

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 6



Part 8/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

We're continuing now in Hebrews 6. We had just begun at the close of the previous session. If you turn to your outline it will be Page 6/1. This is the fifth "let us" passage. And the "let us" is "press on to maturity or perfection." If you don't understand what I'm talking about, turn back to your introductory material, page 0/3, and you'll see, on that page 12, "let us" passages indicating corporate decision. The first four are all found in chapter 4. The fifth one is here at the beginning of chapter 6. The rest are still to come, I'll endeavor to point them out to you as we get to them. That's one of the threads that run through this epistle, these "let us" passages.

We're speaking now about the foundation doctrines of the Christian faith. Perhaps I should just read or translate the first two verses.

> "Wherefore leaving behind the word of the beginning of Christ [or the teaching of the basic truth of Christ], let us be carried on to maturity [or perfection], not laying again a foundation [then the writer lists six foundation doctrines] of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God [or in God], instructions about washings [or baptisms], laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."

Now we'll look at this list briefly. We did mention the first of these six doctrines, repentance from dead works. And it seemed to me the Lord caused me to lay considerable emphasis on this. I stated my observation that probably fifty percent of Christian problems are due to the fact that they don't have that first foundation doctrine of repentance in order. Really, there is no way to go on to perfection or maturity if you haven't laid that first foundation of repentance.

I said that repentance is not an emotion, it's not a ritual; it's a decision. It may be accompanied by much emotion or it may not. But the essential feature of repentance is the decision to turn away from rebellion, self-will, self-pleasing,

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living by our own standards; to turn around and face Almighty God and submit without reservation to His requirements. The Greek word that's used in the New Testament that's translated "repentance" in secular Greek means "to change your mind." You were going to do a thing one way, you change your mind and do it another way. Well, that's true about living. You've been living one way, you change your mind, you're going to live another way. You've had your back to God, now you turn and face Him.

The Hebrew word translated "repentance" very typically describes the outer action, the turning around, the 180-degree turn. Put the two together and you have repentance, an inner decision to change your way of living and a complete round-about turn.

We all need to repent. In Acts 17 Paul says to the men of Athens, "God commands all men everywhere to repent." That leaves out no place and no person. Why do we all need to repent? The reason is stated in Isaiah 53:6. "We all like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way." That's the root problem of humanity. Repentance deals with the root, it cuts the root.

All sorts of other solutions can deal with branches on the tree or even cut the trunk down but repentance alone deals with the root, the stubborn self-will and self-pleasing. And only when that root has been dealt with can God really begin to have His way in our lives.

I said repentance from dead works and we quoted Romans 14:23:

> "... whatsoever does not proceed from faith is sin."

So dead works are all works that do not proceed out of faith. Romans 1:17 says:

> "The just [or the righteous] shall live by faith."

There is no other basis for righteous living but faith. Whatever you do not do in faith cannot be righteous. You should eat in faith, that's what Paul talks about in Romans 14. He says if you don't eat out of faith, it's sin. You should sleep out of faith, talk out of faith, think out of faith, play games out of faith. Any time you're away from the faith basis, you're away from righteousness.

Let me say, out of personal experience, the more faith you are exercising, the more life you have. You can play it safe and arrange your whole life so you're never challenged and never risk anything but you'll be half dead while you live. We sometimes resent the challenges to our faith but they're out of God's mercy because only as we respond in faith do we have life. You want life, there's no way to have it but by faith. Young or old, whatever you may be, the life that's lived out of faith is a life that's full and rich.

I have friends—I could name them, but I don't—who just wait for the next challenge. I think of one dear brother, a preacher. I mean, he's not satisfied if he isn't being challenged by God. He doesn't want to believe God for $500 — $50,000, that's exciting.

Now you may not operate in that area but believe me, if you're just always doing things you can do, without God, you're not living. All that needs to be repented of. The security of the average church member is just as sinful as the drug addict. And probably harder to get him out of.

We're going on to the second of these foundation doctrines. Faith toward God. There's so much about faith, really, I'm not going to spend time on it because if I spend time on it I wouldn't have time for anything else. Let's just look at the one Scripture reference that's given there, Acts 20:20–21. Have you ever heard it said about Acts 20:20 that it's Acts 20/20 vision?

> "How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house ..."

That's a full vision of reaching the people with the gospel.

> "... solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

That's the basis. Repentance toward and then faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You really cannot truly put your faith in Jesus Christ unless you have first repented. You can have a semblance of faith, it will see you through, but there will come some experience in your life when that superficial, external faith will crumble. And you'll wonder what went wrong with God. I want to tell you, nothing ever goes wrong with God. The problem was you hadn't laid some of the foundation stones. The third, instruction about baptisms. Some of your translations say "washings." In fact, the one we have here, the New American Standard, says "washings." The New International Version says "instruction about baptisms." You say, "Which does it mean?" You're

facing a problem which is difficult to think yourself into. The truth of the matter is, it means both.

You see, Greek has this word which means both. We don't have it in English. You ask a Greek, "Which do you mean?" he says, "I just mean that." I don't know whether I can communicate that to you. My field of study was the meaning of words before I got converted and so it's particularly close to me.

