The Book of Hebrews

Chapter 6

 There comes that time in life, for each of us to step up or step aside, when it comes to life, work, or socialization. We cannot simply do enough just to get by or we get left behind. Early on in my life, when I was content to shovel cow manure for a buck and hour and go home, get a shower, and do nothing else for the evening, I was accomplishing nothing, and going nowhere. But it soon dawned on me, that there was more to life and I was missing it.

 We see in our schools where some kids just cannot see the need for any schooling and refuse instruction, and then go through life aimless and without a future except what is at their end. Many of them wind up on the streets eating out of dumpsters, and sleeping in doorways. (Tough way to live, trust me I know from experience)

 The writer is explaining to the reader, first, who Jesus is, and then makes the interesting statement regarding their spiritual immaturity. This Spiritual immaturity comes from lack of knowledge which by this time they should have, but because they have not advanced their learning past the initial teachings they were first presented, they then lack spiritual strength to face the present dangers from both their own Jewish leaders and from the Romans.

 Let’s face it, when we do not learn life’s lessons when we are young, we are completely unprepared to live it, and to face the trials life presents us. Look at it this way, when you were born, you learned to first crawl and then to walk. Had you been content to crawl, you would never have had the opportunity to see the wonders on the table above you. If we had not paid attention to our lessons in school, we would never have had the chance to read some awesome books. For those of us in the military, if we chose not to learn from our instructors, we would never have learned to defend ourselves and our country.

 For these Hebrew Christians, had they learned more about the Savior they would have known more intimately about His saving Grace, and Eternal life in Him. They could have spared themselves from the fear and doubt that riddled their lives. But as the writer pointed out at the end of the chapter last week, they never got past the milk of the Scripture. They were weak and impotent.

 A] Hebrews 6: 1 through 8; (read)

 1] “*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and faith toward God,-”*

 Again and again, we come upon the ancient translators and their placing of chapter numbers and verse numbers in unusual places, and find we are continuing a previous thought in the next chapter. The word ‘therefore’ crops up a lot here and this tells us, that we need to look at the end of the last chapter to see what the writer is referring to. From verse 12 through 14 in Chapter 5 tells us that the writer is blaming their weaknesses in faith to their lack of spiritual maturity due to their lack of learning anything beyond the basic principles of their faith. In other words, how can I be strong in my faith when I have not learned more what my faith is about?

 So the writer wants to leave their area of ignorance and move on from teaching them what they should already know, going past the ‘milk’ of their education. Out of kindergarten into the next grades higher. For the Jewish Christians to become stronger in their faith they must get into the deeper aspects of their education. Not like a builder who decides to lay additional foundation blocks over the existing foundation already laid. That is a waste of the structural blocks, and does not add to the structural integrity of the building.

 The writer notes, that they must get past the dead works, or the meaningless religious activities of the Jewish Priests and Pharisees, which does not get them any closer to God, which they should already know; and they then look toward their personal relationship with God. This would be the elementary base of what they were taught.

 2] “-*of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgments.”*

 Again, these should be things they ought to know, and have incorporated into their lives. Baptism is something that has been done for centuries, but the Baptism in Jesus should have been explained at the time of their conversion. They were familiar with the ‘laying on of hands’, and the basis of Christianity was the resurrection of the dead. All of the Apostles taught this, as well as the eternal judgments. Did you miss this?

 Do we catch on to this part? These things are the substance of things already taught in the Christian primer.

 3] “*And this we will do if God permits.”*

 This statement actually completes the statement in verse 1, where the writer states, ‘let us go on to perfection’ and ends with this, ‘and this we will do if God permits, ‘or if God is willing. How many teachers do we know, can feel exasperated with a classroom of students that cannot get past the initial ‘abc’ and go on to ‘def’? They may want to give up, but press on because this is something they have to do or even desire to do.

 4] “*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,-”*

 Let’s take this a section at a time. This all ties together in that we all have had the basics taught to us, regarding Salvation, and have made that declaration of faith, and in doing so have the Holy Spirit within us. And as the writer tells us, we need to go further as God permits. However, we are admonished, that as we have done all these things, we cannot go back and do them again. Let's see the next verse.

 5] “-*and have tasted the Good Word of God and the powers of the age to come,-”*

 We are in the midst of a Pauline style run-on statement, so to complete the initial thought, we have been enlightened, or the Gospel was brought to us, and as a result, have accepted Jesus as Lord and savior, therefore we have the Holy Spirit in us, and we then know the destiny that awaits us. Now if we do not have that assurance, which apparently, they didn’t, something was missing. What was missing? They should have ‘tasted’ the Good Word, and in that they should have had the spiritual nourishment that would strengthen them for the trials that lay ahead, and in being nourished and fed, they would have been prepared for the Power of God in their lives.

 6] *“-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.”*

 Okay! Go back to the beginning of this whole statement,’ For it is impossible,’ then add, ‘if they fall away, to renew themselves---’. Do you follow this? Once I have made that decision to become a Christian, Saved, and full of the Spirit of God, how can I be saved again? I am already saved, I am a Child of God. Then is it necessary to crucify Christ all over again? So, what does this mean?

 When I accepted Jesus the Messiah as Lord and Savior, in effect I accepted His atoning death on the cross, He was my sin sacrifice as required by the Law, where Jesus bled and died for all of my sins, past, present and future. This is all that was and is needed. So, once I have accepted this, there was no reason for this to be repeated, yet how many times does this happen at this present time in many of our Churches? In too many churches there are alter calls and some folks every week will go down, again and again.

