

TOO LATE TO TURN BACK!

Heb. 6:1-8

Interpretive Problem — one of most problematic passages

Chuck Swindoll: the “**Rubik’s Cube**” of the Bible.

Understanding how to fit each piece is hard work.

Not everyone agrees about how the pieces fit together.

But there *is* a solution!

Faithful study requires we work with pieces until we fit them together.

The author means *something* by what he says;

it’s our job to try to understand it.

[3 Perspectives: 1) Author’s 2) Doctrinal 3) Ours]

Author’s Perspective

We’ll never understand unless we see what motivates *him*
& situation listeners face.

What’s going on? What’s he trying to tell them—about what they face?

Living through revolution in Guatemala, convinced me that when the church endures affliction, our traditional *theological* understanding of many passages changes radically.

Jas 2—people use it to prove we must have works, & faith, to be saved.

Theological debate misses James’ *practical* pt—about hard times.

Do we *really* trust God?

We demonstrate our *real* view by how we live in hard times!

Heb 6 is another of these misunderstood passages.

James interrupts teaching that Christ is best High Priest,
to point out problem of trying to explain it,
because *they aren’t able to take it!*

The problem 5:11-14 “*I want to share this truth with you, but...*”

We’re hard of hearing!

We’d rather hear same old truth we love to listen to.

We don't *want* to move on to the hard stuff—solid food.
 While we've believed long enough to be teachers,
 we haven't *applied* some things God's been trying to teach us.
 We need exercise—practice—to get our spiritual muscles in shape.
 Instead of feeding on solid food of God's Word,
 we're still eating baby food.
We like Gerbers better. It's so smooth and comfortable.
We like bland taste—not hot spices & tough chewing!

The Exhortation 6:1-3

Exhortation **clarifies issue of immaturity**: “*Therefore*”

Positive perspective 6:1a “*Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ & go on to maturity*”

He urges us to grow up.

He wants us to move on toward maturity.

Don't keep re-laying the foundation!

Negative perspective 6:1b-2 “*Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works & of faith toward God, ²& of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, & eternal judgment.*”

Leave the baby food behind!

There's nothing wrong with milk!

In one sense old A.D.A. theme is right. At least with reference to spiritual food: “*We never outgrow our need for milk!*”

But “building strong bodies” requires solid food—not *just* milk.

What does he consider baby food? 3 kinds of “baby food:”

First, fundamental truths about salvation:

Changing your mind about “*dead works*” (lit.) and faith in God.

This *IS* the foundation—It *IS* the starting point!

We can't go on to maturity *until* we learn that our works will never be good enough to earn eternal life—lead to death.

Salvation comes by trusting Him!

But it isn't healthy to spend *all* our time focusing on this *foundational* truth.

We build on this foundation with meaty truth from God's Word,

Teaching concerning rituals. –Baptism & laying on of hands.

–**RITUALS** with foundational significance for the church.

By baptism, *we* identify with *Christ*.

By laying on of hands, *God's people* identify with *us*.

These teachings are foundational.

We need to know what they're about,

But we need to *move on* to solid food—the meat of Scripture.

Teaching concerning resurrection & eternal judgment.

Paul defends the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15.

We must understand that truth.

We also need to know about eternal judgment.

Some teachers question these truths.

It's important, foundational truth.

God doesn't intend for us to spend rest of our life discussing evidence for resurrection & the certainty of divine judgment.

***We must leave the “baby food” behind
& move on to solid food***

—hard truth concerning God and His plan for His people.

The church in his day is similar to many churches today:

People have their hobby-horses they want to ride.

They keep re-visiting issues—comfortable, reassuring issues!

Frequently these are *foundational issues* of Christian faith.

The writer doesn't belittle these truths, but they're *baby food*.

It's time to go on to other things—meaty issues of God's Word.

The foundation is important. Don't try to build without it!

Once it's in place, it's time to build walls, roof, & detail work.

God's involvement 6:3 *"This we will do if God permits."*

Author assumes it's true—readers will move on to maturity.

God wants to bring us to maturity.

But facing truth of God's Word doesn't *always* lead to maturity!

Only way it will happen is if God works in us.

Some people *won't* go on to maturity!

Who are these people?

Why wouldn't God let us all move on to maturity?

