

# Hebrews

## Chapter 5:12-6:12

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- **Hebrews Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Christ is greater than the prophets and the angels.
- Chapter 2 Christ's message is greater than the angel's.
- Chapter 3 Christ is greater than Moses.
- Chapter 4 Christ is greater than Joshua and His rest is superior.
- Chapter 5 Christ's High Priesthood is greater than the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Chapter 6 God's faithfulness is confirmed by an oath.

- **Introduction & Review**

In the beginning of chapter 5, the author introduces the Priestly office of Christ and begins to expound upon the distinctions between it and the Priesthood of Aaron. As he begins to broach the subject of the Priesthood of Christ being in the order of Melchizedek, he takes a slight deviation to address the spiritual laziness he senses in the recipients of the letter. The bulk of chapter six then is a large parenthetical thought to the primary discussion of the Priesthood of Christ. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we hear the message of these chapters because they are a strong indictment upon spiritual laziness both then and now.

- **Exposition**

### Hebrews 5:12-6:12

*12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

- In the middle of his instruction on Melchizedek, the author describes this teaching as hard to explain because the recipients had become slow or sluggish (v. 6:12) in their growth. The Christian life is not an event but rather a process where God's grace is revealed in us and then we are sanctified by Him. It is not enough that we just learn some foundational facts and then coast or stop building. If we stop building or growing *we are losing ground*. Not only do we cease moving forward but we will actually go backwards.
- In going forward it is imperative that we build upon the foundation and in line with the foundation. In order for the house to be beautiful, we must build in accordance with the foundation.
- His indictment of their spiritual condition is that given the length of time and instruction that they had received, they should be in the capacity of teachers-but their disobedience or distractions were stunting their growth.
- He does not disparage milk but he does rebuke those who have not moved on beyond milk to the weightier matters of the faith. This moving on is only done by those who have trained themselves to discriminate evil from goodness. This training comes from constant use. There are obviously some truths of Christianity that even babes in the Lord can understand immediately. But it is equally true to say that there are some matters that can only be understood by wisdom and maturity. The mature should honor the immaturity of those new in Christ but this honor should not be confused with the rebuke here of those who *shouldn't* be immature.

*1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.*

- In this section the author moves on to describe the milk that they should have moved beyond in the previous verses. It should be sobering to us that the author considered these topics to be elementary and yet much of the Christian Church would call these weighty matters!
- ". . . repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. . ." It is a foundational truth that at one time we walked in the deeds of the flesh but we died to those things having been united with Christ in His death. We likewise were united together with Him

in His resurrection such that we turned to God in faith. When you turn *from* something you are simultaneously turning *to* something else. This elementary teaching (which all of us should be equipped to teach and discuss) teaches us that we cannot continue as we did while spiritually dead and believe that God has truly begun a good work in us.

- ". . . of the doctrine of baptisms. . ." It is rather curious that the author uses the plural word baptisms. We can probably conclude at least two things about these doctrines. First, he may be speaking of the past purpose of the ceremonial washings of Judaism or secondly, he could be referring to the differences and purposes behind the baptism of John , the baptism of the Spirit, or Christian baptism. Both points are possibilities however, I would contend that the second is more likely.
- ". . . of laying on of hands. . ." We considered this teaching when we discussed the Gifts of the Spirit. Basically, today we employ the laying on of hands for the purpose of installing or ordaining someone.
- ". . . resurrection of the dead. . ." The Christian hope is not in the immortality of the soul. This was primarily a feature of the Greek materialists who attempted to separate good and evil by the lines of physical and spiritual. Instead, true Christianity although it confesses the eternal character of people, it primarily believes in the bodily eternal existence in an imperishable body.
- ". . . eternal judgment." Despite the desires of many to convince themselves that a loving God would not punish someone eternally, the Christian Church must be equipped with the righteous character of God that cannot tolerate rebellion and will pour His wrath out on the unregenerate. At the same time we must not forget that it is also only by His mercy that He has extended forgiveness to the elect.

***4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.***

- We have already seen that the author is convinced that he is writing to Christians. At the same time, he is also very concerned that some of them will fall away to the types and shadows of Judaism, revealing that they were not part of the house of Christ because they did not remain steadfast to the end. We know two things for sure about this group described here: we know that they were numbered with the true believers and that their sin was that they crucify the Son of God again and put Him to open shame.
- We know that the solemn warning here is not describing those who had salvation and then lost it. Instead, this section describes those who are counted in our midst, who were included with the covenant people but who fell away and revealed that they were not of the Elect.
- The reason it is *impossible* to produce repentance may be understood in a couple of ways, the most likely meaning is that the system that they were tempted to return to was not able to take away their sins. The sacrifices of bulls and goats only pictured the true sacrifice of Christ which was able to atone fully for sin.

***9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (NKJV)***

- The author here expresses his confidence that the recipients are true converts although there were probably some within the church who would fall away.
- There are numerous places in Scripture where warnings are given not to fall away. Given that we do not know precisely who will persevere till the end, we receive the warnings as being given to all people. It is beneficial for all of us to evaluate where we are in the Lord and determine if perhaps we have slowed God's sanctification by tolerating sin.