

11. Understanding Why Salvation Accompanies True Belief

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why some Christians do not grow to spiritual maturity. In this topic, we are going to see that salvation accompanies true belief. In contrast, we will see that those who hear about salvation but choose to continue to depend on their own works have rejected the only way that they can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Hebrews 6:1-3 says, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.” The Old Testament prepared the way for a person to understand the way to come to Christ so the Jews had that background when Christ came. In fact, we see that the Old Testament taught each of the things mentioned in these verses.

The doctrine of Christ is the teaching about the way to have salvation through Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:11, we read, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” We must start on the right foundation in order to have eternal life. However, just like when you are building a house, the foundation of the building is not the final goal. It is just the beginning. The word translated “perfection” means *moral or spiritual maturity*. It comes from the same root word that is translated “full age” in the last verse of Hebrews 5. We saw in the last topic that word speaks about growing to spiritual maturity. Salvation is the beginning of our spiritual life but God wants us to then grow and become spiritually mature as we saw in our last topic.

First, the Old Testament taught repentance from dead works. Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” The Old Testament made it very clear that our own works are like filthy rags. Second, the Old Testament taught faith toward God. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” The remainder of Hebrews 11 talks about the faith of various Old Testament saints.

Third, the Old Testament taught about the doctrine of baptism (washings). This word is only used 4 times in the New Testament and is not the word used for baptism. In Mark 7:4, it talks about the washing of cups. In Mark 7:8, it talks about the washing of pots. Then, in Hebrews 9:7-10 we read, “But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” The Old Testament washings were to point forward to Christ and not a way to provide salvation.

Fourth, the Old Testament taught the laying on of hands. A person would lay his hands on his sacrifice to show his identification with it before the sacrifice was killed. Fifth, the Old Testament taught about the resurrection of the dead. In fact, this was the key doctrinal difference between the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Sixth, the Old Testament taught about eternal judgment. This was a second doctrinal difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Hebrews 6:4-8 goes on to say, “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.” We see that a person could claim to believe all of the doctrines mentioned in the first verses but still depend on his own works.

Some of the Pharisees became Christians. Even those who were true believers continued to hold to the law. Acts 15:5 says, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.’” However, there were also Pharisees and others who were just professing believers who claimed to be Christians but were actually depending on their own works for salvation. Paul said about such individuals in Galatians 1:6-8, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” It is this group of Jews about whom the writer of Hebrews is speaking in Hebrews 6:4-8.

This group had been enlightened. The Gospel had been explained to them by Christ and the apostles. They had tasted of the heavenly gift. The word translated “tasted” means *to enjoy the flavor of or to feel*. Here, we see that they had even made a profession of believing in Christ. They had seen how the Holy Spirit had worked through the ministry of Christ including such things as raising the dead. They had enjoyed hearing the Word of God as they listened to the teaching of Christ. They had even seen the Lord transform the lives of those who truly believed.

Even after seeing and hearing all of these things, the people such as those mentioned in Galatians 1:6-8 had chosen to fall away. The word translated “fall away” means *to be totally unfaithful or to turn from the right path*. These may have made a profession of trusting Christ but had always depended on their own efforts to keep the Jewish law and had tried to get others to continue to follow the law. They had rejected the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood as the payment for their sins. As a result, there was no more offering that could be made for their sins. They are described in verses 7 and 8 as earth that had received the rain and instead of bringing forth food had brought forth thorns and briars instead. Their end would be eternal judgment.

Suddenly, we see a change in Hebrews 6:9-12 where we read, “But, beloved, we are confident of

better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here, we see that the writer of Hebrews now begins to speak again to those who have had true faith and are part of the beloved.

The writer was confident that the Jews to whom he was writing were true Christians because their lives demonstrated the things that accompany salvation even though many of them had remained immature. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” These are the three things that give evidence of a new nature. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4, we see that Paul thanked God for these things in the Thessalonians. Those verses say, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” Those things are evidence of spiritual life.

The writer said that God would not forget their work and labor of love. The Jewish Christians had shown their love for the name of God. In addition, they had also shown a love for the other saints. They had faithfully ministered to other saints. In fact, they were continuing to have that ministry to other Christians. Christ said in John 13:34-35, ““A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”” The Jewish Christians demonstrated that love to one another.

Then, the writer went on to encourage the Jewish Christians to show the same diligence in their hope. The word translated “diligence” means *eagerness or striving after something*. 2 Corinthians 8:16 says, “But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.” Here, we see the eagerness of Titus to help the Corinthians in their spiritual growth. The writer wanted the Jewish Christians to have this same diligence to strengthen their hope as they waited for the coming of the Lord.

The writer did not want the Jews to become sluggish (the word that was translated “dull of hearing” in Hebrews 5:11). Instead, he wanted them to imitate the faith and patience of the Old Testament saints. For that reason, Hebrews 11 will give many examples of the faith and patience of the Old Testament saints as they waited to inherit the promises of God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to have this same love, hope and faith and be able to be an example that others can imitate. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why salvation accompanies true belief.