

# “Things That Accompany Salvation”

*“Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation.”*

—*Hebrews 6:9, New King James Version*

## **WE WILL SOON REACH THE**

end of 2020, which by any measure has been a most eventful, and often perplexing, year. At this time, it is most appropriate for us, as footstep followers of Christ, to step back from the affairs of the surrounding world and examine those things of utmost importance which pertain to our relationship with God as his children. As noted in our title and opening text, these critical matters are “things that accompany salvation.”

It is true that the means of salvation for mankind has already been provided through the sacrificial offering of Jesus as “a ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) However, if we are striving to follow in the Master’s steps as Christians, certain requirements must be met in order to gain the prize of “glory and honour

and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) In chapter six of the Book of Hebrews, from which our text is taken, the Apostle Paul delineates many facets of those matters which are vitally connected to the full accomplishment of our salvation. We will henceforth examine this chapter in more detail.

## **PRINCIPLES OF DOCTRINE**

Paul begins this chapter with the following words: “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”—Heb. 6:1,2

These opening verses are in reality a continuation of the lesson presented in the closing verses of chapter five. It is a lesson designed to encourage God’s consecrated people, by a study of his Word and the heart application of its principles, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Leaving the principles.” This expression must be understood in connection with the explanation, “not laying again the foundation,” found later in the same verse. Putting the two phrases together, the thought of “leaving” the principles is simply that of building upon them as a foundation. It does not mean leaving them in the sense of deserting them and never again thinking or talking about them. The illustration is clearly that of constructing a building. A building is not complete while only the foundation is laid, nor if the superstructure is built elsewhere than upon the foundation. We can thus understand

the phrase in verse 1, "let us go on to perfection." Indeed, the word "perfection" herein used is translated from a Greek word meaning "completeness."

Another important word to understand in this verse is "principles." It is the translation of a Greek word meaning "beginning, or chief." The "principles of the doctrine of Christ" are not, therefore, the less important teachings of the Bible, but rather, the great foundation truths upon which all Christian belief and work must be built. How important it is, then, that we keep in constant touch with these chief foundation principles. It would not be necessary to build the foundation repeatedly. However, since the Hebrew brethren had evidently let these things "slip" they needed to be taught over again, in order that they might, in renewing their devotion, have the proper foundation upon which to build.—Heb. 2:1

In verses 1 and 2 of our lesson, Paul lists six foundation principles of the "doctrine of Christ," all of which should "accompany salvation" in us. The first of these is "Repentance from dead works." Because the apostle was addressing Hebrew Christians, the dead works here mentioned could be particularly their efforts to gain life by keeping the Mosaic Law. These were "dead works" not only because they did not thereby gain life, but also because by them they were brought under the additional condemnation of the Law. Repentance, however, is the principal thought in connection with this doctrine, and is essential to receiving God's blessings regardless of one's former position in life.

Repentance is a required step in the life of all who become Christians. It is not something with which we are only momentarily concerned when first drawn

to the Lord. Each day we fall short of perfection in some measure. Hence, we need to continually be in a repentant attitude, which is quick to seek divine forgiveness through the merit of the shed blood of Jesus. This fundamental doctrine should serve each day to keep us humble before God and to be in constant recognition of our need for his grace and mercy through Christ.

The second foundation principle noted by Paul is “faith toward God.” The relationship of faith to our standing before the Heavenly Father is a vital fundamental to our understanding of his plan and purpose. “Without faith it is impossible to please” God, the Scriptures emphatically declare. (Heb. 11:6) We see the importance of this doctrine by noting the manner in which Paul couples it with “repentance from dead works.” No one can be “justified by the works of the law,” but we can be “justified by faith” and have “peace with God” through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 5:1) How vital it is to keep this essential truth clearly in mind and order our lives in keeping with it!

Paul next mentions the “doctrine of baptisms.” Previously, all those of the Jewish nation had been symbolically “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (I Cor. 10:2) However, at the time of Jesus’ First Advent it was necessary for Jews who sought to follow and accept him as their Messiah to be baptized with John’s “baptism of repentance” from their sins under the Mosaic Law. (Mark 1:4; Acts 13:24) Even in the case of these, though, the real doctrine of baptism called for their burial into Christ, and their covenant to be dead with him. (Rom. 6:3-5) Later, Gentile converts would also have

part in this “death” baptism, symbolized in a literal way by immersion in water. Thus “baptisms,” in the plural, are involved in our understanding of this fundamental teaching, and all are important foundation truths upon which we are to build.

“Laying on of hands” is the fourth foundation principle the apostle cites. In Jesus’ day there were occasions when the sick were healed by the laying on of hands. (Mark 5:23; Luke 4:40) The servants of the Early Church were elected by the laying on of hands, or, more literally, by stretching forth the hand. (Acts 14:23) Timothy was cautioned by Paul not to lay hands on anyone suddenly, without due consideration. (I Tim. 5:22) As a Christian doctrine, the laying on of hands seems to indicate clearly the imparting of recognition, approval and authority.