There are many such examples. There's a word in Russian that means "world" and it means "peace." So you tell a Russian, "Which do you mean?" and he says, "I just mean that word." So you say, "Did the writer of Hebrews mean washings or baptisms?" He meant what he said. The Greek word is baptismos, which means both.

However, it's obvious, I think, that he did not have in mind the physical act of washing your hands as the Jewish people did and all that kind of, shall we say, ritualistic washing because it's included in these foundation doctrines. Therefore, I feel it's absolutely clear that it includes what we would call baptism, which is actually the Greek word, baptismos. The word means literally "to dip something in water so that it's covered." If you run water over your arm, you're baptizing your arm. If you sprinkle water on your forehead, you are not baptizing your forehead. There is a good Greek word for "to sprinkle," which is used about Moses sprinkling the people and the book of the law with the blood, but it's not baptize. If you want to know what it is, it's ?rhantize?. So some people practice baptism and some people practice ?rhantism?. But it is not accurate to call baptism something that doesn't immerse.

Now let's look at just a few of these Scriptures because they'll be helpful illustrations. I've not put in many, just Acts 1:5, words spoken by Jesus shortly before He took His farewell of His disciples:

> "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with [or in] the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Notice the word baptized is used twice in that verse. There are two baptisms there spoken of. One is John's baptism with water, the other is the baptism that's administered only by Jesus Christ with the Spirit or, preferably, in the Spirit. So there are two baptisms that play an important role in the New Testament.

Then in Acts 2:38 Peter said to the people who had asked, "What shall we do?" Peter said:

> "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

There we have yet another form of baptism. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, baptism in water. But not identical with John's baptism because John's baptism was not in anybody's name. This baptism is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, Jesus Himself said, "Baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

All I'm pointing out is we have there three different baptisms —two in water, one in the Holy Spirit— all of which play an important part in the truth of the New Testament. So instruction about baptisms probably should cover all of those.

The fourth, laying on of hands. I think people might be surprised that laying on of hands would be considered a foundation doctrine. All I can say is that first of all, it's there, which settles the question— for me at any rate. Second, I think laying on of hands is something that links various different things that otherwise would not be linked together. So, its real function is to bring things together, to relate things that would not otherwise be related.

I've given you some examples there, let's look at them quickly. Mark 16:17–18. Jesus said, "Go and preach the gospel."

> "These signs shall follow them that believe: in My name [et cetera, and then He concludes verse 18] they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So there is one purpose of laying hands on people in the name of Jesus, to bring healing to the sick. Now there's an alternative practice in James 5, the anointing with oil by the elders. And in James 5, we don't need to turn there, it does not actually speak about laying on of hands. It seems to me from the context that the passage in Mark is primarily in evangelism. Go and preach, and these signs will attest. Whereas the passage in James 5 where it speaks about "calling for the elders of the church" is in the context of church life. I don't believe we need to make a hard-and-fast separation, but there are two different emphases.

Then we have a number of Scriptures in Acts. Acts 8:17–19. This happened in Samaria after Philip had been there; then the apostles John and Peter came down and began to finish

off the work that Philip had started. I think it's interesting that it took one evangelist to get the whole thing going but it took two apostles to establish the church. Acts 8:17 and following.

> "Then they began laying their hands on them [that believed in Samaria], and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ..."

Simon was a smart man in some ways, and he saw the way these people get it is when the apostles lay their hands on them. Of course, he was wrong to offer money but he said:

> "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

There's another biblical, scriptural use for the laying on of hands, is receiving the Holy Spirit. We saw that exercised here on Sunday morning. I had the pleasure of laying hands on a young man, I don't know if he's here, but he had a very remarkable experience with the power of God. I hope he knows how remarkable it was. God went through him like a torrent. But it came after I laid hands on him. I don't necessarily always lay hands on people who need the baptism. I prefer to instruct them and let them just receive for themselves. Some people will receive that way, some won't. I've seen, I think, probably at least 200 people receive the baptism in the Spirit almost simultaneously. That was in New Zealand. Let me just add we got a letter from New Zealand today. All it said on it was Acts 9:16, which is Paul getting a vision of a man of Macedonia who said come over to Macedonia and help us. So I think that was the message.

Let's go on to Acts 9:17. This is in the city of Damascus, Paul has arrived there, he has had his encounter with the Lord on the way, he can't see, he's not eating or drinking. The Lord spoke to Ananias to go and pray for him.

> "Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him [that's Saul] said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'"

Notice both purposes there. Healing and receiving the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 19:6, this is Ephesus, the start of the great move of God there. About a dozen men who only knew about John's baptism had then received Christian baptism. Incidentally, note the difference between the two. John's baptism was not any longer valid. Then Paul laid his hands upon them that they might receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and it says:

> "When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying."

I would like also to point out to you two other passages that are not listed, you might want to write them down: 1 Timothy 4:14 and 5:22. This introduces us to a different purpose for laying on of hands. First Timothy 4:14:

> "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying of hands by the presbytery."

