

## **199427 impossible dow heb6**

Randy and I have really had a good time, and are having, and cards, letters, words of appreciation, evidences of answers to prayer. We've been talking and saying, wouldn't it be great if we could just be quiet and let folks testify to what the Lord's doing in their lives, and we hear from you, and we want to do that. And maybe tomorrow you could be ready with some stainer testimonies.

Some of the greatest people anywhere are here, and we've just been delighted to fellowship with you. Turn to the sixth chapter of Hebrews. I have a little packet of materials that I put together about our theme, Lift Jesus Higher, and some outlines of the book of Hebrews, and the chapters, and so on.

And several of you have this, my message titles are in there, and space to take notes. If you haven't received one of these, talk to me afterwards. I've run out, but I have a master that I can have photocopied for you, and I'd be glad to do that today.

Again, I think the message of the sixth chapter of Hebrews actually begins in chapter 5, verse 11. Does anybody have a New King James that I could read from? I have one at home and neglected to bring it. Thank you so much.

Let me read Hebrews 6 from the New King James, verse 5, verse 11, of whom we have much to say, that is, Melchizedek, hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing, for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe, but solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection.

Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, of eternal judgment, this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who are once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him up to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God, but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected, near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

But, 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. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

No, the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply you. And so after Abraham had patiently endured, He obtained the promise.

For men indeed swear by the greater, an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the unchangeableness, the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath that by two unchanging things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, we may be greatly encouraged who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the presence behind the veil, within the veil, NIV, it enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Dave, you want your Bible back. Thanks. I've titled this message Impossible.

Forgive me, Dave, but where the word impossible appears in your Bible, which you've obviously read and read and re-read, the markings illustrate that, you've got a question mark, and I put one here. Impossible? Again and again, the book of Hebrews stresses the necessity of holding fast to Christ, of holding on to faith. The Hebrews, the people to whom the book is written, were being tempted to give up on Christ, to go back to their pre-Christian lives.

Apparently, the threat of persecution seems to be the strongest motivation pushing them in that direction. You came to Christ, he says to them, you have enjoyed all the blessings in Christ and of Christ, and now you are in danger. You're in danger of becoming hard of heart, and as we read in chapter 5, hard of hearing, stranded at the infancy stage of the Christian life, unwilling to move forward towards strong teaching and mature Christian living.

Jesus Christ is above all. He's greater than the angels, than Moses, than Joshua, than Aaron and all of his descendants. Greater than anything in the old covenant and anything having to do with the life from which you have come as you've come to Christ.

Great as all of that was, and the author never disparages the old covenant or anything in it. As a matter of fact, he elevates it and emphasizes how marvelous God's work has been in the past, but it is in the past. And all of it pointed toward Christ.

All of it was a shadow, and Christ is the reality. All of it was a type of Christ, and Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of all of that typology and symbolism. So really, if you turn back on Christ, you're really taking a giant step backwards.

There's really nothing to go back to. A reminder to people in any age who are tempted to turn

from Christ, that to turn away from the Lord Jesus is certainly always to be facing in the wrong direction. And to walk away from Jesus is to walk right into the darkness, because He's the light of the world.

You run away from Christ, and you'll run right into the middle of a storm. Don't do it. A number of questions raised in this passage, Dave's question mark in his margin, I suppose if, you know, looking at somebody's Bible is pretty private stuff, but I wonder if some of you don't have a question mark in the margin there, too, because there are some questions raised, as you know, by this passage and by its sister set of verses in chapter 10 that have troubled people.

Questions like these, can a person walk away from Jesus and keep on walking until they have walked so far that eventually they're no longer in Christ? Can a person leave the things of Christ behind and get to the stage where even the death of Christ doesn't mean anything anymore? Where a person would say, Christ died for me. That used to mean something to me. It doesn't mean anything to me anymore.

Jesus died. So what? It happened in history, too bad, but so what? I could care less, really, personally. Can you imagine anybody saying that? Who could say that? Who would dare say that? To say Jesus died and I don't care is tantamount, I suppose, to saying, put him back on the cross as far as I'm concerned.

His death means nothing to me. Crucify him again. You'd have to be pretty sinful, disobedient, hard-hearted to talk like that.

Would a person, the question just derives from this passage, would a person go so far from Christ, having once known Christ, that they would say, yes, I used to be a Christian, but I'm not anymore? And you say, why? And they say, well, really, I discovered there was just not that much in it. And if somebody's listening who isn't a Christian, they say, suspicions confirmed, thought so. Ask such a person who has gone so far, would you recommend Christianity? And they stop and think about it.

Would I recommend Christianity? Well, my life and my experience are hardly a positive recommendation, are they? Anyone observing my life, listening to my words, would probably conclude that Christianity is powerless. They might say, well, it was just a phase through which that person passed, obviously, just a phase, just a fad, maybe even a farce, perhaps even a joke. But the truth, the way, the life, as far as I'm concerned, the ministry, the life, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ used to mean a lot to me, but I'm over that now.

And to me, Jesus Christ and all that he stands for are valueless. So Christ is put to an open shame. There's nothing to it at all.

