Hebrews 5:11- 6:12

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Hebrews 5:11–6:12*** (ESV)  
**11** About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. **12** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, **13** for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. **14** But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. **1** Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, **2** and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3** And this we will do if God permits. **4** For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, **5** and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6** and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. **7** For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. **8** But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. **9** Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. **10** For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. **11** And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, **12** so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

1. Briefly summarize Hebrews 1-5.

Ch 1: Yeshua sits at the right hand of God. He reigns with God and as the Son of God reigns as God himself. He is greater than angels (messengers), therefore His words and teachings are greater than any message from messengers (whether heavenly or earthly).

Ch. 2: If the Torah given through messengers was reliable and to be followed, how much more so should we then follow the words of the Messiah. Even though Yeshua is greater than the angels, and his message is greater than that given by the angels to Moses, yet Yeshua was for a while lower than angels, having become man, in order to save man from slavery to fear and death. He was sent from God to be our merciful and faithful high priest.

Ch 3: Yeshua is an apostle and high priest, greater than Moses. Moses was a servant. Yeshua was the son. We must hold fast our faith in Him, and not allow sin to harden our hearts like our ancestors did when they disobeyed Moses. And we know the result of that! None of those who were disobedient were allowed to enter the promised land. Encourage one another not to fall away. Don’t be like your ancestors who didn’t listen to Moses, and didn’t receive God’s promises. NOW, listen to Yeshua, who is greater than Moses and who brings a message greater than that of Moses.

Ch 4: If we **shema** his Word, we receive the promise of His Rest. Our forefathers didn’t have the faith to obey. As a result, they didn’t receive the promise of His Rest. Now we have been given His Word even more directly through Yeshua, and we still have the choice before us to believe and obey and receive the promise of His Rest. Don’t be disobedient like your forefathers. You will have to give account of your actions. No one can hide from power of the Word of God.

Yeshua entered the “rest” of YHWH. He lived a sinless life in perfect obedience to the Word of God, and received the promised “rest” of YHWH. So we should likewise persevere in our obedience to the Word of God received through Him. He has become our great high priest and also our “mercy seat” - the place of our forgiveness. He is both our mediator, leading us into the presence of God, and also our sacrifice, providing the means of atonement for all our sins. He entered through the veil of the heavens into the presence of God on our behalf.

Ch 5: Yeshua is our high priest – greater than those appointed by man, he is appointed by God, to serve forever, like Melchizedek (Righteous King). His perfect obedience made him “blameless”, and through his sacrifice he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

1. In Hebrews 5:11, what does “dull of hearing” mean? See also Is 6:9-10, Ezek 12:1-2 and Zech 7:9-11. What kind of people are dull of hearing? In what ways does this apply to us?

***Isaiah 6:9–10*** (ESV)  
**9** And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “ ‘**Keep on hearing, but do not understand**; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ **10** **Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy**, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

***Ezekiel 12:1–2*** (ESV)  
**1** The word of YHWH came to me: **2** “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, **who have ears to hear, but hear not**, for **they are a rebellious house.**

***Zechariah 7:9–13*** (ESV)  
**9** “Thus says YHWH Tseva’ot, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, **10** do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” **11** But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and **stopped their ears that they might not hear**. **12** They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that YHWH Tseva’ot had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from YHWH Tseva’ot. **13** “**As I called, and they would not hear**, so they called, and I would not hear,” says YHWH Tseva’ot.

These verses describe an unbelieving people who have a lack of faith. They don’t listen to the words of God, and don’t obey them. They don’t **shema**. They are a “rebellious” people.

We are talking about spiritual apathy. God calls it rebellion. That seems harsh, but it shows that God views apathy differently than most of us.

1. Consider the phrase “**basic principles** of the oracles of God” (GR **stoichea**) from Hebrews 5:12. This is only time the Greek **stoichea** is used in relation to God’s word. Usually **stoichea** referes to the elementary spirits of the world ([Col 2:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/bible.72.2.8), [Col 2:20](https://ref.ly/logosref/bible.72.2.20), [Gal](https://ref.ly/logosref/bible.69.4.8) 4:3, Gal 4:[9](https://ref.ly/logosref/bible.69.4.3)). What is being contrasted?

***Colossians 2:8*** (ESV)  
**8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the **elemental spirits of the world**, and not according to Christ.

***Colossians 2:20*** (ESV)  
**20** If with Christ you died to the **elemental spirits of the world**, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations?

***Galatians 4:3*** (ESV)  
**3** In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the **elementary principles of the world.**

***Galatians 4:8–9*** (ESV)  
**8** Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. **9** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless **elementary principles of the world**, whose slaves you want to be once more?

***Hebrews 5:12*** (ESV)  
**12** For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again **the basic principles of the oracles of God**. You need milk, not solid food,

The contrast is between the teachings of MAN and the teachings of GOD. The **logion** (sayings, teachings, oracles) of God vs the those of the world.

1. What happens when people don’t have a solid understanding of the basic principles of God? What was the situation for the readers of Hebrews?

They are vulnerable to errant teaching. They listen to whoever sounds good and makes a good point, having no Scripture basis to refute it. The Hebrews were apparently listening to traditional Jewish leadership who was telling them to turn away from following Yeshua the Messiah, and/or promoting identity with the teachings of certain other individuals or groups. The Hebrews were “ripe for the plucking” because they had no solid foundation.

1. What is the “word or righteousness” in Hebrews 5:13? How does one become righteous? See Rom 3:21, 4:13, 9:31, Gal 2:21, Gal 3:21, and Phil 3:9. What does this tell us about the problems the Hebrew readers were dealing with?