There the laying on of hands was for the bestowing of a gift. Incidentally, the New American Standard says "spiritual gift," but the word spiritual isn't there. I'm interested to see what this one says. Excuse me just a moment. "Do not neglect your gift which was given unto you." So they don't say "spiritual gift."

Now in Romans 1 Paul says that he desires that he might impart a spiritual gift to the Christians at Rome, and the word spiritual is there. But in 1 Timothy 4:14 it isn't there, but the translators put it in. In other words, they made an assumption.

I don't agree with their assumption. I have my own theory, that's why I'm saying all this. I believe that the gift that Timothy received through the laying on of the hands of Paul and the elders was the gift of apostleship. You don't have to believe me, but if I had time I could take you through a lot of passages of Scripture which I believe substantiate that. I don't believe it can be proved, it's an inference.

But at any rate, it is scriptural to impart gifts, both gifts of the Holy Spirit and other gifts, with the laying on of hands. Notice, in this case there was prophecy. My understanding of it would be that Paul was there in Lystra which was, I think, Timothy's home church. The elders said, "He's a good young man." Paul felt a quickening in him and he said, "How about letting him travel with me?" And they said, "All right, but let's pray for him." So Paul and the elders laid hands on him and a prophecy came. The prophecy was, who knows, but I think it was it contained the word apostle. But Timothy never really had much chance to get a swollen head because a lot of things happened to keep him humble.

Now, if you like to turn to 1 Timothy 1 also, verse 18.

> "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophesies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight ..."

You see, that fills in the picture for me. When they laid hands on Timothy and prayed over him, prophecy came that kind of outlined Timothy's future ministry and calling. Now Timothy's in a rather difficult place, he has heavy responsibilities. Paul warns him: Don't yield to the spirit of timidity, and he says, "Remember the prophecies that came when we laid hands on you? Live up to them." I've got this in my little book Laying on of Hands, this interpretation of this passage. Interestingly enough, years later I met a brother, a minister in New Zealand, and he told me that when he was here in the United States in a Bible school, prophecy went before on him that he was to do this and that. Went back to his own country of New Zealand, nothing seemed to be working out, he got discouraged. One day he picked up my book and was reading about Timothy being encouraged by the prophecies that went on him beforehand and he remembered the prophecies that had gone before about him. He stepped out in faith and God honored his faith and his commitment.

So all this is very real. And I think now you can see maybe a little better why I say that laying on of hands is the kind of "linking up" doctrine. It links ministries, it links gifts, it's a means of transferring authority, it's a means of making appointments in the church. It keeps things going.

First Timothy 5:22, just as a final example, speaking about elders to Timothy, who has this responsibility:

> "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily ..."

How many of you have heard the saying, "It's easier to lay hands on than lay hands off"? Well, that's what Paul is saying. Don't do it too quickly. He makes a remarkable statement.

> "... and thus share responsibility for the sin of others; keep yourself free from sin."

In other words, if Timothy had rashly laid hands on a man and sent him forth as an elder and that man had got into some kind of moral trouble and involved members of the flock, Timothy would have shared some of the responsibility for those people who were hurt by that man. It's a very solemn thought. If we give authority to people, we share a measure of responsibility for what they do with that authority. I don't know of any case I can think of where it has been done too slowly. But I can think of a whole lot of cases where if I or others had the opportunity, we would do it much less quickly.

We're going on to the fifth of these foundation doctrines. I think I need to say something more about that. There used to be a kind of group that specialized in laying hands on people and prophesying over them. I can see Ed smiling at me; he knows what I'm talking about. He still bears the scars, I expect. They would fly into a city, go to the local house prayer meetings, pray over people, ordain one prophet, two elders and somebody for the ministry of suffering—which is the cruelest thing you can ever wish on anybody—and fly off again. I've met people years later that were still trying to get out of the pit that was dug for them when that happened. "Well, I was told I was to be an apostle. I don't feel like an apostle, never seen any evidence, but if I'm not an apostle I'm out of the will of God. I'm displeasing the Lord."

And then what about the person who has got the ministry of suffering wished on them? Oh, brother! What agony! See, the Bible teaches if you lay hands on people you've got to be responsible for what happens afterwards. You can't just do it and wipe your hands and walk away. It's like having children. How many of you know that's an ongoing responsibility—for most people, not for some.

All right, we're going back to Page 6/1. The fifth of these foundations doctrines, resurrection of the dead. A very, very thrilling and beautiful study, one that every Christian should have somehow ingrained in him because, dear friends, if you haven't already been there, there will be a time in your life where you're going to need to know if you really believe in the resurrection of the dead. When the Lord called my first wife home after thirty years of marriage, I

had preached for years but I had to ask myself, Do I really believe I'll see her again? Thank God, I was able to say yes. But you can't fool circumstances with a superficial assent to doctrine. You've got to know if you really believe it.

Let's look at just the two Scriptures there that I have included. They're both from Romans. Romans 4:23–25.

> "Now not for his sake [that's Abraham's sake] only was it written, that "it was reckoned to him" [that is his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness], but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned [our faith will be reckoned as righteousness], as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised up because of our justification."

