

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for

August 24, 2025

*"When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said,
'Then who can be saved?' And looking at them Jesus said to them,
'With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"*
– Matthew 19:25-26



“✙” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Luke 9:57-62

Leader: *As they were going along the road, someone said to Him,*
People: **I will follow You wherever You go.**
Leader: *And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests,*
People: **But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.**
Leader: *And He said to another, Follow Me. But he said,*
People: **Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.**
Leader: *But He said to him, Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you,*
People: **Go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.**
Leader: *Another also said, I will follow You, Lord;*
People: **But first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.**
Leader: *But Jesus said to him, No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back,*
People: **Is fit for the kingdom of God.**

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – Hebrews 8:12

***Hymn #9** – “All You That Fear (the LORD’s) Name”

Scripture Reading – Hebrews 10:19-39

Ancient Creedal Proclamation – Apostles Creed (pg#845 in the red hymnal)

Offerings Presented

[Please put your tithe/offering in the plates before or after the service – Thank you!]

[Gifts labeled “Deacon’s Fund go to aid those in need in the congregation.]

***Doxology #731** (red hymnal)

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Sung Psalm #125** – “All, Like Mount Zion, Unmoved Shall Endure”

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (sins)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Reformation Creedal Reading – Belgic Confession, sections for Article 29.

*Leader: With respect to those who are members of the Church (note:
It assumes Christians must be in the church),*

People: They may be known by the marks of Christians;

Leader: Namely, by faith, and when, having received Jesus Christ the only Savior,

People: They avoid sin,

Leader: Follow after righteousness,

People: Love the true God and their neighbor,

Leader: Neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh

People: With the works thereof.

Leader: But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain

People: In them great infirmities;

Leader: But they fight against them through the Spirit

People: All the days of their life,

Leader: Continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion,

People: And obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Leader: In whom they have remission of sins,

People: Through faith in Him.

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – Hebrews 6:4-8

***Gloria Patri #735** (red hymnal)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Sermon – “Impossible to Renew”

A Mini-Sermon Series on Maturity

***Hymn #530** – “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”

***Benediction** – Numbers 6:22-27

Everyone is welcome to Coffee Hour Fellowship downstairs after church today

Announcements & Upcoming Events

- Starting on Sunday, September 7, we will be back to our normal schedule:
9:00-10:00 AM Sunday School for all ages
10:30 AM **Lord's Day Worship**
c.11:45 AM Fellowship Time
- Studies returning:
Sunday School for all ages (9:00 AM) starts on September on 7th.
Tuesday Study (10:30 AM – noon) starts on September 9th.
Wednesday Study (6:30 – 8:00 PM) starts on September 10th.
We will be studying the Book of Hebrews.
Gen-Alpha Club will return on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays.
Friday YADG (6:30 PM) still meets on 1st & 3rd Friday.
Saturday Morning Prayer Group at the Gabelmann's. (Please call Sheryl to confirm if the group is meeting that day, 860-309-7250.)
- On Saturday, **September 13th**, from **noon** to 5:00 PM, there will be a **church picnic** at the Winter's house. (1448 Burt Hill Rd; Tolland, MA 01034).
- The next **Elder & Deacon Meeting** will be at the Aldrich's on Saturday, **Sept. 27th** at **8:30 AM**.
- On Saturday, **October 18th**, starting at 11:30 AM, will be an **Oktoberfest** at the Aldrich's! With choice of select root-beers (we are Calvinists after all). There will be a sign up for whatever German food you would like to bring.
- The tentative date for the **Annual Calvinist-Christmas Party** is Friday, **December 5th**, at the Grange.

ONLINE RESOURCES

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|-------------------------------|---|
| TRC's Webpage: | TrinityReformedCT.org |
| TRC's Facebook Page: | facebook.com/people/Trinity-Reformed-Church/61554974150922/ |
| TRC's Youtube Channel: | youtube.com/@TrinityReformedCT |
| Pastor Doug's | youtube.com/simplyreformed |
| Youtube Channels: | youtube.com/@PilgrimsOfPlunder |

INTERNET PRAYER CHAIN

If you have any prayer requests for our prayer chain, please email them to Donna Ensminger at: trcnwprayer@gmail.com. (If you would like to join the Prayer Chain, also see Donna.)