The literal act of laying on of hands ceased with the death of the apostles, but its symbolic significance has continued with the church throughout the age. This outward sign of approval was of great value in the Early Church, but the Lord’s people still need that which the laying on of hands represented—namely, the approval and acceptance of God, which is manifested by the “witness” of the Spirit. (Rom. 8:16) The doctrine, or teaching, which has to do with our being begotten by the Holy Spirit, coming under its anointing, and being thereby recognized by God as members of the body of Christ and authorized to be his ambassadors, is therefore fundamentally important. Surely, we do not want to lose sight of the glorious significance which pertains to this aspect of the “doctrine of Christ.”

Next Paul mentions the “resurrection of the dead.” In another of his epistles, Paul writes, “If in this life

only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” (I Cor. 15:19) The doctrine of the resurrection is a most vital one. This is true whether we think of it as pertaining to the “first resurrection” in which we hope to share, the “better resurrection” of the faithful ones of old, or the general resurrection of the world. (Rev. 20:6; Heb. 11:35; Acts 17:31; I Cor. 15:22) It is the very foundation of our hope, but requires keen spiritual vision, which can be enjoyed only by “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised,” to plumb the real depth of this glorious doctrine. (Heb. 5:14) In the first chapter of Ephesians the Apostle Paul says that he prayed for the opening of the eyes of understanding of “the saints which are at Ephesus,” that they might realize the mighty power being exercised on their behalf, explaining that it is the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead and highly exalted him, “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.”—Eph. 1:1,18-21

The sixth and final foundation doctrine Paul makes note of in our lesson is “eternal judgment.” The reference here seems to be to the final judgment, or determination as to an individual’s worthiness or unworthiness of everlasting life. The church is on trial now, and in the case of each probationary member, judgment is based on their fulfillment of the vow of consecration which they have made to do God’s will, even unto death. Let us strive earnestly that we may be found among those who will hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” (Matt. 25:21) It is important that we keep constantly before us the fact that our lives are an

open book before God, and that while he is merciful and just, our trial will end favorably only if we keep our hearts pure and render unto him the very best that we are able.

### **HUMILITY TO BE MANIFESTED**

Hebrews 6:3 from the *Amplified Bible* reads: “We will do this [that is, proceed to maturity], if God permits.” In two ways Paul reveals his humility by this statement. He had criticized the Hebrew brethren for their lack of zeal and had pointed out to them their great need to make better progress in the Christian way. Yet, he puts himself on a level with them and says this “we” will do, if God permits.

Additionally, Paul realized that every blessing enjoyed by the Christian is a manifestation of God’s grace. We could not have come into this blessed relationship at all except the Heavenly Father had drawn us. (John 6:44) We could not know the Truth unless he had given us “ears to hear.” (Matt. 13:9,16) We cannot make progress in the way unless “God permits,” for we are able to work out our salvation only because he is working in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Phil. 2:12,13

### **“ONCE ENLIGHTENED”**

Our lesson continues in Hebrews 6:4-6. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world [Greek: age] to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

In God's plan, provision was made to rescue the fallen race from the result of Adam's sin. If we have been truly enlightened concerning this, have accepted the provision of divine favor and have entered into covenant relationship with the Lord, we must be ever vigilant so as not to "fail of the grace of God." (Heb. 12:15) Our enlightenment comes from the Word of Truth and is the first step in approaching God. We may "feel after him," but to find him we must be enlightened to know something of his plan and how to approach him.—Acts 17:27

The apostle says we have "tasted of the heavenly gift." This gift is Jesus, our Redeemer. The fact that we have "tasted" him implies that we have more than merely heard about him and believe that he is the Savior of the world. Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, ... ye have no life in you." (John 6:53) This denotes a close, intimate fellowship with the Master, based upon a full consecration to follow in his footsteps. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."—Song of Sol. 2:3

We have been "made partakers of the Holy Spirit," Paul continues. Those who have tasted of the heavenly gift as a result of making a full consecration to God receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit. They are partakers of the Holy Spirit, the invisible power and influence of God, which is a helper and comforter to them as they seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.—John 14:16-18,26

"The powers of the world [age] to come" have likewise been made known to us. These are the powers of regeneration. In no other way will the power of God in the age to come be so wonderfully demonstrated

as by the resurrection of the dead and the subsequent restoration of mankind to perfection of life upon the earth. Those who are partakers of the Holy Spirit now have by faith tasted of the power of the resurrection. They are, even now, in their hearts and minds, “risen with Christ,” and seated with him “in heavenly places.”—Col. 2:12; 3:1-3; Eph. 2:5,6

Having learned the fundamental principles of the “doctrine of Christ,” and then “tasting” the various blessings associated therewith, we are warned to never “fall away” from this blessed position. Evidently the Hebrew brethren had not lapsed far enough to be in jeopardy of falling away, but they had begun to “slip” from their former zeal and faithfulness. Thus, Paul warns them not to fall short of the manifold favor bestowed upon them, that they “receive not the grace of God in vain.” (II Cor. 6:1) This warning applies equally now to those who have received and tasted of heavenly things.