That's very important. He was raised so that God might justify us, acquit us, reckon us righteous. Righteousness doesn't come through His death, it comes through His resurrection. It's not enough to believe that Jesus died, you have to believe that He rose again.

Romans 10:9, just not a complete sentence.

> "... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved ... You cannot be saved if you do not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. It's essential."

I think there's another Scripture I'd like to add in 1 Corinthians 15. How many of you know what's the theme of 1 Corinthians 15? Resurrection, that's right. Just let's look in the middle of the chapter, verses 13–14:

> "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain."

If there isn't any resurrection, why make such a fuss about it? Verse 16:

> "For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [That's a terrible thought.] If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."

I wish some people would hear that statement. I've heard people say Christianity is so wonderful that even if there was nothing beyond the grave it would be worthwhile. That's not what Paul says. He says we'd be a deluded set of idiots if Christ wasn't raised. It's so important.

I often quote a little hymn or song that I have on a record sung by a Jewish singer who is one of my special favorites that is not a Jewish song. Its title is He Arose. But what always grips me is just a little part of the chorus. I can never say it without tears coming in my eyes, it's an amazing thing. "May the book of life never close till the whole world knows He arose." That's the thing everybody is entitled to know, that Jesus rose from the dead. That's the thing that makes history. The most exciting event in all human history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When you face death face to face, you know death is ugly, death is cruel, death is pitiless, death is irresistible. Thank God somebody beat death. It makes all of the difference to me because none of us are going to live forever. If you think you are, you are deceiving yourself. And furthermore, it's not going to be nearly as long as forever. You'd be amazed how quickly the years fly. The further on you get in life, the quicker they go.

The sixth of these doctrines, eternal judgment. You'll notice that these last two doctrines are beyond time. They're in that great unknown, the unseen realm beyond death. The truth of the gospel spans from eternity to eternity. Let me add that as far as I know, Christianity is the only religion that even claims to deal with our past. I don't know any other religion that even makes that claim. That places it in a category entirely by itself.

Let's look at what it says about eternal judgment. I think I need to explain something first. The word eternal means "that which is out of time." It doesn't mean that it goes on forever and ever primarily, but it means that it's a different kind of existence. Eternal life is not just a very long life, like we have; it's a life of a different order. My impression is in

eternity the past, the present and the future in some sense intermingle. I don't know that I can explain that.

Eternal judgment is judgment that takes place after time has ended. It is appointed unto men once to die and after this what? Judgment. Never forget that. There are also in the Bible many examples of historical judgment. Those are judgments that are worked out in the course of human history. If you don't understand that, there will be many apparent conflicts in the teaching of Scripture that will confuse you. I'll show you perhaps one or two. We are not talking about historical judgment; we're talking about eternal judgment, judgment that takes place after you step out of time and into eternity.

There are various pictures in the New Testament; we won't dwell on them too long. Essentially, the way to distinguish the various judgments that lie ahead is to focus on the type of seat that the judge occupies. There are primarily two, what they call the judgment seat, judgment of Christ, and the great white throne judgment. The difference that you can focus your mind on is that the seat occupied by the judge is different.

Let's look at the judgment seat judgment first in Romans 14:10–12. The Greek word that I'm translating judgment seat is bema. It was used of what Pontius Pilate was on when Jesus stood before him for judgment.

> "But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. The bema. We. That's believers, not unbelievers."

For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Paul is saying, Why be so busy judging everybody else? You're going to have enough to take care of giving account of yourself to God. And remember, you're going to have to stand there. Don't imagine because you're a Christian you will not face this judgment. You will face it because you are a Christian.

And then in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

> "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ [we, Christians], that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

It impresses me that there are only two categories. Everything we do is either good or bad. And if it isn't good, it's bad. And we're going to have to explain it to the Lord Jesus Christ. His eyes are like a flame of fire, His feet like bronze burning in a furnace. Out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword. I don't think excuses will avail, or half-truths. Everything in us will be laid bare with one glance of His eyes. We're going to have to give an account of everything we've done in the body. No wonder Paul said, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade man."

Let's look at one other picture, and this is no longer the judgment seat judgment, this is the great white throne. Revelation 20. John Wesley has a sermon on this Scripture; he calls it "The Great Assign." Revelation 20:11 and following.

> "I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them [there's nowhere left to hide]. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne..."

Notice, though they were resurrected they were still dead, dead in sin.

> "... and the books were opened; ... That's the books of the records of everybody's lives."

... and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. [Not according to their denominations.] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Notice the second judgment, the great white throne judgment, is essentially or primarily a judgment of condemnation. It's assigning the wicked to their final place.

But the judgment seat of Christ for believers is not a judgment for condemnation, because there is no

condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. It's a judgment to assess our service and determine our reward and, I suppose, our standing in the kingdom.

There are also in the Bible historical judgments. Just to have a clear understanding I'd like to speak for a few moments about historical judgments. Historical judgments are God's judgments which are worked out in time, in history. Sometimes there may be a conflict. For instance, just to give an example, a man may commit murder and in history he has to pay the penalty, be executed. But between the time of committing murder and the time of being executed he had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, his sins were forgiven, his name was written in the book of life. And so his historical judgment is negative but his eternal judgment is gloriously positive. So you see there's a kind of built in possibility of tension between the two.

