

# Finishing Well

Lesson #44

Let Us Be Carried To Maturity

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The writer of Hebrews is gravely concerned about the Christians of his day because of the actions they are committing and the subsequent consequences.

- The burden of the writer: Don't return to Judaism.

Their Problem: Increasing persecution from the religious Jews.

Their Solution: Return to the Temple and Judaism

Their Messiah had called them out of Judaism into a new life. The old has been done away with, and now all has been superseded and fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

As Gentile believers, we may not have the same problem, but the concern for us may be falling back into from whence we came, probably legalism, and trying to do things on our own, as opposed to the freedom in Christ.

The writer addresses 5 exhortations to people:

a. Who are truly born again, not mere professors.

Heb. 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,

Heb. 4:14 We have a great High Priest in Heaven.

Heb. 6:4 have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

b. Who have been persecuted because of their faith [Heb. 10:32-34; 13:13-14]

c. Who have faithfully ministered to the needs of others who had suffered [Heb. 6:10]

d. Who were being seduced by teachers of false doctrine [Heb. 13:9]

e. Who were in danger of forgetting the true Word their first leaders, now dead, had taught them [Heb. 13:7].

Hebrews contains 5 warnings to the believer. Each warning is progressively worse.

- 2:1-4 The danger of drifting away from the Word > Neglect
- 3-4 The danger of not entering into His rest > Doubting His Word > Hard heart
- 5-6 The danger of not going on to maturity > Dullness toward the Word
- 10 The danger of despising the Word > Willfully Sin
- 12 The danger of disobeying the Word > Refusing to Hear

All of these dangers are only for the child of God, not for the unbeliever.

The danger of the unsaved is not to be saved and thus go to the lake of fire.

The writer of Hebrews is writing to those who are believers, who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for their sins. Persecution has continued and intensified.

What was their problem? They needed to patiently endure.

They needed to hold fast and not give up thinking that it is not worthwhile. [lyrics to song]

- Key word in Hebrews: patience or patient endurance

Heb. 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;  
for He is faithful that promised;

The Epistle to the Hebrews encourages followers of Jesus Christ not to repeat the mistake of the first generation of Israelites during the Exodus, who could not enter into the promised land, their inheritance, because their unbelief and sin had hardened their hearts. I believe we can trace a common theme drawn from Old Testament History by linking the writer's 5 warnings in Hebrews. Believer: Don't lose your rewards and your inheritance.

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;

- Jesus is superior. He has an inheritance and a kingdom coming.

Warning #1 Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

- The coming Millennial Glory of Jesus Christ & the believer's impending inheritance and glory in Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup>For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; <sup>3</sup>How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;

Warning #2: The Danger Of Disobedience & Not Entering Into Rest: Heb. 3:7 - 4:13

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,<sup>8</sup> Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. <sup>10</sup> Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

<sup>11</sup> So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

Heb. 3:19 So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief.

These people are believers and are saved for the following reasons:

- Because of the message of the whole book of Hebrews.

The whole book is addressed to Hebrew Christians. Note the exhortations:

4 "Let Us" statements to admonish and encourage them to remain steadfast in Jesus Christ.

Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Heb. 4:11 Let us labor [be diligent] therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Heb. 4:14 Let us hold fast our profession [confession].

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Warning #3: Danger of Not Maturing: Spiritual Immaturity: Heb. 5:11-6:20

Important: The emphasis in this section: Make Spiritual Progress Bookend Verses

Heb. 5:11 There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull of hearing [poor listeners]

- The problem was not that he is a dull teacher, but they were Dull Hearers!

Heb. 6:12 That you be not slothful [dull, lazy], but followers [imitate those] of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Summarizes the main message of this difficult section.

The author wants them to have a deeper understanding of Scripture, but he now pauses between 5:11-7:1 to rebuke, warn and admonish those who would cease from growing spiritually.

