



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Prepared by Rev. James R. Wilson, D. Min.
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church - July 31, 2011

Sermon Title: No Turning Back

Sermon Text: Hebrews 6.1-8

Related Texts: Mark 4.1-20; Romans 8:37-39

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Have you ever set out on a new course of action (job or educational goal or hobby or other) but then found yourself wanting to give up and abandon that goal? What was that like?

II. Introduction

After attempting to motivate his congregation to desire to go deeper in their understanding of God’s word and of the implications of the gospel, the writer (he is really a Preacher whose sermon has been recorded for us) presents a second exhortation. In order for them to move on to a more mature faith, there must be a willingness to move from the elementary teachings of scripture and the gospel and a continued movement forward to a deeper understanding. For the Hebrew Christians being addressed by this preacher, there is to be no turning back in their journey of faith.

III. Study the Text – Hebrews 6.1-8

- 1) Verses 1 - 3 focus on the call to leave the elementary things of Christ and to go on to maturity. Look at Hebrews 2.10, 5.9, 5.14, and 6.1 and notice the words translated as either “perfect” or “mature” or “complete.” These all come from the same Greek word – “telios.” Who is being described as complete or perfect in 2.10 and 5.9? How was he made “complete?” To whom are the words “maturity” (5.14) and “mature” (6.1) applied? In what way is the author inviting his congregation to imitate Jesus as the example of what it means to be “mature” or “complete” or “perfect”? How does one “imitate” Jesus?
- 2) Verse 2 lists the “elementary teachings” or the “foundation” of Christian faith. How would you define what these mean? How did you learn them?

<u>Teaching</u>	<u>Definition</u>
1) repentance from acts that lead to death	_____
2) faith in God	_____
3) instruction about baptism	_____
4) the laying on of hands	_____
5) eternal judgment	_____

If we offered a course on “The Basics of Christian Faith” that covered these and related topics, would you be interested? (If so, please feed that back to me jim@gspc.org or Paul paul@gspc.org).

- 3) As you read over verses 1 - 3 how would you paraphrase the author's exhortation? What importance does knowing the basics have? How can one "go on to maturity" without them?
- 4) Verses 4 -6 are challenging verses. Let's begin by looking at the description of the people the Preacher has in mind. Look at verses 4 and 5. What do you think the phrases used to describe these folks mean?

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Definition</u>
1) have been enlightened	_____
2) have tasted the heavenly gift	_____
3) have shared in the Holy Spirit	_____
4) have tasted the goodness of the word of God	_____
5) have tasted the goodness of the age to come	_____

- 5) The Preacher states, "It is impossible for these people (described above)... if they fall away... to be brought back to repentance." What warning is the Writer/Preacher issuing?
- 6) Verses 7 and 8 describe vital and fruitless soils. How does this compare with the soils Jesus spoke of in Mark 4.1-20?

IV. Theological Reflection

There are two possible ways of understanding these verses. One is that those who "fall away" are people who, though they were part of the community of faith, never really made faith in Jesus their own at a deep, inner level. In the context of this passage, they never really embraced the "elementary teachings" even though they were involved in the life of the congregation. The second possibility is the Preacher's attempt to show that there is no turning back as a Christian either to the basics or to abandoning the faith altogether. Instead we are to move on to maturity – go deeper – or risk going adrift.

V. Apply It –Reflect and Respond

- 1) When you reflect on your faith journey, what kind of land (as in verses 7 and 8) would describe you? Are you motivated to move on to maturity?
- 2) Having doubts about or questions concerning faith are not wrong. Are there things you would like to understand more fully, questions you would like to have answered, or doubts you would like some help to deal with? What steps will you take to do so?
- 3) Perhaps someone dear to you has turned away from the faith. Are you willing to persist in prayer for them, asking God to draw them back to the love, mercy and loving –kindness of the Lord?
- 4) Would you pray for yourself, your family, your friends, and for the Good Shepherd congregation to be "leaving the elementary teachings" and "going on to maturity?"