***Hebrews***

***Chapter 6***

**Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so. 4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. 7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. 9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.**

**6:1** *elementary teachings about Christ.* See note on 5:12. (CSB)

Foundational teachings of the Christian faith. (TLSB)

 *foundation*. One’s doctrinal foundation, basic beliefs. (TLSB)

 *repentance*. Rejecting those actions that do not flow from faith in Christ. (TLSB)

 *dead works*. Without faith and without God’s approval, all our works are useless and indeed lay a foundation of false confidence before God. (TLSB)

 *faith toward God*. Trust in the promises of God, esp the promise of forgiveness in Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

**6:2** *washings*. Gk plural of *baptismos*. John’s Baptism and Christian Baptism stemmed from OT commands about ritual washings. Rabbis likely also washed converts to Judaism. These beliefs and practices would need to be distinguished. (TLSB)

 *the laying on of hands*. Liturgical action that likely accompanied baptismal prayers. (TLSB)

 *resurrection of the dead*. The raising, in the body, of all those who have died (cf 1Co 15), a basic doctrine that was much discussed. (TLSB)

 *eternal judgment*. The final judgment after the resurrection of all. Cf Mt 25:31–46. (TLSB)

**6:3** *if God permits*. Acknowledging God’s direction and timing. (TLSB)

A common expression of dependence on the will of God (cf. 1Co 16:7). Only the Lord can open minds and hearts and bring spiritual maturity. (CSB)

**6:4–6** The most common interpretations of this difficult passage are: 1. It refers to Christians who actually lose their salvation. 2. It is a hypothetical argument to warn immature Hebrew Christians (5:11–14) that they must progress to maturity (see v. 1) or else experience divine discipline or judgment (see vv. 7–8). 3. The preferable interpretation is that it refers to professing Christians who are in danger of apostasy. Note “if they fall away” (v. 6) and that the next two participles in the Greek text are in the present tense, which could be construed: “as long as they are crucifying … and subjecting … .” (v. 6). The cause for such apostasy would be in the people themselves and not in God. This view sees chs. 3–4 as a warning based on the rebellion of the Israelites in the desert. As Israel could not enter the promised land after spying out the region and tasting its fruit, so the professing Hebrew Christians would not be able to repent if they adamantly turned against “the light” they had received. According to this interpretation, such expressions as “enlightened,” “tasted the heavenly gift” and “shared in the Holy Spirit” indicate that such persons had come under the influence of God’s covenant blessings and had professed to turn from darkness to light but were in danger of a public and final rejection of Christ (see 10:26–31 and notes). (CSB)

A challenging text. “Remember that God punishes sin with sins. This means that because of their self-confidence, lack of repentance, and willful sins, He later punishes with hardheartedness and blindness those who had been converted.… This punishment should not be interpreted to mean that it never had been God’s good pleasure that such persons should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved” (FC SD XI 83). *impossible* … *to restore them again to repentance*. Luther: “If anyone has fallen away from Christ, who is the true sacrifice for sins, and seeks another way or mode to be saved and go to heaven, he will never go there, he will not succeed” (StL 7:959). No person can bring back those who, having received faith, fall away from it and seek a way of salvation other than Christ. With God all things are possible (Mt 19:26). If you have loved ones who have fallen away, continually pray for them, that God may restore them. (TLSB)

**6:4** *impossible*. The author is sternly warning those who are being tempted. (TLSB)

 *once* … *enlightened*. Refers to Baptism and its new, light-filled life. (TLSB)

 *tasted the heavenly gift*. Repentance (cf Ac 11:17–18) and faith (Eph 2:8). (TLSB)

 *shared in the Holy Spirit*. Those baptized into Christ have called out to God the Father through the Spirit (cf Rm 8:15). (TLSB)

**6:5** *tasted the goodness of the word of God*. They received God’s word of mercy and grace in the Gospel and Baptism. (TLSB)

 *the coming age.* See Mk 10:30 and note; 1Ti 6:19. (CSB)

God’s miraculous intervention in their lives now anticipates the greatness of the blessings of heaven. It is as if heaven has invaded (cf Col 1:13). (TLSB)

**6:6** *fallen away*. Rejected God’s gift of repentance and faith. (TLSB)

 *crucifying once again*. Like the crowds calling for Jesus’ crucifixion, those who fall away viciously reject Christ’s mercy and forgiveness. (TLSB)

 *holding Him up to contempt*. Opposite of confessing Christ; speaking and acting as if the sacrifice of Christ has no power. On the spiritual dangers involved. Luther: “I have already been preaching Christ and fighting against the devil in his false teachers for a number of years; but I have experienced how much difficulty this business has caused me. For I cannot repel Satan as I would like. Nor can I finally grasp Christ as Scripture propounds Him to me, but the devil often suggests a false Christ to me. Thanks be to God, however, for preserving us in the Word, in faith, and in prayer! We know that one should walk in humility and fear in the sight of God and not presume upon our own wisdom, righteousness, doctrine, and courage. One should rely on the power of Christ. When we are weak, He is strong; and through us weaklings He always conquers and triumphs. To Him be glory forever. Amen” (AE 26:196). (TLSB)

**6:7–8** A short parable graphically illustrating the warning just given (see Jn 15:5–6; 2Pe 2:20–22; 1Jn 5:16). (CSB)

Imagery of fruitful and unfruitful land is used frequently in Scripture (e.g., Is 5:1–7). (TLSB)

