

Hebrews

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this morning is going to be somewhat of a... I don't know that I'd exactly call it a repetition, but we're going to cover some of the material that we covered last week because it being Thanksgiving Day, many of you were not here for that content, and it is important stuff, so I wanted to make sure that everybody would be able to have advantage of it.

And we are in Hebrews chapter 6, and I want to remind you, that we continue to deal with what is commonly referred to, and I think justifiably so, one of the more controversial passages in all of the New Testament.

And that is that theme which opens Hebrews chapter 6 and deals with the issue of whether or not one who is truly a born-again believer in Christ can forfeit his salvation.

That is, through bad behavior or whatever. So that even though once upon a time he was a believer in Christ, now he no longer is because of some lapse of faith or bad behavior or denial or whatever the case may be.

One of those positions is held by the Calvinists, and the Calvinist position simply says that you had nothing to do with your salvation in the first place.

[1 : 2 5] It wasn't even your decision. It was simply God's decision. He chose you. You didn't choose him. You had nothing to do with it. And you believed because you didn't have any alternative but to believe.

What's more, you were made alive in Christ before you believed. And that's what made it possible for you to believe. That's the typical kind of Calvinist approach to the subject of the security of the believer.

Dan? Is that predestination? That involves predestination, yes. That includes that. And the opposite position for the Arminian is that once you are in Christ, it is possible for you to lose that salvation and to forfeit it so that you are no longer a believer.

And both groups actually use their interpretation of Hebrews chapter 6 to support themselves and the position that they take. It should be made very, very clear, however, at the outset that the key word insofar as the text is concerned, in my estimation at least, is that which begins the argument when he says, for it is impossible, which simply says can't be done.

Can't be done for those who were in Christ to fall away and no longer be in Christ because if such were possible, then what would be required is those five things that we've already covered in chapter 6 earlier on that would have to be required before you could be saved again.

[3 : 0 0] And in the midst of this whole issue, we insist on really focusing on the Jewishness of the whole problem and the historicity that surrounds it.

And that is, this is during a time in the first century when almost everyone who was a believer was a Jew.

You've got to remember that for the first 8 to 10 years after the resurrection, everyone who had come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah was Jewish.

It wasn't until you get clear up to chapter 10 of the book of Acts that a Roman army officer by the name of Cornelius is introduced to the person of Jesus of Nazareth and he becomes a believer.

And it caused quite a ruckus. The reason it caused quite a ruckus was because Cornelius was not a Jew. He was a Gentile. And God used Peter to open the eyes of the Gentiles.

[4 : 13] Peter was a guy that's kind of like a bridge. He was a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. And when you come to Acts chapter 12, Peter vanishes from the scene.

He's gone. And who comes on the scene to take up the baton and go on from there but the Apostle Paul. So, Peter virtually slips into obscurity in chapter 12.

And the Apostle Paul comes into prominence beginning with his conversion in chapter 9. And we've got a really volatile situation that existed in Judaism.

The whole Jewish community was divided over this issue. Was Jesus of Nazareth the one promised by Moses and the prophets or not?

Everything hinged on that in the Jewish mindset. Because if he was, then your full and complete obedience belongs to this Jesus of Nazareth.

[5 : 23] And there is nothing too great that you can do for him. And there is no obedience too great to give him. On the other hand, if he is not, then he's an imposter.

He is not worthy to be believed. He is a liar. You can ignore him. There isn't any middle ground. You can't say, well, I don't want either of those positions.

I'll take something in the middle. There is nothing in the middle. He either was who he claimed to be or he was not. And there's no other way about it. So, the Jewish community is really divided.

And you've got to keep in mind that the vast majority of Jews did not embrace Jesus as their Messiah. It was only a minority that did.

I know it's a little confusing because we see 3,000 saved on the day of Pentecost. But we're talking about, we're talking about a few million Jews living in Israel. And 3,000 is nothing compared to that.

[6 : 26] And the word would spread, of course, and there would be more Jews added to it. And we see later on in the book of Acts that there were about 5,000. And it said many of the priests, Jewish priests, came to faith and to believe.

