

Study #6: What It Takes to Persist

Having introduced the name of Melchizedek in 5:6 and 5:10, Hebrews takes a sudden off-road excursion. We'll get back to Melky in 7:1, but this section gets us ready. It's also a return to a familiar theme in Hebrews.

Read Hebrews 5:11 to 6:12.

1. What would you say is the main point of this section?
2. See how many metaphors you can find for our process of growing. (I count five, but I might have missed some.)
3. The author is obviously concerned with something. What do you think it is?
4. What does he want the Hebrews to do and not to do?
5. Thinking of your own experiences, what causes people to get stuck in their faith journey? Why do they drift away?
6. Christians differ as to whether 6:4-6 is talking about transformed believers who lose their faith, or people who have been in and around the church but never really committed themselves. The author says in 6:9 he doesn't believe his description applies to his readers. What then is the point in saying it? Do we need this kind of warning to be verbalized today?
7. Verse 6:12 peeks ahead to the famous chapter 11. What raw material do we need in order to follow this prescription?

Read Hebrews 6:13-20.

8. What was Abraham's promise, and how does it apply to us?
9. What is the big deal about God taking an oath?
10. What was God's intention in doing so?
11. Verses 19-20 may set the biblical record for mixed metaphors. Can you make sense of it?
12. What is the role of hope in our lives, according to this metaphor?
13. What is the basis of our hope?
14. How does hope link us to Jesus?
15. And how does hope help us to persist in growing?

Hebrews 5:11-6:12 New International Version

Warning Against Falling Away

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

6 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death,^[a] and of faith in God, 2 instruction about cleansing rites,^[b] the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age 6 and who have fallen^[c] away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. 7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Footnotes

Hebrews 6:1 Or from useless rituals

Hebrews 6:2 Or about baptisms

Hebrews 6:6 Or age, 6 if they fall

Hebrews 6:13-20 New International Version

The Certainty of God's Promise

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."^[a] 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

16 People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Footnotes

Hebrews 6:14 Gen. 22:17