

# Hebrews 6

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In life, we are constantly presented with an array of choices. These choices involve both our ultimate goals and the intermediate steps that we must take to reach those goals. For example, just about all of us were asked as children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” In response to that question, we stated what our ultimate goal was. We said we wanted to be a police officer, or a firefighter, or an astronaut, and so on. I myself, when I was six or seven, declared that I wanted to be an aerospace engineer. Yes, I was a weird kid.

However, most of us never ended up reaching those ultimate goals because we were unwilling or unable to follow through on the intermediate steps. When my wife was still working outside the home, she had a plaque on her desk that read, “Not everybody can be an astronaut when they grow up.” Clearly, my own dreams of becoming an aerospace engineer didn’t pan out. At the time, I thought that being an aerospace engineer was about drawing pictures of airplanes. Then, my dad, who is an engineer, told me that engineers had to do lots of math, and that was the end of that.

Perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, Hebrews is a book about choices, about ultimate goals and what it takes to get there. In the spiritual realm, the ultimate goal is a no-brainer. Everybody who believes in heaven wants to go there. However, the intermediate steps require much more effort. Just like you can’t become an engineer without doing lots of math, you can’t go to heaven without being righteous, and just like I wasn’t willing to devote myself to numbers instead of words, most people aren’t willing to devote each day of their lives to God. These apparently small, insignificant choices to disobey can have a disastrous overall effect. Let’s look at how this works in Hebrews 6.

## **Maturity or Failure.**

The first option that the Hebrews writer presents to us is the choice to press on to **SPIRITUAL MATURITY**. He describes this decision in Hebrews 6:1-3. Here, he addresses a problem that was common 2000 years ago and is still common today—the problem of Christians who aren’t willing to expand their knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Christians like this understand enough to have obeyed the gospel in the first place, but they’re content to keep their knowledge right at that minimal level. They don’t want to understand the example of Jesus or the way His grace operates to cleanse us from sin. What’s more, they even have to be re-taught the moral basics, over and over again.

Brethren, that’s not what God expects from us. He wants us to become more like Him each day, and that process must begin with learning more about Him each day. None of us will ever come to a complete understanding of His will. Before I started this sermon series, I would have said that Hebrews was the book of the Bible I knew best, and yet, in every lesson I’ve written, my study has taught me something I didn’t know before. That being the case, we must make sure that we’re here every time the doors are open, eager to learn more about God’s word. We must make sure that we study that word on our own and discuss it with our families and friends. That’s the only way to grow.

If we don’t put in the study time that growth requires, we put ourselves in danger of **FALLING AWAY**. The Hebrews writer describes this bitter alternative in Hebrews 6:4-6. This is one of the most ominous passages of Scripture in the entire Bible. We don’t have to know very much about God at all to know that we do not want to be the ones who are crucifying Jesus anew and exposing Him to contempt. What’s more, the Hebrews writer tells us that this is an irreversible process. This doesn’t mean that some Christian who rejects the Lord can never come back to Him, no matter how much he wants to. That would contradict everything the Bible teaches us about the grace of God. However, it does mean that once a Christian passes a certain spiritual point, he will never return to faithfulness because he will never want to. He is so far gone and has hardened his heart so much that even the gospel can no longer have an effect on him.

None of us want to be that Christian, and yet, that’s where so many Christians end up. They end up there because they make those insignificant daily decisions not to grow. It’s a beautiful Sunday afternoon, and so they decide to take the kids to the park instead of coming to church services, and they don’t hear the gospel, and they don’t grow. The lawn needs mowing Saturday morning, and they do yard work instead of coming to the hymn-learning session or the prayer breakfast, and they aren’t built up by talking to God and spending time with their brethren, and they don’t grow. Choice by choice by choice, they choose the world over the Lord. Soon, they aren’t at Sunday morning services very much anymore, and before they know it, they’re entirely back in the world, their feet set on the path to destruction.

The Hebrews writer emphasizes this point by starkly describing **TWO FIELDS**. Let’s look at this in Hebrews 6:7-8. These two fields are two people, both of whom have received the outpouring of grace from God. One of these people is fruitful. He devotes himself to growing in understanding and usefulness in the kingdom. He bears the harvest in his life that God wants to see, and so God will bless him with eternal life. On the other hand, we see the Christian who chooses to be unfruitful. He refuses to grow and he refuses to do. Instead, he takes the new life that God has given him

and wastes it on unproductive pursuits that bring no glory to his Redeemer. This supposed Christian isn't headed for God's blessing. Instead, he is bound for God's curse, and the fire of destruction that awaits the disobedient.

