**Growth, Grace, and Hope**

*Hebrews 5-6*

**Introduction**

1. The Hebrews were experiencing great trials of faith – **10:32-33** – persecution still happening.
   1. Needed God’s grace to endure the trials and receive the promises.
   2. Ironically, allowed the adversity to discourage them from accessing God’s grace through their diligence of faith.
   3. Being persecuted for following God’s word, they sought a solution by turning from it when the solution would be found by digging deeper in it.
2. We crave full assurance of hope (**6:12**) that anchors us in any storm of life (**6:19**).
   1. We cannot have such assurance without God’s grace – **4:16** (context: aid of the High priest – **4:14-15**)
   2. We cheat ourselves out of God’s grace without growth – **5:10-11** (much to say about Christ’s priesthood, and help it provides, but difficulty due to lack of growth)
3. We fool ourselves if we think God’s provisions of grace will help us if we do not meet Him where He has called us through the conditions He has set (Like growth – **2 Peter 3:18** – in grace).
4. Admonition: Failure to Grow **(5:11-6:3)**
5. Self-Stunted Growth **(5:11-14)**
   1. **(v. 11)** – ***“About this” (ESV)*** – not simply Christ (too broad), not simply Melchizedek (too narrow), but the **entire scope of the High Priesthood of Christ** (including discussion of Melchizedek).
      1. ***“much to say”*** – important and comprehensive subject (Includes: sin, humanity of Jesus, sacrifice of Jesus, necessary New Covenant, eternal intercession as High Priest, etc.) (Chapters 7-10)
      2. The dullness makes the meaty subject more difficult to explain.
         1. *nōthros* – sluggish, i.e. (literally) lazy, or (figuratively) stupid (STRONG).
         2. “It is a combination of two Greek words, one meaning "no," the other "to push," hence, "no push," thus "slow, sluggish." (Wuest Word Studies, Hebrews 5:11)
         3. ***“of hearing”*** – they stopped studying the truth, and therefore were ill-equipped to handle meat.
         4. **6:12** – ***“sluggish”*** (nōthros)
   2. Problem – **(v. 12)** – still need milk, can’t digest meat.
      1. Not that they are a babe.
      2. But that they are STILL a babe – ***“I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able” (1 Corinthians 3:2)***.
   3. Consequence – (**vv. 13-14**) – unskilled, undiscerning.
      1. **Discerning good and evil** – in face of trial, ill-equipped to make right decision due to immaturity.
      2. EX: **2:1-3** – drifting from word; **3:12** – deceitfulness of sin; **13:10-14** – go outside camp and suffer, or stay.
6. On to Perfection **(6:1-3)**
   1. **(v. 1)** – the milk is important, but preparatory for progression.
      1. EX: Building house – lay foundation once, erect structure on top.
      2. Aim – perfection – maturity.
      3. Leaving discussion – not abandoning it, but not staying there – take what you’ve learned with you to greater things.
      4. (**v. 3)** – we will be able to with God’s help **(cf. John 15:5).**
   2. **Repentance from dead works** – can’t continue in sin, to die to sin.
   3. **Faith toward God** – **11:6** – vital; obedient faith; source (**Romans 10:17**).
   4. **Doctrine of Baptisms** – type/shadows of washings under OT, and realization of true cleansing under NT (**cf. 1 Peter 3:21**).
      1. Also different baptisms – John, fire, HS, suffering, water for remission of sins.
   5. **Laying on of Hands** – for imparting spiritual gifts (Infancy of church) (**cf. Acts 8:17-18**)
   6. **Resurrection of the Dead** – future universal resurrection (Christ firstfruits)
   7. **Eternal Judgment** – the resurrection is to judgment (**9:27**) (*NOTE: argument in chapter 9 rests on assumption of foundation laid*).
7. Caution: Apostasy Looms **(6:4-8)**
8. Insidious Implications of Their Direction **(6:4-6)**
   1. **(vv. 4, 6)** – impossible to RENEW them to repentance.
      1. Not impossible for them – to be forgiven, to be saved.
      2. Force of “Impossible”:
         1. For God to lie – **6:18**
         2. For blood of animals to take away sin – **10:4**
         3. To please God without faith – **11:6**
   2. Why impossible to renew?
      1. ***“if they fall away”*** – not drift into sin and then repent, but complete departure – turning back (context – from Christ to Judaism).
      2. What have they fallen away from?
         1. **Enlightened** – with truth, so what will you tell them they haven’t already known and rejected (**cf. 2 Peter 2:21**).
         2. **Tasted heavenly gift** – experienced release from sin and spiritual blessings.
         3. **Partakers of the Holy Spirit** – in fellowship with God through revealed truth – change, active faith.
         4. **Tasted good word of God** – all of its attendant blessings – saw it is good.
         5. **Powers of age to come** – Messianic Kingdom (powers of grace and gospel) (THINK: Jews who looked forward to the fulfillment of prophecy, but now turning away.)
         6. **NOTE: All these can correspond to the foundations of (vv. 1-2) – such known blessings would usher an appreciative one to greater heights.**
      3. Amounts to crucifying Christ – (**v. 6**) – **10:28-29** – despising/rejecting the blessings no different than despising/rejecting Christ as others did before.
   3. Why is their failure to grow followed with such an aggressive/dramatic warning? – **1 Peter 2:1-3** – failure to grow is an indication that you do not care for the taste of spiritual blessing, which is the first step to rejecting it completely.
