

**Introduction:**

- A. I was reading a recent article in *Christianity Today* by Joshua Rogers. He was reading his daughter *The Last Battle*, the final book in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C. S. Lewis, when she asked, “Where’s Susan?”

Susan is the child queen who helped her siblings save Narnia from the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. However, she is conspicuously absent from an early scene in *The Last Battle* that includes every character who traveled to Narnia as a child.

“Daddy, where is she?” my daughter asked again.

“We’ll see,” I said, with a tinge of sadness.

He writes, “Although I’ve read *The Chronicles of Narnia* dozens of times since I was a boy, Susan’s tragic end gets me every time. The book eventually reveals that Susan grows up and outgrows her love for Narnia. We get few details about her until the end of the book, when High King Peter responds to an inquiry into his sister’s whereabouts.”

“My sister Susan,” answered Peter shortly and gravely, “is no longer a friend of Narnia.”

“Yes,” said Eustace, “and whenever you’ve tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says, ‘What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children.’” [“The Overlooked Hope for Narnia’s Susan Pevensie,” 3/7/16]

- B. Susan thought she had become too grown up for thoughts of a great king like Aslan and a blessed land like Narnia and, though she had once experienced it, she left it behind. That is the real-life concern of the book of Hebrews. **Turn to Heb. 5.**
- C. When King Jesus saves people from sin and death and implants his own Holy Spirit in our lives it is all with one goal: **that now we can be righteous people for God.** But what if someone who accepts Christ but doesn’t want to be

righteous; doesn't want to trust God in dark times or obey him when it they feel like sinning? What about them. What if they won't live for the beautiful land God has promised because they are so bound to this world? What then?

- D. As we've been working through this book we've run into some pretty deep teaching. Like last week in Heb. 5 how Christ our high priest suffered temptation so we can now come confidently to God's throne of grace to find the mercy and grace we need. You know when I preached on that last week I thought, *I wonder if people will stay with me during this. This is not lightweight teaching.* Well, apparently this writer had the same concern. **Vv.11-13...** So here's the first thing I want you to remember:

## I. DON'T BE A BIG BABY! (5:11-14)

- A. Big babies no longer try to understand teaching about righteousness. There are people who love the *idea* of being a Christian—who want to be saved from their sin, and sing cool worship songs, and have people love on them, and go to heaven. But what they *don't* want to do is learn about living righteously. They *don't* want to understand how Christ helps us in temptation. They don't want to help others be faithful. They don't want to endure God's discipline so that they might become holy. The fact is, they've already forgotten the basics of the gospel. **Spiritually speaking, they're just big babies.**
- B. **V.14**, "*But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*" Did you realize distinguishing between good and evil was that tough? Actually it is, because sin is so deceitful, so subtle. Our hearts can harden almost imperceptibly. We easily lose our grip on the life of faith. So we must always be in training in the ways of righteousness—learning the wonders of the Gods grace and help through Christ, learning form the example of people in Scripture, "being transformed by the renewing of our minds." **Christians who "no longer try to understand" righteousness are big babies, and that puts them in danger.**

6:1-4...

## II. LET US MOVE FORWARD TO MATURITY (6:1-12)

Can we agree to do that? Right now. Is that your intention and practice, “*to move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and go forward in maturity*”?

**The author reminds us that God introduced us to his salvation in two wonderful ways.**

- A. God introduced us to his salvation by basic, elementary Christian truths. They are the foundation of all else we believe and do. We need to know them. We need to review them. We capture the basics in our songs and creeds and classes. Here, the author mentions some of them:
1. *Repentance from acts that lead to death.* The very beginning of salvation is, “*Repent and believe the good news.*” Turn from your sin. Got that? Any questions? That’s a basic.
  2. *Faith in God.* In repentance we turn *from* sin and we turn *to* God, who revealed himself in Jesus. We have faith that God loves us and whoever believes in Jesus will be saved, now and forever. Got it. That’s basic.
  3. *Instruction about cleansing rites, [and] the laying on of hands.* These were phrases familiar to Jewish (i.e. Hebrew) Christians and not to us, but I think by *cleansing rites* he means baptism and symbolic Jewish ceremonial washings that were brought over into the church. By “*laying on of hands*” I think he means the way the early church would gather around someone and pray for the Holy Spirit’s anointing and for God’s special help—like for healing and anointing for a ministry task. Baptism. Prayer over one another. Basics.
  4. *The resurrection of the dead.* One of the first things we teach new believers. The Lord will return and we will meet him in the air and be with him forever. Basic.
  5. *Eternal judgment.* There is a hell and all who do not receive God’s gift of redemption in Christ will face it. Basic.

OK. Do we need to go over that again? Or can we build on that foundation with truth that will help us think and live righteously this week?

- B. There is another way that God introduces new believers to their salvation: God gives us heaven-sent experiences of new life. The writer describes several powerful Christian experiences that people have as new believers and then says that despite all those, the person could still be lost. Those verses stir a lot of controversy. Does this mean someone who becomes a Christian can lose their salvation? Or does this describe someone who was never really saved in the first place. The nastiest theological argument I ever had was over these verses. And I don't even remember what my point was!

