

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Heb 6:1-2

Most of us know someone who at one time professed faith in Jesus Christ and then wandered away. At one time they were enthusiastic, engaged in a ministry, there seemed to be evidence of spiritual life.

But something changed. Over time, they seemed to lose interest. Having once made a clear profession of faith, they began to talk about “being on a journey,” and now there seems to be very little evidence of spiritual life and no love for Christ, no hunger for his Word, no desire to be with his people. It is a real issue that affects every one of us.

The Only Kind of Faith Worth Having

May I suggest that a faith that lasts is the only kind of faith worth having. There are three things in this world that last forever, *“These three remain: faith, hope and love”* (1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV).

We know true love lasts, and ‘love’ that does not last is not true love; it is infatuation. Real hope lasts, and ‘hope’ that does not last is only a passing illusion. Genuine faith lasts, and ‘faith’ that does not last, by definition, is not genuine faith; it is only a passing interest. We are not saved by a passing interest in Jesus Christ.

The book of Hebrews makes this especially clear: *“For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end”* (Hebrews 3:14). Notice what this verse is saying: *“If indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end...”* That is, if our faith lasts, then we know that we have come to Christ.

True faith perseveres. Saving faith, that is, faith that joins a person to Jesus, is faith that lasts. And a profession of faith that does not last is, by definition, not true faith. It is not saving faith. *“We have come to share in Christ, if we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”*

You find the same truth in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 *“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.”* People are not saved by a passing interest in the gospel. You are saved by this gospel *“If you hold fast to it; otherwise you have believed in vain.”*

There is a phrase that is often used among Christians that conveys a wonderful thought, but at the same time, conceals a dangerous error: **Once saved always saved.** The wonderful thought in this is that Christ guards and keeps his own. His sheep will never perish John 10:28. But who are Christ’s sheep? They are those who *“hold fast to the word”* (1 Corinthians 15:2). They are those who hold their *“original confidence firm to the end”* Heb 3:14. These are the ones who truly belong to Jesus.

So, the dangerous error concealed in the phrase “Once saved always saved” is the idea that anyone who has ever made any kind of profession of faith at any time will be saved, regardless of whether they show any continuing interest in Christ. That error may be one of the devil’s greatest deceptions. It encourages people to think that they can safely live at a distance from Christ, because, having once professed obedient faith in Jesus, all will be well with them in the end. That is a house built on sand.

The writer of Hebrews was clearly concerned about the spiritual condition of these Hebrew believers. It was not clear to him that all would be well with all of them in the end. His is that some of them were in danger of falling away from the faith they had professed Heb 4-6.

The Basic Principles of the Oracles of God

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. (Heb 5:12)

There are *“basic principles of the oracles of God”* that all of us need to grasp. These basic principles should be clear, established, and undisputed in the mind and heart of every believer (Hebrews 6:2). The writer is saying, “There are certain things that should have been settled for you long ago, but I’m not sure they are for some of you.”

This letter was written to Jewish people who had become believers in Jesus but were in danger of apostasy. This is **not** a description of who Jesus is and what he has done. It's a plain and compelling statement of why we need Jesus.

We are talking here about *“The basic principles of the oracles of God”* (Hebrews 5:12). Or to put it another way, *“The elementary doctrine of Christ”* (Hebrews 6:1), or we might say, “The road that leads to Christ.”

So, when the writer says, *“Let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation...”* he is not saying that Christians should move on from Jesus. How could any Christian ever do that? **The whole point of this letter is that you cannot move beyond Jesus** (Hebrews 1:1-3).

When the writer says, *“You need milk, not solid food...”* Hebrews 5:12. The milk is: **why we need Jesus**. The solid food is: **who Jesus is and what he has done, as revealed in the New Testament**. Every Christian needs the milk. We need be clear about why we need Jesus. This is basic and foundational to a faith that lasts. But we must move beyond the foundation of grasping why we need Jesus, to embracing him, and receiving all that is found in him. That is how we go on to maturity.

I want to show you from these verses **three compelling reasons** to continue to believe in Jesus today regardless of the cost.