Let's look at Exodus 20:3–5. This is part of what we call the Ten Commandments. In fact, it's the first part. The Lord is speaking:

> "You shall have no other gods before me or beside me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or likeness of what is in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the water under earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate me ..."

That's very clear that certain sins bring God's judgment beyond the generation of the person who committed the sin. In fact, for three or four continuing generations. I believe that the particular sin is what we would call today being involved in the occult. That is, having some other god beside the true God. I've dealt with many, many people in whose lives one of the factors was the sin of an ancestor. And we had to face up to this fact that God's historical judgments were being worked out in their lives as a result of the sins of ancestors.

Now that's historical, not necessarily eternal. If you turn to Ezekiel 18, the difference is brought out very clearly. Ezekiel 18:20.

> "The person who sins will die ..."

The Hebrew says the soul who sins will die.

> "... the son will not bear the punishment of the father's iniquity; nor will the father bear the punishment of the son's iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."

Now there is no conflict between that statement and the one in Exodus because they're two different kinds of judgment. Exodus is speaking of historical judgment worked out in history. We know that to some extent they are true, we cannot deny them. An alcoholic's child starts with disadvantages that are not the disadvantages of a man who is, say, a university professor. There's no getting away from the fact that in this life what our parents were and did affects, in some measure, the course of our life. That's realism. To say otherwise is just to put your head in the sand, which is not what ostriches do. That's a slander against the ostrich. I'm always out to defend the ostrich against that statement.

On the other hand, when we stand before the eternal judgment of God it won't be what our father or mother did, it will be what we have done that we will be judged on. I hope that's at least in some measure clear. We cannot escape, in a sense, either judgment. History is, in a sense, the record of God's judgment. If you study the history of Israel, it's one long record of divine judgment worked out in human history. And some of them have taken thousands of years to be worked out. It's frightening. We now go back to Hebrews 6:3 which says:

> "This we will do if God permits."

Now, I can't remember whether we went into this, but let's go into it again briefly. It's speaking about moving on to perfection. Let us move on. And then the writer says we'll do this if God permits. Why wouldn't God permit? Surely God would be happy for everybody to move on to perfection. You can't go any further in the building until you get what the American's call a permit and the English call a permit. But anyhow, you know what I'm talking about. That's true in the natural. Until your foundation has been certified by the building inspector you cannot built any further. God has his building inspector. God says foundation incomplete. Where's that first stone, repentance? I won't sign the certificate. You can't go on. That's one among various reasons why millions of Christians are still messing around with the foundation. They've never had a permit to go any further. Some of them do go further and along comes God's

building inspector and says tear it down, start again. That's a reality. I venture to say to you here tonight, anybody who hears this, if you don't have your foundation in order you will never go further. That's a final, categorical statement. God doesn't have favorites. He's not to be bribed. You can't slip the inspector something on the side and get away with it.

Now, two practical applications. Number one, we need to lay the foundation once for all, then go on to complete the building. One mistake you can make is keep on laying the foundation. You only need to lay it once. Then go on. That's "let us go on."

But, the other application is if we have not laid a proper foundation we will not obtain a permit to continue construction. So there we are. I've put it another way many times. You do not get graduated from grade 2 in God's school till you've passed the test. It isn't like the modern educational system where promotion is automatic. That isn't education, how many of you know that? That's a substitute. God doesn't have substitute education for his kids. You get tired of the lessons in grade 2, well, pass the test and you'll move on. I remember a man phoned me once when I was in Dallas when I was just new to this country and everything that was going on. He had two questions. The first was about the antichrist, I forget what the other was about, eternal security or something like that. I said, "As a matter of fact, I don't think I can really answer your questions. I tell you what, I think your problem is you're in about grade 3 and you're trying to handle grade 6 material and it won't work." Well, that was the end of that phone conversation! I really said it to help him.

We are now, God helping us, and with the necessary permit, we're going to move on. We come to Hebrews 6:4–8. The third passage of warning. This is primarily against apostasy or falling away. I prefer the word apostasy because falling away suggests it's happened by accident. Apostasy indicates it happened by a decision. I think it's the latter that the writer has in mind. I'll read the passage and then we'll look into it. Let me just check on you, myself included. We've had two other passages of solemn warning, what was the first one a warning against? Very significant. It's at the beginning of chapter 2. How shall we escape if we neglect, first; unbelief second; third, apostasy; fourth—why should you know? But it is willful continuing in sin. And fifth, falling short of the grace of God. I believe that order is very significant. I think neglect will lead to unbelief and unbelief will lead to apostasy. If you really believe the truth of the Bible you couldn't apostatize.

So this is the warning against apostasy, beginning in verse 4:

> "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened [or illuminated] and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then fall away, to renew them again to repentance, crucifying as they do to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame."

I don't think there are any questions about the translation of this point. This is one of the most discussed and argued about passages of New Testament doctrine. All I can say is, I believe it means what it says. Let's find out what it says.

