

Christ Superior Person – Part 5

Hebrews 5:11-6:9

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Normally I back up into my text the previous week a bit, but this week I want to back up only one verse, Hebrews 5:10, where the writer says, “Called of God,” he’s referring to Jesus Christ our great High Priest, “an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” This is the second time he’s mentioned Melchizedek in the book of Hebrews, and we’re kind of like, “Yeah, well let’s get into him. Let’s get into it. Let’s talk about it,” but again now we still have to wait until Hebrews 7. I keep putting it off and putting it off and putting it off, and I’m doing my homework so I can do a good job on Melchizedek, but it doesn’t really come back to the doctrine of Melchizedek until Hebrews 7.

Where we’re at in the book of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ is a better priest. The reason is, again, keep this context always in mind that the writer of Hebrews was writing to Jewish believers to encourage them not to go back to Judaism. Tonight we’re going to see that doing that in a way is kind of a sense of backsliding, or forsaking Christ is backsliding and turning back, so he’s writing to Hebrews to tell them to stop being Hebrews, to be Christians, to follow Christ, who is a better Priest in a better tabernacle and a better covenant. This is the “meat and potatoes” of the book of Hebrews. This is the central theme of the book of Hebrews: Jesus is better than the prophets, Jesus is better than the angels, Jesus is better than Moses; but Jesus is also better than Aaron and the Levitical system so why would you ever go back, so he’s writing to them.

Now, they were being persecuted for their faith in Christ and thought they had lost something in Judaism, so they’re being discouraged and wanting to go back. He warns them periodically through the book, and we have the third warning section in our passage tonight, which is actually are text, Hebrews 5:11-6:20. It’s the third warning passage, and the warning is that we not be dull toward the Scriptures, the Word of God.

The third warning begins, and let’s look at it in Hebrews 5:11. First of all, what we have a warning that begins in verse 11, and we see the conditions that they were in. They where in a state of infancy and spiritual immaturity, and then he’s going to tell them the marks of maturity at verse 14. Let’s read from verses 11-14. The writer of Hebrews says, “Of whom,” this “of whom” in verse 11 is a reference to Jesus Christ our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He’s a Priest, but not after the Levitical order because He’s the Messiah so He’s from the tribe of Judah, but He’s actually after the order of Melchizedek. Now, “Of whom,” referring to Christ, “we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” He mentions Melchizedek at the end of verse 10, and says, “Of whom,” referring to Melchizedek, “we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye,” the problem is, “ye are dull of hearing. 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of

righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

This section, as we mentioned, is the beginning of the warning. When we get into Hebrews 6, the entire chapter gives us this warning not to look back, not to let go, not to turn back, but to press on forward. He says, "There's a lot of things I'd like to say about this Melchizedek and the priesthood of Christ, but it's hard to utter because you are," here's the first point, "dull of hearing." As I said, here we have their condition: they are dull of hearing. They were drifting from the Word, Hebrews 2; they were doubting the Word, Hebrews 3; and now they are dull to the Word.

As I've mentioned before, your Christian life depends on having a knowledge of God through His Word. It depends on being in fellowship with God as He reveals Himself in His Word, so you can't neglect your Bible, you can't be ignorant of the Bible, you can't be ignorant of the Scriptures and grow as a Christian. Many times I tell people, "If you leave your Bible over in the corner of the room and just neglect it, you will eventually dry up and fall away from the Lord. You cannot walk with the Lord without His Word." I know we need His Holy Spirit, and we need fellowship with the saints, but we need all those elements together; and all of it is based on, centered on, grounded on, founded on the Word of God. The whole context of this warning is that you're a bunch of babies, spiritually immature. You ought to be teaching others, and you have need to be taught the basics again.

Now, it's possible to be a Christian and never grow up. A few weeks ago, we just had a little granddaughter born, and she's growing so fast. It's so fun to watch the grandkids develop. If I would have known how much fun grandkids were, I would have had them first. It's just a blast. Kids are a lot of work when you're a parent, but grandkids are fun because you can play with them, spoil them. I took my 12-year-old granddaughter out for lunch and took her shopping yesterday. I just said, "What do you want? I'll buy you stuff." Not anything, but I said, "I'll buy you some stuff," and it was just a great, great time. Then, she goes back to mom, has to explain what she bought, and I can go home and just go to bed.