These people are saved because of the immediate context in Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

- They are babes, and therefore they had life 5:13
- They did not need knowledge but needed to use the knowledge they already had. 5:13
- Their lapse into dullness was because of disuse. 5:14
- They were saved else they could not have been expected to be teachers. 5:13
- They are exhorted to go on unto "perfection." 6:1

This does not mean to come to salvation, but to come to maturity in Christ.

The writer includes himself along with them in needing to go on [6:1 "us" 6:3 "we"].

- Lastly, they already knew and accepted the basic doctrines.

Marks of Spiritual Immaturity Heb. 5:11-13

Heb. 5:11 Concerning Him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

1. Dullness Toward the Word
2. Inability to share God's Word
3. Failing to use time wisely.
4. Constant diet of milk with no meat
5. Not skilled in using the Word

Consider: Mature believers had senses trained to discern good and evil.

Question: How did they come to maturity? Practice & Training

Heb. 5:14 But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age [mature], even those who by reason of use [practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

- Use = #1838 = hexis = habit; constant practice; power acquired by practice
- Senses = #145 aisthétérion= to perceive with the aid of the *physical senses*; moral feeling to know what is right or wrong in God's eyes
- Exercised = #1128 = gymnazo = to *train with one's full effort*, i.e. with complete physical, emotional force like when working out intensely *in a gymnasium*; presumes full discipline, necessary to be in "top working condition" (full agility, skill, endurance).

- This is gained only from *constant, rigorous training (exercise)*. Conveys acquiring *proficiency through practice*.
- Discern = #1253 = diakrisis = properly, a *thorough judgment, a discernment (conclusion)* which distinguishes "look-alikes," i.e. things that *appear* to be the same.
- Good = #2570 = kalos = beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence praiseworthy; morally good, noble
- Bad = #2556 = kakos = evil; what is contrary to law, either divine or human, wrong, crime:

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.

Our inner spiritual man has spiritual senses.

Ps. 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.

Eph. 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might [power] by His Spirit in the inner man;

Matt. 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

As we feed on the Word of God and apply it in daily life, our inner "spiritual senses" get their exercise and become strong and keen.

Spurgeon: Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong.

It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.

I Tim. 4:7-8 But refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. <sup>8</sup> For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of That Which Is To Come.

The nation of Israel under Moses lacked this discernment and failed to claim its promised inheritance.

These believers are about to make the same mistake. They needed to go forward and claim God's blessing, His rest, or they will go backward and wander about aimlessly.

Preacher: "Betweeners:" saved by the blood but not enjoying newness of resurrection life.

Paul's discussion in Philippians 3 should challenge us with his earnest desire to press forward and to become a special kind of Christian - not mediocre who will resist the call to maturity.

Tozer: "Many have the bland assurance that because they can quote the text of Scripture they must have the experience. This strange belief that assumes because we can quote chapter and verse, we possess the content and experience is a grave hindrance to spiritual growth. I think it is one of the deadliest, most chilling breezes that ever blew across the church of God."

Tozer: God calls us to "Go On To Maturity" - GROW UP in Christ! God is not honored by our arrested development. Mediocrity is NOT the highest Jesus offers.

Spiritual growth is NOT automatic. Spiritual growth begins with a basic discontent with your present condition. You must be intentional, desiring, and diligent.

Warning: Mediocre Christians will resist the call to spiritual maturity.

Don't settle for the "creed of contentment." Apprehended Bible truths will awaken your desire for the Holy Spirit to continue working in you and move you forward.

God's Word conveys strong appeals and commands for us to earnestly desire spiritual maturity. Common words and phrases: be diligent to enter; strive or agonize for the prize; mortify the deeds of the flesh; pursue holiness; be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Yet many born-again believers put on the brakes at the risk of being perceived as "fanatic."

Question: Am I a "fanatic" who desires to continue maturing spiritually until He calls me home or am I guilty of merely "nibbling" at the truth of God's Word, content to be a common, mediocre Christian?

