

Hebrews Chapter Six (vv.1-3)

Hebrews 5.11-6.20 records the third warning passage of the Apostle. It comprises: **rebuke** (5.11-14), **exhortation** (6.1-3), **warning** (6.4-8) and **encouragement** (6.9-20). A number of different groups of people are under consideration in these verses. The *exhortation* went out to those who were **carnal** (weak). The *warning* was given to those who were **natural** (wicked). The *encouragement* was for the **spiritual** (wise).

Hebrews 6.1-3: Exhortation to the Weak

1 Therefore *leaving* (having left) the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; (not laying again ~~the~~ (a) foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, **2** Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.)

'Therefore' reminds us of the importance of noting the preceding verses. The Hebrews were marked by spiritual slumber (5.11) and needed re-teaching the basic truths of NT revelation (5.12). They seemed to be more concerned with traditions and shadows of the law (milk) rather than the Person to whom they were all pointing (strong meat). This resulted in a state of **spiritual infancy**. Paul reminds the readers that when they professed faith in Christ they had been 'separated from' or 'abandoned once and for all' the 'principles of the doctrine of Christ'. This phrase literally reads: 'the word of the beginning of the Christ' (JND) and signifies all that God made known concerning the Messiah under Judaism (Hebrews 1.1). This included the prophecies concerning His *coming* and types/figures of His *work*. It may also embrace the earthly ministry of Christ prior to the cross. This teaching took the people a little further than Judaism but was necessarily restricted. Why had all this been once and for all abandoned? All the prophecies, types and figures had now been fulfilled in Christ. *The shadow had found its Substance. The pictures had found their Reality. The types had given place to the great Antitype.*

It was now time to be 'carried on' (by the Spirit of God) to 'perfection' or 'full growth' and 'maturity'. In the light of the use of this word in Hebrews (see 7.11, 19; 9.9, 11; 10.1, 14) it speaks of the perfection of the full revelation of God in Christ, encompassing His perfect **sacrifice** (in contrast to the imperfect and inadequate sacrifices offered under the Levitical system), perfect **redemption** and perfect **salvation** that gives the Christian a perfect **standing** in the presence of God. For the Hebrews, there **must** be advancement into the full light of Christian revelation. *WE Vine: This infancy was a spiritual condition lingering under the ceremonies and types under the Law, rendering it impossible for the reception of the full doctrines of the ascended Son of God and his high priestly ministry.* In the light of Acts 21.20 this was needful exhortation: *Acts 21.20: Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.* God was patient with this for a time until it developed into either 'going on' or 'going back'.

Judaism was merely the *elements* or *substance* from which the finished article of Christianity was made. Note. Christendom today is largely concerned with the *elements* of Christianity, but not the full revelation of Christ in glory. This is perpetuating Judaism which was terminated at the cross! *JM Davies: When the veil of the temple was rent and God left Judaism, Roman Catholicism took it up in all its ritual. There is a challenging practical application of this truth. Let us turn away from those things which are earthly, fleshly, transitory and temporal (Judaism) and turn our gaze heavenward to things which are spiritual, permanent and eternal. Let us develop the habit of occupation with the Man in the glory.*

The God-ordained religion of Judaism provided 'a' (not 'the') foundation for the fuller revelation of Christianity. As a foundation precedes the building, so Judaism preceded Christianity. The NT is built upon the foundation of the OT promises and prophecies in which they find their fulfilment. The **six** (man in the *flesh*) statements which follow (vv.1b-2) are in parenthesis and expound the foundation of Judaism which paved the way for fuller and final revelation in Son. The six statements are to be taken in three couplets and consider things **inward**, **outward** and **onward**.

<i>Foundation of Judaism (OT)</i>	<i>Revelation in Son (NT)</i>
Repentance from dead works and faith toward God (v.1). This is a <u>turning away</u> from dead works (sin) and a <u>turning to</u> the living God (faith). These principles were seen throughout the OT (Job 42.6, Ezekiel 14.6, Hebrews 11), especially in the sacrificial system, and the same message was preached by John the Baptist (Mark 1.4), Christ (Mark 1.15) and the Apostles (Acts 2.38, 3.19).	Acts 20.21: <i>Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.</i>

<i>Foundation of Judaism (OT)</i>	<i>Revelation in Son (NT)</i>
<p>Doctrine of baptisms and laying on of hands (v.2). The word ‘baptisms’ is ‘washings’. This is referring to the ceremonial washings of the sacrificial animals, priests and more (Exodus 30.19, Leviticus 1.9, 8.6, Mark 7.2-4). This was something that could only offer external and ceremonial purification (Hebrews 9.9, 13).</p> <p>The laying on of hands was prominent in the OT, especially in relation to the sacrifices (Leviticus 1.4, 16.21). This signified the sins of the <i>offerer</i> transferred to the <i>offering</i> and the excellence of the <i>offering</i> transferred to the <i>offerer</i>.</p>	<p>John 13.10: <i>Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.</i></p> <p>Titus 3.5: <i>Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.</i></p> <p>2 Corinthians 5.21: <i>For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.</i></p>
<p>Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (v.2). The doctrine of a general (rather than selective) resurrection and judgment of every person was taught in the OT (Job 19.25-27, Ecclesiastes 12.14, John 11.24).</p>	<p>Mark 9.9-10: <i>... the Son of man should be risen from among the dead. And they kept that saying, questioning among themselves, what rising from among the dead was.</i></p> <p>Romans 8.1: <i>There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.</i></p>

3 *And this will we do, if God permit.*

This verse follows the parenthesis and so ‘this will we do’ relates to being carried on ‘unto perfection’ if ‘God permit’. It was the writer’s intention to lead his readers on to a fuller exposition of the perfection of Christ, especially His priesthood. This desire, however, was fully dependent on the permission of God. Without God’s enabling there would be no increase (see John 3.27, 1 Corinthians 3.6, 16.7, James 4.15).

Hebrews 6.4-8: Warning to the Wicked

The company in view in this section is primarily the ‘evil’ generation (Matthew 12.39) that rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. They had refused to believe the testimony of God’s Son, and later, the Apostles. They had rejected the testimony of Peter and John (Acts 3-4, 12), stoned Stephen (Acts 7), delighted in the death of James (Acts 12), refused Paul and Barnabus (Acts 13, 22) culminating in Paul stating (AD60): *Romans 11.7: What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election (remnant) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.* See John 12.40 where this is attributed to Satan. The book of Acts closes with the fearful condemnation of the same generation (AD62): *Acts 28.27-28: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and **their eyes have they closed**; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.* This generation had clearly demonstrated themselves to be marked by unbelief (Hebrews 3.12) and were facing the awful judgment of God (AD70). This generation was typified in the equally wicked generation who all perished in the wilderness (Hebrews 3.7-4.13). This warning was important for the Hebrews. Although the writer was persuaded better things of his readers (see v.9), there were no doubt some professors amongst them who would demonstrate by their actions that they belonged, not to Christ, but rather to this same evil generation that had and were rejecting Him.