But the community of Israel was still sharply divided. Families were divided. Neighborhoods were divided. Workplaces were divided. And the synagogue was divided.

Because when these people came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, they didn't drop out of the synagogue and start the first church of whatever on the corner. They continued right on in the synagogue because that was their whole life.

That was their history. That was what they were accustomed to. And within that synagogue, you're going to find Jews who are firmly committed that Jesus was the Messiah.

No doubt about it. And there are those firmly committed that He was not. No doubt about it. And here they are, every Sabbath, meeting in the synagogue to worship and to carry on the functions of Jewish society.

[7 : 28] And you can imagine the controversy. Sometimes there were just a small group of believers and a much larger group of unbelievers. And they made it uncomfortable for them.

They would criticize them. They would ridicule them. They would make fun of them. And it finally got to the place after a number of years where the majority said, we're just not going to put up with these people anymore.

And they became persona non grata and they were virtually excluded from the synagogue. They were still Jews. They were born Jews. But they were Jews who had become believers in Yeshua HaMashiach.

And what this writer of Hebrews is putting across is the idea that, look, when you come to faith in Jesus as your Messiah, there's going to be a price to pay.

You're going to be criticized. You're going to be ridiculed. They're going to make things difficult for you. It could cost you your business. It could cost you your reputation.

[8 : 30] All the rest. People are going to ignore you like the plague. And others won't let their children play with your children because you're one of them. So what are you going to do? Well, I thought about actually saying maybe this whole thing about Jesus being the Messiah.

Maybe I've got it all wrong. Okay, let me do a do-over on that. And I'll just unbelieve. Okay?

And welcome me back into the Jewish community where everything is forgiven and we can pick up where we left off and things will run smoothly again. Hey, you can't do that. It is impossible.

You cannot do that. And then when the heat's off and things cool down, then you can reaffirm your faith in Jesus again. And the writer of Hebrews is saying, you realize what would happen if that were possible?

Listen, you can only be saved once. That's right. And the idea that you must be born again and again and again and again and you know, some people, dear souls, they lack assurance, they lack understanding and confidence in their salvation.

[9 : 49] And every time there's an altar call, they go. And they think, well, maybe I wasn't saved before and if I wasn't, I'll get saved now. Or I, I did some terrible things this past week and I'm afraid God has kicked me out.

So I want to come back. So the invitation is given and they go forward again. And there is but one dose of salvation per person.

You either have it or you don't. And if you have it, it is in your system. It's in your spiritual DNA. You are part of it and it is part of you.

And that's the way it's going to be. And you are in Christ and nothing can separate you from Him. Not even stupid, bad behavior. And the reason for that is you did not get into Christ because of your behavior.

And you're not going to be kicked out because of your behavior. You realize there isn't a one of us that deserves to be in Christ? Isn't a one of us that deserves salvation? Not a one of us.

[10 : 55] And as I've often said, anybody who thinks they are entitled or they deserve heaven isn't going. And there are going to be a lot of disappointed people because they've got a long list of all the things they've done that should impress God and open the pearly gates and let them in.

But we are saved by grace. We are kept by grace. And that's the whole nine yards. So, dealing with this issue is what he's talking about.

In fact, this is the burden of this whole letter of Hebrews. It's to get these people stabilized in their faith so they can move out and grow and mature and develop and become responsible believers in Christ.

And these people were just vacillating. They were lacking in diligence. They were afraid to move out with boldness because of repercussions, because of criticism, and so on.

So, as we turn to chapter 6 and verse 9, this is 6E, and the writer says, Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you.

[12 : 08] And who is the you to whom he is referring? He's referring to those who have tasted of the heavenly gift, who have partaken of the Spirit, who have tasted of the age to come.

All those five things mentioned earlier, these are those of whom he is referring here when he says, we are persuaded better things of you. Why? Because you are believers.

Now, start acting like it. Shape up. We are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation because you are saved.

