

Study Notes For Hebrews **(Chapter Six)**

Hebrews 6:1-2 - The recipients of this letter were told it was time for them to mature (Hebrews 5:11-14). Now, the penman of this letter establishes what they needed to do next: *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment”* (Hebrews 6:1-2).

The Greek word translated “principles” is defined as: “a commencement, or (concretely) chief (in various applications of order, time, place, or rank): — beginning, corner, (at the, the) first (estate), magistrate, power, principality, principle, rule...” (Strong’s # 746). Most of the time, this Greek word is translated “beginning” throughout the New Testament (KJV). Therefore, the writer of this letter is telling them that they, and he as their teacher, need to leave the first things and move on in their learning process.

The statement, “let us go on unto perfection” is about completion (Strong’s # 5047). The one other time this term is used it is translated “perfectness” (Colossians 3:14). The foundation of what they needed taught had been laid. There was not a need to stay on those things. Before we proceed, it is important to note that there is a time to revisit and review things in the process of spiritual growth (I Timothy 4:1-6, II Timothy 2:8-19, II Peter 1:3-15, II Peter 3:1-2, and Jude 1:5). Now, let’s consider not laying again the foundation with that clarification in mind.

The foundation of our faith includes Jesus, what He taught, what the Apostles taught, and what the prophets taught (Luke 6:46-49, I Corinthians 3:9-11, and Ephesians 2:19-20). That is very broad. So, to be specific, this teacher outlines what he is talking about that they needed to move beyond. He is talking about repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, the teaching of baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. In one conversion account, we can see all of these things taught in some manner prior to conversion (Acts 2:22-41). Yet, teaching did not then nor does it now stop at the point of conversion (Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 2:42).

We are not told whether these saints needed continual teaching on these first principles or not. It could be that, those teaching them only taught on these first principles. Think about how many of us were in congregations of “churches of Christ”

wherein the teaching seemed to almost always revolve around nothing but these and other first principles. Whatever the cause, the penman of this letter is saying there is more to learn than what these folks were learning. Again, to repeat, their limited growth in learning and usage of their senses to discern right from wrong was limiting what they could be taught.

A Christian should know, prior to conversion, about repentance from dead works (Acts 3:1-19 and Acts 26:18-20). However, we see Christians in the first century that needed to be reminded of such things (Romans 6:1-23). We read about Christians, aside from this present context, who needed to depart from things and go onto perfection (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Repentance and faith were preached to the lost (Acts 20:20-21).

Think about those who only focus on lessons about faith. In this letter, we will see a whole chapter dedicated to the subject matter of faith (Hebrews 11:1-40). Faith had already been addressed prior to this immediate context (Hebrews 3:7-4:3). If a Christian or group of Christians need taught about faith on a continual basis, what does that say of their proper walk in Christ (II Corinthians 5:7)? Yet, there were congregations that needed taught to help them in what was lacking in their faith (I Thessalonians 3:10).

There were several baptisms taught about in the first century (Matthew 20:20-28, Mark 1:1-11, Luke 12:49-50, and Acts 18:24-19:7). When the letter to the church in Ephesus was written, then there was only one (Ephesians 4:1-6). Christians then and now should be mature in knowledge enough to know what that one baptism is (I Peter 3:20-21; cf. Acts 8:25-39).

The laying on of hands could mean several things. It could mean the appointment to or of a work (Acts 13:1-4). The laying on of hands could refer to the giving of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the Apostle's hands (Acts 8:5-24). The laying on of hands could refer to healing the sick (Acts 28:8). Either way, these things were all matters one would know before or soon after conversion into Christ in the first century.

The resurrection from the dead is the cornerstone of our faith, but there were congregations that struggled with this subject matter (I Corinthians 15:1-58). Since the resurrection will occur when Christ returns and judges humanity (Matthew 24:35-25:46), the two subjects tie together. It is not a difficult subject, but there were teachers that persuaded people of error on these matters (II Timothy 2:14-18). There were also

congregations that just did not fully understand what was going to happen when the dead would rise in the resurrection (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We know our Lord expects all Christians to grow in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). That growth needs to include being fruitful in every good work (Colossians 1:10). Instead of being like those written to in this letter, we need to work to have our faith growing exceedingly (II Thessalonians 1:3)!

Hebrews 6:3 - We have been studying about how the saints to whom the Hebrew letter was written needed to grow beyond where they were (Hebrews 5:12-6:2). Their lack of growth was preventing them from being capable of fully understanding the teachings about our Lord (Hebrews 4:14-5:11). The penman of this letter then stated this: *“And this will we do, if God permit”* (Hebrews 6:3).