What a shame that anybody would come to this, that their life would bring Christ into disrepute and shame. Well, those are the question marks in the margins of our minds as we read this passage. Is such a thing possible? If it's not possible, then the author wasted a lot of time

writing this chapter.

It is unfortunately possible, and how terrible to contemplate that unfortunate possibility. It's impossible, it's possible to be disloyal to Christ, this passage suggests. It's possible to betray Christ.

It's possible to commit treason against Jesus. This isn't just a Christian lapsing, giving way to temptation, and then falling down and crying out in repentance for forgiveness. This passage does not belong to people like that.

Passages that belong to people like that are passages such as Randy quoted for us. If we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us. This passage belongs to those who have been on a long road walking away from Jesus.

And I can't help thinking it would probably take quite a while before you get to the point where there's a line in the middle of the road, and it says something like, beyond this line, no turning back. And the people he's talking about have said, well, choice to be made, what are we going to say about them? If the cause of Christ, thereby defamed, and Jesus' death were to be nullified and canceled out as efficacious for that individual, what then? Where would such a person be then and there? What possible end could await them if they keep on walking and walking and walking the wrong way? Could such a person ever come back to Christ? The question ought to be, by that time, would they be likely to? If the heart has become so hard and the resolve against the Lord Jesus so strong, what chance is there for change? Let's catch up to such a person. Well, we can't go any farther than that, but at least we can call out.

Turn around, repent, come back, and you can hardly hear them because they're facing in the other direction. And the words come back, repent? Why should I? I don't want to debate the question of whether I can repent. It's not a question of philosophy.

It's not a question of theology. It's a question of my experience and my determination. Quite frankly, I don't want to repent.

I've reached the stage that nothing can change my mind. There's only one word to describe my response to a call for repentance, and it's the word impossible. In Tao, you can take your notes and get an eraser and rub out the question mark and in its place put an exclamation mark, impossible.

It has nothing to do with God's grace. It has everything to do with treason. Hebrews, don't turn back.

Move forward toward obedient maturity. If we turn back and live in sin and unbelief and disobedience and hardness of heart and rebellion, it becomes more and more difficult to repent as long as we are living away from the Lord. And I would remind you that the tense of the Greek verbs that are a part of this difficult passage are very, very important.

When it says it's impossible for those who fall away to be brought back to repentance, the next phrase is, because to their loss they are crucifying. If you have a footnote, you will see that the word because is probably better translated while, or as long as. We have present active participles in Greek here.

As long as they are engaged in this kind of rebellion, of course, they're not about to turn away from rebellion. One could ask, suppose they stopped crucifying the Lord Jesus all over again. Suppose they stopped subjecting Him to public disgrace.

Could they come back? And all that I know of the rest of the Scripture says, of course they can come back. But as long as, while, because, living away from the Lord. Is that the life you want? Some people die and I'm asked to take the funeral, and people say, was he a Christian, was she a Christian, and I, well, they used to be.

And I preach the funeral sermon, and I really haven't got much to say. Other people, brother, when they die, you don't have any doubt at all. And I can stand there and say, this person was not perfect, had their faults, I may not say that publicly, but true nevertheless.

But I can say, I know for sure today that this was a believer who loved the Lord and served the Lord, and they're in glory. And anybody here, I'll just tell you that with all the confidence I can muster up. Folks, when it comes my time, I don't want anybody to wonder.

I want whoever says the words to be able to say, Dow was a lot of things, but one thing he was, was a man of faith, and he loved the Lord right down to the end, and he went through a lot of struggles, but he loved Jesus and lived for Jesus, and because of the grace and mercy of God, we can say, go home, folks, and don't worry about his soul. These people had been enlightened, the light had been turned on. They had tasted the heavenly gift, they had shared in the Holy Spirit, they had tasted of the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come.

Were they Christians? Sure sounds like it to me. I read about 10 pages of a commentary the other day that tried to convince me otherwise. I don't know why anybody would want to.

The text seems pretty plain. I don't care if you're what ism you belong to, why don't we set those things aside and just let the text speak? Why would anybody fall away from all of that? Why would anybody turn away from all of that? I don't know, but I know people who have, and my heart breaks for them as the heart of this author broke for these. Turn the page and change the mood, because it changes in the passage.

Thanks be to God, the writer is assured that his readers have not reached this stage. There are aspects of genuine Christianity, part of their experience. He talks about your work and the love that you've shown God as you helped His people, and he urges them, don't stop, keep at it, show the same diligence to the very end in order to make your hope sure.

Don't turn back, rather keep going forward, serve Jesus, love Jesus, and take along with you

these better things, these things that accompany salvation, he calls them. Don't be lazy, don't be lethargic, don't be sluggish, but copy, he says, emulate the lives of those who through faith and patience have gained the inheritance. And in chapter 11 he will describe a whole army of people who have gained the inheritance, people like Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses and all the rest, who through faith and perseverance and patience and confidence in God, believing God's Word, have moved forward and never turned back.

God's promises are wonderful, and as we endure to the end, we will be heirs of those promises. His promises are backed up by His oath, God has sworn by Himself. When we swear in a court of law, which Jesus says we don't need to do, but people say, I swear by something greater than myself, perhaps the Bible.