So, where are those things that accompany salvation? It shouldn't be vacillating and indecision and hem-hauling and backpedaling and all the rest of it. You need to have an appropriate boldness.

Though we thus speak, for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward his name. And why and how did they do that?

[13 : 09] Because they were believers. They were true believers. And they had a labor of love. And that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. These are the same ones of whom he is speaking when he says, it is impossible to fall away.

You can't do that. You've got one option. Just one. What is it? Move out. Move forward. Keep moving. Keep going on. in that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.

And, we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

Okay. I'm all for letting there be light, but sometimes it's a different kind of light. So, in full assurance of hope to the end, that you be not slothful.

And, the problem is, that's exactly what they were being. They were slow to move. In order that you may become half-hearted, not become half-hearted, grow careless, show yourself slow to learn, grow disinterested.

[14 : 25] Why? Because they were becoming weary with paying the price and living under this constant pressure and difficulty. You've got to understand, many of them were ostracized from the Jewish community.

They were shunned. They were left outside. And, it was a terrible price to pay. And, not only that, but their kids paid the price, too. Everybody paid the price. But, followers of him, followers who, through faith and patience, inherit the promise.

For, when God made promise to Abraham, now, hear what he's going to say. He's going to prove this point. Look, God has made a commitment. He has made a promise to the seed of Abraham.

You can take it to the bank. Whatever God promises, he is absolutely, definitely, concretely, going to deliver. That you can count on.

And, we cannot count on one another sometimes. We can't always count on ourselves. But, you can count on an immutable God. And, when God made promise to Abraham, this is where it all started.

[15 : 35] Genesis 12, out of Abraham and his seed, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve tribes, through whom the Messiah would eventually come. All of this is ramped up in God's promise to Abraham.

That's Genesis 12. Because, because God could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee.

There's no maybe about it. God's going to make good on his word. And, these are promises that he gave to the seed of David. And, I want to spend just a little bit of time on this swearing and oath, because that's something that is very peculiar to the Jewish people.

We do it today, primarily out of tradition, but in biblical times, it was considered a way of guaranteeing something that you promised you were going to do.

In other words, in the Jewish community, and traditionally, it would be one thing to say, I will do such and such. You can count on it.

[16:55] And, to the average Jew, that did not mean all that much. But, if you were willing to say, I swear by the God of heaven, or I swear by the temple, or I swear by this or by that, that gave an extra dimension of guarantee to it, so that in the Jewish community, that you could rest in.

You could just get them to swear. Well, our Lord addressed that in the Gospels, and we won't take time to go back there, but he made the statement, swear not at all, neither by the temple, neither by this or neither by that, swear not at all.

He's not talking about using profanity, by the way, cussing. He's not talking about that. He's talking about swearing an oath. And he said, your word needs to be your bond.

If you say you will do something, that's it. Or you will not do something, that's it. Don't add the swearing to it.

That is unnecessary. necessary. Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay, so that your word is your bond. And you shouldn't have to say, well, I swear to this or swear to that.

[18:22] What was it? What we used to say as kids? Swear to God. What was it? Something about sticking the eye? I don't remember what it was.

We used to make these stupid statements as a kid, swear to God, lest I die, poke me in the eye, something crazy thing like that. Anyway, if you said that, it's kind of like a double dare.

You de-double dare, oh, wow, you've got to do that if you de-double dare. That's something that has real coinies to it. Well, what Christ is saying in refuting that is it's just nonsense.

A simple yes or simple no should identify you with your personal integrity. And when you give your word, that should be enough. And what God is doing here is actually accommodating the culture and the tradition of Israel in the same way that when he had the animals split in two and parts of one side and parts on the other side and he walked between with Abraham asleep, God had already made a promise to Abraham that he was going to bless him and his seed.

And wasn't that good enough? Well, sad to say, apparently it wasn't good enough for Abraham. So you know what God did? This is a picture of God's condescension, God's accommodating the weakness of men.

[19:57] God said to Abraham, all right, Abraham, I told you what I'm going to do. Apparently that's not good enough for you. apparently if you have the word as your countrymen make the word and the promise, that would suffice.