This epistle does not state who wrote it. There were multiple people involved. We read “we” in this verse we are studying now. “We” is also used later in this context. Notice: *“But, beloved, **we** are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though **we** thus speak... And **we** desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end”* (Hebrews 6:9 and Hebrews 6:11). We also saw the usage of “we” in Hebrews 5:11. Later in this epistle we will read the following: *“Now of the things which **we** have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”* (Hebrews 8:1). There are many other statements that speak of “we”, but the aforementioned were set forth because they indicate, with clarity, the involvement of multiple people in the writing of this letter.

The learning process the saints in this epistle needed to go through included themselves and those that were going to teach them. The teachers were committed to the cause of their growth. Those teachers were also convinced that these saints were more capable than they were showing at this time (again; Hebrews 6:9). The need for teachers in the growth process is an inescapable truth (II Peter 1:1-13). Even when someone already knows something, it is needful to have a teacher stir up that person’s mind (Philippians 3:1 and II Peter 3:1-2). Contextually, we read that they needed someone to teach them again from the first principles of the oracles of God (Hebrews 5:12). Even in the age of spiritual gifts, those capable of teaching were necessary for the perfecting of the saints (Ephesians 4:7-16).

The text proceeds with the assumption that there is a readiness, on the part of the saints being addressed, to learn. We know that a readiness of mind is necessary for the word of God to be learned by the hearer (Acts 2:41, Acts 17:10-11, I

Thessalonians 2:13, James 1:21-25, and I Peter 2:1-2). So, the right things appear to be in place for these saints to grow. If they are ready, their teachers are ready too. There is one other factor that needs to line up. Will God permit their growth to occur? What does that even mean?

We know that it is certainly the will of God for all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:1-4). The evidence is undeniable. Our Lord sent forth His Apostles to teach the Gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-20, Luke 24:36-48, Acts 13:46-47, Romans 16:25-27, and Colossians 1:3-6). So, we know the Lord is not desirous for the Gospel to be kept from those willing to learn it.

Teachers in the first century were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, John 16:1-13, and I Corinthians 2:1-13). That guidance was not just in what to teach, but also where to teach. Consider this: *“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”* (Acts 16:6-10). This is not to say that the messenger had no choice in the matter. Who can forget the choices of the prophet Jonah (Jonah 1:1-3:3)? Remember, the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets (I Corinthians 14:32).

First century teachers could not be in every place they wanted to be at all times (I Thessalonians 2:1-3:13). Even if God would send them, sometimes other things hindered them. For example, Paul desired to go to Corinth (I Corinthians 4:19, I Corinthians 11:34, and I Corinthians 16:1-7); yet it didn't happen (II Corinthians 1:1-18). We can see the Lord's will for Paul to get to Rome and how God worked to make that happen (Acts 23:1-11 and Acts 27:1-44). So, if God wanted Paul in Rome He could not also have Paul in Ephesus at the same time. There were only so many teachers with a whole world needing to be taught.

Sometimes the statement “if God permit” or “Lord willing” is simply put forth with an understanding that tomorrow is not promised to anyone. Consider: *“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye*

rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (James 4:13-16). Whether in the first century or today, we do not know if the world will even exist tomorrow (II Peter 3:9-14). Therefore, we cannot assure anyone that we will or will not be at a place on the morrow (Proverbs 27:1).

In conclusion, what was written in Hebrews 6:3 only applies today in the principle of not counting on tomorrow. Therefore, we should take careful note of that point. When there are souls at stake, we cannot control how long we will have to teach them. Think of every day as *"now is the day of salvation"* (II Corinthians 6:1-2).

Hebrews 6:4-5 - The need for the growth of the saints addressed in this letter had been made abundantly clear (Hebrews 5:11-6:3). Now, we are going to consider how important this growth was for those being addressed as it relates to apostasy. Notice: *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come"* (Hebrews 6:4-5).

The word "impossible" should grab some great attention. The Greek word translated "impossible" in our current text was used three other times in this letter (Hebrews 6:18, Hebrews 10:4, and Hebrews 11:6). The term is clear. In this context, it is scary. The fact that someone could fall away (Hebrews 6:6) and it be impossible for them to be restored to the faith is not comforting at all. Christians then and now have generally found great comfort in the fact that while apostasy can occur (Luke 8:13, Galatians 5:4, and II Peter 3:15-17), you can also be restored (Luke 15:1-32, Galatians 6:1-2, and James 5:19-20). In this instance however, the opposite is being stated. That principle will be restated again later in this epistle (Hebrews 10:22-39).

