval.

What about Saul?

Saul forced himself to go and offer the sacrifice.

And he lost his kingdom.

Do you ever think he thought afterwards,

“I wish I still had my kingdom.

I wish that I hadn’t offered that sacrifice.”

What about Judas Iscariot?

**He goes into the temple, throws the silver on the floor
and says, “I’ve made a mistake.**

I preferred money to the master.

Silver to the Savior! I’m sorry!”

He goes out and hangs himself.

Belshazzar banqueting, feasting.

An unseen hand comes into the room and writes:

“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.”

You’re weighed in the balances and found wanting.

**Do you think that night as he died by the sword,
that he regretted the life that he had lived?**

**What about Pharaoh as he looked into the face,
of his dead first-born son?**

**Resistance time after time as God tried to speak
to that guy, but there he sees the horrible price,
decisions that cannot be undone.**

How many times do you think the children of Israel, wandering in the wilderness those 40 years had wished that they'd gone into the land at Kadesh-Barnea? Living with the horrible realization and the regret, that there's no repentance. There's no way to undo what's been done.

What about Adam and Eve? Standing outside the cherub-guarded gate, to the garden of Eden. Do you think they ever regretted the fact, that they partook of the fruit and lost everything, as a result of it? You can't undo some decisions.

Nadab and Abihu as young priests, offered strange fire and became instant fatalities.

Ananias and Saphira had a bum real estate deal and they became instant fatalities. Do you ever think that in those final seconds that they were alive, that they wished they'd never entered into that real estate deal and lied?

What about Achan as he stole those things and put them in the floor of his tent at Jericho. He knew he was a thief. But as he and his whole family were being stoned and everything burned, do you think Achan ever thought that he made a mistake?

You come to a point, you make a decision, and you can't undo those decisions.

You can't go back and rewrite that chapter.

There comes a time with God, when there is no more repentance.

That's Romans 1:24, 26, 28.

God gave them over to burn in their flesh toward one another of the same sex.

God gave them over, God gave them over, God gave them over.

Now God has a three-point program for recovery for his wayward child.

- 1. He'll stir up the circumstances around you, to try to bring you back.**
- 2. He will discipline you. He will chasten you.**

If He doesn't get a response then,

- 3. It's going to be, come on home, in physical death.**

Back to verse 6.

“And then having fallen away to be renewing them again to repentance since they are:”

1. **“crucifying again to themselves the son of God” and**
2. **“putting him to open shame.”**

They are going over to the crowd that crucifies Him, that shames Him.

They’ve joined that group, the Friday group, rather than staying with the Sunday group.

These are present participles.

Present participles mean that these things are going on right now.

Let me translate it, this way.

“It is impossible to renewing them again to repentance while they are crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame.”

It’s present.

While this is going on, it is impossible to renew to repentance.

For example,

“I’m a drug addict.

Man, I’m really having a tough time.”

Until you cut that out, there’s no room for repentance.

As long as you continue to maintain the path you’re going on, there’s no room for repentance.

If your hand offends you, cut it off.

**If your eye offends you, pluck it out!
Get rid of it.**

Then there is a renewing to repentance.

**When the Prodigal son came to his senses in the pigpen,
he said, “How many sons have my father?”**

**He had to leave the pigpen and he had to go home.
But he cut that way of life that he’d been living before,
to go home.**

**The author closes with an illustration from nature,
verses 7 and 8.**

**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;**

That same soil, verse 8, can have a different response.

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

Be a person who is bearing fruit.

“It is bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless.”

**So if I don’t go on to maturity and I try to go back or
I try to maintain the status quo and don’t go on**

and grow, I bring forth thorns and thistles and that my friend is a very serious matter.

Oswald Chambers said: “The one great passion of the saint is that the life of the Lord Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh.”

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

- 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 Christ likeness.
- 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.”

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PART II

STUDY NUMBER TEN — Hebrews 6:1-8

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

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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.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Hebrews 6:1-8 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.
2. What are we commanded to do in verse 1?
3. What are we commanded not to do, according to verse 1?
4. What condition is stated in verse 3?
5. What is impossible, according to verses 4-6?
6. Why is it impossible to be “renewing them again to repentance,” according to verse 6?
7. State in your own words what you think Paul is teaching in this very controversial section.
8. How does the illustration about nature in verses 7-8 relate to the subject of this passage?
9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?
10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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