Heb. 6:1 Therefore, having left [once and for all] the elementary *principles* [ABC'S] of the teaching of Christ, Let Us Go On To Perfection. [5<sup>th</sup> Let Us statement]

Let us be carried forward. God enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word and act on it. He is emphatic: There is a peril in not progressing!

Press on = #5342 = phero = be borne along like a ship by the wind

The use of the passive voice:

- Emphasizes the exertion of power on the individual from an outside source.
- Conveys the thought of the need of the recipient to willingly surrender to this outside influence

The present tense emphasizes the continual need for this activity.

- The writer lumps himself in this group needing to be continually borne along.
- The idea is "Let us be carried along by God's Spirit."
- Let us be carried forward to maturity.
- God enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word and act on it.

Submit to the Holy Spirit whose transforming power will complete the work in you.

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; [Promise> Reckon> Surrender>Thank Him]

The 3<sup>rd</sup> warning amplifies the previous 2 warnings and shows how serious it is if believers fall away from the Lord. The believers have seen more than a simple glimpse of the Lord.

- Idleness in Christian living leads to falling.
- Falling brings the rod and staff of God, He will not have His name reproached.

## The Warning - Falling Away 6:4-6

For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup> 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.

There are 5 spiritual privileges listed here. Whenever Scripture uses important terms, the very same book in which they are used will define their meaning and show their significance.

1. "Those who were once enlightened." Regenerated by the Holy Spirit  
Hebrews 10:32, "But call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated [enlightened], ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

- This word refers to the moment when the light of the gospel was apprehended by us for the first time [II Cor. 4:4, 6; Eph. 3:9; II Tim. 1:10].
- The word "once" when used in Hebrews marks something that is never repeated.  
[Heb. 9:7,26; 10:2;12:26]

2. "... and have tasted of the heavenly gift." A real experience  
Notice Hebrews 2:9, "But we see Jesus ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Tasting in the Greek signifies holding something in common with someone else. It does not signify, as in our culture, tasting it and then refusing to partake of it. Christ partook of death for us completely so that we might partake of the gift of eternal life. God's gifts and calling are without repentance so that we have eternal life as our possession. We hold this in common with Jesus Christ. His life became our life because He died our death for us.

3. "... and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."  
The word "partakers" is used in 2:14; 3:1 and 14. It signifies in these verses not just participation but rather the personal character that has been gained because of vital relationship. The personal character of the human race was flesh and blood. To be partakers of the Holy Spirit is to have the personal character of the person governed by Him (i.e. to be regenerated).

4. "... and have tasted of the good word of God." > Goes back to the word "taste."  
They have experienced a special utterance in which they realized that it was from God.

5. "... and the powers of the world to come." Powers of the Millennial Age

Now the parallel uses and references show that these five things are stated about believers.

- a. Only the believer is once enlightened.
- b. Only the believer has the gift of eternal life.
- c. Only the believer has the Holy Spirit.
- d. Only the believer partakes of the NT revelation and so governs his life accordingly.
- e. Only the believer has experienced the power of the new birth.

Moreover, every one of these statements is an orist tense signifying that these things are never repeated acts of God's working. This too shows the writer is speaking to believers in which God Himself has performed operations which will never be repeated. If they had not been saved, then they could NOT have experienced these things; but since they were saved these acts could never be repeated.

The question still remains: What is he saying to them?

Let us consider what this passage cannot teach. It cannot teach that you can be saved, lost, and saved over again. The passage says such is an impossibility.

### The Danger of Relapse and Forfeiting Inheritance

Remember these 5 warnings are a unit and build on one another. The unity of the 5 warnings admonishes believers to press on and obtain all God has promised to faithful Overcomers. Also, the warnings draw from the typology of the Exodus generation.

These individuals have understood the glory that awaits Christ and His Metachoi [partaker, koinonos] in the coming millennial kingdom, but they have turned away to go back to the world. They have done basically the same thing the Exodus generation did in the wilderness when they refused to enter and fight for the Promised Land, their inheritance. Those Israelites angered God so thoroughly He swore on His own name they would not enter the Promised Land. God made up His mind, and He would not repent. [change His mind]

Ps. 95:10-11 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said,

It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

<sup>11</sup> Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

Consider: They looked away from the things of God & the LAND set before them.