Why We Need Jesus

1. Our best efforts are “dead works” and we rely completely on the provision of God.

repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. (Hebrews 6:1)

Repentance means “turning away from something.” What is turned away from here are “dead works” (cf. Hebrews 9:14). This verse is not talking only about sinful works. We all must turn from sinful works for sure, but we also must turn from *“dead works.”* What does that mean?

The point here is that our best efforts to live a good life — our most generous, most sacrificial acts — the best works any of us could offer to God in the hope of impressing him and winning his favor — are dead works. That is, they have no saving value at all. *“All our righteous acts are like filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6 NIV).

It is easy to assume that the good we do in life will outweigh whatever sins we may have committed. But the most basic principle of the oracles of God is that any good work that you might think of offering to God is dead on arrival. So, we must turn from believing in our self and in our own effort to live a good life. But turn to what?? The answer is to **Faith toward God.**

2. Our sins defile us and exclude us from the presence of God.

...instruction about washings, the laying on of hands... (Hebrews 6:2)

Notice that Hebrews does not talk about the “washing” of baptism, it talks about “washings” (plural). And while there are examples in the New Testament of the Spirit being given through the laying on of the hands, this was not the norm. Believers receive the Spirit at baptisms.

What we have here is not a summary of the Christian faith, but an explanation of “the basic principles of the oracles of God.” The Old Testament was full of ritual washings e.g. Exodus 30:18f, Hebrews 9:10. There was no end to it — the washing of hands, the washing of feet, the washing of plates, etc. These were familiar to the Hebrew believers. The washings were a constant reminder to them that sin defiles and that we cannot come into the presence of God until we are washed.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were excluded from the garden where they had known the presence and blessing of God. God says of heaven, *“Nothing unclean will ever enter it...”* (Revelation 21:27). Think about what that means for us: Not a hint of gossip or greed or pride or laziness will ever enter the holy presence of God. So, if the stain of a single sin was to be found on you or me, we would be excluded from the light and joy and blessing of the presence of God forever. Thank God he has provided a way of removing what defiles us!

He does it through the sacrifice of Jesus. The entire sacrificial system in the Old Testament was given for this one reason: to show us why we need Jesus.

Here's why we have the reference to the laying on of hands in this verse. Remember, he was writing to Jewish believers, and at the height of the Day of Atonement was the **“laying on of hands.”** When the high priest offered the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, God said, **“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness...”** (Leviticus 16:21).

The laying on of hands in the Old Testament spoke of sin being transferred and of guilt being taken away, so that God's presence and the light of his blessing could come again among his people.

3. Our lives are eternal, and we all face the judgement of God.

...the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:2)

Here is the ultimate reality that every one of us must face: **“It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...”** Heb 9:27. And then the writer of Hebrews says a little bit later: **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Hebrews 10:31).

People who have no faith in Jesus are sometimes very confident, even defiant, in the face of death. But the problem for the sinner does not lie in the event of death itself. It lies in the resurrection. The real problem lies in the fact that the sinner will be brought into the presence of the living God, and held accountable for every word, and thought, and deed. The real problem is the awful reality of facing justice as a sinner, and of that judgment stretching on into eternity — an eternal judgment with no end. Death can't hide us from this God.

There will only be one hope for any of us on the day, and that is, that Jesus will stand beside us and claim us as his own. That Jesus will say, “Mike is one of mine. I died for his sins.”

Some people profess faith in Jesus without ever really being clear about why they need Jesus. They come to Jesus because they hope that he will give them the life that they really want. “If I follow Jesus, he will answer my prayers, and give me what I want.” Behind that is an implied contract that if I believe in Jesus, the good things I want will come to me, and the bad things I fear will be kept far from me.

That is a house built on sand, and such faith will not last. When the storm comes to our life, if that is the only foundation we have, we are going to be in big trouble, aren't we?

At some point, the way of Jesus will involve a cross for each of us. We will find, as these Hebrews did, that Christ leads us on a path we would never have chosen for our self. And if our faith is about Jesus giving us the life we wanted, our faith will not last.

When we understand these basic truths then we will cling to Jesus all our life and do all that we can to honor and glorify Him in our manner of life. Anything less will not be acceptable to those who know Him and what He has done for us.