A baby is a beautiful thing, isn't it? But a baby shouldn't stay a baby. A baby should grow, should begin to talk, should gain coordination, should be able to communicate, should be able to feed and take care of themselves, the growth and development. The sad thing is that in the spiritual realm, when you become a Christian, you're born into God's family, you're a spiritual babe in Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again." The Christian life starts with a rebirth, but we don't stay there. The sad thing is, it's possible in our Christian life to have been saved for many years but still be a baby Christian—you're still a Christian, you're still saved, you're still going to heaven, but you haven't matured and grown. He's going to talk about "meat" and "milk" and the desire for the Word in this passage, but the whole text is, he says, "You're doubting God's Word, you're dull of hearing, you're drifting away from God's Word, and the problem is now that you're spiritually babes. First, you should have been teaching others, you yourself need to be taught again the basics of Christ and the Scriptures." It indicates that time should produce maturity.

Maturity and spirituality are two different things. You can be spiritual in that you can be knowing God and a child of God in fellowship with God, but maturity takes time, takes a knowledge of God's Word, takes experience, and it produces growth. You can't mature overnight, it takes time. Spirituality is that fellowship, that individual personal subjective experience that you have with God, but you can be spiritual and not mature. The goal of the Christian life is to be both mature and spiritual—living in the fellowship with Christ in the Spirit, walking in the power of the Spirit, but growing and becoming mature and being able to teach others.

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you should be able to share the gospel with another person. You may not be a Billy Graham or Greg Laurie or some evangelist like that, but you should be able to give your testimony, you should be able to tell someone who Jesus is, what Jesus has done for you, and be able to know enough of the gospel to be effective to share the good news with other people, and in the sense you're teaching them, you're instructing them. Everything you begin to learn...and if you really want to learn the Bible well, learn it to teach others. One of the best ways to learn the Bible is to say, "I want to learn this because I'm going to tell it to someone else." What you learn should be pass on-able, and if you really want to solidify it in your own mind and heart, then you give it to others.

I was actually only about a year old in the Lord when I started teaching the Bible. I'm glad we didn't record any of those messages, it would have been horror to listen to. I do have some audio messages that go back to early 1970, '73, '74, '75, and it's freaky to listen to. My wife heard one the other day and couldn't even recognize my voice. It sounded so youthful and so vigorous. What's happened to you? It's called fifty years, that's what's happened to me. I remembered that I was so excited. I was learning doctrines and sharing them for the first time fresh that week. What I was learning, I was sharing. It was something that just solidified in my heart, and I've grown in my convictions and my understanding of God's Word over the years. There's still a lot that I don't know, and I still have a lot of room to grow, but the question that we need to ask ourselves is: Am I a baby or am I a mature Christian? Am I growing? For whatever length of time I've walked with the Lord, am I growing and maturing properly as a child of God? All of that develops around our relationship to the Word of God, so you should be able to teach others.

As I said, notice verse 12, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers;" there's a time issue there. It's time. You've been saved long enough. You've been walking with the Lord long enough. You ought to be teaching others. This doesn't mean everyone is called to be a preacher or formally a Bible teacher, but every Christian should know and be able, "...to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." This is one of the reasons why I'm doing the "Great Doctrines" of the Bible on Sunday morning, to be able to give that systematic teaching on all the important truths and doctrines of God's Word.

They had a limited capacity. If you're taking notes, write this down, they were limited in their capacity. They were not really receiving and growing in their knowledge of God's Word, and they were staying in a state of spiritual infancy. When you meet somebody that's been a Christian for fifty years, it doesn't guarantee that they're a mature Christian. They could be very

immature.

