

- **Introduction:** in the first several chapters the Lord Jesus has been made much of, His glory and excellence; there has also been the repeated message for the readers to not return to their old ways of life, but to persevere and to press on in Christ
- In this section our author will spend an extended time evaluating their present condition, and the need for spiritual maturity

APPLICATION

I. THE WRITERS' DILEMMA – 5:11

- ***of whom [Jesus and Melchizedek priesthood] we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.***
- There is a lot he has to say about it, and it is difficult to explain, not because it is itself difficult, but because of the condition of the hearers - He describes them as “dull of hearing”
- “Dull” could also be translated sluggish or lazy; their hearing, their ability to listen and process the teaching of the things of God has come to a place in which it is difficult for the writer to explain
- While in conversion deaf ears are made to hear, it doesn't mean that hearing is 100% restored permanently; there are things that can affect our ability to hear
- What has caused this dullness of hearing?

II. THE READERS' IMMATURITY

A. Analogy of the Student/Teacher – 5:12

- ***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***
- There is an expectation, after a certain amount of time, that Christians (in general) are to be so taught in the basics of the Christian faith that they are able to teach others in some capacity (family, children, neighbors, work associates, acquaintances) - this takes time and maturity, but the expectation seems to be for all
- Instead of having reached that maturity, they are at the place where the first principles need to be taught again
- First principles are like the “ABC's”, the fundamental building blocks
- There are certain things about the Christian faith the function as those building blocks, and they, because of stunted growth, need to go back to those basics
- In this is a pointed rebuke, that they have to go back like school children when they should be at the place of teaching

B. Analogy #2 – Baby/Adult – 5:12-14

- ***and you have come to need milk and not solid food.***
- the analogy is changed from the school room to the mother's breast – the time ordinarily comes for every child that they move from only drinking the mother's milk to beginning to eat food, and then growing to the point of eating solid food as they mature into an adult
- These readers are like adults who cannot chew and swallow food, but have to go back to the breast
- ***For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.***
- This is not using the analogy of the milk of the Word in the same way as 1Peter 2:2
- The milk here are the “first principles” the ABC's of the faith – those things always used (like the alphabet), but to go beyond
- Whatever those first principles are, to only have them is to be unskilled in the word of righteousness
- There is a “skill” to the use of the Word that comes by experience – unskilled is to have lack of practice and ability
- ***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.***
- The solid food is not merely some kind of “deep teaching”, but the ability to discern good and evil by the use of the senses
- It is like moving on from exact rules and details (as a child) and having wisdom and discernment as an adult to figure things out without having been told exactly
- This is a big part of Christian growth, being able to take the basic principles from Scripture and using our reason and our senses to discern things that are good and evil (not merely things that are explicitly so)

III. THE WRITER'S INTENTION – 6:1-2

- ***Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation...***
- Instead of going back, he is giving them the benefit of the doubt (after these rebukes) and is going to take another approach

- He is going to move on from the “elementary principles”, the “first things”, the basics of Christ and move on toward a more mature, complete teaching; he is not going to lay the foundation again, but wants to move on
- He then lists 4 things that he considered as foundational, basic, elementary principles
- My concern is not so much to go through what each of them are, but to see that he uses them as foundational
- 1.) **of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God**
 - While there is certainly an aspect of the Christian life that sees repentance and faith as ongoing (sanctification), here the writer is speaking of a starting point – it is the entrance of the Christian life by Repenting from dead works and having Faith toward God – in one sense, all subsequent repentance and faith grows out of that
- 2.) **of the doctrine of baptisms**
 - baptism/washings as an initiatory rite of entrance into the Christian life
- 3.) **of laying on of hands’**
 - Two kinds of examples if this, one the setting apart for special calling (Acts 6:6) and the other the post baptism example (Acts 19:6)
- 4.) **of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment**
 - the basic truth of the fact that all people will be raised from the dead and face judgment before the Lord, and that the outcome of that judgment is forever