LEADERSHIP

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Elders: | Rev. Douglas Aldrich, pastor | 860-379-1147 | douglas_aldrich@sbcglobal.net |
| | Bob Ensminger | 860-485-8738 | robert.ensminger@arthurgrossell.com |
| | Rich Gabelmann | 860-605-7852 | rgabelmann0415@gmail.com |
| | Rev. Jonathan Haulenbeek | 203-709-0784 | jhaulenbeek@icloud.com |
| Deacons: | David Mattson (chair), Carl Bierce, Caleb Goodell, Mason Goodell, Dean Winters | | |
| Sunday School: | Verna Aldrich, Vika Winters | Music Coordinator: | Cindy Rines |
| Clerk: | Sheryl Gabelmann | Treasurer: | Cindy Rines |

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Worship Starts At: 10:30 AM (9:30 AM in the summer)

Sunday Worship At: Winchester Grange (100 Newfield Rd; Winchester Center, CT 06098)

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 343; Riverton, CT 06065 – *Phone:* (860) 238-7399

Webpage: trinityreformedct.org – *Email:* trinityreformedct@gmail.com

Sermon Notes

Hebrews 6:4-8
"A Fierce Warning"
A Topical Ministries on Maturity
August 24, 2025

Introduction

- 1) We are looking at the concept of (spiritual) maturity in this topical mini-series.
- 2) One of the key aspects of maturity is to have knowledge and then be able to apply that knowledge correctly, i.e. **wisdom**.
 - a) That you can handle complicated things.
 - b) Remember the beginning of wisdom: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."* – Proverbs 1:7
 - c) Because the wise man is able to receive correction and learn: *"Whoever loves discipline (or "instruction") loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid."* – Proverbs 12:1
- 3) As we learned last week, in Hebrews 5:11-6:2, the author of Hebrews lays the foundation of the basics of the Christian faith.
 - a) In Hebrews 6:9ff the author begins to go into the mature calling of Christ.

Hebrews 6:9 - *"But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way."*
 - b) However, there is Hebrews 6:4-8.
 - i) Before going into what maturity looks like, the author gives one of the fiercest warnings in Scripture.
 - ii) And it is one of the most debated verses in church history.
- 4) But first, we need a detailed recap of Hebrews 5:11-6:2.

Review of Hebrews 5:11-6:2 – Levels of Teachings

- 1) The most basic things of the faith are: **The Elementary Principles**.
 - a) Hebrews 5:12 - *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles (stoicheion) of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food."*
 - b) The elementary principles (stoicheion), literally *"elements of the beginning"*, are the basic things, the building blocks, the "ABCs" of something.
 - c) What are the ABCs of the faith?
 - i) It is directly in the text: *"the oracles of God."* Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2; 1Pet 4:11
 - ii) "Oracles" (*logia*), the sayings, the words, of God.
 - d) The most basic thing to understand is that God has spoken.
 - i) It is how the Bible begins: In Genesis, God speaks creation into existence. Gen 1:1-3; Ps 33:6,9; John 1:1-3
Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3; 2Pet 3:5
Genesis 1:1a,3 - *"In the beginning God . . . Then God said, . . ."*

- ii) The critical event of the Old Covenant is God speaking on Mt. Sinai, giving the Law, especially the Ten Commandments. Ex 19:16-20; 20:1-21
Deut 4:10-13; 5:1-22
Neh 9:13-14; Heb 12:18-21

Acts 7:38 - "*This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles (logia) to pass on to you.*"

- iii) The New Testament shows us the whole purpose of creation: God's eternal Word, His Son, takes on human flesh and dies for the sins of the world to bring forth the Kingdom for God's people. Is 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 53:4-12
John 1:1-14,29; Gal 4:4-5
Eph 1:9-10; Phil 2:5-11
Col 1:15-20; Heb 2:9-10

- iv) The Bible ends with a warning not to add or subtract from God's Word. Rev 22:18-21
Deut 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:6

- e) The mission of Christ's church is to proclaim the Word, especially in worship. Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48
Acts 1:8; Rom 10:14-17; 2Tim 4:1-2

- f) The idea that God has spoken in an objective, clear way, and that His will is knowable, is simply the basic starting point.

