

## Hebrews: On to Perfection (Hebrews 6:1–8).

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (12/11/2016)

### Introduction

1. Why was the priesthood necessary? The answer is simple: there is a *sin* problem.
  - a. Sin has created a breach between sinners and a holy God (Ex. 34:7).
  - b. The present condition of the sinner (Eph. 2:2) renders him incapable of healing that breach (Eph. 4:18).
  - c. *Grace* is God's answer to this human condition, but grace must be carefully administered so as neither to cloud God's character nor to leave an impression that God owes something to guilty sinners (Rom. 11:6).
    - 1) To avoid this problem, grace must be *sovereignly* administered in the doctrine of election (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9).
    - 2) God must act in harmony with His own perfection, balancing His grace and His justice (Rom. 5:21).
    - 3) Thus, a *mediator* is required—one who is chosen and qualified by God in order to act in behalf of those sinners whom He desires to grace with salvation (Heb. 2:17; 5:1).
2. Only Jesus Christ is ultimately qualified to accomplish this task permanently (1 Tim. 2:5, 6).
  - a. He alone bridges the chasm sin created between heaven and fallen sinners.
  - b. To do so, He became a God/man who magnified the law and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21).
    - 1) Jesus was made under the law (Gal. 4:4) and fulfilled all its requirements (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 5:19).
    - 2) Jesus then redeemed His own—repentant sinners—from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).
    - 3) In this, Jesus succeeded because He obeyed God in every detail (Heb. 5:7). True believers will also succeed because they, too, will learn obedience through suffering.

### I. Connections

1. Hebrews 6:1 is tied very firmly to 5:7–9 by the Greek term *τελειότης* (*teleiotes* – perfect).
  - a. This term is used both of Christ's experience in the flesh and of our hope as redeemed sinners.
  - b. As a sinless man, He suffered in the will of God, and being perfected (*complete*) in that experience, He also learned obedience through what He suffered.
  - c. As redeemed sinners, believers are presented with the hope of personal perfection (*mature*) even as they learn obedience in the journey to holiness.
2. Although He was the divine "Son," Jesus "*learned obedience*" (5:5; quoting Psa. 2:7).
  - a. In order for the "Son" to become a priest and sympathize with the condition of sinners, He must become a *man*.
  - b. In that new state, the Son (as man) learned to suffer, even unto death (Phil. 2:8).
  - c. In this experience, Jesus was made "perfect" (*teleiotes* – "complete"), which experience qualified Him for the priesthood (5:10).

### II. Conditions

1. With Christ's experience in mind, Paul calls believers to "*go on to teleiotes –perfection or maturity*" (6:1).

- a. Spiritual maturity requires full obedience to Christ: “*eternal salvation* [is for] *all who obey Him*” (5:9). The term translated “*obey*” links very closely to *hearing*. Thus, obedience is a *response* to something heard and believed (Rom 10:16; Matt. 8:27; Acts 6:7; 12:13; Rom. 6:12, 16, 17; 2 Thess. 1:8).
  - b. What did Paul say was *the problem* of those to whom he was writing? They had *become* “*dull of hearing*” (5:11). They needed a refresher course on “*the basic principles of the oracles of God*” (5:12) because they were stuck on milk, constantly re-laying the foundation of repentance (James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:2). Solid food is for the mature (*teleiotes*)—those who have a mindset to fulfill God’s commands or will for them (5:14; 2 Pet. 1:5; Prov. 13:4).
2. Can spiritually slothful persons truly be Christians?
    - a. If obedience is “giving diligence” to what is spoken from heaven by acting on what is heard and—
    - b. If coldness, lethargy, disinterest, or rejection characterize one’s spiritual temperature, then how can one argue that he possesses what Jesus bought for His own, “*eternal salvation*”? Perhaps these saints needed only to be rebuked for childish behavior (5:12–14), or maybe their issue is something far more serious.
  3. Tragically, many Christians have been falsely assured that they are eternally secure even though there is no evidence of spiritual transformation: continuing and consistent growth in grace and willing and submissive obedience to God’s will.
    - a. The warning of 6:4–6 has been variously interpreted as teaching that one can lose his salvation or, at least, scaring the slothful saint with an *if* one could lose it.
    - b. A plain, straight forward reading of the text reveals the simple message that it is impossible for apostate Christians to renew repentance (the re-laying of the foundation in 6:1).

### III. Consequences

1. Can one honestly believe that God would put His Son through the suffering of death in order to redeem sinners and then let them fall away? No. Paul warns these wavering saints with a very hard truth and an uncomfortable explanation that their spiritual dullness may be very telling about their true condition.
2. The first fact that Paul explains is that it is impossible to embrace the truth and then fall away.
  - a. These believers have experienced three powerful facts: (1) they have been enlightened (*regeneration*; John 8:12; Acts 28:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9). (2) They have tasted the heavenly gift (*fellowship* with God; Psa. 34, especially v. 8). (3) They have shared in the Holy Spirit (*guidance*; Rom. 8:9–17).
  - b. Those who experience regeneration and think that they can fall away must face a hard fact: renewal of repentance is impossible because Jesus will not be put to open shame for them again (6:6; 1 Pet. 1:5). If these saints fall away, they must face the reality that they never were enlightened by the gospel at all.
3. The second fact is that nature illustrates the reality of true faith—the true nature of soil is revealed by its condition (6:7, 8). Soil that is blessed of God is fruitful because it receives the necessary rain. On the other hand, worthless soil yielding only weeds proves to be cursed of God and ready for the fire of destruction.