      1. Still acknowledge the gracious taste of the Lord? No, for if you did you would seek milk of word to grow by it.
9. An Appropriate Metaphor (**6:7-8**)
   1. The blessings of God (**vv. 4-5**) are for the purpose of progressing to maturity and receiving more blessings.
   2. To receive such, only to fail to pursue more and grow is like land that is watered and cultivated to bring forth fruit, but only brings thorns and briers – THE FARMER WILL BURN IT BECAUSE IT IS USELESS – SO WILL GOD (**cf. John 15:6)**
10. Exhortation: Optimism for Better Days **(6:9-12)**
11. A Reason for Optimism **(6:9-10)**
    1. **(v. 9)** – the warning/rebuke is not with doubt, but confidence (nevertheless, the warning/rebuke is necessary) – ***“[love] believes all things, hopes all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7)***.
       1. ***“things that accompany salvation”*** – **5:14** (solid food); **6:1** (going on to perfection)
    2. Reason – **(v. 10)** – they have shown interest/diligence in the past, as well in some areas currently.
       1. ***“have shown”*** (Past); ***“and do minister”*** (Present)
       2. It is not as though the Hebrews were completely hardened and heartless – cared for other Christians (**10:33-34**).
          1. But they lacked ***“full assurance of hope” (v. 11).***
       3. They were slacking in an important area – ENCOURAGED BY NOTING WHAT THEY ARE DOING WELL, AND INSTRUCTING TO ACT THE SAME IN ALL AREAS.
12. A Call to Action **(6:11-12)**
    1. **(v. 11)** – ***“same diligence”*** – i.e. as you’re doing in other areas **(v. 10)** – it is not good enough to work hard in some areas, but must do so in all.
       1. ***“to the full assurance of hope”*** – pros – towards.
       2. ***“so as to realize the full assurance of hope” (NASB)*** – i.e. you aren’t there yet.
          1. Which is why you’re struggling.
          2. **The cause is your lack of growth – SO SHOW DILIGENCE TOWARD THAT END.**
    2. **(v. 12)** – not sluggish (**5:11** – ***“dull”*** – *nōthros)* – in their study and growth of God’s word – maturity to digest meat (like Jesus High Priesthood – **5:10**).
       1. Follow example of others in faith and patience.
       2. Diligence in growth would require faith and patience, would lead to growth in faith and patience, which would see them to the end.
    3. **Diligence shown = not sluggish; full assurance of hope = leads to faith and patience; until the end = inherit the promises.**
13. Consolation: Hope and High Priest (**6:13-20**)
14. God’s Immutable Counsel (**6:13-18**)
    1. *“For”* – following exhortation to follow example of others (**v. 12**).
    2. (**vv. 13, 15**) – ***“For when God made a promise to Abraham…after he had patently endured, he obtained the promise.”***
       1. Why should the Hebrews put all their eggs in this basket?
       2. How can the Hebrews know that a full devotion of themselves will pay off?
       3. How can they know that persisting in faith which is the cause of the persecution will be worthwhile?
    3. God’s promises are certain:
       1. **(vv. 13-14)** – swore in promising Abraham.
       2. **(vv. 16-18)** – gave promise and made oath (two immutable things) to show the immutability of His counsel (word/promise).
       3. **(v. 15)** – Abraham received promise because: **1)** God’s faithfulness and **2)** Abraham’s enduring faith.
       4. **(vv. 17-18)** – God did this so we could study it and have strong consolation (comfort, confidence).
15. Our Anchor of Hope **(6:19)**
    1. The result of their diligence in growth would be – ***“full assurance of hope” (v. 11)*** – based also on God’s faithfulness.
       1. Enters presence behind veil – heaven.
    2. This hope would act as an anchor in a storm – (**v. 19)** – the storm of their persecution (**10:32, 39**).
16. Our High Priest (**6:20**)
    1. Return from **5:10-11** – resume a detailed discussion with **Chapter 7**.
    2. **5:11-6:20** – not a mere digression into a side point, but A PREFACE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT TO THEIR SPIRITUAL SUCCEESS (hence the time given to encourage their growth to be able to digest such a subject).
    3. Hope enters behind veil – because forerunner entered.
    4. Forerunner (implying we follow) – predicated on his entrance to become/serve as High Priest to aid us getting there.
    5. Need for growth to maturity in digesting such a meaty topic to receive God’s grace to persevere in faith until we reach our reward.
       1. **4:14-16** (introductory thoughts before meaty details) – ***“Seeing then”*** – when the High Priesthood is seen and appreciated in fulness through spiritual growth, then the help provided will be pursued.
       2. THEIR SLUGGISHNESS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH WAS CAUSED BY THEIR NEGATIVE REACTION TO ADVERSITY – IRONICALLY, THE GROWTH TO RECEIVE MEAT LIKE THE DISCUSSION OF CHRIST’S HIGH PRIESTHOOD WOULD HAVE EQUIPPED THEM TO ENDURE THE ADVERSITY.
       3. THEY HAD BEEN CHEATING THEMSELVES OUT OF GOD’S GRACE – THE WRITER IS CALLING THEM TO BREAK THAT CYCLE, AND THUS POSSESS THE FULL ASSURANCE THEY CRAVED.

**Conclusion**

1. Faith trusts in the plan of God to aid us and ensure our realization of hope in heaven.
2. Failure to progress in the knowledge and application of spiritual truth is to deny ourselves God’s grace which leads to full assurance of hope.
3. We should never underestimate the power of God’s word – the greatest tool we have for enduring the trials of faith is the gospel of Christ. To know it is to receive God’s grace to help, and to secure spiritual life.