- i) Ponder that, instead of starting with: "Jesus loves you."
ii) Start with: "God has spoken" Or to go KJV: "*Thus saith the Lord*".

- g) To boldly state God has spoken with clarity is humility.

- i) To think or act that God has not spoken is arrogance and death.
ii) What was the devil's first words in Scripture?
Genesis 3:1b - "*Did God actually say . . .*" (ESV)

- 2) From the elementary principles come the elementary teaching (Going from the ABCs to the basic lessons).

- a) Hebrews 6:1-2 - "*Therefore leaving the elementary (archē) teaching (literally "word of the beginning) about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.*"

- b) The things that are the basic lessons of the faith.

- c) Remember these 6 things are:

- i) All related & build on each other.
ii) About salvation – Being put into Christ.
iii) In OT language (Remember the Christians in Hebrews know their OT, they are Jewish Christians facing the temptation to give up on Christ.)

- d) The six things are:

- i) **Repentance from Dead Works** = Turning away from sinful deeds and acts done without faith.
ii) **Faith towards God** = Turning to the Triune God and trusting in Him.
iii) **Instruction About Washings** = Baptism, the sacrament of being washed in Christ and put into His church.
iv) **Laying on of Hands** = Of being brought into the church and receiving her blessing.

- v) **Resurrection of the Dead** = Those put into Christ's resurrection will be resurrected at the end of the age.
 - vi) **Eternal Judgment** = God's judgment is coming and He will judge all. Heb 10:26-27
Heb 12:23
- 3) From the ABCs, then comes the basic lessons, from there comes the walk of being mature.
- a) And the author of Hebrews wants to do this: "*And this we will do, if God permits.*" - Hebrews 6:3.
 - b) But first, a most severe warning.

Challenges from Hebrews 6:4-6a

- 1) Hebrews 6:4-6a is a most challenging text: "*For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance,*"
 - a) It is challenging, to us moderns, because we do not like texts about judgment.
 - b) It is troubling because it seems to teach there is no repentance, or any hope, for those who fall away from the faith.
 - c) It is troubling because it seems to teach that true Christians can fall away.
- 2) To hear Hebrews as teaching that there is no hope of repentance after falling away from the faith is clearly wrong.
 - a) This so bothered some ancient Christians that:
 - i) A few questioned whether Hebrews should be in the Bible!
 - Especially because of Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31.
 - Though the majority, and earliest witnesses, affirmed it.
 - ii) Also, the unbiblical habit of delaying baptism, to increase the chance of not having a major sin before death, also crept in to the ancient church.
 - b) Clearly, a true Christian can, and unfortunately does, sin, Ps 51:1-12; Matt 6:12; Luke 22:31-32
after baptism, but also can receive forgiveness. 1John 1:8-9; 2:1-2; James 5:16
 - i) Baptism is clearly given early in one's Christian Matt 28:19; 1Cor 1:16
life, either to the children of believers or Acts 2:38-39,41; 8:12,36-38
quickly to new converts. Acts 16:14-15,30-33; 18:8
 - ii) Clearly, devout Christians wrestle & fight against sin, as John wrote to the church: "*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" – 1John 1:8
 - iii) Peter called the baptized Simon Magus to repentance. Acts 8:13,22
 - iv) Peter himself was restored by the Lord Jesus Luke 22:61-62; Gal 2:11-14
Himself after sinning after having faith. John 3:22; 4:1-2; 21:15-17
 - v) Whole NT churches were made up of baptized believers and were called to repentance: Corinth (1Cor 1:13-17; 6:9-11; 2Cor 2:5-11); Galatia (Gal 3:2-3; 4:19; 5:4); the Churches of Revelation (Rev 2:4-5,14,16,20-22; 3:1-3,16,19).
 - c) So, the Bible clearly doesn't teach that if you sin after baptism, you have no hope.

3) The other challenging point (i.e. can true Christians fall away) has been much debated by Christians throughout the centuries.