So, who could have fallen so far that they could not have gotten back up? Let's start with considering who "those who were once enlightened" is referring to. If you do a word study on the Greek term [φωτίζω] that is translated "enlightened", you will find this term is used eleven times in the New Testament (Strong's # 5461). To help us understand the term, I am going to give a couple of verses wherein it is translated differently in the KJV. Notice: *"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will **bring to light** the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God... And to make **all men see** what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 4:5 and Ephesians 3:9). Reading the underlined/bolded statements above are very clear. Thus, those who were impossible to have restored are those who saw the truth clearly and still fell away. It doesn't stop there though.

In addition to being enlightened, the person whom could not be restored if fallen also tasted the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. First century Christians were given miraculous, spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:3-14:40 and Ephesians 4:7-16). How that happened is really clear. A person obeyed the Gospel of Christ and then an Apostle came and laid his hands on them to give that person the gift of the Holy Ghost. That person then had some spiritual gift (Acts 8:4-25 and Acts 19:1-7).

Enlightenment tied into the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. Think about this inspired teaching: *“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him”* (I John 2:18-27).

In an effort to quickly tie these things together a bit more, consider what happened in the churches of Galatia. They were erring by following perversions of the truth (Galatians 1:1-9). Part of their errors we going back to following things that were done away in the Law of Moses (Galatians 5:1-9). So, the Holy Spirit had Paul question these erring saints and have them consider how the Spirit was working miracles through them (Galatians 3:1-5). It was not through the Law of Moses that they could work such miracles. It was through the work of the Spirit. They had the evidence in them and working through them. What more could have been done to prove to them that the ways of Christ, taught to them by Paul, was the truth?

They have tasted the word of God (I Peter 2:1-3). So, they have both heard and seen the truth. “The powers of the world to come” refers to Heavenly powers. We have seen the phrase “world to come” already in this letter (Hebrews 2:5). The point being, they had seen things that are above the natural laws of this world. Signs and wonders

were worked regularly in the first century (Acts 14:3). Thus, the word of God was taught and confirmed (Mark 16:15-20). What more could be done to convince someone who had these experiences?

We know that miraculous works done through the Spirit have ceased (I Corinthians 13:8-13). We have the words of the witnesses (Acts 10:38-39; cf. John 20:30-31). We have all things we need in writing (II Peter 1:3-21). We are more capable of enlightenment as all things have been revealed. So, how careful should we be not to fall from the faith (Luke 12:35-48)?

Hebrews 6:6-8 - In the article last week, we considered how these saints were enlightened. They had seen the power of the world to come through miraculous spiritual gifts. What more could they have seen or known to cement their faith in Christ Jesus our Lord? Our study continues with: *“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned”* (Hebrews 6:6-8).

Some people just love the world too much to stay faithful (II Timothy 4:10). Some withstand the teaching of the truth (II Timothy 4:14-15). It is even possible for some to become spiritually blind and forget what it meant to be purged from their past sins (II Peter 1:9). With a lot of Jewish saints in the first century, they became prey to teachers looking to bring them back to the Law of Moses or certain parts of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1-35). Some escape the pollutions of the world just to turn backwards and head right back into sin (II Peter 2:20-22).

If a person falls away, the work of restoring that person begins (Galatians 6:1-2). As Paul wrote to Timothy, that person needs properly instructed so that he or she can recover himself or herself (II Timothy 2:24-26). For the people described in the Hebrew letter, this process was called “impossible” (Hebrews 6:4). It was not just what they had come to know as we have read, but also that their actions were the equivalent of crucifying Christ again.

To consider the point of crucifying the Son of God afresh, consider something that Jesus said to Saul [Paul; Acts 13:9] on the road to Damascus. After Jesus had already been killed, buried, risen, and ascended into Heaven (Luke 24:1-51 and Acts 1:1-11); Jesus asked Paul, *“why persecutest thou me?”* Wait, Paul couldn’t have literally persecuted Jesus, because Jesus was not on earth. So, what did our Lord

mean? Paul was persecuting Christians (Acts 9:1-2, Acts 9:11-13, Acts 22:3-4, Acts 26:9-11, and Galatians 1:13). The perspective of our Lord is that when you do something to His followers that is the equivalent of doing it to Him (Matthew 10:40-42, Matthew 25:31-40, and John 13:20). A similar line of thought is presented here in the point about crucifying Jesus afresh. If one of His disciples falls away, thus rejecting Him and putting Him to an open shame, it is like you have killed Him all over again. It was rejection that sent Jesus to the cross (Luke 9:22 and Luke 17:25). Learn something from that. Think about what sin does to our Lord (Genesis 6:5-6, Psalms 78:40, Psalms 95:9-10, Isaiah 63:7-10, Ezekiel 33:11, Luke 19:41-42, and Romans 2:23).