Then, he says, "...ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." These phrases get a little challenging to be sure as to what he's referring to, but remember they're Jews who came out of Judaism and were in danger of going back. Most likely, he's referring to things that deal with the old covenant and the Old Testament. Some of them carried over into the New Testament, and he's saying, "You need to go over these basics again," but when he says, "ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God," the word "principles" means the basics, the elementary principles or the ABCs. Here you should be in college, and you're still learning your alphabet. You're not advancing. Then, he says, "...the oracles of God," is a title for the Scriptures, the Word of God, "and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They were spiritual babes, and babies drink and need milk. Some say every body needs milk, even adults, but if you're an adult and all you drink is milk, you're probably going to be in big trouble. You should be able to go on to solid foods. One of the signs of maturing is that you graduate from milk to meat, or from milk to food. Part of your maturing as a believer is growing in the things and the doctrines of Christ and of God's Word.

Verse 13, the writer says, "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness," which is another phrase or term for the oracles of God or for the Scriptures, "for he is a babe." There's the reference to the fact that they're spiritual babies. They're limited in their capacity, they're lacking in their growth, and they lack skill. Notice verse 13, "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe." The "word of righteousness" is another title for the Scriptures. They lacked skill and ability to be able to properly handle the Word, interpret the Word, and divide the Word.

Verse 14, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." In verses 11-13, he gives us the condition of their babyhood or their lack of growth or their immaturity, and then in verse 14, he gives us the marks of maturity—that they have unrestricted diet, they can eat meat and they understand the Word of God, and that they have a responsibility in making right decisions. That's seen in the phrase, "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." So, "strong meat" belongs to them that are mature, fully grown, and "...who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

What that means is...again, I preach from the King James Bible, and some of the verses like this I should probably read from the NIV or some other modern translation, it means that they take the things of Scripture—here's a mark of maturity—and are able to apply it to their lives in everyday situations. Listen to me carefully. One of the marks of immaturity is they don't know the Scriptures, and they don't know how to apply it to their marriage, they don't know how to apply it to their life. They don't know how to say, "Well, this is good and this is bad; this should be done, this shouldn't be done." They don't have their senses exercised to be discerning and take the things of God and make them practical.

One of the things I'm trying to do, and it's quite a challenge, is to take the doctrines of the Bible on Sunday morning and make them practical. We read about God being omniscient, He knows all things, the practical aspect is that He knows what you're going through. He knows what your needs are. He's your Father. You can take some of the most lofty biblical doctrines and truths, and they come right down where we live, come right down into the kitchen, right down into the living room, right down into the bedroom, right down in our workplace, right down where we live. That's the mature individual, he can discern both good and evil. He's rightly dividing the Word of truth, so it's a marvelous, marvelous truth. From understanding the Scriptures, they are able to apply them.

The Bible says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only," so it's not a mark of maturity just to know theology and Bible doctrine, it's a mark of maturity to have it take hold of your life translating into the way you live. Someone once said, "The goal of Bible study is not an enlightened intellect, it's a transformed character." If you're growing as a believer, and you're growing in your knowledge of God's Word, does it make you a better husband? Does it make you a better wife? Does it make you a more obedient child? Does it make you a better worker on the job? Does it make you live more holy and more righteous before God? If not, that's not true knowledge of God in His Word. Jesus said in John 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." D.L. Moody said, "Every Christian's Bible should be bound in shoe leather to remind them that the Word of God is to be lived out in their daily lives." Let's grow, let's mature, but let's not just have a bunch of information, let's see God do a life transformation in the way that we live by being discerning of what is good and what is evil. This is basically the idea of putting God's Word into practice. They were limited in their capacity, they lacked growth, and they lacked the skill to decide what is right and what is wrong.

There is no break between Hebrews 5 and 6, and what you have beginning in Hebrews 6 is the solution to their spiritual condition in verses 1-3. They are babes in Christ, they lack discernment, they're not growing, and they need to know the Word better and apply it to their lives. Now he wants to give them the solution to that and exhorts them, Hebrews 6:1. "Therefore," this is the application of what we just read in Hebrews 5, "leaving the principles of the doctrine Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the 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. 3 And this will we do, if God permit."

He was confident, God willing, God leading, God energizing, directing, that we will do just what he exhorted them to do, that they would go on to maturity and not go back. Later on he says, "...we are persuaded better things of you." "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," so leaving the ABCs, the elementary principles, the first things. Some translations have the first truths of the doctrine of Christ, "let us go on unto perfection," or the word means maturity or completion.