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

### The Solution - Soaking It In - Heb.6:7

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;

- Soaking up spiritual knowledge produces fruit.
- Higher fruit production chokes out the weeds.

Not every believer bears the same amount of fruit ["some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty," Matt. 13:23]; but every believer bears the same kind of fruit as proof that he is a child of God [Matt. 7:15-20]. This is the fruit of Christian character and conduct [Gal. 5:22-26] produced by the Spirit as we mature in Christ.

But he was concerned lest they rest on their achievements and not press on to full maturity and the enjoyment of God's rich inheritance.

Heb. 6:8 but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

Wiersbe: A field proves its worth by bearing fruit, and a true believer, as he makes spiritual progress, bears fruit for God's glory.

- Note that the "thorns and briars" are burned, not the field.

The strong language of Hebrews 6:8 has led many expositors to conclude the individual described is an unbeliever. The metaphorical language has been interpreted as referring to eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

However, it should not be and cannot be based on the fact those addressed are believers.

These people are believers and are saved for the following reasons:

- Because of the context following in Hebrews 6:9-12.
- 6:9 They are addressed as "beloved."  
6:9 The writer is persuaded of the things that accompany salvation.  
You cannot be persuaded of fruit if you do not possess the tree and the life in it.  
6:10 They had already produced such fruit.  
6:12 They are exhorted to be imitators which is never for the unsaved.

It should be noted God does intend to judge His people at the judgment seat of Christ with fire trying each work. The result of fruitlessness will be rejection or disapproval.

I Cor. 3:11-15: For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- Positional Justification
- 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;
- Experiential Sanctification
- 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what SORT it is.  
14 If any man's work abides which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.  
15 If any man's work shall be burned [human works], he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Truth: It is possible to never mature and remain a spiritual infant for life.

Years of wasted service will only produce a pile of ashes at the Judgment Seat.

Consider: Believers who rebel against God and will not submit to sanctification will miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today and will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Scriptures implicitly state judgment will emanate from the Judgment Seat of Christ with a just recompense of reward— positive and negative as the result.

Here is a clear case of burning being associated with someone who is still saved.

The portion here which is relevant to our discussion is that the burning in Hebrews 6:8 is not talking about a believer going to Hell because he fell away.



This is why there is the need to go on and a warning against going back. You can never regain wasted years. Thus, the illustration of Hebrews 6:7-8 fits perfectly. All we produce is either for blessing or burning. It is not the believer that will be burned, but what he has produced. Often, we take the blessings of the rain and sunshine and yet only produce thorns and briars.

### The Exhortation - God Is Faithful 6:9-12

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. <sup>10</sup> 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.*

The writer listed some of the fruit that he knew had been produced in their lives [Heb. 6:10]: because of their love, they had worked and labored for the Lord; they had ministered to other saints; and they were still ministering [I Thess. 1:3-10; Rev. 2:2].

These are some of the "things that accompany salvation."

Heb. 6:11-12 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, <sup>12</sup> that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Be diligent to the end and inherit the promises of God.
- Do not be lazy but follow those who are mature in Christ.

Jonathan Edwards: It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven...to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else but that which is our proper end and true happiness. I resolve to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world, as I possibly can.

Consider: We sometimes go to extremes to plan everything in this life, but then we are careless about our life to come.

Iosif Ton We "are formed, shaped and tested for reliability, and based on our degree of trustworthiness we are given a position of responsibility in the kingdom."

This is not a privilege which is "earned" in the usual sense.

It is a gift of immeasurable grace based on our temporal efforts on earth. "

Our inheritance is a precious commodity and it can be lost.

Paul exhorts us in Eph. 4:1 & I Thess. 2:12 to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. We are to prove ourselves worthy of our high calling.

Rev. 3:11 Behold, I am coming quickly!

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Rev. 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.