The Lord then begins to illustrate the lack of fruit from apostate saints by talking about what rain does for the earth. If the Israel of old stayed faithful, God promised them this: *"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit"* (Leviticus 26:4). If they were not faithful, He promised them this: *"And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you"* (Deuteronomy 11:17). Fruitful seasons then was a reward and the lack thereof was a punishment. Now that God indirectly works through the seasons He has set in motion, we read this: *"Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness"* (Acts 14:17). So, whether directly of old or indirectly now; we see the evidence of God in the fruit of the earth. The faithfulness of saints is similar. We see who our brethren really are by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20 and Titus 1:16).

Christians are created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:1-10). Good works are supposed to be fruitful (Colossians 1:10). Jesus taught the expectation of His followers being fruitful (Matthew 13:1-23 and John 15:1-9). That message was continued after His death (Philippians 1:9-11). Saints are not supposed to be unfruitful (Titus 3:8; 3:14).

You would not want to plant something that you want fruit out of among thorns (Jeremiah 4:3). The same is true spiritually (Mark 4:18-19). What happens when fruit is expected, but thorns and briars spring forth instead? Like was preached even before Jesus began His work, the unfruitful tree is cut down and cast into the fire (Matthew 3:1-10). The Lord showed them that fruitless saints are useless to Him.

Now, think about yourself. Don't essentially crucify Christ again. If you are fruitless, all hope is not lost. Consider this in conclusion: *"There were present at that*

season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down” (Luke 13:1-9).

Hebrews 6:9-10 - The saints addressed in this letter were taught that they needed to grow and become fruitful rather than err and fall from the faith (Hebrews 5:11-6:8). From that, the Holy Spirit guided the penmen of this letter to write these words: *“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”* (Hebrews 6:9-10).

The first thing we are going to consider in this study is the term of endearment used to address these brethren. The inspired penmen of this letter addressed these saints as “beloved” (cf. Acts 15:25, Romans 1:7, Romans 12:19, Romans 16:8-12, I Corinthians 10:14, I Corinthians 15:58, II Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 6:21, Philippians 2:12, Colossians 3:12, Colossians 4:9, Philemon 1:1-2, James 2:5, I Peter 2:11, I Peter 4:12, II Peter 3:14-17, I John 3:21, I John 4:7-11, III John 1:2-11, Jude 1:3, etc.). There is not much to figure out in that word. It shows the writers of this letter loved and understood God’s love for these saints. The corrective measures taken in this letter are evidence of that love (Proverbs 27:5-6, Hebrews 12:5-11, and Revelation 3:19).

Those writing and sending this letter had some confidence that these saints could do better. So, their lack of growth and lack of fruit was not a question of ability. If these saints were just a bunch of one talented brethren (cf. Matthew 25:14-30), less would have been expected of them (Luke 12:41-48). Statements such as this were made to other brethren that needed to make corrections as well. For example, the troubled congregation in Rome was told this: *“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another”* (Romans 15:14). When Philemon was expected to take back his escaped slave and new brother in Christ Onesimus (Philemon 1:1-20), Paul wrote

this to him: *“Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say”* (Philemon 1:21). Statements like these can be taken both as encouragement and statements of expectation.

Rather than being rejected (Hebrews 6:8), they needed to do the things expected of them that would lead to their salvation. They have already read that salvation is conditioned on obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9). So, the point is being made clear that their salvation is in their hands. The overall point is similar to what Paul and Timothy wrote to the saints in Philippi: *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians 2:12). It was better for them to learn from what was being said to them than to find out what disobedience would ultimately result in (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Then this letter addresses the fact that if they put the work in, the reward will be theirs. God is righteous (Deuteronomy 32:4, Ezra 9:15, Psalms 7:9, Psalms 11:7, Psalms 116:5, Psalms 119:137, Daniel 9:14, Romans 1:16-17, and II Timothy 4:8). The Lord is righteous in judgment (Acts 17:30-31). His recollection of the deeds of man is not flawed. His memory extends to the point wherein every idle word spoken can be brought into judgment (Matthew 12:33-37). Even under the Law of Moses, God’s judgment will be rendered for every work that they did (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). So, the Day of Judgment will be a day of accounting for all the good and bad each person has done (II Corinthians 5:10). That is, with one exception.