 7] “*For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful to 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.”*

 If we look at the context in which this is written; we have discussed the plight of those who have not grown in their faith but because they have made that profession of faith, IN FAITH, the writer assures them with this statement. The seed sown on good tilled soil will give a bountiful crop for the sower, and the seed sown on bad soil will not reap a crop but will become weed for the fire. What usually grows on bad soil are weeds, vines, thorny shrubs, all plants good for nothing, but to be used for the ovens, for cooking and heating.

 Was their heart like that good soil, that receives the rain that nourishes the seed, or hard soil that the rain water runs off, thus not getting to the roots, and the only plants will be the weed plants. These people are saved, and that is to their benefit, but God does have His judgments on both the saved and on the unsaved. And, of course you don’t want to be one of the unsaved, because then there is no hope.

 Hebrews 6: 9 through 12; (read)

 1] “*But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes things that accompany salvation though we speak in this manner.”*

 Here is a case where the writer has been verbally spanking the folks and if all you do is berate them this will turn them all off and they will fade away, but the writer changes his tone to a more conciliatory one, lest he drive them away. Like that disciplinarian of old who spanked the child just for looking crosswise. One could spank the good right out of the child.

 The writer affirms that they are saved and that all the promises that came with their salvation are intact. Despite the ravages of the Jewish leaders and the Romans the promises of eternal life hold true.

 2] “*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.”*

 God knows all you do, and even knows your heart. The writer affirms that God has been with them, has seen their charity, and known their hearts especially when it came to ministering to the believers around them. So here the writer does complement them on the faith they do exhibit and the works they have been doing, in spite of their faltering under the pressure of the life around them.

 I can picture this moment, where despite the fear and doubt of the people, they still take care of each other and of visitors who come to their door. So, what seems to be the problem? The fact that there is no joy, there is no positive attitude? That there is only fear, and uncertainty, and this leads to folks one by one seeking the shelter in what was known before. Do you follow the reasoning? Like the Jewish people who followed Moses in the desert, longing to return to their slave lives in Egypt because of the uncertainty of what lay before them and the difficulty of the journey.

 Here again, we all to a point, when faced with the unknown, or faced with certain dangers, long to see the better days of your youth, or the safety of what we knew back in our days of childhood.

 3] “*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.”*

 In seeing the diligence with the folks looking after the needs of each other and of strangers at the door, that they should pursue their faith and spiritual growth with the same diligence, and desire. Sometimes the struggle weighs us down, and we do become sluggish. Many times, this can be caused by an inadequate diet, and without the proper nutrition we do grow sluggish and tired, as we do not keep a steady diet of God’s word we can grow spiritually sluggish and tired. This refers to the earlier point of not advancing from the milk of Scriptures to the meat of Scriptures.

 The writer tells us to go forward with FAITH and patience. God is there, He knows what awaits is, be patient, He will see to the issues. How many of us are patient in troubled times?

 C] Hebrews 6: 13 through 20; (read)

 1] “*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you.’”*

 Here is what we can see as long-term patience. God singled out Abraham, didn’t he? And God then promised Abraham that He would make of Abraham a great and mighty nation, right? But did Abraham see it come in his lifetime?? No, did is happen by the time of Joseph? No. So, by three generations to Joseph, this promise was still there. Even to four hundred plus years later when the Jews in Egyptian slavery had numbered in the plus three million, they were not the nation yet. But the promise was still there. ---patience---!

 2] “*And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”*

 Abraham may have been gone, Joseph, may have been gone, even Moses may have been gone, but the Jewish people after patiently waiting on the prophecies God gave Abraham, did realize the founding of a great and mighty nation, didn’t they? And they did become mighty for a season, and raised mighty armies and were recognized for whose they were.

 Are we seeing the point? The writer tells the people faith and PATIENCE! That is what comes from knowledge, understanding and wisdom; patience, because the promise is still there.

 3] “*For men, indeed, swear by the greater, and an oath for the confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.”*

 When a man makes a promise, he confirmed that promise with an oath usually on something greater than himself, creating that obligation to keeping that oath. That oath was the end of the matter until the promise was met. How much more with God making that oath and because there is none greater than God, he makes that oath on Himself, and there is no greater promise, therefore the people can take heart in the promises of God because ‘in His time’ that promise will be fulfilled.

 4] “*Thus, God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that two immutable things in which is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”*

 Immutable means unchangeable and these two unchangeable things are the promise of God and the oath on that promise made by God. With God nothing changes and if He makes that promise, that promise never changes and when He takes that oath, that oath is never broken. The writer tells us, that we can take consolation in this, that the hope never changes.

 5] “*This hope, we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered before us, even Jesus having become the high Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*.”

 Absolute certainty! Hope is only as strong as the object of that hope is. We can hope in things of man which are only tenuous, or we can hope in things of God which are a certainty. Hope in God or the promises He has made with His oath are that certainty and the writer assures his readers that with the waves of troubles that assail them like the waves of the sea, they can anchor their hope in the promises of God. They believed that when they made their sacrifices at the Temple that the High priest carried their atonement behind the veil where God resides and Jesus being that intercessor forever as Melchizedek. Interesting how the writer keeps using that image.

 In other words friends, even today, as we face our trials, we hope in God’s promise of that eternal life in Him forever and we can indeed walk in faith through our trials, knowing that God knows what we are doing, what we are facing, and through our relationship with Him as our Father and we are His children, He will always be with us; and as children we must continually be learning and growing in His Word, and these Words must be a part of us.