[God is going to stop some people. Here's why:]

THE EXPLANATION 6:4-8

These verses are introduced by the particle "for"

Principle presented 6:4-6 *"For it is impossible, in the case of those who've once been enlightened, who've tasted the heavenly gift, & shared in H.S. ⁵ & have tasted the goodness of the word of God & the powers of the age to come, ⁶ & have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they're crucifying again the Son of God to their own harm & holding him up to contempt."*

Who's he talking about?

* **He's speaking to people who are in the family.**

Exhortation to grow up doesn't make sense

for someone who's never been born, nor to a dead carcass!

* **He goes out of his way to convince us he's dealing with people who have experienced "the real thing."**

—they've been *enlightened*

—they've *tasted* the real thing—the heavenly gift

—they've become *partakers* of H.S.

–they’ve *tasted* how good God’s Word is, & power of the coming age

How much more could we say of someone who has real thing?

What does he say about them?

They should go on & not turn back to Judaism.

Looks closely at risk this generation of Hebrew believers faces. If they turn back now, they’ll never be able to reverse process.

“*Fall away*” refers to followers of Jesus who abandon God’s people.

Once they leave, it’s impossible for them to turn back.

Why is this true? 6b *“Since they’re crucifying again the Son of God to their own harm & holding him up to contempt.”*

[It’s impossible for them to turn back, because . . .]

Their departure is public statement of rejecting Jesus all over again—repeating what Israel did.

If they willfully turn back, **they’re identifying with the generation of Israel that condemned Christ.**

They’re affirming the nation’s decision.

They ***“crucify Him again for themselves; put Him to open shame.”***

To turn to Judaism isn’t just changing where you go to church, It’s public statement; allying self with those who crucified Jesus

It’s joining those who mocked & jeered!

**Like skier pushing off edge of extreme slope,
once you’ve pushed off, there’s no turning back!**

Once they go back, they can’t just change their mind & come back.

Consequences of statement are too great to jump back & forth.

Israel’s example at Kadesh-Barnea Num. 14:40-45 *“They rose early in the morning & went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, “Here we are. We will go up to the place that the Lord has*

promised, for we have sinned.”⁴¹ But Moses said, “Why now are you transgressing the command of the Lord, when that will not succeed?⁴² Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.”⁴³ For there the Amalekites & Canaanites are facing you, & you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.”⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed out of the camp.⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites & Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down & defeated them & pursued them, even to Hormah.

**After refusing to trust God & enter the land,
they couldn't change their minds.**

That generation of Israel died in the wilderness!

They couldn't turn back!

Their generation of Israel's also condemned Lk 11:29-32, 50-51

“When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”³⁰ For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.”³¹ The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation & condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, & behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”³² The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation & condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, & behold, something greater than Jonah is here.” ...

"so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,"⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar & the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.”⁵² Woe

to you lawyers! For you've taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, & you hindered those who were entering."

Acts 2:40 *"Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"*

The generation of Israel that rejected Messiah will die under God's judgment.

If *they* identify with that generation, they're publicly voting for

Christ's rejection & subjecting themselves to coming judgment

Principle illustrated 6:7-8 *"Land that has drunk the rain that falls on it, & produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears thorns & thistles, it is worthless & near to being cursed, & its end is to be burned."*

In storm, when it rains, all the ground receives the same rain.

Some ground produces useful crop—it's blessed

Some ground produces worthless crop—that's cursed.

It's fruit is destroyed—it's only good for burning.

It's same storm—God plans the rain for the ground's good!

If after receiving all God has given us, instead of producing useful crop, we produce same old worthless fruit, (thorns and thistles!)

If we go back into the crowd & act like everybody else, & produce what they produce... (the rejection of the Savior),

...then we come back under same curse they're under.

The fruit of our lives is same as theirs.

It's worthless—destined for destruction.

If they throw in the towel and turn back...

They'll be identifying with them publicly in turning backs on Jesus.

=>They'll share in judgment rejection produces.

(Physical destruction)

One more look: what author is saying:

God's people are **suffering–tempted to throw in towel**.
 Writer's trying to give them reason to hang in there, but they're
 having a hard time hearing because ***they're immature***.

**They understand foundational truths of God's Word
 –baby food.**

They know we're **not saved by works**—they remind each other of
 that weekly.

They know we're **saved by faith**, by trusting God's provision.

They understand issues involved in their **rituals**:

–teach regularly about significance of **baptism**

People making that public statement of identification with Jesus.

They understand the **laying on of hands**

They are identifying with those God has touched in special ways.

Resurrection's clear. They know that if we die, we'll rise again.