It speaks about people who have had five spiritual experiences. Let's look there in the text. The first one in verse 4 is they have been enlightened. The second one, still in verse 4, they have tasted of the heavenly gifts. The third one, still in verse 4, they have become partakers or sharers in the Holy Spirit. The fourth one, now in verse 5, they have tasted the good word of God. And number five, they have tasted also the powers of the age to come, or an age to come.

Let's briefly consider what's implied by each of those statements, what kind of experience it indicates. First of all, being enlightened which is an act of God, the Holy Spirit. He enables us to see the truth about Jesus Christ, about the Bible, about ourselves. It's not something that we could ever achieve by pure intellectual study or reasoning. There has to be an illumination.

This was very clear to me when I was confronted with the claims of Jesus Christ in a personal way because I could not understand the gospel. I was trained to analyze and reason and explain. I absolutely could not understand the gospel. It didn't make any sense to me whatever. Nor could I believe it. I wanted to and I couldn't. I don't know whether you can accept that fact but I really wanted to believe and I couldn't. Then I was enlightened supernaturally. From that moment onwards I have never doubted that Jesus Christ is alive and that he is the Son of God. It was not a process of reasoning. It was enlightenment. You may not know it but there are truths in the Bible you cannot apprehend merely by your reasoning. Once you are enlightened you have a responsibility you didn't have before.

We could look in Hebrews 10:32 for another example of this phrase.

> "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings ..."

It's a very interesting thing to study the operation of enlightenment. Years back in the days of John Wesley there was another great preacher named George Whitfield. They were friends. George Whitfield was really probably the more impressive preacher. Incidentally, he's the man to whom the Southern Baptists owe their existence. I don't know whether the Southern Baptists know that. And he was preaching in London and William Wilburforce who was a member of Parliament was converted through his preaching and became instrumental in abolishing the slave trade in various areas of the British dominion as a result of his conversion. Now William Wilburforce was a friend of William Pitt who was the Prime Minister, a brilliant man and the leader of Britain. He really felt that William Pitt needed the message of George Whitfield. He prevailed on his friend to go with him to church and hear George Whitfield. He sat right through the sermon, listened to it all, then they walked out of the church and William Wilburforce said with great anxiety, "What did you think of it?" And Pitt said, "I didn't understand a word of it." He was one of the most brilliant minds in Europe at the time but he was not illuminated, he wasn't enlightened. He had only his natural mind, he never understood the message of George Whitfield.

So this is the first experience we're talking about, it's a supernatural revelation of truth. Many of you have had it. Maybe all of you have had it, I don't know. But I know in my own experience from that moment onwards I could never go back and pretend I didn't know. It was utterly a closed door. Thank God I never wanted to go back. That's the other side of the story.

Tasted the heavenly gifts. That's the second experience. What heavenly gifts? Well, I'll give you two Scriptures. Romans 6:23, every good Baptist knows this. It's good to know it, let me add that.

> "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So that's a gift. Now the Greek word that's used there is charisma which gives us incidentally the word Charismatic, etc., etc. The first time charisma is used in the New Testament it's used in Romans 5, you don't need to turn there. The gift there is righteousness. It's very interesting. Charismatics have gotten far away from these two initial basic meanings of the word charisma. Righteousness and eternal life. Bear in mind you cannot have eternal life till you have righteousness because God cannot give it to a sinner. It's very interesting. There's a whole area of truth here most Charismatics have never even peeked into.

However, the word that's used in Hebrews 6:4 is not charisma. It won't mean much to you but in Greek it's dorea. I have a theory which I have propounded in New Zealand—I don't know whether I have ever propounded it anywhere else. My theory is the word dorea in the New Testament Greek normally means a gift which is a divine person. Not an experience, not a thing, not an it. Now that word is used that way in 2 Corinthians 9:15. At the end of two chapters on money, Paul says:

> "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift ..."

In other words, when we've done all our giving let's remember that God started the giving. He gave things we can't match. The word there is dorea. What do you think the indescribable gift of God is? I'll tell you what I believe it is. The Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe in Hebrews 6:4 the gift is the Jesus. Mind you, if you have Jesus, in him you have the charisma of eternal life. So it's talking about people who have Jesus, and in him, eternal life.

The next is they became partakers of the Holy Spirit. The word means to have a share or part in. They had a share or a part in the Holy Spirit. Now, let's turn to Acts 2:38.

> "Peter said to them, Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ into remission [or forgiveness] of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Guess what Greek word it is? Dorea. That's right. It's not talking about receiving spiritual gifts, it's talking about the gift which is a divine person. Who's the person? The Holy Spirit. First you receive Jesus, then you receive the Holy Spirit, himself the gift. So we're talking in Hebrews 6:4 of people who have received the Holy Spirit.

Going on to verse 5, they've tasted the good word of God. There are many, many Scriptures there. Let's note that it is not logos but rhema. It's not just theology, it's God has

spoken to them through His word. I'm sure most of you are familiar with that.

