

## Hebrews 5:11-6:8 – On to Maturity

Jesus is superior to the Old Testament prophets, angels, Moses and Joshua. Based on Psalm 110:4, Jesus is not a priest according to the Mosaic Law. He is an eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Before going into detail about Jesus as high priest after the order of Melchizedek, the author admonished the recipients for not being mature. 5:11-6:8 is another section of admonition and exhortation.

### Read Hebrews 5:11-14.

For the first part of verse 11, ESV has “About **this** we have much to say”. NIV has the same words in a different order; “We have much to say about **this**”. KJV has “Of **whom** we have many things to say”. NASB has “Concerning **him** we have much to say”. The difference in translations reflects the fact that the relative pronoun in the original Greek could be either masculine or neuter. ESV and NIV take it as neuter. KJV and NASB take it as masculine. What or whom do you think the author was referring to? Why was the author hesitant to continue his discussion of Jesus as the eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek? (5:11)

Based on verse 12, what was the result of the recipients being dull of hearing? By saying that they needed milk and not solid food, what was he saying to them? It is fine for a baby to drink milk and not solid food, but a two year old should be eating solid food. The author made that point in verses 13-14. Based on verse 13, how did being a spiritual infant manifest itself? What do you think “the word of righteousness” refers to? (5:12-13)

In verse 14, what do you think “solid food” refers to? How were mature people described in this verse? BDAG translates this verse as “solid food is for adults who, because of their mature state, (have) their senses [faculties] trained to distinguish between good and evil”. Others say that “mature state” should be translated “practice” or “exercise”. Almost all translations use “practice”, “exercise” or something similar. The one exception I found is Mounce. (5:14)

### Read Hebrews 6:1-8.

In verse 1, the recipients were exhorted to go on to maturity. In verses 1-2, do you think the list explains what is meant by the “elementary doctrine of Christ”? What teaching was categorized as elementary level teaching? I think it is fair to say that some of the things listed, like “faith in God”, can be taught at both an elementary level and an advanced level. Most versions have “washings” or something like it while the KJV has “baptisms”. In Colossians 2:12, the word means “baptism”. In Mark 7:4, the word means “washing” as in washing dishes as a ritual cleansing. BDAG says that the word in this verse is “a reference to various water-rites, including probably John’s baptism and Christian baptism”. (6:1-2)

In verse 3, what does the author intend to do? What is the condition for this to happen? (6:3)

To say that verses 4-6 are challenging is a major understatement. The main statement of verses 4-6 is that it is impossible to restore to repentance those who have fallen away. The main questions to answer are “who can’t be restored” and “what does it mean to fall away”. Also, is the “falling away” a real possibility or only a hypothetical which will never happen? It seems that there are three options when identifying who is being talked about. They had eternal life before and after “falling away”, a “falling away” that is only hypothetical which never happens. They never had eternal life, either before or after “falling away”. They had eternal life before “falling away” but they lost their salvation and now are doomed to eternal punishment. This is where the concept of “scripture interprets scripture” is very important. Unless the context absolutely demands the idea that people can lose their salvation, this interpretation should be rejected on the grounds of much clearer passages which say that God preserves those whom he has chosen. For me, the passages I look to are John 6:44-48, 64-65, 10:27-30. There are other passages of course. This concept is known as “perseverance of the saints”. A better term is “preservation of the saints”. It is God who keeps, guards, and preserves, until the end, those who are his.

What do you think “once been enlightened” means? “Once enlightened” is not a phrase used in the rest of the Bible. The basic idea of “enlighten” is to bring light to darkness. Some think this refers to baptism. What does it mean to taste “the heavenly gift”? The phrase “heavenly gift” is not used in the rest of the Bible. James 1:17 says that every good gift is from above. That doesn’t help narrow down the meaning. What does it mean to “share in the Holy Spirit”? The word “share” is used 6 times in the NT, of which 5 are in Hebrews. Luke 5:7 uses the word with the meaning “business partners”. In 1:9, God has exalted the Messiah “beyond your **companions**”. In 3:1, we “**share** in a heavenly call”. In 3:14, we “**share** in Christ” if we hold firm to the end. In 12:8, “all have **participated**” in discipline. (6:4)

What does it mean to taste “the goodness of the word of God”? This is yet another phrase not found in the rest of the Bible. What does it mean to taste “the powers of the age to come”? This is the last descriptive phrase of those who have “fallen away” and it also is a phrase not found elsewhere in the Bible. I think that anyone who believes that there is no doubt that these phrases all describe people born of God are on shaky ground. I can’t find anything in the Bible to support that claim. The phrases could refer to someone born of God but that can’t be established with certainty. Could these phrases also describe the Israelites who did not believe God and died in the wilderness? Could these phrases refer to someone like Judas? Did Judas ever believe in Jesus Christ? See John 6:64, 70. (6:4-5)

What does it mean to “fall away”? “Fall away” only occurs once in the NT. It is a combination of a common preposition and the word “to fall”. BDAG says it means “to fail to follow through on a commitment, fall away, commit apostasy”. See Hebrews 3:12, 10:26. What does it mean to commit apostasy? (6:6)

Most people who believe that you can lose your salvation also believe that you can gain it again. What do verses 4-6 say to the person who goes down front every week to be saved? Verse 6 says that it is impossible to restore to repentance again one who has fallen away. It also says that this person is “crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm”. ESV, KJV, NASB and NIV all have the idea of crucifying again. Notice “restore ... again” and “crucify ... again”. Does this go back to the idea in verse 1 of not laying again a foundation of repentance and the resurrection of the dead? ESV has “to their own harm”. NIV has “To their loss”. NKJV has “for themselves”. NASB has “to themselves”. NKJV and NASB reflect that the word they are translating is a reflexive pronoun in the dative case. What does verse 6 mean? (6:6)

Verses 7-8 may remind us of the parable Jesus told about the sower. See Matthew 13:1-30. Do you think verses 7-8 have the same message as Jesus’ parable about the sower? What did the seed sown among thorns represent? What is the point of verses 7-8? (6:7-8)

If we cheat and look ahead to verse 9, we see that the author of Hebrews was optimistic about the recipients’ salvation.