

Hebrews

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] We plan to undertake chapter 6 this morning, and as I mentioned at our last session, this certainly is one of the most controversial passages in all of the New Testament, and it has evoked a great deal of disagreement on the part of believers.

And I am talking in particular of Hebrews chapter 6 and the first four verses or so. It's been subject to perhaps a score of interpretations from both sides, the Calvinists and the Arminians, and I suspect there is some truth and some error with both sides, but we will do our best to dissect the passage, and we will encourage any input that you may have to offer because there are some hermeneutical principles that need to be applied here, and the first one has to do with ignoring the chapter divisions, as we have pointed out a number of times in the past.

Recall, if you will, there is nothing inspired about the division of chapters or verses in the Bible. They were added, actually, not all that long ago.

About 500, 600 years ago, our Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testament, didn't even have chapter divisions or verses. Those are all man-made, and some of them are good, and some of them are terrible.

And here we have another example of a terrible one. The clue that indicates that it is not a good chapter division is the way chapter 6 starts, with the word therefore.

[1 : 4 3] Therefore is no way to begin a new thought or a new chapter. Therefore, as well as wherefore, is a conclusion.

It is a deduction that has been reached, and it is not the beginning of a new thought at all. So, what is the therefore, therefore, as the old cliché goes? It indicates that there is a very close connection between what has just been stated in chapter 5 and what is opening in chapter 6.

Recall, if you will, we concluded chapter 5 with the writer admonishing, actually, he was scolding his Jewish audience for their lack of progression and understanding, which by this time should have been sufficient.

But in their case, it wasn't. So, I just want to go back, and I'm going to reserve comment, but I just want to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Let's go back to chapter 5, and look, if you will, at verse 12, and we'll just continue reading until we get into chapter 6.

Verse 12 of chapter 5, For, or because, when for the time you ought to be teachers. Now, be reminded, he is addressing a Jewish constituency.

[3 : 1 5] These are people who were already well-versed in the Old Testament. The New Testament had not even been written. So, he is reminding them of what they know, and he says, For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God.

It's kind of like saying, you need to go back and go over the ABCs again. I'm disappointed with you people. Where have you been? How come you are not up to speed?

Instead of being able to teach others, you need somebody to teach you the very basic rudiments of the faith all over again. The first principles of the oracles of God.

And you are become such as have need of milk, not of strong meat. You're still on pabulum, the milk.

You ought to be enjoying T-bone steaks. You ought to be enjoying the mashed potatoes and gravy and everything that goes with it. But you're still on the bottle.

[4 : 29] This is ridiculous. Everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Therefore, chapter 6 opens, therefore, in other words, this is why I am saying, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.

That's what they were not doing. They were stuck on hold. They were not moving out in this new faith. These, by the way, bear in mind, these are Jews, and they are Jews who, for the most part, are believers.

They have come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah. Now, as we go through Hebrews, it will become apparent that there are three classes, three distinct classes of Jews to whom the writer is addressing his letter.

[5 : 48] And they are all Jews, but there are Jews who have come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. There are Jews who are issued in this letter a warning because they have not come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

And there are also Jews in the third category who are on the fence vacillating. They can't quite make up their mind. One day they are convinced.

The next day they are not. They have never actually made a commitment to him because they are unsure of their position. So there you've got three different classes of Jews, but all Jews, to whom the writer is addressing his remarks.

And here, I am convinced that in this portion, he is talking to those who have embraced Yeshua HaMashiach as their Messiah.

The question now is, what are they doing with him? Are they moving out? Are they developing? Are they maturing? And this element, to whom Hebrews is written, has not done that.

[6 : 56] And the writer is urging them, provoking them, on to the progress that they should be enjoying while they are still stuck on the ABCs.

And this is what he says, what he means when he says, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ. That's the ABCs. What are the principles? There is no greater principle regarding the doctrine of Christ than God sent him, and he sent him for the purpose of dying for our sin.

That's the ABCs. That's the essence of the gospel. That's as basic and as simple as you can get as a beginner. And Paul makes that so clear when he writes to the Corinthians, for I delivered unto you of first importance.

In other words, this is ground rule, this is the bottom, this is the baseline, this is the A of ABCs. I delivered unto you that which I first of all received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the gospel.

That he was buried, that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. That's the ABCs. That's the essence of the gospel. They had embraced that. And now what the writer of Hebrews is saying, with that as your foundation, move out and let's start building the superstructure.

[8 : 24] Don't relay the foundation. You're stuck there. You need to get off the foundation and start building the upper stories. That was the great problem that faced him.