The indisputable point is that the writer is describing a phenomenon that every pastor has seen and wants to prevent. **A person who has had an extraordinary introduction to the Christian life can squander it all and be lost.**

The author just reminded us of the basic truths God taught us when we came to the faith. Now he reminds us of the wonderful experiences God gave us:

1. We were *enlightened*. "I once was blind but now I see." Our blind eyes were opened and we *knew* that Jesus is the light of the world. It was a miracle, a gift of God.
2. We have *tasted the heavenly gift*, i.e., salvation. We *tasted* the relief of forgiven sin and the hope of eternal life.
3. We have *shared in the Holy Spirit*. We have known that sweet sense of God being with us, of new breath and power and truth.
4. We have *tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age*. These two go together. He means that we heard the gospel preached to us and knew it was from God, and with it we saw the evidences of God's power in lives touched by the word, powers that could only be explained as a work of God.

C. **Those are the common early experiences of all**

**Christians.** They are experiences only God can give. But they evidently do not guarantee eternal life. Notice that this list does not mention *changed lives*, people who are made holy or complete in Christ. Because, in fact, there are some people who hear the gospel and welcome it, and God pours out all these salvation experiences on them but then they do nothing. They do not become new. Oh, they're glad for a season. They reform in some way or another. They come to church and worship with gusto and gladness... for awhile. **But they are like the Israelites in the wilderness.** They get out into the dry places of life and they refuse to rely on God's promises. They do not obey God's commands. They test God as if he has something more he must prove to them. They are much more interested in the life they left behind than the land that lies ahead. **God did everything for them.** He sent Jesus to save them. Then he drew them toward himself. Then he introduced them to the basic truths of the faith and gave them heaven-sent gospel experiences. *Which they welcomed!* All that, and then... nothing.

The sentence that begins in v.4, "It is impossible..." ends in v.6, "to be brought back to repentance." God brought them to that point once, but having hardened their hearts as they have, it won't happen again. **V.6b**, "*To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*" They are saying Jesus' isn't the Savior after all, that his work was useless.

- D. The next verses seem to make clear to me that, despite all they knew and experienced, these people are not ever really changed, never actually born again. V.7-8... In this picture, the people who hear the gospel are the land. You might say that the seed of the gospel is planted in their field. Then God sends his extraordinary rains—Gospel light, the taste of salvation and the company of the Holy Spirit, the taste of God's Word and power—these wonderful, nourishing rains on the seed of the gospel in the field of those hearts. And then... *nothing*. The only thing that can be done is burn the whole thing off. A sobering picture of judgment.

- E. Understand that God is incredibly dogged in his desire to save sinners. God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish—certainly not anyone who has once responded to Jesus. He doesn't let people go easily. He's the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 to find the one who is lost. He challenges us in Scripture to go after those who are drifting. As the poet said, God, the Hound of Heaven, pursues people *"down the nights and down the days... down the arches of the years.... Strong feet that followed, followed after...with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace."* But there are those who, despite all God has done, turn their backs on him and there comes a day when God says to them as he did to Israel in the wilderness, *"They shall never enter my rest."*
- F. **V.9:** Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. In other words, *things that give evidence that you are actually saved and bearing righteous fruit.* Usually, people respond to these wonderful divine rains of truth and experience by entrusting their lives to God more and more. We begin to pray, to worship, to turn from sin, to think as Scripture thinks, to love one another. We really are *born again*, we really are *new creations*. This is the normal course of the gospel, unless people deliberately and persistently harden their hearts and *"no longer try to understand"* the righteousness God teaches them.
- G. What convinced this writer—and me—of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation?
1. **V.10...** God sees the things you do that spring from your love for him—especially how you help your brothers and sisters in Christ. What work? Your efforts to behave like a Christian when you're under pressure, to pray and to be with God's people, to give of your time and money for the things of God, to encourage the fainthearted, to be a good neighbor for Jesus' sake, to be salt and light for the gospel. **God sees your work as the clear and glad fruit of your salvation.**

2. What's more, God sees your diligence. V.11... You not only do righteous works, you have stuck with it, some of you for a long, long time. You do it because you believe it will matter in the end that you were righteous now. You do it because you believe in heaven, and that hearing God say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant,*" will make it all worthwhile.
3. Finally, you imitate the faith and patience of those who've gone ahead of us. V.12... Remember that phrase up in 5:11, "*it is hard to make it clear to you because you **no longer try** to understand.*" "*No longer try*" there is the same as the word translated "*lazy*" here. Like bookends of a sermon. **There are those who no longer try (he began) but we don't want you to be like that.** I see you wanting to imitate the faith of Abraham or David or Peter. I see you trying to be brave like Joshua or Daniel or Stephen the martyr. I see you wanting to be like Mary at Jesus' feet or all the others in that great cloud of witnesses whom the Bible commends for their faith. I see you yearning for home.

Oh, my dear, dear brothers and sisters, *even though I've spoken like this, I am convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation.*