So I'm going to do that. I'm going to give you that, Abraham. So he had these animals divided in half, half the animals on this side, half the animals on that side, and a deep sleep and darkness fell upon Abraham and God in the person of a smoking torch and a lantern passed himself through those animal pieces.

Abraham was out cold. He was sound asleep. And all that indicates is that that promise was conditioned solely upon God. Ordinarily, ordinarily the two people entering the covenant, that would be God and Abraham, would link arms, arm in arm, and walk through those animal pieces together, which was tantamount to saying, if either of us violate or break this covenant, may what has happened to these animals be our portion.

And Abraham is as much as saying, well, now, now, that's really a promise. Actually, it was a kind of an insult to God, because God said, I'm going to do thus and so, and Abraham said, I didn't know about that.

Can you do that? Will you do that? God says, alright, Abraham, we'll do it your way. take the animals, cut them into, and he was accommodating Abraham to the local culture and custom that was embedded in Judaism and that whole part of the world at that time.

[21 : 43] So, here's what we've got in this situation here. God is doing the same thing in Hebrew. He is making a note, he is swearing a note, but all oaths that are worth anything are sworn by a person who is greater than yourself.

There, God's got a problem because he can't find anybody. There isn't anyone greater than himself and this is what the text says, because he could swear by no greater, he swear by himself saying, surely, blessing I will bless thee and multiplying I will multiply thee.

Now, this swearing thing has come down through centuries, actually through millennia, into many places throughout the world today. And we know, we're familiar with this, in the American system of jurisprudence, and when someone is called upon to give a testimony, it is not regarded sufficient for them to take the stand and be counted on to tell the truth.

truth. So, they have to be sworn in. And there was a time when in every courtroom in this country, left hand was placed upon the Bible, right hand was raised, pointing to whom?

Pointing to heaven. Left hand on the Bible, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

[23 : 28] And they reply, I do. Sometimes they repeat the oath. I do solemnly swear, tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. And of late, and I'm sure that this is due in part to the secularization that is taking place in our country, I understand that now in a number of courtrooms at the discretion of the judge, the Bible is absent, and very often they say, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Stop there! Stop there! There is no so help you God. They just stop there, and they reply, I do. Now, courtrooms differ, and it's again at the discretion of the judge.

But it is a sad commentary because, and the idea of course, is that when someone is sworn in, then you can be more assured that they are going to be truthful than if they are not under oath.

But we all know that for a lot of people, that doesn't amount to a hill of beans. Some of the classiest liars that have ever come out of a courtroom swore on Bibles to tell the truth, and you know, you can't believe them.

So, the extra dimension that is supposed to be realized in the taking of an oath and being sworn in, doesn't necessarily mean anything because there are a lot of people who lie under oath.

[24 : 57] And by the way, that is subject to penalty. You can be prosecuted for lying under oath, and it's called perjury. And you can actually be charged, and some have even been sent to jail for lying under oath.

And when people all kinds of stuff going on Washington now, and investigations, and people are called up to testify, and they're before a Senate committee or a House committee, and they swear them to tell the truth, but we all know that there are those who have lied under oath.

So, anyway, God is accommodating Abraham, and he has sworn by himself that there is guarantee behind his word, saying, I will bless thee.

And multiplying, I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

For men swear by the greater, and by the way, the promise that he obtained eventually, of course, was Isaac. And Isaac was the child of promise.

[26 : 08] And Ishmael was the child of the flesh. Ishmael was fulfilling God's promise man's way. Isaac was fulfilling God's promise God's way.

And the difference, of course, was tremendous. He obtained the promise. Verse 16, For men verily swear by the greater, and, let's turn the page, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

In other words, if the oath is taken, that's the end of any argument, any debating, or any quibbling, the thing that is promised is locked in.

That settles it. That gives an air of finality to it. Well, if you could just get in to make an oath, then that will settle the issue.

Then we can be sure. That's what the text is saying. Every dispute of theirs, the oath is final for confirmation. And Rhames says, And with them, an end of all gainsaying by way of confirmation is the oath.

