

The Rabbi's Worries Hebrews 5:12 – 6:8

Hebrews 5:12 – 6:8 Introduction

- Hebrews is a 1st Century sermon from an anonymous Christian who had been trained in the rabbinical traditions of his time.
- He wrote it to encourage Jewish Christians who were under pressure to back away from their Christian faith and return to traditional Judaism.
- In Chapters 4-5 he introduced a major theme of the letter, the high priesthood of Christ.
- He is trying to show how it is the fulfillment of the priesthood of the Old Testament.
- As he began to speak of an obscure Old Testament character named Melchizedek, a person central to his explanation of Christ's priesthood, he decided to pause.

- He needs to express a few worries he has about the people who will read this letter.
- There will be three of them.
- They are serious.
- They are relevant to every pastor, every church, every Christian and even every potential Christian today.

Hebrews 5:12 – 6:8 Outline

Three Things That Worry the Rabbi:

Worry #1	Ignorance	5:12-14
Worry #2	Immaturity	6:1-3
Worry #3	Apostasy	6:4-8

Worry #1 Ignorance 5:12-14

- Start reading from **5:8** to get the earlier flow of the text.

- **5:12** The rabbi stops here because he has material to go over with the people that he is afraid they might not understand.
- The problem is not that the material is so incredibly difficult, but that the congregation is unready to grapple with it.
- These are not new believers, they are people raised in the Old Testament Scriptures who already have years of Christian teaching behind them.
- The congregation ought to be farther along in their faith than they actually are.
- The information they needed was accessible; they simply were not making use of it.

- **5:13** They still need **milk**.
- They need to keep going back over the basics or the ABCs of the Christian life.
- **5:14** They should be ready for **solid food**.
- There are deeper, more satisfying, more enjoyable truths that can only be grasped when we are ready.

- Because they have been lax in their learning, they are also behind in their calling.
- By this time they should be teaching others.
- Their lack of enthusiasm for the things that would help them grow has now begun to hold others back.
- **Take note:** People are waiting to benefit from our spiritual growth.

Worry #2 Immaturity 6:1-3

- **6:1 Leaving ... elementary principles**
- These are the basics or “the ABCs” of the Christian faith.
- **perfection** is more like “maturity.”
- We need to grow from babies needing milk into spiritually responsible adults.

- **6:1 Not laying again a foundation**
- There is no need to repeatedly build a foundation, but a good foundation must be firmly built.
- We can only leave the basics of the faith as a child leaves the ABCs – after we have learned them well.
- **6:1 repentance from dead works**
- Repentance or a rejection of sin is needed and is basic to the Christian life.
- As long as we think more highly of our sin than of Jesus, repentance hasn’t taken place.
- **Faith toward God** is needed in order to receive forgiveness of past sin and the daily help we need to avoid sin in the future.

- **6:2 baptisms** Notice that this is plural.
- This can mean one of two things:
- Jewish ritual washings, as the original readers were Jewish and possibly living by these laws.
- The two baptisms for a Christian:
 - Baptism in the Spirit – the inward cleansing done by God which purifies our heart.
 - Water baptism – the public expression of our faith symbolic of death and resurrection.
- **6:2 laying on of hands**
- We practice this as a part of prayer for people at special times:
- Immediately after baptism
- For physical healing
- Before mission trips
- Upon entry into a particular role of ministry
- Etc. (Whenever we might pray for special needs)

- **6:2 resurrection of the dead**
- Christians, of course, believe this.
- Jesus rose from the dead.
- We will also rise at the end of the age and will be given new immortal bodies for eternity.
- **6:2 eternal judgment**
- Jesus will judge the living and the dead.
- That judgment will have eternal consequences.
- That is why faith in Him is vital to the salvation of our souls.
- He alone saves.

- **6:3** So let’s move on to maturity.
- This is one of the reasons we teach through the Bible here at our church.
- Our hope is to grow strong, mature, capable believers in Jesus Christ.
- We don’t want to feed you only milk, and we don’t want to stick to only the simple basics of the faith, as important as the basics really are.