When the Bible talks about mature, it actually uses the concept of fruit that is fully ripe. Have you ever grabbed a plum and it looks so good? I love plums! I love to rub them on my lips and

smell them. I love the texture and the feel of the plum. If you go to bite into it and it's not really ripe yet, it's hard and like rubber. It's not very desirable, right? You want it to be fully ripe. You don't want it to be overly ripe or under ripe, you want it to be just right. I love that concept of God wanting us to ripen, so we stay attached to the vine—keep this in mind—we stay in fellowship with Christ, and then we grow, we mature, we bear fruit for His glory, but we need to go on.

Notice in Hebrews 6:1, "...let us go on unto perfection," or to spiritual maturity, "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." The "doctrine of Christ" probably to these Jewish believers started with the Old Testament teachings and predictions of Messiah. Whenever you find the word "Christ," even in the New Testament, it's a title that we know from the Old Testament of Messiah, Mashiach, the anointed One. It means He's the Messiah, the Mashiach, the anointed One. That's what the word means, anointed One. The "doctrine of Christ," in this context to these Jews was probably leaving the Old Testament predictions and getting to the explanations of who Christ is.

Just a footnote, this kind of excited me today as I was studying, and I don't want to get sidetracked because, you know, even as believers we know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. All Scripture is equally inspired, but not all Scripture is of equal value of importance for the Christian today. If I were going to be deserted on a desert island, by the way I've always hoped that if I was, there'd be perfect waves for me to do a little surfing there. Forgive me, I had to throw that in there. If I were deserted on an island, I would rather have the book of Romans than the book of Numbers. What are you laughing at? Not that it isn't God's Word, not that it wouldn't bless my heart, not that I wouldn't be thankful from the Lord, but it's, "Lord, if I ever crash on an airplane, let's pray that my New Testament stays intact."

I love the gospels, and those are so important. We would be lost without them, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; but if you're going to really grow as a Christian, and please don't misunderstand what I'm saying here, you must move to Acts, and then go through the book of Acts, and you must get to Romans, and Corinthians, and Galatians, and Ephesians, and Philippians, and Colossians. Those are what's called didactic, the word is doctrine or teaching epistles, and historical narrative passages in the Bible must always be interpreted through the lens of the epistles. We know from the gospels Jesus died on the cross. We know that He rose from the dead, but we know from Romans a lot more of why He accomplished on that cross. You see, the epistles are the doctrinal explanation of the historical narrative. A lot of Christians make a big mistake when they try to build doctrine on historical narrative. You can do that in the gospels, you can do that in the book of Acts, but not to the neglect of the epistles or the didactic doctrinal teachings in the New Testament.

If I were going to be abandoned on an island, I would hope and pray that I had the book of Romans or Galatians or Colossians or Philippians or something like that. The best thing would be to have Genesis to Revelation, right? the whole Bible.

What happens when we are growing and maturing is we move along through Scriptures and

when I talked about Revelation on Wednesday night, I didn't have time to go into it but Revelation of God in His Bible, in His Word, is what's called progressive. Now, it's completed now and it stopped, but from Genesis to Revelation God progressively reveals more and more about Himself. We have a greater understanding than Job did because we have the whole revelation of God. This is why we, "...earnestly contend for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints." You need to progress through the Scriptures. You need to take the doctrinal sections...a baby Christian will just spend all his time in the historical narrative and doesn't want to go on to the "meat" of the Word, not that the gospels aren't "meat," but if you're going to grow, you must progress through Scripture and gain a greater knowledge of God as He progressively reveals Himself culminating in the book of Revelation.

Let's break this down, verse 1, "...let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works," so the "doctrine of Christ" are the basics about Christ, you move on through the Scriptures, you grow in your knowledge of His Word, you go on, and then, "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works." I have to confess, these next several verses are a challenge to me like probably none other in all of Scripture. This idea of, "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works," is probably referring to the old covenant and a knowledge of the law of Moses and the rites, rituals, and legal law and codes that Moses in the Pentateuch, that we should grow on from there, "and of faith toward God," that we should grow on past just a simple initial salvation experience of believing in Jesus and being saved.