When he says, let us go on into perfection, he's not talking about any kind of sinless perfection. He's talking about, let us go on to maturity, to development.

He's talking about contrasting them as babes needing a formula of milk, whereas they should be developing into solid foods and growing and maturing.

And we all know that when a baby starts out with milk at its mother's breast, you don't want it to stay there. It'll eventually graduate into pabulum or the oatmeal, but you don't want it to stay there.

You want that baby to be able to eat all of the food on the table that the adults are eating. And as it does, it grows and matures and develops.

[9 : 30] And this baby isn't coming to perfection. It is coming to maturity. It is developing. And if you'll note the words, the Montgomery translation says, let us go on.

Let us be born along toward what is mature. And William says, and continue progressing toward maturity. Moffat says, let us pass on to what is mature.

And Philip says, and go forward to adult understanding. Not laying again the foundation. In other words, once you are saved, you can't be saved again.

Salvation is a one-time experience. And when you have come to faith in Christ, you are complete in him.

Our position is complete. And fellas, insofar as you're complete, insofar as your salvation is concerned and your position, there isn't any way that you can be more complete than what you are.

[10 : 45] This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Colossians and said, and you are complete in Christ. That means you have nothing lacking in your position. In other words, God cannot do anything more to affect your salvation than what he has already done through the finished work of Christ.

That is over and done with. And the reason your position is perfect, complete, mature, is because Christ is the basis for it.

And he knows nothing about doing an incomplete work. He will perfect that which concerns us. And we are in Christ.

We share his righteousness. We share his destiny. We share every good thing that he has to offer simply because we are in him. And that is our position. Our practice is another matter.

It is our practice in which we are to grow and mature and develop. That is what is meant by growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 53] You cannot grow in your position. But we can certainly grow, develop, and mature in our practice. And therein lies what the writer is talking about here.

Laying not again a foundation or continually relaying a foundation. William says, let us stop laying a foundation. And Philip says, let us not lay over and over again the foundation truths of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

I well remember my present wife saying that when they lived for quite some time in Knoxville, Tennessee.

And her husband was operating a business there. And they attended a local church there in Knoxville. And she said, they loved the church. They loved the people.

And everybody was friendly. And it was a good atmosphere that prevailed and everything. And the only complaint that they had was the preaching, the teaching.

[13 : 02] And she said, the pastor was a really nice guy, a wonderful man, and everything. But all that was ever delivered from the pulpit was salvation, salvation, salvation.

And always an invitation to receive Christ at the end. And this was standard fare.

And that's great. Nobody is denying that. But that's the basics. That's the element, the ABC. People need nourishment to go on and go beyond their salvation.

They need to move into what the scriptures call the sanctification. That is the growth and the maturity and development. And yet, I am satisfied, bless their heart, that there are a lot of preachers who feel that they have failed the Lord if they haven't given the plan of salvation and an invitation for people to be saved.

Because after all, even when you have a congregation of a couple of hundred people, and as far as you know, every one of them is a believer, yet there may be just one who doesn't know the Lord.

[14 : 20] So, you are justified and even required to preach salvation and give that invitation just against the possibility that there may be one soul out there that has never made a decision for Christ.

And I can understand that rationalizing, because how much value can you put on that one soul? But at the same time, you're starving all the rest.

The rest of the congregation is not being fed. They're not being given the nutrients that they need to go on and develop in their Christian life. It is salvation over and over and over again.

So, what people need is to be edified. The Apostle said, Let all things be done unto edification. Edification means the saints need to be built up.

From which the word edifice comes. It means to create a superstructure. To build them up. To develop them. And that's the principal responsibility of the church.

[15 : 29] Now, I know it's not often looked upon that way, and I remember years ago when I made the statement that offended somebody so deeply that they stopped coming to grace.

And I said, The church, the church of Jesus Christ, was never intended, and I'm talking about a local congregation now, was never really intended to be a soul-saving station.

It was intended to be a saint-equipping station. This is Ephesians 4. Now, of course, the gospel is preached at church, invitations are given, and a lot of people are saved in church.

And I'm sure that's true, as people have told me, at Grace Bible Church. But that's not the basic thrust of the church. Who is supposed to do the work of evangelism?

You are. You are. It isn't the pastor. The pastor is to equip the saints. This is Ephesians 4. The pastor is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

[16 : 42] And he is to teach and edify and build up the saints so that they take the word of salvation, they take the gospel out, where they work, where they live, where they play and everything, and share and communicate the gospel.

But somewhere along the line, that's been lost sight of. And everybody seems to think that the preacher is the professional evangelizer.