However, the Hebrews writer is at pains to point out that he is convinced of **BETTER THINGS** about his readers. We find this in Hebrews 6:9-10. This isn't based on his affection for them, although he does love them. Instead, he believes that they're on the right track for now because of the fruit that he has seen in their lives. They've been working for the Lord and serving one another in love. That's not enough, but it's a start. They haven't reached the point where they can rest on their laurels, but they can take comfort in the knowledge that they've been doing well so far.

Likewise, friends, we must pause periodically to evaluate where we are spiritually based on what we do. If we are on the path that leads to heaven, our lives will show a pattern of steadily increasing good works. If our lives show a stagnant pattern, or a decreasing pattern, or no pattern at all, that's a bad sign. We need to be honest about the kind of life we're living, even if we don't like what honesty says about us. That's the only way we could ever improve.

Just as was true for the Hebrews, though, past works aren't enough to keep **THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE**. Let's read together from Hebrews 6:11-12. The Hebrews writer's point is that if we have that track record of spiritual growth, it didn't happen by accident. Instead, it happened because we worked for it and asked the Lord to bless our labors, all with the goal of heaven in mind. If we have been growing, we need to maintain that determination so that we can keep growing. If we do that, we will be following in the footsteps of those who made their lives a spiritual success. The righteous men of old didn't work hard for five or 10 years and then coast. Instead, they kept the accelerator floored to the very end of their lives. We must do the same, by seeking every opportunity presented to us to learn more about God's word, by seeking every opportunity to do good works. Only then can we look to inherit the promises too.

### **Inheriting God's Promises.**

In fact, this idea of inheriting God's promises is going to drive the discussion of Hebrews for the next chapter or more. The writer embarks on this discussion by exploring God's promises to **ABRAHAM**. Look with me at Hebrews 6:13-15. Because the book assumes a certain baseline knowledge of the Old Testament, the argument here is not as clear to us as it perhaps should be. In this section, the writer refers to the conversation that God has with Abraham after the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. Even though it's not apparent from the little snippet that the Hebrews writer quotes, in Genesis, God prefaces this statement by explicitly saying that He is swearing by Himself to bless and multiply Abraham. Others in the Old Testament might have sworn by something or someone greater than themselves; God could only swear by Himself because there was no one greater. Abraham believed God and His promise, patiently waited for God to fulfill that promise, and ultimately received the blessing that God had guaranteed, just as we hope to today.

If we want to fully understand what's going on here, though, we must delve more deeply into the meaning of **GOD'S OATH**. The writer analyzes this in Hebrews 6:17-18. He begins this analysis with an exploration of why men swear oaths. As a race, mankind has a problem—we're all a bunch of liars. So that we could have at least some certainty in the word of another, we devised the idea of an oath, so that we can trust the statements of one who is speaking under oath. This idea is very old, and it continues into the present. In our courtrooms, people testify under oath every day.

However, this doesn't make sense with respect to God. God is incapable of lying, and everything that He promises, He will surely fulfill. We entrust our souls to the truth of His word even when He doesn't swear an oath about some particular concept. Why, then, does God bother swearing oaths at all? According to the Hebrews writer, God carries this out for our benefit, so that we can know just how much trust we can place in some particular promise. If God says He's going to do something for us, His purpose is unchangeable. It's a lead-pipe cinch. Now, if God further backs up that promise with an oath, He has lined up not one but two assurances in which it is impossible for Him to lie. God's promise plus an oath is a double lead-pipe cinch. Our salvation is based on this kind of unshakable promise-plus-oath combination. Because we have so much assurance in God's promise, the only logical thing for us to do is hold on. No matter what trials we must undergo in this life, we can be absolutely, unquestionably certain that we will be rewarded.

The Hebrews writer then starts sneaking up on just what this double lead-pipe cinch is when he describes **OUR HOPE**. We see his comments concerning this in Hebrews 6:19-20. According to him, this hope is like an anchor. An anchor connects a ship to the bottom of the ocean, so that the ship won't drift onto the rocks, even in a storm. Our hope, however, anchors not our ships, but our souls. It doesn't tie us to the ocean floor. Instead, it connects us to the presence of God in heaven, even through the barrier of God's purity that might otherwise separate us.

On a ship, there's one primary way to get an anchor to take hold. You drop it over the side, and wait for it to do its work. However, we can't drop our hope overboard and expect that it will hit heaven. The reason why our hope has found purchase in the holy place of heaven is that Jesus has carried it there for us. He has gone where we hope that our souls will go. Here is where the Hebrews writer gets back to the thread of the conversation that he began in Hebrews 5. If Jesus entered the holy place in heaven, that makes Him like the people who entered the holy place of the temple on earth—the Aaronic priesthood. Indeed, Jesus is a high priest, but not according to Aaron, according to Melchizedek.