A person is saved by faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone; but then there is also "the doctrine of baptisms," notice it's plural, verse 2. Again, in the context of Jews not going back to Judaism, he's probably referring to washings and formal washings and ritualistic washings. The Jews had all kinds of rituals and washings of hands, pots, and pans, and Jesus actually said, "You make clean the outside of the pots and pans, and you wash your hands, but your heart is full of evil or extortion and sin." We go on past the ceremonial washings. He's probably not talking about baptism in the sense of Christian baptism, but even that is an initial experience of the believer and we go beyond that. "...and of laying on of hands," in the old covenant they had a lot of procedures where they laid hands on the priests, the priests laid hands on the sacrifices. I've mentioned the scapegoat, how the scapegoat had the sins of the people pronounced on that goat by the priest laying his hands on that goat. Even the individual who brought a lamb to be sacrificed by the priest, you'd actually put your hands on that lamb and ceremonially transfer your sins to that lamb, and then it would be sacrificed. Now, as Jews, he's telling them, "Let's get past that. Let's go beyond that."

Again, just a little footnote, and I know I could maybe get myself in trouble or someone get upset with me, but as a Christian, whether Gentile or Jew, we're one in Christ. Don't make the same mistake that the writer of Hebrews was writing to the Jews in Hebrews for and try to go back to Judaism and not go on to follow Christ. I've met more Christians who think they're more spiritual because they observe Old Testament laws, rites, and rituals, and the more Judaistic in their Christianity, there's a sense in which God is finished with Judaism. It's fulfilled in Christ. He is the substance; Judaism is the shadow. As Christians, we understand where we're coming

from and what's behind us, and that's a beautiful thing, but don't go back to the shadows.

If you're a young bride and your husband is in the Army and sent off to war, and you have a picture of him in the house, it's a blessing to look at the picture and to think of your husband. You're glad he's out fighting the battle, but you look forward to the day he comes home. If he came home, walked through the doors, and you refused to embrace and look at him and just took the picture and went off to the bedroom and just looked at the picture, how do you think your husband would feel? It's like, "Excuse me. Let's put that aside. I'm here in flesh and blood. The real thing is here." That's what it's like when people leave Christ and go back to the old system or the old covenant, so let's progress on. Let's move on.

Then, he mentions the "...laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead," which was a doctrine taught in the Old Testament, also in the New, but let's go beyond that, "and of eternal judgment." He's just basically listing some of the doctrines that are foundational, taught through the old covenant, carried into the new covenant, but we need to grow and go on beyond that to the deeper "meat" of God's Word. He says, "All this will we do, if God permit."

Beginning in verse 4, we start with the heart of the warning. Let's read it. I confess to you that I approach these verses with a little fear and trembling and with trepidation. He says, "For it is impossible," there's no break between verses 3 and 4, so he says, "For," and here's the reason that we need to "let us go on" because, "it is impossible for those," underline the word "those," "who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away," that phrase in the Greek is not your normal apostasia, it's only used here in the Bible. It's a unique Greek phrase that literally means to fall alongside. It would be used of someone walking on a road and falls alongside the road. "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. 7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs," or vegetables, "meet for them by whom it is dressed," or tilled the soil, "receiveth blessing from God," so the fruit is born. "But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Those are illustrations.

Verse 9, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you," I asked you to underline the word "those" in verse 4, and then you have "they" in verse 6, and again "they;" in verse 9, "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." He's talking in a sense about a hypothetical situation or he could be talking about real individuals that are actually going back to Judaism and are in danger of not bearing fruit and in danger of actually losing fellowship with God and rewards. This is where the challenge comes into this passage.

Go back to verse 4. "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, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 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.” This is probably a passage that I’m asked questions about more than any other in the Bible. I very rarely have the time to really try to deal with it in a question after service, but it’s a verse that has troubled people, perplexed people, and good conservative orthodox scholars have different interpretations of this passage. So, I by no means would say that my view, and I’ll try my best to explain it, is the lock-solid view of this passage. I’m actually saying that there are those that are orthodox that disagree on interpreting this passage.