**6:7** *receives a blessing from God*. Just as the land, blessed to be fruitful (Gn 1:11), produces a crop after rain, so the waters of Baptism bless God’s people with righteousness. (TLSB)

**6:8** *cursed*. Those who receive God’s gifts through faith, but then fall away, will fail to bear the fruit of God’s Spirit. They become like weeds, sapping resources while producing nothing. (TLSB)

 *burned*. Just as thorns and thistles, being unproductive, are burned off, so those who fail to trust God’s Word will face His judgment. (TLSB)

**6:9** *confident of better things … that accompany salvation.* Although the author has suggested the possibility that some of his readers may be in danger of apostasy, he is confident that God has been, and will be, at work among them. Changed lives and works of love (v. 10) suggest that many of these persons were indeed regenerated. (CSB)

Spiritual blessings that flow from a life of trust in Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

**6:10** God has begun His work of salvation among them and will remember His own demonstration of love and service through them. Surely He will also show His righteousness in bringing their salvation to completion (cf Eph 1:13–14). (TLSB)

**6:11** *to the very end.* A call for perseverance in faith as an evidence of salvation. (CSB)

 *full assurance*. Complete confidence in the promises of God. (TLSB)

 *make your hope sure.* See 11:1; 2Pe 1:10. (CSB)

**6:12** *imitators of those who* … *inherit the promises*. Follow the good example of those who lived by faith in God. This theme is developed in ch 11. (TLSB)

 *those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.* For examples see ch. 11.

**5:11–6:12** Christians grow in maturity by building on the basic teachings of the faith and connecting God’s promises with the new way of life that He gives. Those who reject God’s promises should fear the just judgment of God. If we fail to be fruitful in love, mercy, and generosity, we become like thorns and thistles, fit only for His fire. However, we can be confident that God, who has given us the gift of salvation, will grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. • Come, Holy Spirit. Renew my trust in Jesus, and grow Your fruit in my life. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Certainty of God’s Promise*

**13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. 16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.**

**6:13** *God made his promise to Abraham.* The promise of many descendants was made with an oath to emphasize its unchanging character (see Ge 22:16–18). Ordinarily the swearing of an oath belongs to our fallen human situation, in which a man’s word is not always trustworthy. God’s swearing of an oath was a condescension to human frailty, thus making his word, which in itself is absolutely trustworthy, doubly dependable (see v. 18). (CSB)

 *God* … *swore by Himself*. Cf Gn 22:16–18, where God gave His absolute guarantee in promising His blessing to Abraham. (TLSB)

**6:15** *after waiting patiently.* For 25 years (see Ge 12:3–4; 21:5). (CSB)

 *received what was promised.* The birth of his son Isaac (Ge 17:2; 18:10; 21:5). (CSB)

**6:16** *swear by something greater*. Something upon which they rely for blessing or security in life. (TLSB)

 *an oath is final for confirmation*. The oath verifies the claims of the one taking it (cf Mt 5:33–37 for Jesus’ warning regarding oaths). (TLSB)

**6:17** *the heirs of the promise*. All those who place their faith in Christ are heirs of Abraham, and therefore heirs of the promise made to him (cf Gal 3:29). (TLSB)

 *unchangeable character of His purpose*. Unlike human beings, God’s purpose does not change due to time or circumstance. (TLSB)

**6:18** *two unchangeable things.* God’s promise, which in itself is absolutely trustworthy, and God’s oath confirming that promise. *be greatly encouraged.* Since we look back on the fulfillment of the promise that Abraham saw only in anticipation (11:13; Jn 8:56). (CSB)

God’s purpose and oath (promise). Cf v 17. (TLSB)

 *it is impossible for God to lie*. God’s promise and oath are unbreakable. We can be absolutely certain that God will remain true to His Word. (TLSB)

 *fled for refuge*. God freely gives His protection from evil to all those who call out to Him (cf Ps 34:8; 46:1; 91:2). (TLSB)

 *the hope set before us*. Hope of sharing with Jesus, by the Holy Spirit’s power, the eternal blessings of life with the Father. (TLSB

**6:19** *as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.* Like an anchor holding a ship safely in position, our hope in Christ guarantees our safety. (CSB)

As an anchor holds in a storm, so the hope of eternal life gives us stability in the sufferings and temptations of life. (TLSB)

 *inner sanctuary behind the curtain.* Whereas the ship’s anchor goes down to the ocean bed, the Christian’s anchor goes up into the true, heavenly sanctuary, where he is moored to God himself. (CSB)

Cf Lv 16:2, which refers to the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle (and later the temple), where the high priest would enter annually on the Day of Atonement. In Christ, we have access to the gracious and sanctifying presence of God. (TLSB)

**6:20** *a forerunner*. Jesus, as both true man and true God, has prepared the path to the Father for us. (TLSB)

 *a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.* The grand theme that the author is about to develop (ch. 7).

**6:13–20** God’s promise and oath to Abraham is certain. As heirs of Abraham, those who trust in Christ Jesus share in the blessing of life promised to Abraham. They experience unending stability and security through the Son’s gracious access to the Father. If we doubt God’s Word, we act as if God is a liar and miss the blessings that flow from a trusting relationship with Him. As we trust God’s promises, we see that God tells the truth, and we share in the blessings of eternal life. • Lord God, in Christ You speak true mercy and forgiveness. Therefore, I will trust Your Word and receive what You graciously give. Amen. (TLSB)