Worry #3 Apostasy

6:4-8

- **Initial admissions:**
 - The passage is controversial.
 - The language of the passage allows for more than one understanding, and therefore:
 - It is almost impossible not to read into the passage whatever one already believes about salvation – and whether or not it can be finally rejected or lost by a regenerate believer.
- **Option A:**
 - The passage is merely hypothetical, describing a situation that never actually occurs.
 - This view sees the author using this scenario as a warning device to jar the complacent Hebrews out of their lethargy.
 - While I agree it's a very useful warning device, I don't think it's merely hypothetical.
- **Option B:**
 - These are people who were exposed to the gospel but quickly rejected it, opting instead to stay within traditional Judaism – in an open rejection of Christ.
 - I agree that these are people who are openly rejecting Christ and remaining in Judaism, but I don't think that rejection came very early.
- **Option C:**
 - Some say the passage describes a truly regenerate believer who has “lost” or “abandoned” his or her faith.
 - This takes seriously the description of these people in **6:4-5**.
 - The “truly regenerate believer” part is where I have the real trouble here.
- **Option D (What I believe and why):**
 - The description of these people in **6:4-5** indicates that they genuinely came under the influence of the gospel and openly took part in the life of the church.
 - The description in **6:6** of their rejection of Christ assures us that this was no simple “falling into sin” and helps us see why repentance is impossible. Christ alone saves.
- *“God has pledged Himself to pardon all who truly repent, but Scripture and experience alike suggest that it is possible for human beings to arrive at a state of heart and life where they can no longer repent.”* F. F. Bruce, British Bible scholar and author
- The illustration in **6:7-8** reminds us that visible growth is a sign of a truly transformed heart.
- Listen to John the Baptist in **Matthew 3:7-12**.
- If our walk with Christ yields no visible evidence, then we need to truly question our relationship with the Lord.
- See **2 Corinthians 13:5**.
- **On the genuine believer's security:**
 - This might be a very long discussion, which we will not go through completely today.
 - But here is simply one reason of many that I don't believe a truly regenerate believer can possess eternal life and then lose or reject it.
 - Quite simply, eternal or everlasting life or salvation is, well, “eternal” or “everlasting.”
 - Please don't think I'm trying to be cute or clever or a smart aleck. See **5:9**.

- Eternal life is a gift from God to all who put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin.
- Some argue that “eternal” in this sense does not describe a length of time, but a type or quality of life that is completely superior to what we have now.
- I agree that it describes a completely superior quality of life.
- But the Bible doesn’t call it “special life,” “miraculous life,” “wonderful life,” or simply “a completely superior quality of life.”
- The Bible calls it “eternal” or “everlasting” life.
- Eternal life is a type or quality of life that is completely superior to ordinary human life.
- And it is eternal.
- And we can receive it now as a gift from God.
- And if this “life” ever ends, meaning that the person in question walks permanently away from their commitment to Christ, then that wasn’t eternal life. It was temporary.
- So you can’t lose or reject the real thing.
- You can, however, lose or reject a reasonable facsimile – and many, many, many people do.
- They are raised in the church or they make an outward profession of faith, they “walk with the Lord” for a time – and then they’re gone.
- The Bible says much to assure us of our salvation, but what it says is inseparably linked to our faith in Jesus Christ.
- See **1 John 5:11-13**
- The person who “no longer believes” or who no longer gives evidence of professed belief is walking on very dangerous ground.

Hebrews 5:12 – 6:8 Conclusions

- Don’t become “dull of hearing.”
- Doing so stunts your spiritual growth.
- A stunted spiritual growth means that your life is not as useful for God’s purposes as it might be otherwise.
- Think of learning the Bible as a way of getting to know the Savior that loves you.
- When we love people we enjoy getting to know the details of their lives, their personalities, their backgrounds – the things that make them who they are.
- Think this way about Jesus and it will encourage you to mature in your faith.
- A mature walk with the Lord is far more enjoyable than an immature one.
- Our love for God grows as we get to know Him more intimately.
- Christian maturity, therefore, is in your best interest.
- But remember also that others are waiting to benefit from your maturity.
- Participation in the church is not the same as transformation of the soul.
- We can only see the “fruit” on the outside, but serious consideration is needed on the part of each of us to examine our “inside.”

- This is not a morbid, perpetual questioning.
- It is simply an honest assessment of whether we are truly relating to Christ on a private, personal level.

- What can we do to help others stick with their Christian commitments?
- Don't manipulate, but do encourage.
- One size doesn't fit all in either evangelism, further discipleship, or ongoing ministry.
- Not everyone prays when we ask them to, goes to Bible college, becomes a missionary or serves on staff at the church.

- What can we do to help others stick with their Christian commitments?
- It isn't always possible, but when possible, prioritize long-term relationships over instant results with either Christians or non-Christians.
- We are normally the most influenced by those who know us the best.
- So any ministry done in the context of ongoing relationships is bound to be most effective.

Closing Text Hebrews 6:9-12