Here’s where the crux comes. It seems as you read this passage that the writer of Hebrews is warning the believers that they can lose their salvation, that if they fall away, that there’s an impossibility for them to be ever brought back to repentance. Real quickly, before I forget, if it does teach that, and I don’t believe it does, it also teaches that you can never be saved again, which I don’t think is scriptural. If you do believe that you can be saved, born again, then lose your salvation, and we can spend weeks on this passage, and I’m going to just kind of skim through it and then come back to it next week. If you believe that you can lose your salvation, then based on this verse you’d have to also agree that you can’t get it back, so if you lose it, you can’t get it back. You can’t repent and be born again, again.

Let me give you some other views, but let me say this. I don’t believe that it’s teaching that a true believer can lose their salvation. Let me give you some background on how to interpret Scripture. First, whenever you’re interpreting Scripture in the Bible, Scriptures that are clear should be used to interpret Scriptures that are unclear. Scriptures that are clear should in a sense, I hate to say the word “trump,” but they should be interpreting or take precedence over unclear Scriptures. If you have a verse that is unclear and there are differing views on it and controversial, and sometimes good scholars have different views on the one verse and can’t agree, but then you have these other verses over here that are very clear and very easy to understand, you don’t—listen very carefully—you don’t abandon the clear teaching of the Bible for unclear verses. What I’m saying is that it would be folly to build a doctrine on this passage that you can lose your salvation when I’m convinced that the Bible is clear that you cannot.

Now, some say, “Well, I’m convinced that you can,” and I’ll accept your position. I think you’re wrong, but I’ll accept it. If I didn’t think you were wrong, then I would hold your position. We can be Christians, we can be brothers, and Christians shouldn’t fight over the doctrine of: Can a Christian lose their salvation? Sometimes it’s called “once saved, always saved,” sometimes it’s called the perseverance of the saints or whatever term people want to give it, but I’m convinced the clear teaching of the Bible is that if you have been born again, regenerated, given new life—you’ve been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ—that you can never, ever be lost. You can slip into carnality, we’re going to see in this text, you can lose fruit, you can lose reward, you can be chastened by the Lord, you can dishonor God, you can backslide, I’m not recommending you do that, but I do believe that salvation is eternal.

In Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” That’s a description of a Christian. There is no such thing as a Christian who is not in Christ Jesus. If Paul says there is no condemnation, there is no condemnation. If we read down to the end of Romans 8, it says there’s no separation. Nothing can, “separate us from the love of

God, which is in Christ Jesus.” If Paul says to the Ephesians very clearly that we’re sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, not only are we sealed with the Holy Spirit, which speaks of security and ownership, only God can break the seal and He won’t do that, but he tells us for how long we are sealed, “...unto the day of redemption.” That’s the third phase of our salvation, glorification, when we go to heaven. Those are just two references.

Jesus said, and I quoted it Sunday morning, “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” Some say, “Well, you can jump out.” If His hand spans the universe, that’s a big jump. I can go on for quite some time, but the Bible says, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” In Philippians 1:6, “... he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,” so I believe what begins with grace ends in glory. It’s not a license to sin, not a license to live however you want, it should be humbling our hearts to be thankful to God.

You don’t put yourself “in Christ,” you can’t take yourself out of Christ. You don’t seal yourself with the Holy Spirit, you can’t unseal yourself. You didn’t regenerate yourself, you can’t unregenerate yourself. For you to lose your salvation, you’d have to unregenerate yourself, nothing in the Bible tells you how to do that. You’d have to take yourself out of Christ and put yourself back in Adam. You’d have to get the Holy Spirit to leave you, to depart from you, and never come back. I find nowhere in Scriptures that clearly teach that, but the Scriptures clearly teach...and, you know, when I was first starting to teach the Bible I didn’t believe any of this. I was raised in a denominational environment that taught you could lose your salvation. You couldn’t tell me what you did to lose it or how much sin lost it or how sinful you had to be before it was lost, so everyone lacked assurance and every Sunday everybody went back to the altar and got saved again. Every Sunday the whole church gets saved every week. Nobody had any assurance.

