

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

Christ, Superior to Aaron (Continued)

Hebrews 6:1-20

- I. THE PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRESS (Hebrews 6:1-8)
 - A. The Desire for Perfection (Hebrews 6:1-3)
 1. The continuation from previous thoughts (Hebrews 6:1)
 - a. The continuation noted by the word *Therefore*
 - b. The source being referenced (Hebrews 5:10-14)
 - (1) The apostle wanted to go more in-depth concerning Christ, but was unable to do so (Hebrews 5:10-11).
 - (2) The people needed to hear instead those things that would have been considered “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12).
 - (3) The people to whom the apostle wrote, were unskilful in the word of righteousness (Hebrews 5:12-14).
 2. The desire set forth (Hebrews 6:1, 3)
 - a. Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1)
 - b. Going on unto perfection (Hebrews 6:1)
 - c. Not laying again...(Hebrews 6:1)
 - d. This will we do, if God permit (Hebrews 6:3).
 3. The principles of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2)
 - a. Note: There are a number of interpretations on Hebrews 6, not excluding its opening verses. Some interpret the principles as things taught throughout the Old Testament that served as types and figures of Christ. However, these people had already learned some things about Christ, but were unable to continue their education. That being said, it seems more likely that these principles involved the earthly ministry of Christ and the doctrine he set forth.
 - b. Repentance from dead works (Hebrews 6:1; see Matthew 4:17)
 - c. Faith toward God (Hebrews 6:1; see John 12:44)
 - d. The doctrine of baptisms (Hebrews 6:2)
 - (1) Water baptism (Matthew 3:13-14)
 - (2) Baptism with the Holy Ghost (Luke 3:16)
 - (3) Baptism with fire (Luke 3:16)
 - (4) Baptism of suffering (Matthew 20:20-23)
 - (5) Note: There are other baptisms mentioned in scripture, but these were specific to the ministry of Christ.
 - e. Laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:2; Matthew 19:13, 15; Mark 6:5; Mark 10:15-16; Luke 4:40)
 - f. The resurrection of the dead (Hebrews 6:2; see John 5:29)
 - g. Eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:2; see Mark 9:43-48)

B. The Danger of Falling Away (Hebrews 6:4-6)

1. What does the passage say?
 - a. The presence of an impossibility
 - (1) “For it is impossible” (Hebrews 6:4)
 - (2) “If they [people discussed in the context] shall fall away” (Hebrews 6:6)
 - (3) “To renew them again unto repentance” (Hebrews 6:6)
 - b. The people of the impossibility (Hebrews 6:4-5)
 - c. The problem creating the impossibility (Hebrews 6:6)
 - (1) “They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.”
 - (2) They “put him to an open shame.”
2. The issues of the passage
 - a. Were the people initially saved?
 - (1) Their description
 - a) They “were once enlightened” (Hebrews 6:4).
 - b) They “have tasted of the heavenly gift” (Hebrews 6:4).
 - c) They “were made partakers of the Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 6:4).
 - d) They “have tasted the good word of God” (Hebrews 6:5).
 - e) They “have tasted...the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:5).
 - (2) The problem
 - a) If these people were saved, is it possible that the passage teaches that saved people can lose their salvation?
 - b) If these people were not saved, how can such a powerful description be made of those who are not saved (see Hebrews 6:4-5)?
 - b. Does the falling away refer to loss of salvation?
 - (1) If so, this complicates matters for those who subscribe to eternal life.
 - (2) If not, to what is it referring?
 - c. How is it impossible to renew again unto repentance (Hebrews 6:6)?
 - (1) If the falling away refers to a loss of salvation, an inability to repent would be an inability to get saved again. Note: Although those who subscribe to Arminianism or the loss of salvation love to use this passage to “prove” their doctrine, it should not frighten off those who believe in eternal life. If it did teach the loss of salvation, it would also teach the impossibility of getting saved again after have lost salvation. This makes most Armenians extremely uncomfortable.
 - (2) If the falling does not refer to the loss of salvation, but instead to something akin to becoming a castaway, what does it mean that they cannot “renew them again unto repentance” (Hebrews 6:6)? While avoiding some doctrinal dilemmas, this introduces other conflicts.

