

**Thought for Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2021**  
**Pastor Gordon Hamilton**

**Hebrews 6:1-20**

Last week we left the writer to the Hebrews talking of our faith, whether we are young in the faith and still needing ‘*milk, not solid food,*’ (5:12), and there maybe some of us in that situation, and as a pastor my job to feed both sets of people. Chapter 6 begins; ‘*Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.*’ I believe the writer is talking about those who hold on to ‘religious’ things, the quote is; ‘*instructions on baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement.*’ And there are still arguments in the church today over some of those issues, if there wasn’t I guess there would only be one denomination. Many of us hold very strong views on baptism and other aspects of church life. I have heard, at christenings, promises that once the child is baptised, when it dies it is going to heaven. I would argue that baptism is a personal choice, and even then is no guarantee of salvation, that comes through our own choice, to believe and recognise Jesus as your own personal Lord and Saviour, or not. I also believe that there are people who don’t attend church, or have a faith, because of some people who do attend a church and don’t live the life that Jesus would expect them to live. In his book, Red Letter Christianity, Tony Campolo along with Shane Claiborne, challenges Christians to live as people who adhere to the words of Jesus. I remember some years ago a couple who had a large family and not a lot of money. One of the deacon’s of the church asked me what I thought of the man not wearing a suit to church on a Sunday. The deacon was a businessman and so wore a suit to work most days. I replied that the man most probably didn’t possess a suit, and what is more important, to wear jeans to church, or not to attend church because you don’t have a suit? In a way it is a bit like the bit in the sermon on the Mount when Jesus says, Matthew 6:5-8; ‘*when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*’ God knows your heart, so you don’t have to try and be someone that you aren’t, just be yourself in Christ’s name, living in his footsteps. The problem for the Jewish leaders was that Jesus wasn’t what they expected a religious Rabbi to be. Jesus mixed with ordinary people. The Jewish leaders said it, they accused him of meeting with people who, they as leaders, as rabbis and as priests, wouldn’t think of mixing with. Hence the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus turned the tables upside down metaphorically as well as in fact, and scolded the leaders for not doing His Father’s will but just doing what they felt was right. **Read 6:4-6...** that is a challenge to all of us that attend church or chapel, have we had a personal encounter with Jesus? Have you had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit? Many of you, I am sure will say yes, some of you may say, I’m not sure. If that is you I would have to ask you, how did you come to faith? If someone was to ask you, why you are a believer? Or, what do you believe? Or, why do you go to church or chapel? How would you respond? Maybe a bit of home work this week, spend a short time in writing out your testimony. Maybe about the first time you recognised and accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Possibly a witness of somehow the Lord has blessed you more recently. People love to hear ‘your’ story. 1 Peter 3:15; ‘*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*’ You don’t have to preach, I know a couple of weeks ago we celebrated Pentecost and

we saw Peter preach, and we saw 3,000+ people were added to the number of believers. I'm sure we would all like to see that happen again, and who is to say it won't. we need to be people prepared to witness our love of Christ. I have said it many times, the best form of introduction to Jesus, is a personal invite from a friend. I pray that you will be that friend, and when someone accepts Jesus through your witness, there is no better feeling of satisfaction. Who have you invited to join you in church recently? Pray about it. You may think they won't accept your invite, but they may just say yes. You may say, your church isn't meeting at the moment due to Covid19. That gives you time to pray and ask the Lord to guide you who you should ask. God will lead you to the right person, v10; *'God is not unjust, he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.'* We are called to be his witnesses here on earth, and God says he will help us, but we also have to help ourselves. God promised Abraham that he would bless him, and he did. Yes, he did have to wait, and God promises us a blessing and we need to be patient. V16 tells us that *'Men swear by someone greater than themselves...'* Yet in Matthew 5:34 Jesus tells us; *'do not swear at all; either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by earth, for it is his footstool...Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No'.'* verse 18 tells us it is impossible for God to lie. That gives us an anchor to hold on to, with the promise of joining Jesus when our time on earth is through. I do try to find a hymn / song that fits with our Thought for Sunday. I don't know this one but felt the words were appropriate. I pray the Lord will bless you. Amen.

*Have you heard the good news?  
Have you heard the good news?  
We can live in hope  
Because of what the Lord has done.  
(Repeat)*

There is a way  
When there seems to be no way,  
There is a light in the darkness:  
There is a hope,  
An everlasting hope,  
There is a God who can help us.

A hope for justice  
And a hope for peace,  
A hope for those in desperation:  
We have a future,  
If only we believe  
He works in every situation.

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