Studying the book of Romans, the book of Galatians, the book of Ephesians, the book of Colossians, the book of Philippians, over studying those verses and years of studying them, eventually...and I actually came in dragging my feet, came and reluctantly said, “Lord, thank You for eternal salvation. Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul. Thank You, Lord, for making me whole. Thank You, Lord, for giving to me, Your great salvation so rich, so full, and free.” Amen? What a blessed thought. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

I’ve got to move a little faster. We’re only going to go to verse 9 tonight, which is kind of what I planned on, so I’m still on schedule. This is the first, unclear must yield to the clear. Secondly, context, context, context, context. Writing to Hebrews that were going back to Judaism, telling them not to do that but to move on. Thirdly, here’s an important point, ask yourself: Is this a salvation text or a fellowship text? A lot of these texts in the Bible which people think is telling us we can lose our salvation, 1) they’re not telling us we can lose it, they’re telling us, “Make sure you have it;” 2) some verses are dealing with salvation and some are dealing with fellowship. This is what 1 John was written for, “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We don’t get salvation back, we get fellowship, koinonia, back. “...we walk in the light, as he is in the light...and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This passage is not about salvation, it’s about fellowship. It’s about fruitfulness.

Now, there are three basic views, and then we’ll go back and wrap it up with the text. There are those that say this is saved, and the person loses their salvation. Again, I believe the clear Scripture teaching is that we are saved eternally and we cannot lose our salvation. Based on that alone, and the study of the text, I do not hold that this is teaching that a saved person can be lost. Secondly, there are those that teach this is an unsaved person that is described in this text, and I’ll talk about that, that doesn’t really get saved or born again is just short of salvation. It’s unsaved and they fall away from their profession of faith.

In the New Testament when you’re dealing with classic heretics, that’s the clear teaching of Scripture, that they are unregenerate, they’re not saved. In the book of Jude, and 2 Peter, when it talks about the pig that has been washed and goes back to the mire, everyone knows that’s their favorite verse in the Bible, right?, that’s a heretic. That’s a person who isn’t saved, they weren’t born again. They come to church, sing the songs, clap their hands. They never were born again. They were never regenerated. They looked like a Christian, but they weren’t really a Christian. They were still unsaved. The dog that vomits goes back to its vomit. Jude talks about those who are unsaved and go back to their unbelief.

The third position is that they are saved and that they simply backslide, tragically backslide I should say, and it’s a loss of fellowship, loss of fruitfulness, and a loss of rewards. That third view is most likely, I think, what is happening in this text. I don’t believe it’s saying you can lose your salvation. It’s possible, not as probable, that these people described here are unsaved and that they apostatize, that’s not the phrase that’s used here, but it’s more probable that they’re saved people who backslide and that they could be chastened by the Lord, they could be taken home to heaven by the Lord, they lose their rewards, they dishonor God. We all know people as far as we can tell, but only God knows the heart, who backslide, who were living for the Lord and walking with Jesus and then went back into their sin; and when they’re living in that state of deliberate disobedience and rebellion to God, that’s when it’s impossible to renew them to repentance. Only God can do it in a miracle, and those prodigal sons do come back, but that’s what I think. It’s probably being described here as the impossibility of this passage.

He describes these individuals as “once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” so it is possible, that’s probably not the case but probable, that these people were saved and not unsaved, that they, “tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” The reason why I’m a little hesitant here is because I do believe that a person can come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that a person can come to church and hear about God, that a person can hear the Scriptures and even start to believe them but haven’t trusted Christ.

John Bunyan, in his excellent book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the spiritual allegory, has false believers getting to the very door of heaven and then going to hell. It's possible that people can profess to be a believer and sometimes even have an emotional experience but not be truly born again or regenerated. I do believe that Scofield, in his Reference Bible, takes that position on this passage that these people were unregenerated, they weren't saved. They had all this experience of God and the Holy Spirit and understood all those things, but they never really were regenerated or born again.