He is the only one who is able to lead someone to Christ. And I don't want to try to do anything, because I'm afraid I might do it wrong. Or I'm afraid I might mess up. Or I'm afraid they may ask questions that I can't answer.

That's his job. That's his job. Yeah. That's what we pay the preacher for. That's his job. Yeah. That's his job. Yeah. And there's a lot of that, you know. And this, sad to say, this is pretty much what much of the church has morphed into, where the whole thrust of evangelizing is to be done from the pulpit.

And I'm, don't get me wrong, I'm not opposed to that, and I've done plenty of it myself. And I plan to continue. But the basic thrust of the ministry is for believers.

[17 : 54] The church is, someone said, the church is not for ain'ts. It's for saints. And we're glad any time an ain't comes in and is exposed to the gospel, but by and large, the atmosphere that is created and the content of the scriptures that are shared is designed to appeal to the maturing, growing believer in Christ.

And somewhere along the way, we've gotten, we've lost sight of that. And many churches are, like I said, are turned into just an evangelistic center.

And the rest of the congregation is kind of like dying on the vine because they're not being fed, they're not getting the nourishment they need, they're getting salvation over and over and over and over again.

And once you're saved, you can't get more saved than saved. You are delivered, you are rescued, you are in Christ. Now grow up! How do you grow up? With the word of God, taught, explained, practiced, that's what grows saints.

And these people were lacking in that. So, let us not lay again repentance from dead works, that's, that's, that's the ABCs of salvation.

[19 : 14] What, what is the first thing you have to do? What is the very first thing, what is the A of the ABC on hearing the gospel of Christ?

It means you're a sinner. First, yeah. That's repentance. That means you've got to change your mind. That's where it all starts. But, once you've changed your mind, you don't need to change it again.

When you receive Christ as your Savior, you receive Christ as your Savior. And I know people lack assurance, and, and this is, this is a real problem. And I can speak to this personally, because, as a new Christian, and I hadn't, I hadn't, I hadn't been, hadn't been a believer, but, but, yeah, actually even less than a year.

And I encouraged this tremendous plague of doubt regarding everything. Regarding my salvation, regarding the authority of the Bible, regarding everything.

And I was a real emotional, spiritual mess, because I had, I had an understanding of what was at stake, my eternal destiny.

[20 : 24] But I didn't have any assurance or any comfort. And it was an agonizing thing. And I can well remember as a new Christian saying something in prayer like this, Lord, I, I think I believe, I think I trusted, I intended to, but if I didn't really, I want to now.

And, and it's, it's a plea for that kind of assurance and confidence that is lacking, because a heart that does not have assurance and confidence is a heart that cannot be at rest.

And we are called upon to be at rest and to be at peace, so that the peace of God that passes understanding shall guard our hearts and minds. But if you don't have assurance of your salvation, which is the very A of the ABCs, then your growth and your development is hindered because you're stuck on A.

and you cannot get past that. So there is no growth and no maturity. And by the way, this, I am satisfied, is a principal reason why so many believers have been saved for years and years and years.

and they may be in church every Sunday, but there seems to be no evidence of growth or maturity or development and you wonder why.

[22 : 00] I mean, here is someone who for the amount of years that they have been a believer should be teaching others and yet they are insecure and they are unsure of their own position and a lot of this has to do with an inability to grasp the concept and doctrine of grace.

Now, let me just depart here a little bit because I know wherever I speak, I've run into this a number of times. And it makes people very, very reluctant to share their faith or to explain how they came to Christ or how they know they are in Christ because they are scared to death that it will sound like they are boasting to say I know I am in Christ and that heaven is my destiny.

They are afraid that will come across to other people as well, la-di-da, look at you. You must think you are really wonderful that you have arrived and you know you're going to heaven.

Wow! You must think you are really good. Unless they give the impression that they are that secure and that confident which will make them look like they're a real goody-goody they just dummy up and they don't share anything like that because they don't want to come across as somebody thinking that of them so they just they don't have a handle on grace.

And when you can say I know my sins are forgiven I know that I'm going to heaven that that's my destiny and I know it has nothing to do with my degree of goodness because that doesn't begin to measure up.

[24 : 10] It is all because of the grace of God. That's why I know. Pat? It helps if you follow that statement up of also saying I also know that I'm still a sinner. There you go.

Absolutely. We are reclaimed sinners but we are still sinners. And there is a problem because we are saints. We are saints in Christ.

We are separated ones. But we are not perfected saints. We are saints under construction. We are saints that are being developed.

And when you consider that when Paul writes to the Corinthians you talk about a bunch of spiritual juvenile delinquents. The Corinthians were it.