It would be interesting, but I don't want to do it, but it nevertheless would be interesting if I went down this list to see who would raise his or her hand at any given point and say, "Yes, that's happened to me, that's happened to me, that's happened to me."

They have tasted the good word of God. There are so many Scriptures about the word of God that I think we'll just not spend time looking at any of them. And the powers of a coming age. That's exciting, isn't it? I wonder how many of you believe you have tasted the powers of the coming age? I'll give you some Scriptures that to me explain it and see if you agree. 2 Corinthians 1:21–22. Paul has been talking about all his trials and tribulations and about the need of prayer. Then he says:

> "Now he who confirms us with you in Christ [or strengthens us] and who anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."

A much better word is down payment. It's not so spiritual but it brings out the meaning. Before we speak about that, let's turn to the other passage in Ephesians 1:13–14.

> "Among whom also are you, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in whom, after believing, you were sealed with the Spirit of promise [the Holy Spirit], who is the pledge [down payment] of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory."

You'll notice in both those passages when it speaks about an experience with the Holy Spirit it says first you were sealed and then you received the down payment. That's one of the most interesting words in the Bible. In Hebrew it's aravon. In Arabic it's arbone. In Greek it's arabone. And in Swahili, the language of East Africa, it's araboonee. So you got the same word there in four languages.

Now, years back, say 1947, my first wife and I were furnishing a new home and we needed to buy material for drapes. We went to the old city to some of the stores where they were selling material and let's say we needed 20 yards. Let's say that it was $5 a yard. It wouldn't have been that much in those days but that's all right. So the man had his bale there and he had just about 20 yards and not very much more. I said we need all 20 yards, how much will it be? He said twenty times $5 is $100. I said I don't have $100, I'll give you $20. That's the down payment. I'll come back with the rest and take the material. But in the meanwhile you're not free to sell it. It's mine. I did. Guess what the word was for the $20? Arbone. Okay. It was the down payment. It was part of what he was going to get.

That's what the Holy Spirit is. He's Jesus' down payment in us. He says once I've made that down payment you're not for sale. It's my guarantee I'm coming back with the rest of the money. Okay? But you've got $20 of heaven's money in you right now. The other 80, you've got to wait. So, when it says tasted the powers of the coming age, I understand that to mean the experience of the Holy Spirit which lets you know what life in heaven is like. I mean, there are times when you can do things you absolutely couldn't do at other times. Sometimes when the Holy Spirit comes on me I start dancing, I can do things I absolutely could not do in the natural. Some people are surprised. They were surprised when David danced.

Let me give you a very clear example of that kind of thing. It's Samson. People picture Samson with bulging muscles and tremendous chest development. Not necessary at all. His strength was supernatural. He killed 1000 Philistines with a jawbone of an ass. I mean, if they lined up and waited to be hit on the head that would be a tremendous job! Really. He didn't do that in natural, he tasted the powers of the coming age.

I heard the testimony of a missionary once who was in an earthquake in Japan. His wife was buried under some masonry. He lifted that masonry up. It was far heavier than he could lift but he said I knew then where Samson got his strength. We're talking about something that really thrills me, the supernatural power that we'll be living in in the next age. But we get a little arbone, a little down payment here and now.

Now, these people have had the down payment. Some of you understand what I'm talking about. Perhaps maybe all of you. Let's just go over it. It's a very solemn thought. They have been enlightened, they had a revelation of truth that you can't grasp just by natural reasoning. They've tasted the heavenly gift: Jesus, eternal life. They've become sharers in the Holy Spirit. They've tasted the good word of God, they know what it is for God's word to speak to them. And they've tasted the supernatural power of an age that has not yet come on earth.

Now it says it is impossible for people who have had those experiences, if after that they fall away— and that is the word, fall away, fall beside, fall off the platform. If I were standing on the platform and I took one step too far and fell off, that would be exactly what it says. They've fallen off.

> "It is impossible to renew them again to repentance because they are crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting him to an open shame."

Now, let's be careful about this. First of all, it does not talk about some weak, struggling, Christian babe who is trying hard and keeps being tripped up. That's not the kind of person it's directed at. If you should be in that category and you have 15 more falls before midnight, don't be condemned. It's not you it's talking about. God is on your side. It's talking about people who had it all, known it all and for some quirk turned their backs on it. See, it's somebody who has actually put Jesus to shame, denied him. They say, "I don't believe in Jesus Christ, he isn't the son of God, he never really saved me."

I don't know whether you can believe people like that. I had a young man whose name was Bill

?Steeby?. He had one of the most tremendous experiences of salvation I can remember. I got him, as I used to get my converts, at a street meeting. He came in on a Sunday, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit about the middle of the week which was exceptional in those days, that was the early 1950s. By the end of the week he was singing in the Spirit and having visions. I remember, as a matter of fact, when he got the baptism, in a vision he was washing the Lord's feet with his hair. But you know, within a year he didn't even remember if he had ever been saved. He told me he was into Buddhism and finding it very fulfilling. I don't think he even recalled what had happened to him a year earlier.