The third view, as I said, is that they were and this is the description, verses 4-5, of true believers who fall away. That "fall away" as I said is used only in this passage. It's not used in any other passage, and it means to fall alongside.

The picture that we just read last week and the week before in Hebrews was, remember the story of the Israelites coming out of Egypt and coming to the border of Kadesh Barnea going into the Promised Land? I think that still holds true of this passage, that they were saved, they came out of Egypt, they came to the border, but they didn't enter into the Promised Land. They didn't enter into the life of fellowship and the blessing and abundance. The next day when they woke up when God said, "You can't go in," guess what God said? "No, it's too late. Too late. You can't go in." How fitting that this passage says, "For it is impossible...to renew them again unto repentance," so it could be that's a picture that's in the book of Hebrews of a loss of a believer losing fellowship with Christ and rewards.

When you find the word "repentance," verse 6, "to renew them again unto repentance," do you know Christians, even after salvation, have to repent? They have to turn back to God and ask Him to forgive them. As believers, we repent more after salvation than when we first got saved. We initially repent and believe, but we have to repent all the time, "God, I'm sorry. God, I was wrong. Please forgive me," to restore fellowship. If they are living in a place of rebellion and disobedience to God, then it's impossible to renew them to that repentance of turning back to God. But quick, 1 John 1:9, as a cross-reference to verse 6, and what they're doing when they're living in this backslidden state, so I would call them backsliders, is "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame," and it's in the present tense in the Greek. They're putting Him to open shame and crucifying Him afresh.

Here's the illustration, verses 7-9. This sheds light on understanding this passage. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain," so what he's doing in verses 7-8, and then his assurance in verse 9, is trying to illustrate what's going on in the passage. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs," vegetables, food, "for them by whom is it dressed, receiveth blessing from God," you might just make a note in verse 7, this is the fruitful life.

We've got a lot of rain lately, right? I don't know about you, I know we need rain and we're glad for rain, but, "Rain, please stop for a while." All the green grass, all the beautiful flowers, my wife and I took a beautiful walk out in the hillside the other day, and there were just wildflowers everywhere. It was so beautiful. So, the rain comes down and the fruit comes up, the blessings

come up. This is the way we should be living our Christian life, bearing fruit for the glory of God.

In verse 8, fruitlessness. This is what was just described in verses 4-6. He was warning them not to be fruitless. He says, "But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Don't misinterpret the idea that this analogy, this illustration, where weeds are burned teaches that Christians can be thrown into hell. That's not what he's teaching. He's merely using an illustration of the contrast between bearing fruit, verse 7, and being fruitless thorn bushes in verse 8. John 15 is not about salvation, it's about bearing fruit. People use the same passage, John 15, that if you don't abide in Christ, you're going to be thrown into the fire and burn, when it's not talking about salvation, it's talking about fruit bearing. You're not going to bear fruit if you don't stay abiding in the vine.

Notice how it closes, and I will wrap it up in verse 9, "But, beloved," it's interesting now he calls them "beloved," so he's clearly talking to believers, "we," not those or they but "we," beloved, "are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany," again, note that word "accompany" "salvation, though we thus speak." He gives them an assurance. Through all this warning passage, you say, "Whew! All that? And it's not even what he wants to talk about?" He gives them a little warning then says, "But I know that you're going to grow, you're going to bear fruit, you're going to be blessed, you're going to bring glory to God." It's like, "Dude, could you just not put that in there so that we won't be so confused?" I say verse 9 is the assurance that he had for the true believers, "You will produce better things."

I want you to notice the words "accompany salvation." He's not saying that you will bring about or precipitate or cause your salvation, he's not talking about salvation. He's talking about those things that "accompany salvation" which is fruit, which is bearing fruit for the glory of God. The subject is not salvation, the subject, verse 9, are those things, "that accompany salvation." It's a key word, and it sheds a lot of light on this passage. It's not about salvation, it's what accompanies your salvation, that your life, if it's truly saved, will bear fruit. He's basically warning us there and we need to be warned: Don't turn away, don't drift away. "Let us go on," let us grow. Don't backslide. It's a sad and tragic and horrible thing. Amen?