³ **And this we will do if God permits.**

- The “this” that he wants to do is to go beyond the basics to perfection

IV. THE REASON FOR THIS APPROACH – 6:4-8

- What he writes in the next section, one of the most difficult and controversial passages in the NT, must be understood in the overall flow of this entire passage
- The “for it is” must somehow be connected to what has gone before it
- **For** (coordinating conjunction)...**those who were once** - one time only, happened in past or formerly - one time sacrifice (9:26), one time death (9:27), one future “shaking” of the earth (12:26)
- 1.) **enlightened** – (photeinos – aor/pass) - former days 10:32; coming to the Spirit illumined knowledge of the Truth
- 2.) **and have tasted the heavenly gift** - (geuomai – aor/midd) – (Jesus and death 2:9); not merely touched to tongue, but fully partaken
 - the gift of heaven – the H.S.? Jn4:10/7:39; Act2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17); gift of grace or forgiveness another possibility – Rom5:15, 17)?
- 3.) **and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit** (metoxos – shares in, partners, companion, comrade) of the Holy Spirit– 3:1 the heavenly calling; 3:14 of Christ; 12:8 chastisement
- 4.) **and have tasted the good word of God**
- 5.) **and the powers of the age to come** - experienced something of the future world through miracles (2:4-5)
- So who is this? Either a description someone who, in the end – either someone who has fully received the blessing of conversion or not
- I cannot perceive of any more exquisite and exalted language to describe spiritual blessings, so I lean toward it being someone genuinely converted to Christ through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit – I believe most, when merely looking at the language used, would agree...until what is said about them is considered
- **For it is impossible...if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance,**
- Whatever is being said here, it is clear that it is impossible (adunatos) - 6:18 – for God to lie; 10:4 blood of bulls and goats; 11:6 w/o faith to please God
- essential to interpreting the passage is to know what “fall away” means – our problem is that we have all kind of preconceived notions and presuppositions as to what it means; is it...
 - 1.) complete and final apostasy
 - 2.) partial and temporary departure
 - if they fall away (parapipto – para = alongside; pipto = fall) - only here in NT; fall beside, go astray, become lost, turn away, abandon, dissociate, deviate from the right path, wander)
 - some commentators suggest that it is hyperbole (figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect) – in other words, he is not saying that it can actually happen, only theoretically
 - questions are raised such as “how far, and for how long, can someone go aside?”; becomes a matter of degrees
 - Again (palin) – once more, to a previous position renew (ana+kainidzo –pres/act) restore; to cause a change to a previous, preferable condition; make new again
 - to repentance (metanoia) –two major ideas of a beginning and climactic change (Act2:38; 3:19 both aor/act) or ongoing (2Cor7:9; Rev2:5)

Interpretation: It is impossible, once someone has been truly born again to...

- 1.) repent and come back into a right relationship with God and be saved (many will not take this far enough)

- those who want to make this a passage declaring that it is possible for someone to lose their salvation must be willing to go so far as to say that once lost, it is impossible for them to regain it
- 2.) start over from beginning
 - which of the two fits? Particularly, in connection with the next part of the verse giving the reason this is impossible
 - **since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.**
 - Crucify again (ana+staurow) for themselves the Son of God; Put Him to open shame – expose to public ridicule
 - If it was simple “internal” repentance, how could this be so?
 - How is this possible? the idea of the sufficiency of Christ’s once for all sacrifice will be denied
 - I suggest that in the flow of all that is said that even when someone has not grown, has fallen short, has not matured, has even fallen along the wayside that going back through the foundational parts of professing faith in Christ, being baptized, laying on of hands – to do so for someone in this condition is to undermine the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement and salvation – it is relating salvation more to our faithfulness than Christ’s
 - It is to in fact live by a works salvation as evidenced by our needing to go back to the beginning because we have failed
 - What is needed is perseverance, pressing on, yes repentance, but not repentance as first displayed at the beginning of the Christian life – this is impossible, because Jesus’ salvation is complete and we are complete in Him
 - You cannot go back to the beginning, you cannot become a baby again (and I’m not going to treat you like one), but you need to be who you are and continue to grow and mature in Christ
 - You don’t need to get “saved again”, you need to press on because God’s work is great in you
 - There are those who spend much of their Christian life in wild gyrations of recommitments and revivals (getting saved again for sure), getting re-baptized, trying to start over
 - The work of Christ is enough and our own works are never enough – don’t try to become a baby again, grow up and mature by God’s blessing
- Our writer then uses an analogy to explain what he means
- **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; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.**
- In the end, cultivated earth that is fruitful from the rain it receives God blesses
- If that earth, though it receives cultivation and rain, bears thorns and briars, in the end it will be burned
- If the grace of God is there, then what is received will mature and grow and bear fruit
- If the grace of God is not there, then in the end it will be barren

V. THE WRITER’S CONFIDENCE – 6:9-12

- **But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.**
- He closes this section by speaking of his confidence in his readers, that though they are immature and not where they should be, and is giving them stern warnings and correction, that there are things that he has seen that accompanies salvation
- **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.**
- One primary evidence is their labor of love in their ministry to the saints (which they are continuing) - this is seen as showing love toward God – this is not “spectacular” work, but very ordinary and mundane – but God is not unjust to forget
- **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**
- He returns to the repeated theme of the necessity for diligence to the end, not becoming sluggish, and in the end to inherit the promises (more next week)

APPLICATION

- For the believer – in my estimation, there is a lot of energy spent by Christians trying to figure out the secret mystery of their new birth, when they were saved, etc. – a hyper-introspection
- It is thought that if somehow I can look in my soul and see the secret work of God, then I will have confidence and assurance – this is putting our confidence in ourselves rather than Christ - look to Him, His finished work and grow up rather than remaining infantile – otherwise you will never have the confidence to teach others