***Romans 3:21–24*** (ESV)  
**21** But now **the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law**, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

***Romans 4:13–14*** (ESV)  
**13** For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world **did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith**. **14** For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

***Romans 9:30–33*** (ESV)  
**30** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, **a righteousness that is by faith**; **31** but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. **32** Why? Because **they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.** They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, **33** as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

***Galatians 3:21*** (ESV)  
**21** Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! **For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law**.

***Philippians 3:8–9*** (ESV)  
**8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith**.

The “**word** of righteousness” means the “**message** about how God declares a person righteous.” Thus, what they were unable to do was to clearly define the righteousness which is by faith as opposed to self-righteousness -- a so-called “righteousness based on keeping the Torah and the traditions of the traditional Jews.” This righteousness was based upon their Jewish status and their identity with that group.

The Hebrews were facing pressure, probably from the traditional Jewish leadership, to conform to their prior way of thinking that keeping the Torah and their traditions were the basis of righteousness.

1. In Hebrews 6:1-2 the author encourages his readers to maturity, moving beyond the elementary teachings that are foundational to their faith. What are those elementary teachings? Is the order they are listed in significant?

**1. repentance from dead works** (actions of self-righteousness, like thinking keeping Torah or traditions makes one righteous)

**2. faith toward God** (righteousness by faith)

**3. instructions about washings** (plural – refers to washings / mikvaot) – public statement of faith; teaching that this is not ritual conversion

**4. laying on of hands** – commission for service and also receiving power of the Holy Spirit

***Acts 8:17*** (ESV)  
**17** Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

***Acts 9:17*** (ESV)  
**17** So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

***Acts 19:6*** (ESV)  
**6** And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

***2 Timothy 1:6*** (ESV)  
**6** For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

**5. resurrection of the dead** – resurrection of the Messiah is key, also resurrection of believers

**6. eternal judgment** – This will happen: it will be positive for believers and negative for unbelievers

The order seems to refer to a natural time progression. It starts when a person repents and ends with eternal judgment.

1. Why does the author speak of “**laying again** a foundation”?

They had been taught these things before. But because of their apathy they have not matured. They have been swayed by others. They need to start over and firm up their foundation.

1. In Hebrews 6:3, what does the phrase “And this we will do” refer to?

“And this we will do” refers back to the primary subject given in verse 1, “let us press on to maturity.” Our author exhorts his readers not to be satisfied with only the beginning or foundational truths regarding Yeshua as the promised Messiah, but encourages them to press forward in the things necessary to attain a maturing faith. For example, he wanted to teach them more about Melchizedek as a foreshadow of Yeshua, but they were not mature enough. They are still being swayed by influencers eroding their foundation.

1. What is the danger presented in Hebrews 6:4-6? How could be impossible for anyone to be “restored again to repentance”? Consider the context of the audience and how they are being pressured. Consider also Rom 1:18-32.

***Romans 1:18–32*** (ESV)  
**18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. **19** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **21** **For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him**, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. **24** **Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts** to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, **25** because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. **26** For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; **27** and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. **28** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up to a debased mind** to do what ought not to be done. **29** They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. **32** Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

There comes a time when God turns his back on those who continue to reject Him. When then happens is that people continue down their path of destruction without restraint.

The Hebrews are being pressured away from their commitment to follow Yeshua as their Messiah. It seems as if the author is simply saying “be careful… it is possible, even though you have been enlightened by the Spirit, and tasted the goodness of God, for you to harden your heart and fall away. And if you do, there is no way for restoration by any other means – so **there can be no hope salvation for you if you reject the only way**.

This makes sense in light of the context. The Hebrew believers were being urged to forget about Yeshua as Messiah, and go back to the old ways of worship and sacrifice within the confines of the traditional Judaism and priests and religious leaders of the day. Therefore, they were being urged to reject this Messiah Yeshua. But the author is giving a strong warning here: **beware, if you go down this path, there is no other way of salvation available to you**.

1. What point is the author trying to make in Hebrews 6:6 when he says “they are crucifying once again the Son of God”? Consider 1 Cor 3:10-11.

***1 Corinthians 3:10–11*** (ESV)  
**10** According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. **11** F**or no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

Those that crucified the Messiah saw and witnessed all that He did. Yet they were dull of hearing and hardened their hearts. They rejected what the Messiah offered and instead crucified Him. It seems the author is telling the Hebrews that they are in danger of being just like these people. They have tasted the Word and the Spirit and experienced first hand His gifts. Yet they are dull of hearing and if they continue down that path and reject what the Messiah offered, they will be no different than those who crucified Him. It is impossible for there to be salvation for them when they reject the Messiah. **There is no foundation other than Yeshua.**

1. What is the point of the brief analogy or parable of Hebrews 6:7-8?

This connects with the Romans 1 passage we just read. Those who receive God’s blessings but continue to live evil lives will be punished. There remains no salvation for them. They drank the rain… they should bear good fruit. If they drank the rain but bear bad fruit… there will be destruction!

1. What is the Greek translated “sluggish” in Hebrews 6:12? Where else was this same word used in this passage?

The Greek is **nothrós** and is the same word translated as “dull” as in “dull of hearing” in Hebrews 5:11.

1. From Hebrews 6:10-12, how are the Hebrews (and we) encouraged to live?

* Serve the saints
* **Earnestly desire** the full assurance of hope until the end
* Not be sluggish/ dull / apathetic
* Imitate those who **through faith and patience** inherit the promises