I think in England they say, I swear by Almighty God that what I'm about to say is the truth. In other words, I'm not just talking to men and women, I'm talking to God, and before God I must speak the truth, and I will believe it. I'm swearing it in God condescendingly, he for whom there is no greater, need not swear.

When God speaks, it is so. God is truth, and that we can believe His promises, all of them, the promise to Abraham will be fulfilled. I'll bless you and make you a blessing in the world.

In you, Abraham, and in your seed shall all the world be blessed. Christ is the seed of Abraham. All of those who are in Christ are the true children of Abraham.

To be in Christ is to be heir of all the promises of Abraham and all the promises of God. And God has said, it is so, and God cannot lie. Would God lie to us? This passage says God can't lie.

There are things God can't do. What? God is omnipotent. There's nothing God cannot do.

Yes, there are things God cannot do. One of you was telling me about a discussion you had in the car on the way home the other night with your children, and one of your children said in the car, you got talking about God's greatness and omnipotence, and your child said, well, could God create a rock so big he couldn't lift it? Well, the answer to that is that God can do anything that God wills to do. And God's will is limited only by His nature.

Well, draw whatever conclusion about the rock you want to make from that. But God's nature is truth. Plato said God's body is light, and His shadow is the truth.

And if that's His nature, then He cannot, He cannot, in all of His omnipotence, act if it is not according to His nature. He cannot lie. And he says, if you hold fast to Christ, you'll inherit every good promise of God.

Are you in Christ? Oh, he says to these people, you have fled from the past to take hold of the hope offered in Christ. And they have. They want to go back to what they have fled from.

Foolish. The hope offered to us in Christ, he says, is like an anchor. And here he mixes up

metaphors all over the place.

But that's all right. We can get a handle on it a little bit. He says hope is like an anchor.

And here's your hope in Christ. And you know what an anchor does. You throw it over, and it catches on the bottom, and it holds you fast and keeps you from drifting.

Well, we don't really want to stop our ship as we're moving toward port. Well, he said, no, don't do that. Take the anchor and just give it a big heave.

And throw it out in front of the ship. And throw that thing so far that it goes, and now he mixes his imagery up incredibly, that it'll go right through the veil, right through the curtain, separating in the old covenant the holy of holies from the holy place. Now separating heaven and earth, life and death, time and eternity.

Throw that anchor of hope as far as you can into the future so that it goes right into heaven itself and just roots itself and fixes itself in the stuff that heaven is made of so that it's firm and fixed. And you say, where is my hope? My hope is within the veil, anchored within the veil, inside the curtain, in heaven itself. Where Jesus is, he says.

And it's safe there. Your anchor will hold you. And so you're hanging on to the anchor line and you're pulling on that thing, and you're not going to budge that anchor.

If you keep pulling, that boat of your life is going to keep moving forward and getting closer and closer to the anchor all the time. Don't let go of the rope. And do it in the spirit of, not of timidity that says, oh, can I lose my salvation? But all the while, he says, being greatly encouraged.

Behind the veil, within the curtain, in heaven itself is Jesus, the object of faith and hope, our forever priest for dear life. Don't turn back. Hold on.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock, which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love. Will your anchor hold in the storms of life when the clouds unfold their wings of strife, when the strong tides lift and the cables strain? Will your anchor hold, drift, or firm remain? When our eyes behold through the gathering night, the city of gold, the harbor bright, we shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore. Ever come in from the lake, and it's been rough and choppy, but you come into the dock, you hear the bump, bump of the boat, the bump of the oars in the bottom, the lapping of the water, just rocky enough, you're feeling a little bit queasy, and you step up onto the dock, and the ground is firm under your feet with the storms of all past forevermore.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, I wholly lean on Jesus' name. When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace.

In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within, way up there, within the veil. His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in that whelming flood. When all around my soul gives way, He then is my hope and stay.

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. Serious, terribly serious, warning, but glorious, everlastingly glorious, promise. You want to let it go? Some of you are getting kind of close to the end of the voyage.

Hang on, you're almost there. Some of you may be getting discouraged. Don't you dare turn back.

Don't you dare. I've spoken to generations of students in my 65 years, and I've said, you know, the law of averages would suggest that some of you listening to my voice will probably defect. And they look at me, this is the first few days of school, and they look at me as if to say, you're crazy.

Not me. Most of the EBC stories, and I've had somebody tell me, I get tired of hearing your EBC stories, not here, you know, because I always tell the good stuff. Well, why not? I'm not going to tell you about all the rascals that have attended Emmanuel Bible College.

There have been some. And there have been some who started out well and then became casualties. Who wants to tell their stories except to the Lord in private? And I suppose the law of averages would suggest that maybe even here this morning, there might be somebody with a little bit of a secret life, maybe nobody knows about it, but you're taking baby steps toward destruction.

Cut it out. You know better. Fix your eyes on Jesus, and don't take your eyes off him, not for a minute, and you'll be fine.

Randy, that's a hard passage, but brother, it's in the book. And in all of its warning, and in all of its positive promise, it sure makes a lot of sense to me. You too? Somebody said 11.30, please.

Okay.