- d. What is it to “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh” (Hebrews 6:6)?
 - (1) If a saved person loses his salvation, this likely refers to the necessity of Christ to die on the cross a second in order to offer a second opportunity for salvation.
 - (2) If a saved person does not lose salvation; but, rather falls away from God, what exactly does that mean?
 - (3) If the person was never truly saved (though a profession had been made), but only fell from his profession, how exactly would this be equivalent to crucifying “to themselves the Son of God afresh?”
3. The common interpretations
 - a. Real loss of salvation
 - (1) Suggesting the people were really saved
 - (2) The passage deals with actual loss of salvation.
 - (3) Those who lose their salvation can never be saved again.
 - b. Hypothetical loss of salvation
 - (1) Suggesting the people were really saved
 - (2) The passage deals with loss of salvation.
 - (3) However, the “if” clause points to a hypothetical argument. In other words, the apostle was not saying that the loss of salvation was possible. He was only saying that if it were possible, it would be impossible to be saved again.
 - c. The spiritual castaway
 - (1) Suggesting the people were really saved
 - (2) However, the people did not lose their salvation, they only fell away from their service to God.
 - (3) The realm of impossibility covers the thought that they are spiritual castaways (1 Corinthians 9:27) and can no longer return to God’s perfect will for their lives. Thus limiting their usefulness.
 - d. The excommunicated castaway
 - (1) Suggesting the people were really saved
 - (2) However, these people did not lose their salvation, but fell away from God by committing a major sin.
 - (3) They are castaways and, although they will go to heaven, they should never be received again into the church.
 - e. The lost apostate
 - (1) Suggesting the people were never really saved
 - (2) However, they were received into the church as though they were and participated in a very active way as believers.
 - (3) Their falling away was proof that they were never truly saved.
 - (4) The impossibility of their repentance deals with two things...
 - a) It would be impossible for them to return after having claimed to have been saved and fully participating as a believer only to fully and outwardly reject the truth of the

gospel. This departure would be seen as crucifying Christ a second time.

- b) It is God's declaration that He would not call them back to the gospel. They made a mockery of His offer and have gone to a point that He would no longer deal with them.

4. Another consideration

a. The interpretation stated

- (1) The people described in Hebrews 6:4 were never truly saved.
 - a) They were Jews who professed to trust in Christ.
 - b) In every outward way they partook of the blessings of the Christian life and experience, but they were not truly saved.
- (2) At some point, they fell away from the gospel, renounced Christianity and returned to Judaism (Hebrews 6:6).
- (3) For them to return to Christ would make a mockery of the crucifixion of Christ. They would be crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and would put Him to shame by saying that His first offer of salvation was insufficient (Hebrews 6:6).
- (4) It would be impossible for these people to renew themselves to repentance because God is through with them (Hebrews 6:4). He will not give them another call.

b. The interpretation defended; Note: Since most interpretations begin with the premise that the people in Hebrews 6:4-5 were saved, the key in verifying this interpretation is to prove that the people of Hebrews 6:4-5 were never truly saved. Consider the following evidence as presented by:

- (1) The illustration of the herbs and thorns (Hebrews 6:7-8)
 - a) Hebrews 6:7 begins with "For the earth." The word *for* points back to the preceding verses and shows that what follows illustrates what has just been stated doctrinally.
 - b) Two things are the same.
 - i) The external circumstances
 - (a) The external circumstances of the herbs and the thorns are the same. They both are in the earth.
 - (b) Both groups of people being compared are earthly peoples and are of this world.
 - ii) The rain
 - (a) But, especially important, they both receive the rain. Rain from heaven is always a picture of blessings from God.
 - (b) The blessings of Hebrews 6:4-5 were especially prevalent in the apostolic age and were indicative of the moving of the Spirit.
 - c) Two things are different
 - i) The fruit is different.
 - (a) One spot of earth brings forth herbs and another spot brings forth thorns.
 - (b) In scripture, fruit reveals the root (Matthew 7:20).