[27 : 16] And that's why it meant so very much to them. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel.

Immutable means that you are not subject to change. When something is mutable, we talk about mutations. There can be a mutation in insects or in bacteria where it is able to actually develop into something else through a mutation.

And this is something that medical researchers have fits about because they no sooner come up with a drug to address something and kill a certain kind of bacteria and bacteria is biological life.

They are living things and they want to survive. Even if it kills you, they want to survive. So they will thrive if they can and when opposition comes at them by way of a medication that is designed to obliterate them, they begin finding ways to work around it and survive the medication by mutation.

They mutate into something else that that medication will not affect. And that's a big, big problem because years ago, probably about 25 years ago, no, maybe, I guess it's been more like 50 years ago, there were certain drugs that were developed that were called wonder drugs and one of them was cortisone and two or three others and I can't recall them and they were marvelous, life-saving, they addressed a whole lot of medical issues, but getting to the place now where these things no longer have the same degree of effectiveness that they once had and there are no new wonder drugs on the scene.

[29 : 24] And it really concerns the medical community because we are in danger of large numbers of people being actually wiped out when certain strains can develop and I'm sure there are some sleepless nights in the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta because they're dealing with us, trying to come up with things and they fear that massive epidemics may break out because some of these things are no longer effective.

So we read that he confirmed it by a note that by two immutable things and one of course is the promise that is the promise of Isaac, a son, a seed, a nation, and the other is the oath that God took.

So these two immutable things in which it was impossible. There's another impossible. We saw that in chapter 6 at the beginning. It is impossible for those who have been enlightened and so on and so on.

Here it is impossible for God to lie. And you are aware, I'm sure, that there are a whole lot of things that God cannot do that are impossible.

One of the old saws is could God make a rock so big he can't lift it? Well, that's actually a contradiction in terms.

[30 : 48] That's an impossible situation. It's the same way as saying, well, if God cannot make a circle square, then he can't do everything. Well, that's a contradictory situation too because if it's a circle, it's a circle.

If it's a square, it's a square. And one cannot be the other. It's the same way as saying, God cannot lie. A lot of things he cannot do. He cannot deny himself.

He cannot lie. And he cannot save anyone other than through the finished work of Jesus Christ. So God has limitations imposed upon him. The things that he cannot do.

And we ought to be glad that he can't. So it's impossible for him to lie. And because of that, we might have a strong consolation.

That means you can settle down and be at peace and rest in this because you know God will hold up his end no matter what.

[31 : 51] Amen. men. We might have a strong consolation, strong encouragement, mighty encouragement. By the way, this encouragement, this confidence is sometimes by others interpreted as cockiness or self-confidence and it's far removed from that.

we are completely confident that we are heaven bound. And you know how the world interprets that? The world interprets that as well.

You must think that you're really wonderful. That you are such a wonderful person and you've done so many good things that you know that God is going to accept.

No, no, no, no. That misses the whole point. Our confidence is strong and it is certain. But it isn't because of who we are or what we have or have not done.

Our confidence is in the integrity of God and in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That's what gives us the ability to say, I know.

[33 : 02] Not because of who I am or what I've done, but because of who Jesus Christ is and what He's done. They completely missed the point. And that's because they are locked in to operating on the merit system.

And they think that you think you're going to heaven because you are so good. No, I'm just as rotten as everybody else. But the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

That's where our confidence lies and nowhere else. So, we have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope, that is, the confidence, the absolute certainty, set before us, which hope we have as an anchor.

I love that. We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the sea billows roll, anchored to the rock that cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.

Our anchor holds because Christ is our anchor. Joe? And hope is not hope like we kind of generally think of hope. It's a sure thing. Amen. It's a sure thing.

[34 : 18] Thank you. Thank you. Biblical hope is not a question mark. Biblical hope is not a maybe. Biblical hope is a certainty. And when Paul wrote to the Colossians and he said, Christ is in you the hope of glory.