We will later address, in this letter, the area of God’s memory wherein He does not recollect things (Hebrews 8:1-13). Thankfully, sins can be washed away by the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5). That means, man can be justified in ways that was not possible in times past (Acts 13:38-39). Sins can be remitted; forgiven (Acts 2:38-41, Acts 3:19, Acts 22:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, I Corinthians 6:9-11, and Ephesians 1:7).

God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). He saw the labor of love that these saints had put forth in their work for Him (Acts 10:1-4; 10:31). The labor of love being done by them was the ministering to the saints. We know, from what Jesus said regarding the Day of Judgment, that serving the saints will be brought up on that day (Matthew 25:31-46). If you read that context you see that what brethren do for one another is like you have done or have not done those same acts to the Lord Himself.

Serving one another is called a labor of love because we serve one another through love (Galatians 5:13 and I John 3:14-18). Such efforts can be accomplished in

various ways, In the first century, there were opportunities to render financial aid to brethren in need (Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:25-27, I Corinthians 16:1-4, and II Corinthians 8:1-9:13). We can serve one another by refreshing each other (II Timothy 1:16-18). We can serve one another through acts of hospitality (I Peter 4:8-9). We can serve one another by helping each other with spiritual burdens (Galatians 6:1-2). The list could go on and on. Regardless of how saints serve each other, if done right the reward will be in the life to come.

For God to reward the service saints have toward one another, we have to come back to that phrase “labor of love.” Ministering to the saints had to be done through love lest it would be an unprofitable work (I Corinthians 13:3). Such love is what identifies us as the Lord’s disciples (John 13:34-35). Not only can we learn from these saints what not to do, but herein we can learn to minister to each other as a labor of love to be rewarded in the end!

Hebrews 6:11-12 - In this study we will be looking at some more words of motivation. After establishing that God would not forget their work of love they did toward His name (Hebrews 6:9-10), the penmen of this letter then wrote: *“And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises”* (Hebrews 6:11-12).

In this context we have seen terminology of endearment when these saints were referred to as “beloved” (Hebrews 6:9). There is care from those involved in the writing and sending of this letter to their fellow saints. Keep that in mind as we examine the Greek word “ἐπιθυμέω” that is translated “desire” in this text. The meaning of the word is: “To set the heart upon, i.e. long for (rightfully or otherwise): — covet, desire, would fain, lust (after). To turn upon a thing; to have a desire for, long for, to desire; to lust after, covet...” (Strong’s # 1937). This word is translated “lust; lusted; lusteth” in passages such as: Matthew 5:28, I Corinthians 10:6, Galatians 5:17, and James 4:2. It is translated as “coveted; covet” in passages such as: Acts 20:33, Romans 7:7, and Romans 13:9.

As we keep in mind what the Greek word translated “desire” means here, think about the thought presented thereafter. These brethren covet, lust after, strongly desire their fellow-laborers in Christ to continue to show their diligence in the works they were doing. Why is that? Why do they so strongly desire to see these brethren continue in the things they were doing? Well, how many start off strong and then slack off or completely fall (Psalms 106:3-14, Luke 8:4-15, Galatians 1:6-9, II Peter 2:20-22, and Revelation 2:1-7)? Think about what Jesus said to Simon Peter: *“And the Lord said,*

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31-32).

In the letter to the saints in Colosse, we read: *“As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God... If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Colossians 1:7-10; 1:23).* What was written to Colosse and what is stated here in this Hebrew letter, while differing in wording, is the same message. The desire of the teacher to the students is to continue (John 8:30-32, John 15:9-10, Acts 14:22, I Corinthians 15:58, Titus 3:8, Titus 3:14, and Revelation 2:8-11). Don't stop! Go forward and grow onward. The recipients of this letter should be thinking that they've read this exhortation already (Hebrews 3:1-4:11).