- ii) The end is also different.
 - (a) The herbs receive God’s blessing while the thorns and briars are rejected and are burned.
 - (b) The Bible teaches us that the tares are to be burned in the end (Matthew 13:40).
- d) The represented people groups
 - i) The herbs are a picture of the saved.
 - ii) The thorns are a picture of the lost.
- (2) The phrase “better things” (Hebrews 6:9)
 - a) The passage opens with the contrasting coordinating conjunction, “But.” Paul knew the Hebrews to whom he wrote did not mirror the thorns in Hebrews 6:8.
 - b) He was persuaded of “better things” of them and “things which accompany salvation.” This would contrast with lesser things that do not accompany salvation.
 - c) In other words, there are two ways:
 - i) Better things which accompany salvation
 - ii) Lesser things which did not accompany salvation
 - d) Paul had been warning (Hebrews 6:4-6) against the lesser things—a way which provided many of the external experiences of the saved, but not the permanent gift.
 - e) He warned against those who professed to have, but did not possess the gift of salvation.
- (3) The description of Hebrews 6:4-5
 - a) The key word *tasted* is used two times and is the verb of three of the five statements. To taste, as used here, is to make a trial of or to experiment with. It would be contrasted with eating and digesting.
 - b) They were “enlightened” (see John 1:9).
 - c) The strongest statement of the five says that they were partakers of the Holy Ghost.
 - i) Most of these people had experienced the gifts of the apostolic age (see Hebrews 2:4).
 - ii) Were lost people able to experience and practice the spiritual gifts? Consider two examples.
 - (a) The wonder-workers of Matthew 7:20-23.
 - (i) They prophesied, cast out devils, and did mighty works yet Jesus never knew them.
 - (ii) Since He never knew them, they were never saved—yet they did many works.
 - (b) Judas
 - (i) He was one of the twelve disciples who cast out devils and healed all manner of diseases (Matthew 10:1).
 - (ii) He was certainly a partaker of the Holy Ghost, yet he was “a devil” (John 6:70) fairly early in the ministry of Christ.



- iii) Being a partaker of the Holy Ghost indicates a very real closeness to the work and power of Christ but it does not verify true salvation—especially in the times of the outward manifestation of the power of the Spirit. However, it does pinpoint the people to whom Paul referred in this passage. They were people who were very close, but did not possess the gift of salvation.
- (4) Hebrews clearly taught that the Jews who fell away after having fully participated in its experience were never saved, because they never believed to the saving of the soul.
 - a) Better things...which accompany salvation (Hebrews 6:9)
 - b) An evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12)
 - c) Not mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:2)
 - d) Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hebrews 4:11)—notice that the falling was the result of unbelief and was proof (Hebrews 4:2) they were not saved.
- (5) The crucifying of the Son of God afresh
 - a) It is not an actual crucifying, because it is to themselves.
 - i) In other words, by rejecting what they had outwardly accepted, they were saying that Christ's first death was insufficient.
 - ii) Paul emphasized their mockery of Christ's sacrifice.
 - b) This situation was mentioned again in Hebrews 10:29.
 - i) The people who mocked the crucifixion of Christ trod under foot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.
 - ii) Their punishment would be sorer than those who simply rejected Christ.
 - iii) But notice the context.
 - (a) God said "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:38-39).
 - (b) Those who draw back never believed to the saving of the soul. In other words, the apostates were never saved—"I never knew you."

C. The Demonstration from Nature (Hebrews 6:7-8)

1. The watering of the earth (Hebrews 6:7)
2. The meet herbs (Hebrews 6:7)
 - a. Meet for them by whom it was dressed.
 - b. Receiveth blessing from God.
3. The thorns and briers (Hebrews 6:8)
 - a. It is rejected and is nigh unto cursing.
 - b. Its end was to be burned.