What that means is because Christ is in you, that is your absolute guarantee, assurance, confidence of future glory. And what's that future glory?

It's a resurrection body. Body fashioned like under the body of Christ, glorified as he is. That's our hope and it is in him. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.

This is body and spirit. Both sure and steadfast. And which enters into that within the veil.

This has to do with the Jewish temple and the holy place and the most holy place. The veil that separated them. And only the high priest could go into the most holy place once a year.

[35 : 25] Day of atonement. Not without blood. To atone for his sin and the sins of the people. And that's what he's referring to here. Which enters into that within the veil.

Whether the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus. Made and high priest forever. After the order of Melchizedek. And we saw him surface back in chapter 5 and here he is again because he's such a prominent person and plays such a strategic role in our salvation.

So there are just two people in the priesthood of Melchizedek. One is Melchizedek the other is Jesus. And in the priesthood of Levi and of Aaron there were thousands of priests over periods of years.

But Christ is an order because he was not born of the tribe of Levi. That would disqualify him from being a Levitical priest. He was born of the tribe of Judah. That was the royal line. But Melchizedek was the forerunner and Christ is the antitope.

Kevin? Yeah. From the beginning. You said something that was very, very valuable and had a lot of meaning. So we're talking about salvation. From the beginning about how people feel.

[36 : 37] You know what I mean? Like they've lost their salvation. You know what I mean? Yeah. I know there are people who and probably the greatest reason why people lose the confidence of their salvation, the assurance of their salvation, is because they've done something really stupid or sinful and they reason this way.

You know what? If I were really a Christian, I would never have done that or I would have never said that. But I did say that and I did do that. Therefore, that must mean I'm not really saved.

and that is an inability to appropriate what grace is really all about. When God saved you, he did not give you probation.

He gave you salvation. He's not saying, now I'm giving you this gift of salvation, but buddy you better watch it because if you misbehave, I'm going to yank it from you.

Yeah, a true Christian could never do that. Well listen, when you got saved, when you trusted Christ as your Savior, the Spirit of God came in, but your old Adamic nature didn't vacate the premises.

[38 : 01] It's still there. And your volition did not change. You still have a will and you can still do really stupid things that no Christian ought to ever do.

And I'm speaking from experience. but your behavior does not cause you to lose your salvation any more than your behavior causes you to gain salvation.

It is a matter of grace through faith. And of course, this does not mean that now that you're saved you have a license to sin. You can live any way you want to. Well, actually you can.

But, God has a woodshed. And it's called divine discipline. And He will spank your spiritual butt all the way home if He has to.

Kevin? You know I was going there. Hey, my man, you went right there. Okay. First thing, you know, there's got to be some of my evidence about that tells you this. The Lord said, first of all, He said, I will never leave you and I will never forsake you.

[39 : 06] Amen. Amen. Never leave you or forsake you. Amen. He told me the things. He said, You have to understand the natural before you can understand me.

And then when He told me to leave me, you gotta understand the natural in life before you understand me. Now, let's go to the natural. When you was born, when you was born, and you came out of that room, I'm talking about the spiritual room, you know where I'm going with this, when you was born out of your room, and your natural mother and your father, when mama said, you better be on that porch.

By what? By dust. Well, I got something for you. If you wasn't on that porch by dust, you better whoop it. If she didn't tell you to pack up your clothes, get out, I don't want to be bothered with you no more.

Amen. Because you were her son, because you carried the DNA. Amen. Continuously. When we mess up, but they never told us what? To get out, you're not my son no more.

They couldn't do that, because you carried the DNA. Amen. And the same thing applies to Jesus in the spirit. Once you acquire his DNA, and then say, then you mess up like Mark said, you got a whooping company.

[40 : 19] That don't mean to say that your salvation is all I'm done with you. You could be thankful. That's right. That's right. Thank you. You belong here. Thank you. Thank you, brother. Take out the woodshed.

You do not remain in the body of Christ because you deserve it, because you didn't get into the body of Christ because you deserve it. You got in by grace, and you are kept by His grace through faith.

Thank you. Thank you.