

1. Building on the Basics (Heb 6:1-3)

Again, the chapter division is unfortunate as the thought continues from Heb 5:14. The author recognizes that there are foundational principles in the gospel just as there are in other academic disciplines. These things would involve basic life-changes, questions of curiosity, false conceptions and other matters of interest to a young Christian. While these things must be periodically reinforced, Christians must press ahead in their understanding of deeper aspects of truth. The writer intends to provide such instruction *“if God permits”* (Heb 6:3).

1. What are “dead works”?
2. What “baptisms” might be referred to in Heb 6:2?

2. The Fate of Apostates (Heb 6:4-8)

This section has fueled endless debates across the centuries as men grapple with the implications of what the author sets forth. The crux of the issue is *“if they fall away”* (Heb 6:6). We must remember what the author is addressing in this book: not merely succumbing to occasional temptation but deliberate, calculated apostasy. He has warned against *“departing from the living God”* through rebellion and unbelief (3:12, 16, 19). This was a chronic state of mind, a conscious hardening of the heart (3:7, 15; 4:7) which caused them to abandon their original confidence and confession (3:6; 4:14). Having fully and completely experienced the joys and benefits of reconciliation in Christ (6:4-5), these brethren choose to withdraw and, in the process, *“crucify again for themselves the son of God, and put Him to an open shame”* (6:6b).

What is the result of such a mindset? *“It is impossible ... to renew them again to repentance.”* This truth is so unsettling that our first impulse is to soften or circumvent it. Please note that the text does not say that an apostate cannot be forgiven. What it says is that the apostate’s frame of mind precludes his repentance. In other words, conscious rejection of the truth can result in a “point of no return” wherein no value is seen in Christ and, consequently, no impulse to repent is generated. This person is likened to a patch of earth that drinks in life-giving rain but only produces thorns and briers (6:7-8). Although it is beyond human capability to determine when such a person is irrevocably apostate, this does not nullify the author’s warning: such a condition *is* possible and his readers are dangerously flirting with it.

3. Explain the significance of the word “tasted” (Heb 6:4-5). Compare Hebrews 2:9.
4. Explain the context of this warning. What failure has led these brethren to the brink of disaster?

3. On a Positive Note ... (Heb 6:9-12)

The author follows the above hammer-blow with gentle optimism. He assures them that their past and present work has not gone unnoticed by God and they need to “*show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end*” (Heb 6:11). “To the end” is a key phrase of perseverance (3:6, 14). A steady, patient faith has always been required of God’s people to “*inherit the promises*” (6:12).

5. Of what is the writer confident concerning his beloved brethren?

6. How does Hebrews 6:10 complement Hebrews 6:4-5?

4. God’s Confirming Oath (Heb 6:13-18)

As an example of tenacious, enduring faith the author cites Abraham. God had asked so much of this man: to leave his homeland, to live a nomadic life, to believe that he would produce offspring beyond virility, to sacrifice his son. Yet God gave Abraham every assurance that He was trustworthy and His promises were sure. Part of that assurance was His swearing of an oath upon His own name. This was not done because God had other options; He could not violate His promise for “*it is impossible for God to lie*” (Heb 6:18). But because of the suspect nature of man’s promises, “*an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute*” (6:16). This being true, God, as it were, condescended to man’s level and added an oath to His promise. As the Scriptures reveal how God has fulfilled His redemptive promises made so long ago through Abraham, we are given “*strong consolation ... to lay hold of the hope set before us*” (6:18b). What a loving and understanding God who adapts His behavior to the frailty of man!

7. The quotation in Hebrews 6:14 follows what incident in Abraham’s life?

8. By what do men swear? By what did God swear?

5. Hope: The Anchor of the Soul (Heb 6:19-20)

The imagery here is vivid. As a boat is stabilized by anchoring itself to the bottom of the sea, the Christian is stabilized by casting his hope into heaven itself, “*which enters the Presence behind the veil*” (Heb 6:19). Jesus is our heavenly high priest, and all our hope rests upon Him. He has gone on ahead as a forerunner and represents us before the throne of God, making atonement for our sins and presenting our petitions to God. God has done everything He possibly can to give us confidence in forgiveness and eternal life; we must therefore “*hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end*” (Heb 3:6). Thus ends the parenthetical exhortation from 5:12, and the author returns to his main thesis: the priesthood of Melchizedek.

9. What two qualities are associated with hope as an anchor of the soul?