I don't believe there's any way back for a person like that. I don't want to put anybody under condemnation, that's not the preacher's job, that's the devil's job, he's smart enough at it, we don't have to help him. But I would like to say to you that I don't believe there's any way you will make it to heaven if you don't will to make it there. I find that when every new movement comes along, whether it's shepherding or whatever it may be, some people join it because they think something is going to do something for them automatically even if they're not really willing it themselves. There isn't such a thing.

I'll also tell you out of experience there's only one way to know a man that is living right. It isn't that he performs miracles, because he can be performing miracles and living in adultery at the same time. It isn't that he prophesies. It isn't that he preaches tremendous sermons. There's only one way to know that a man is living right and you know what that is? That he's living right. There's no substitute. You can combine sin with almost anything. The Holy Spirit is given to do the will of God. If it's the will of God that he heals 500 people in a meeting, that man has that gift. The Holy Spirit will work through that man to heal 500 people. And he can then go out and live with somebody else's wife. I'm not theorizing, I'm talking about situations that I've been very close to. There is no substitute for willing right. God is never ultimately going to override your will, grab you by the hair and say come on to heaven anyway. Because, if he did, heaven would be misery. You'd wish you were anywhere but in heaven, unless your will is set to will the will of God.

You can have lots of problems and lots of struggles. You're looking at somebody who has had plenty. But I never have unwilled my faith in Jesus. I would not dare to. I wouldn't even think of it. I wouldn't let it cross my mind. I've dealt with quite a large number of young people, and most young people go through times of testing. I've seen all the girls that Lydia and I brought up, nine girls, all were baptized in the Holy Spirit before they were seven years old without exception. And really lived their lives close to the Lord. But by the time they got to be 15 or 16, invariably there was a personal reassessment, Am I going to go on with God or was that just something for my childhood years?

And I've known some who, they weren't very impressive Christians for awhile. And I said this to Ruth as a matter of fact, about somebody else who is not one of my children. Ruth was pointing out that there was a lot lacking in her commitment. I said never suggest to her she isn't committed to be a Christian. Assume that she is. Keep her talking that way. Never let her go back on her confession. That's the most dangerous.

You remember when Peter was about to be tested to the utmost Jesus said, "I've prayed for you. Not that you won't do the wrong thing but that your faith won't fail." This is something that really, I don't know whether God has given me special insight into. I feel so much of our Christian activity is superficial. That people are trying to find a way to get to heaven and enjoy—I don't want to use the word enjoy because sin really isn't that enjoyable. But to get to heaven without a real commitment to God. There isn't any way.

It's dangerous to play around with spiritual things. Israel, at the foot of the mountain, sat down to eat and to drink and

rose up to play and ended up in gross idolatry and immorality. Playing with spiritual things is as dangerous a game as you could ever find. I'm cautious about people that play with spiritual gifts. I'm not saying it's a deadly sin but it's a risky thing to do. I can enjoy humor and I'm not a very sad person I don't believe. But there are some areas of humor and jesting and likeness which are off limits to me. I will not treat sacred things lightly because if I do I'll get burned.

I would like to move on from this but we just have a few minutes left and it seems to me the Holy Spirit is really almost riveting our attention on this fact. You have to be in earnest. I've often wondered why God put up with Jacob. What was there in Jacob that made him so patient? I would never have picked Jacob to start with. And with God's insight it's amazing. But what was there in Jacob? I think it was this: He took God seriously. He knew there was something to get from God and he was going to get it anyway. Cheat or not, but get it. It seems that that attitude was much more favored by God than the attitude of Esau who was a good kind of man and didn't do anybody harm. Never cheated but just wasn't the least bit concerned about spiritual things. If you have to choose, and I'm not saying you do, be a Jacob but never be an Esau.

We're not going to get there in this session but Esau is held up as an example of a profane, Godless man. What did he do? Just indulged his appetite and threw away his birthright, the promises of God. I think perhaps if I've got anywhere in the Lord it's because whatever the Lord has for me is precious to me. I want it. I am not prepared to sell my birthright.

Well, I think we're going to have to close. I still have a feeling that maybe the Lord wants to speak and I'm going to wait for a moment. If my brothers on the platform have got something that God has given them, I have a feeling that there's somebody here that's looking for an answer. I want to tell you, I don't know who you are, God has got an answer for you. You don't need to go away tonight without an answer. I'm just telling you that in faith. I don't know. Well, we're going to wait a moment before we go. I've never done this in these meetings.

I seem to get the impression that there's somebody here tonight who's in danger of throwing away something very precious and that God wants you to enjoy and to have. And the devil has kind of fooled you into believing that it really isn't worth it. The truth of the matter is, it's worth a lot and God has taken a lot of trouble to get you to the place where this thing is now available to you. I would say to you tonight, reach out and grasp whatever it is that God has. Grasp it firmly, don't let it go. God has got a future for you. He's got something far greater than you could imagine. You tend to think about yourself as somewhat an unworthy person with not much ability or talent or claim on God's interest. But the Lord wants you to know tonight that he is very interested in you personally. He has your welfare at heart and he's brought you here tonight just that you might know he's planning the very best. May God bless you, Amen.

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Sermon

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