Their continuation of the good, like all saints of all-time, must be unto the end (Matthew 10:22 and Revelation 2:10). Later in this letter, the saints will be taught to look to Jesus for an example of a faithful finisher (Hebrews 12:1-3; cf. John 4:31-34 and John 5:36). To be finishers, they needed to continue to be diligent. That Greek word used and translated as “diligent” is translated in other Scriptures as “earnest care” (II Corinthians 8:16) or “haste” (Mark 6:25 and Luke 1:39). That is not a complete list, but partial to help give us an idea of what that word means. The fact is, there was a rush on this instruction. That leads into what is written next. What is the enemy of diligent work?

The enemy of diligent work is laziness. There is a full assurance (Titus 1:1-3) of the hope that they/we have (I Peter 1:3-9), why would we crush that hope with laziness? All who are familiar with the Scriptures know that God does not approve of laziness (Proverbs 6:6-11, Proverbs 10:4-5, Proverbs 12:27, Proverbs 21:25, Proverbs 24:30-34, Matthew 25:14-30, and II Thessalonians 3:6-15). Rather than being slothful (Proverbs 18:9), saints are to be fervent; zealous (Romans 12:11). Godly zeal results in good works (Titus 2:11-14). We know what every good work is through what we read in the Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16-17). Faith without good works is dead faith (James 2:14-26). For us who are in Christ, we are supposed to be fruitful people (Ephesians 2:1-10). The motivation comes from the full assurance of the hope that we have.

If the hope that laid before them wasn't enough to move them to continue, they were given another tool to use. Sometimes people need to consider that others have succeeded in the endeavor that they are engaged in. We are reading that they were told to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. In the event that they are having trouble with identifying those individuals, this letter will give them some examples to consider in addition to Jesus (Hebrews 11:1-38). With those of old, it was said: *"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"* (Hebrews 11:39-40). All of those of old did not live to see Jesus. They did not live to see what these saints had seen. They did not live to learn what these saints learned. Yet, they stood as model citizens to be considered.

Let us take these things to heart lest any of us get lazy. Remember, others have put in the work. We are built upon them (i.e. Ephesians 2:20-22). Don't ever slack off.

Hebrews 6:13-15 "After being instructed not to be slothful, but to go forward with endurance; the promise made to Abraham is now brought into this letter. It fits, because the penmen had addressed inheriting the promises. Thus, our study in this article will be upon these words: *"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise"* (Hebrews 6:13-15).

To learn about God's promise to Abraham, a verse by verse study in the book of Genesis is required (Genesis 12:1-25:11). To read about God swearing by Himself, you should focus on the time Abraham was told to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice as a test for Abraham (Genesis 22:1-19). The wording that is being referenced in our study today is from these Scriptures within the aforementioned context: *"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"* (Genesis 22:15-18). That covenant between God and Abraham stood as the hope for Israel (Deuteronomy 29:13, Isaiah 45:17-25, and Luke 1:67-80). That promise continues to stand today as hope for all of humanity (Galatians 3:8-29).

God has, even on other occasions, sworn by Himself (Deuteronomy 28:9, Isaiah 45:23, Jeremiah 22:5, Jeremiah 49:13, Jeremiah 51:14, and Amos 6:8). The prophet

Micah stated: *“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old”* (Micah 7:18-20). He is the “Most High”, so there was no greater whereby He could have sworn by (Psalms 83:18 and Psalms 92:8).

Abraham was promised that he would be blessed (Genesis 24:1) and multiplied (Genesis 17:1-2). God did as He promised. In fact, He later used this as evidence for His people to look upon to gain their faith, confidence, and trust. Notice: *“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody”* (Isaiah 51:1-3).

However, the promises to Abraham were not just a given. Abraham had to have faith (Romans 4:16-22 and Hebrews 11:8-19) and continue in obedience (Genesis 26:5). He had, like all others, had to patiently endure to see the end of the promises of God (James 5:7-11). What we see being done in this teaching is powerful. Things that happened in the past serve as an example to learn from to this very day (Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-13).

From the lesson about God keeping His promise to Abraham, these saints as well as we can learn that God keeps His word. This is a huge lesson. Our hope depends on the integrity of God. Think about these words: *“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour”* (Titus 1:1-3). We will discuss this point in more detail later in the chapter (Hebrews 6:17-18). For the sake of our current study, consider how that knowing God will keep His promises aids the faithful to continue to live faithfully.