## **PROGRESSING TOWARD PERFECTION**

Hebrews 6:7,8 states, “The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

The apostle here is using an illustration to help us grasp more clearly the declaration, “Let us go on to perfection.” God’s purpose in watering the earth, and the purpose of those who till the ground, is that it may “bringeth forth herbs”—that is, that there might be a fruitage, or harvest. In this illustration the earth represents those to whom are given the

water of Truth, while the dressers and tillers of the soil might picture those who are used by the Lord to assist these in connection with their understanding. This cooperative arrangement is intended to bring forth fruit. However, if nothing but thorns and briars appear, the effort is wasted. Thus, the object in our receiving the water of Truth is not merely that we may enjoy it, but that it produce the fruitage of a Christlike character in our lives, “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.”—Heb. 12:11

As our lesson continues, we come to the words of our opening text and the verse that follows: “Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”—Heb. 6:9,10, *NKJV*

Although these Hebrew Christians had not been making use of their opportunities as they should, Paul was pleased to call them “beloved.” This is the spirit of divine love, which will not let go its hold on an individual while there is evidence that reformation is possible. The expression, “better things,” is in contrast with the possibility previously mentioned of falling away after being fully enlightened. Here the apostle was encouraging them to take a firmer hold upon the Truth, and to follow that course of zeal and devotion which would result in their salvation, that “great” salvation which “first began to be spoken by the Lord.”—Heb. 2:3

The Hebrew brethren evidently progressed well for a time, for the apostle speaks of their “work and labor of love.” Later, in chapter ten, verses 32-34,

Paul asks them to call to remembrance those “former days” when they were first illuminated, when they “took joyfully” their trials and persecutions. He wanted them to renew their original zeal and love.

What could have been more encouraging to those who, perchance, had become weary in their walk than to assure them that the Heavenly Father had not forgotten their past faithfulness! While Paul does not say so, one of the evidences that God had not forgotten them was the fact that he stirred up the apostle’s mind to write this epistle as a means of helping them to take a more positive stand for the Truth and for its righteous principles.

God’s justice not only reproveth and disciplines where necessary, but treasures up every good deed and rewards it. Even the giving of a “cup of cold water” to one of his “little ones” will not go unrewarded. (Matt. 10:42) God also encourages every good trait that it might grow stronger and become more dominant in one’s life. He takes delight in every evidence of progress in the path of righteousness.

### **DILIGENCE UNTO THE END**

In Hebrews 6:11,12, we read: “We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” God’s interest is in all his people, “every one of you.” He does not want one to fail. Victory, however, is dependent upon “diligence” and “full assurance of hope,” not merely for a little while, but until we have been faithful “unto the end”—unto death.—Rev. 2:10

Every truly faithful and zealous disciple of Christ is an encouraging example to his brethren. Those who inherit the promises do so because of their implicit faith and patient endurance, even unto death. If we be “followers of them” who are thus faithful and zealous, we will not be slothful, but diligent, daily striving to fulfill the conditions of our consecration.

### **GOD’S PLEDGE TO ABRAHAM**

Paul next hearkens back to the promise given to Abraham. “When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”—Heb. 6:13-15

The apostle here does not quote the entire oath-bound covenant with Abraham. He is merely citing the illustration of Abraham’s faith in God’s promises and patiently waiting for their fulfillment as being essential to actually having them become a personal possession. It is important to note that the promise which Abraham “obtained” after he endured is from a Greek word which has the thought of a “pledge” or an “assurance.” God gave Abraham a pledge, an assurance, when he ratified the original promise by his oath.

### **HOPE—AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL**

The final five verses of our lesson read as follows: “Men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which

it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”—Heb. 6:16-20

God’s willingness to give his people a more abundant assurance of his loving purpose toward them is fully in keeping with his grace and mercy. He did not need to confirm the covenant with his oath, for no one would ever have reason to doubt his word. Later, one of the requirements of the Mosaic Law was that important matters should be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses, and God was willing to conform to this principle. (Deut. 19:15) His word was immutable, and his oath was immutable. Thus by these “two immutable,” or unchangeable, things, he has given us strong consolation who have laid claim to the hope set before us of being part of “Abrahams’s seed” which will bless all the families of the earth.—Gal. 3:16,27-29; Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Acts 3:25

Our hope is an “anchor,” secured “within the veil.” Here the apostle symbolically puts the Christian in the position of Israel’s high priest, who alone had the privilege of entering into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. We can hope to enter into the greater Most Holy, even “heaven itself,” because Jesus, our forerunner has first entered for us to prepare the way. (Heb. 9:24; 10:19,20) What a glorious hope is ours! Let us, therefore, seek to complete, by the Lord’s grace and with his help and supervision, the development of all those “things that accompany salvation.” ■