I mean these people were a mess. They had divisions among them. They were squabbling and arguing and fussing over gifts and who had what and all the rest. And Paul said I address you as carnal fleshly.

[25 : 10] You are just acting like people out in the world act. What is the matter with you? And you know what he calls them? He calls them saints separated under Christ Jesus.

You are saints. You are not behaving very saintly like. And he really chews out those Corinthians because they were not fulfilling what God had required of them or given them the ability to fulfill.

Kevin? First of all my wife said something earlier man. Well I thought some were sent and some just went. I'm sorry?

I said some were sent and some just went. Okay. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And one of the biggest reasons is because first of all you have to be drawn by the Holy Spirit anyway.

You're going to repent. All the repent and do all things. You're not drawn by the Holy Spirit or the living God. But people have become stagnant in their own ways.

[26 : 19] You know what I mean? In their own ways and they didn't want to grow. They felt it. You know what I said they killed him for it. Yeah. Because they were stagnated in their own ways.

They didn't want to grow. Smug and self-satisfied. That's a kind of a Pharisee's kind of description. And Christ read them out soundly and roundly.

Any thoughts about this? This is really Dan? Well you've cast upon a very deep subject here. Area Christianity because you have this where you become a Christian and then you know you don't do anything with it.

Yeah. You have those that do something with it. But then you have the others which I'm most concerned about and what they call the baby Christians they go to church and they say oh I found Jesus Christ but then the preacher says by the way we're going to revelations that's the last book in the Bible.

And so they really you have to have both. You have to have a basis. You're right. Yeah. A script full understanding before you can apply.

[27 : 40] I think there's some people that I mean I can't judge the heart of them. I don't know but I see this but I think once you have maturity not only means you walk and talk but you find out a little bit more what's in this Bible.

But there's what I think you put on the day very deep. Well it is. It is a real problem because and I think every pastor confronts this.

I know I deal with it on a weekly basis and that is in your congregation and almost every congregation you've got people all over the spiritual spectrum.

You've got the relatively new believer who has not been a believer in Christ very long at all and he's just spreading his wings and just starting to fly and is what Paul calls a babe in Christ.

He may be 60 years old but if he has just come to faith in Christ he is a baby a baby brother. And then you've got the seasoned old saint who has been walking with the Lord lie these 65 years who knows the Bible about as well or maybe better than the preacher and you have the responsibility of providing spiritual nourishment for both and for everybody else who is in between.

[29 : 20] And some of the things that are going to come from that pulpit are going to go right over the head of some people. They just don't get it. They don't have the sufficient base and maturity to understand and connect those dots and put it together.

And at the same time you've got the baby brethren who are still in their ABCs and you need to be sensitive to them because they are just growing and maturing.

They've got so many questions and so many some of them have so much baggage from where they're coming from that they need the ABCs.

And what are you going to do? You try to kind of aim for the middle or do you go with the lowest common denominator and this will result in your preaching salvation for every message or do you go with the very highest which means you're going to be over the heads of some.

And I've read a number of articles about this and I've taken my cue from a number of well-known pastors from times past and I'm going all the way back to Spurgeon and all the rest of them.

[30 : 36] And the general consensus seems to be and I know you may or may not agree with this but I've adopted it and I trust that if it is not accurate and this is not the way it should be that's just one more thing the Lord will have to forgive me for.

but what I have sought to do is teach to the highest element in the congregation not the lowest.

With the intent that the goal is to bring those on the lowest rung up rather than to make it pabulum and milk and bore the saints who are seasoned and beyond that.

So it does become a problem and I think every preacher worth his salt has struggled with this issue. That's why when I first came to your church I couldn't understand you what you're talking about.

Okay. Well, you're still there and I would hope that you I have nothing but the salvation message.

[31 : 49] Okay. Well, I appreciate that. I appreciate that. I really do. Yeah. Kevin. I was saying that one word that came up.

to remove a lot of people from stagnation. Stagnation is a bad after heck of a word. And it's really, really deep in the churches where people feel like they didn't bow just about one thing.

I'm good. I've got it. I've got it. I've got it. But you will never know why the secrets are broken. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. You never outgrow your need for growth. You never arrive. Nobody can say, well, I've been a Christian X number of years now and I want you all to look at me as the example because I have arrived.

[33 : 13] God forbid. You know, I'll tell you what. The closer you come to the Lord and the more you mature in the faith, the more you will be wholly convinced that you are far from having arrived. There won't be any illusion about that.

And on that note, we will leave the subject, but we really didn't get into the problem that surfaces here in chapter 6. It's coming up in the next couple of verses and we will be there next time.