Like Abraham, all Christians have to patiently endure (Matthew 10:22). That is, to live faithfully until the time we die (Revelation 2:10) or until Christ returns if that happens before we die (Matthew 24:35-25:46 and I Thessalonians 4:13-5:9). To do so,

we have to have the motivation of knowing that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13; 5:20). God is not going to change His mind. He is not going to turn from us because of all the evil in the world. We can know that because God kept His promise to Abraham even though the children of Israel were more often unfaithful than faithful (Deuteronomy 9:13-24 and Acts 7:51). As we have here in El Paso studied through most of the Old Testament, we have seen the great frustrations the Lord endured at the hands of His people. He was heavily grieved by them (Psalms 78:1-72, Psalms 95:1-11, Isaiah 63:10, etc.). God still kept His promise to Abraham (Matthew 1:1; cf. Galatians 3:16).

We know that we have to run the race of this life with patience (Hebrews 12:1-3). Whenever you find the run to be hard, let that hardship turn to the strengthening of your faith (James 1:3-4). Later in this epistle we find this: *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)”* (Hebrews 10:23). We can count on God. Therefore, let us keep on regardless of how difficult things may get in this life.

Hebrews 6:16-18 - In our previous study we considered that God swore an oath to Abraham by Himself (Hebrews 6:13). We considered how that God kept His oath and how that Abraham patiently endured to obtain what God conditionally promised to him (Hebrews 6:14-15). Now we are going to consider more about God swearing by Himself. Here are the inspired words we are going to study in this article: *“For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”* (Hebrews 6:16-18).

The first point raised in this part of our study is that men verily swear by the greater. For example, notice what Abimelech requested from Abraham: *“And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear”* (Genesis 21:22-24). Abraham was not under the Law of Moses. Yet, we can see that when the Law of Moses did come into effect man lawfully continued to be able to swear by the name of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:13 and Deuteronomy 10:20). Swearing by the name of God was, in principle, a way to end any argument as to whether or not one would keep his or her word. They knew God would hold them accountable if they lied by His

name (Leviticus 19:12). That doesn't mean much though. Men did swear by the name of the Lord and still didn't keep their word (II Chronicles 36:11-13).

Before we continue into the text we are studying, we need to be clear on something. As Christians, we are commanded to speak the truth to others (Ephesians 4:25). Under the Law of Christ (cf. Galatians 6:2), we are specifically instructed not to swear or take oaths. Notice: *“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil... But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation”* (Matthew 5:33-37 and James 5:12).

Back to the text we are studying, we find an explanation as to why God swore by His great name. We read the wording “more abundantly” in this text. Consider, in part, what that means: “a more superabundant way... something further, more, much more than all, more plainly... superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon...” (Strong's # 4054). So, we can see that God was reaching to give the most assurance possible to Abraham that He would keep His promise. Then the word translated “immutability” adds some more to this study. The Greek word “ἀμετάθετος” speaks clearly to the fact that God's promise was fixed, unchangeable (Strong's # 276). For us, we have thousands of years of history to study to see that God's counsel stands (II Kings 13:23, II Chronicles 6:15, II Chronicles 21:1-7, Psalms 105:1-45, and Jeremiah 33:20-26). We can show Scriptures to give people assurance (Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 55:11, Malachi 3:6, and James 1:17). Abraham did not have that. So, God took the greatest measure He could to give Abraham assurance.

So, there are two fixed factors here that God provided Abraham with as confirmation for His promise. They tie together. God took an oath and He cannot lie. For us, this is simple. We know God cannot lie because His word says so (Numbers 23:19, I Samuel 15:29, Psalms 89:35, and Titus 1:1-3). God's past actions prove He cannot lie. As we can know man by his fruit (Matthew 7:15-20), we can also know God by the same. He has done various great things to show His integrity to mankind. For example, consider that God has for thousands of years set things in motion so that there are seasons on the earth (Genesis 8:20-22 and Acts 14:17). Take, for another example, the reason we see rainbows in the sky at times when it rains (Genesis 9:1-17).

Our God is the God of truth (Exodus 34:6, Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalms 100:5, and Isaiah 25:1).

God's truth in this text is just about Abraham. The writer of this letter points out that God's inability to lie provided strong comfort to them as well. All of humanity has one hope (Ephesians 4:4). In the letter to the saints in Colosse Paul and Timothy wrote this: *"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth"* (Colossians 1:5-6). You could phrase this hope in various ways that all mean or point to the same thing. You could say our hope is in the resurrection (Acts 24:15), righteousness (Galatians 5:5), grace (II Thessalonians 2:16), etc. Any way you word it, hope comes down to what is awaiting the faithful in eternity with our Lord (I Peter 1:3-9).

