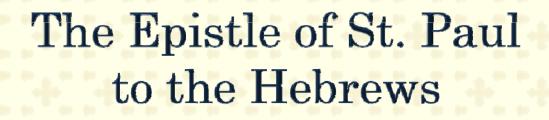


Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



Chapter 6

**Bishop Youssef** 

### Introduction



- St. Paul encourages the Hebrews to move on to spiritual maturity
- Although they were in spiritual infancy, he still did not lose hope in them
- The first step is to go beyond the elementary teaching (i.e. foundation)
  - This does not mean that the foundation is not important



## A Call to Perfection (6:1-3)

Basic teachings of Christ:

- Repentance from sin
- Faith in God
- ✤ Baptisms
- Laying on of hands (Chrismation, Priesthood, Unction of the Sick)
- Resurrection of the dead
- Eternal judgment



## A Call to Perfection (6:1-3)

- ➢ Going on to perfection; we will do if God permits (v.3)
- Perfection does not mean only growing but steadfastness in Christ till the end
- It is *practically impossible* to restore repentance to those who apostate, especially after becoming spiritually mature



 $\succ$  V. 6 is a practical truth and not a theological truth

- Theologically repentance from apostasy is acceptable
- Practically it is impossible on our part, but for God everything is possible



The spiritually mature people:

- Were once enlightened (Baptism)
- Have tasted the heavenly gift (Eucharist)
- Have become partakers of the Holy Spirit (Chrismation)
- Have tasted goodness of the word of God
- Have tasted the powers of the age to come



- Fall away (v.6) is not just any sin, it is apostasy
- Apostasy here is not out of ignorance or error it is *deliberate*
- The Ex-believer can perish!
- He is similar to the Jews who after having seen and heard the Lord, they crucified Him



- Apostates can only be rehabilitated through *repentance* not rebaptism (v.6) (St. John Chrysostom)
- Apostates are equivalent to *unfertile land* which bears briars and thorns instead of useful herbs
- "It is *rejected* and near to being cursed...." (v.8)
- Still there is hope in God only; not in them

# Encouragement To Persevere (6:9-12)



A word of encouragement and comfort is *needed* and *offered* (v. 9)
 This comfort is unmistakable because it is rooted in:

- ✤ Confidence in the justice of God (v. 10)
- Acknowledgement of their work and labor of love:
  - 1. Toward His name
  - 2. Through continuous ministry to the saints

# Encouragement To Persevere (6:9-12)



How to persevere to the end and not to be sluggish?

- Diligence (v.11)
- Imitate those who through *faith* and *patience* inherit the promises (v. 12)
- The fruit of perseverance:
  - ✤ Full assurance of hope until the end (v.11)



- In order to encourage them to persevere, St. Paul has to prove the reliability of Lord's promises
- ➢ God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3 & 22:16-17)
- > Why Abraham?
  - The appeal to the oath (they can count on God)
  - Prepares the way to return to the subject of Melchizedek in chapter 7



- God swore by the highest power available to Him, *Himself*
- God was both the one who swore the oath and the one who guaranteed the oath
- The very existence of the Jewish Christians, proved that God had kept the promise to Abraham to bless and multiply him



- Psalm 110:4 speaks of a priest according to the order of Melchizedek
- The promise of Psalm 110:4 was affirmed by an oath of God
  Faithfulness of God to His promise-affirmed-by-oath to Abraham in Genesis 22 anticipates the faithfulness of God to His promiseaffirmed-by-oath in Psalm 110 to Christ to be a priest like Melchizedek



God's promises are reliable because He never changes

- > We need to *endure patiently* to obtain the promises (v. 15)
- Two unchangeable things which support our faith:
  - God's promise
  - ✤ God's oath
- The faithfulness of God is a strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope that is set before us



The hope of salvation is like an anchor, which during the time of trouble, protect us from drifting away

> The hope is:

- ✤ Sure: can be trusted
- Steadfast: unchangeable
- This hope opened the path to the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies



- The Lord Jesus, as a forerunner, has already entered there as a priest to intercede for us
- ➢ Since only the high priest could enter that inner sanctuary in Judaism, and since the Lord Jesus is there on the right hand of the God → Jesus is the ultimate High Priest

### Conclusion



- What is apostasy? Why is it impossible from a practical standpoint to restore apostates to Christian faith and practice?
- If we take seriously the exhortation to exercise both faith and patience, what effect does that have on our Christian life?
- In what sense have we "fled to a place of refuge"?