They understand about **judgment**. God will avenge the wicked.

They know we're secure—aren't worried about *being* judged.

BUT, there's storm outside.

"It's raining-hard-I'm afraid."

These were horrible days to be part of God's family.

The storm raging about them, can produce one of two effects:

the storm can bring blessing; the storm can bring destruction.

It depends on the condition of the soil!

Babies don't like pain. *They cry when they hurt!*

It takes a mature perspective to understand that ***pain is good***.

God uses pain to bring us to maturity!

Suffering produces godly character.

Affliction makes us into the people God longs for us to become.

That's heavy truth! That's hard to take. **It's solid meat.**

Feed that concept to newborn Christian; he'll choke on it!

We don't want to suffer. It's a hard message.

Let's talk about what a great salvation God has given to us.

"I'm saved and glad I am!"

No. Let's move on to the hard stuff—the solid food.

How does God make His people into what He wants us to become? **Affliction.**

That's how Jesus fulfilled His part in God's plan.

That's how we fulfill our part in God's plan.

James 1:2-4: That's heavy stuff! That's solid food!

Romans 5:3-5 This is hard stuff.

We prefer to go back to the easy stuff—the baby food.

God says let's move on—to truth that leads to maturity.

If we turn from the family, take the easy way out; align ourselves with those who reject Jesus, the judgment about to fall on them will fall on us.

DOCTRINAL PERSPECTIVE

What are doctrinal implications of this passage?

Most commentaries focus on

whether these are genuine believers who lose their salvation, or unsaved people who make a profession & then turn away.

What makes these risky is its clear affirmation:

"It's impossible . . . to turn back."

If these are believers who lose their salvation, that doctrine runs contrary to Scripture that those who trust Christ are new creatures and belong to Him forever,

It also means that if you're saved & lose it, there's no point trying to come back.

"It's impossible . . . to bring them back to repentance."

If it's talking about people who aren't saved but just professing faith, and they turn away, it's no use trying to bring them back

It's still ***"impossible . . . to bring them back to repentance."***

I don't find that idea in Scripture.

I do find that at **Kadesh**, God's people come to point when they fail to trust Him, turn from instruction, & judgment comes on them.

They try to go back but it's too late to turn back. *They've gone too far.*

Or, **like Esau** who couldn't repent though he wept bitterly, they come to point when they can't turn back.

=> God's judgment is going to come.

Both of these cases talk about physical judgment God sent.

This passage isn't talking about salvation.

It's an exhortation to trust God and move on.

God's judgment is about to fall.

If they throw in towel & realign themselves with those who crucified our Lord, they won't be able to turn back when judgment falls.

So hang in there. *Move on to maturity!*

OUR PERSPECTIVE

So if this has nothing to do with our salvation,

If it's written for that generation in unique temptation—throwing in towel & turning back to Judaism where it's safer & comfortable, ...

What bearing does this warning have on our life today?

Two warnings we should be hearing in this passage:

1. Let's move on to maturity 6:1-3

Let's get on to hard stuff, solid food. Not easy but it's important!

Application to us: NOT the same!

NOT facing same circumstances.

NOT likely to go back to Judaism to escape persecution.

NOT likely to re-identify with those who rejected Christ.

We ARE likely to face hard times & seek easy way out!

–to push the **“EASY BUTTON!”**

But “pushing the easy button” will NEVER lead to maturity!

The writer urges us to move on to maturity!

2. Don’t be ashamed to take a stand for Jesus.

People may turn on us, just like they turned on Him.

Don’t let the wish for relief pressure us into joining the crowd that put our Savior on the cross.

[3rd application—essence of what our Lord told this generation.]

There’s a storm raging. It’s a “hurricane!”.

It’s pouring. I don’t like thunder and lightning.

Storm’s raging around some of us. We’re hanging on for dear life.

Some days we wonder whether God knows or cares

We’re sure of the foundational truths of God’s love & our salvation.

But I’m hurting.

Then God tries to feed me this solid food about how He produces perfection in my life.

And frankly, I’m ready to gag on it!

Do I really believe that *THIS* is how God wants to make *me* the person He wants *me* to be?

Forget it! Let’s just throw in the towel!

Life was easier B.C. (=Before Christ).

When storm rages around us, we can trust God & keep walking!

God says, “Don’t turn back! Don’t throw in the towel!

Trust me! Let’s go on to perfection!”

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

“My rain brings blessing.”

“Let me produce a useful harvest in your life!”