We can see that God's covenant with Abraham was kept (Acts 3:11-16). We are the beneficiaries of that promise (Galatians 3:8-29). Therefore, we can have comfort that God kept His word and we see that even to this day (Romans 15:4)!

Hebrews 6:19-20 - We have studied and considered things pertaining to the integrity of our Heavenly Father (Hebrews 6:13-18). He doesn't lie. His word is sure. You can trust in His word in troubling times (Nahum 1:7). Those facts lead us into our study in this article. The text we are going to study is the following: *"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec"* (Hebrews 6:19-20).

The word of God teaches us that we are saved by hope. Notice: *"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it"* (Romans 8:24-25). After the miraculous age, the faithful were/are left with faith, hope, and love (I Corinthians 12:3-13:13). We have hope through the word of God (Psalms 119:49, Psalms 119:81, Psalms 130:5, Romans 15:4, and Colossians 1:23). Our hope is laid up for us in Heaven (Colossians 1:5). Therefore, death is not the same for us as it is for those whom have no hope (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). We can have hope through what the Lord says because we can trust Him (Titus 1:1-3). We can look forward to what is in store in the life to come (John 14:1-3), because we can trust the words of our Lord.

Hope is a motivator. Hope motivates a person to work for a reward (I Corinthians 9:9-10). Hope motivates us to live faithfully. Consider these inspired words: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (I John 3:1-3). Hope is fuel to our ability to rejoice (Romans 12:12). There is even much more to consider about hope, but with what we have let’s consider how hope is an anchor of the soul.

An anchor is a heavy object attached to a rope or chain that is used to make fast a vessel to the bottom of a body of water, river, etc. As waves and currents come about, that anchor holds the boat in place. Hope accomplishes for the faithful of God the same thing that an anchor does for a boat. Hope holds the faithful in place. You can see this when you look at faithful saints who had to go through difficult times. Paul wrote of them (himself along with his companions in teaching the Gospel) being “troubled on every side.” Yet, they were not distressed. Their looking forward to things eternal helped them keep the course (II Corinthians 4:8-5:1).

Hope, that is rooted in the truthfulness of God, is sure and steadfast. When hope is properly placed in God, you can become unmovable (Psalms 62:5-6). The first letter to Corinth we have a record of contains a whole chapter about the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:1-58). At the end of that chapter, we read this instruction: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Corinthians 15:58). Hope enables us to fulfill that instruction. The very letter we are studying teaches that to be partakers of Christ one has to hold steadfast unto the end (Hebrews 3:14). We can trust God to uphold His part of His promises. Can He trust us to remain steadfast in hope? You answer that for yourself.

Next we read about our forerunner, Christ Jesus our Lord. The figure of the veil here is not the same as the figure of the veil mentioned later in this letter that concludes with that veil being His flesh (Hebrews 9:1-10:20). A forerunner is a scout, someone that runs ahead of the others. What Jesus did by sacrificing Himself is not something we follow Him in. He was that once for all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10). So, what was He first in that we should follow? He was the firstborn of the dead (Colossians 1:12-18) to ascend to our Father in Heaven (Ephesians 1:17-20). Again, our lively hope is in the resurrection unto eternal life with our Father in Heaven (I Peter 1:3-13). Our High Priest has entered into that most holy place so that, even now, we can come boldly unto the

throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16). We cannot separate hope from Jesus. For us Gentiles, without Christ we would have no hope in this world (Ephesians 2:1-17). “Christ in you” is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Paul told Timothy very plainly that Jesus Christ is our hope (I Timothy 1:1). That hope is in His return and what is to come thereafter (Philippians 3:20-21 and Titus 2:11-14).

Again, the text of this letter comes back to our High Priest Jesus Christ being after the order of Melchisedec. Before this letter changed course, we had already begun to read about the order of Melchisedec as it relates to the priesthood of our Lord (Hebrews 5:6-10). Going forward, we will be considering much more about the priesthood of Jesus.

As we end this chapter and look forward, remember that Jewish Christians in the first century struggled to understand the changes from the Law of Moses into the Law of Christ. Even though God did much work to prepare, even sending the forerunner John to preach (Matthew 3:1-12); many Jewish Christians fell away (i.e. Galatians 1:6-9; 5:4). Divisions took place and had to be dealt with because of certain people that had loyalty to the Law of Moses rather than to Christ (Acts 15:1-40). So, going forward, remember that what may be simple for us to see now was not so simple for some to see then. Hopefully you can appreciate the great lengths God went to so that they could learn that which is easy for us to see.