- a) Some believe a truly repentant, regenerated, Spirit filled Christian can lose their salvation. Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-27
Gal 5:4; 2Pet 2:20-22
 - i) Including Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Arminian Protestants.
 - ii) Lutherans and Anglicans tend to get squishy on this.
- b) Our Reformed Tradition argues strongly that a truly born again believer cannot lose their salvation, though clearly delusion and deception are possible. John 6:37-39; 10:27-29
Rom 8:29-30,35-39; Phil 1:6
Eph 1:13-14; 1Pet 1:3-5
- c) Hebrews 6:4-6 is one of the key texts used by those who believe one can lose one's salvation.
- d) In one sense, the outcome is the same:
 - i) Reformed: If someone seems to be a Christian and falls away, then that person was not a Christian.
 - ii) Arminian: A true Christian can fall away and make themselves not a Christian.
 - iii) Both agree you can have "apostates" – Those who claimed Christianity but fell away and are not Christians.
- e) Be careful: Don't miss the main point of any text!
 - i) Our first desire is not to defend one's theological system. Even the Reformed Tradition, though there is a place for that.
 - I love the Reformed Tradition, because it is so committed to hearing all of the Bible in context.
 - And the Reformed Tradition teaches that Scripture has the final authority, not any Tradition. (See chapter 1 of Savoy & Westminster.)
 - ii) Also, our first desire is not to figure out some mystery that intrigues us, though there is a place for that.
 - iii) Our first objective is to hear the main point of the text! What the author wants us to learn.
 - iv) To give an example:
 - Justification by faith alone is a core doctrine of the faith that applies to all Christians, even the clergy. Rom 3:28; 4:4-5; 5:1
Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9
 - Yet James 3:1 declares that those who teach will incur a greater judgment.
 - How does that technically work come Judgment Day?
 - I don't know!
 - However, teachers have been warned – And that is the point.

How to Understand 6:4-6

1) How do we understand Hebrews 6:4-6a?

- a) First, remember the context: Hebrews, maybe was originally a sermon, which was given to a church made up of mostly Jewish Christians who were being tempted to give up Christ. Heb 2:3

b) The Bible first focuses on the corporate (covenants); we moderns first think in psychological individualistic ways.

c) The author's first concern is pastoral: An exhortation for the church to persevere in the faith.

Heb 6:9-12

2) Hebrews 6:4-6 uses sacramental, covenantal, communal language.

a) The "enlightenment" here refers not to regeneration (being born again) but to the reception of the knowledge of the Gospel combined with the sacrament of baptism and instruction by the church.¹

John 4:10
Eph 3:9
Heb 10:26,32

b) We heard this language already in Hebrews 6:1-2; About baptism and the blessing of the visible church by the laying on of hands.

c) Note what follows: "*and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.*" – Hebrews 6:4b-5

i) "Tasted" is a reference to the Lord's Supper, to Communion.

1Cor 10:1-4; 11:23-28
1Pet 2:3

- Communion is more than a mere memorial, though not magical.
- It is the proclamation of the Gospel with visual aids.
- Always remember the direction of the sacraments: From God to us.
- That is why it is "*heavenly gift*", "*the good word of God*" and is about "*the powers of the age to come.*"

ii) To receive the blessings of the church is to be "*made partakers of the Holy Spirit.*"

- It doesn't say "*And the Holy Spirit is in them.*"
- But they have partaken of the things of the Holy Spirit.
- This is about having an external association with, participating with, not necessarily being completely one.

Luke 5:7; Heb 1:9
Heb 3:1,14; 6:4
Heb 12:8

d) If you have received all these blessings and you fall away, forsake, defect, commit apostasy, then there is no hope of restoration.

i) This is not mere backsliding, which can be repented of.

ii) This is a decisive, complete, turning away from Christ, this is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Matt 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30
Luke 12:10

iii) The Greek for the verb "have fallen away" is not describing a drifting away, or struggle with sin, but a final repudiation of Christ after clear exposure to the gospel. It is a willful act of apostasy, completed and irreversible in its effect.²

¹ For example, the early church father Justin Martyr writing between 150-55 AD, states "And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed." A few chapters later he continues, "in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person." – *First Apology*, 61:12f; 65:1.

² "Have fallen away" (parapiptō) from Hebrews 6:4 is in: Completed act (aorist): a definitive break, not ongoing wavering. Active (not passive): a willful rejection, not accidental stumbling. Participial chain: apostasy is placed in the same category as enlightenment, tasting, and sharing — all external experiences short of regeneration.

- 3) Notice how terrible this is, as the author explains: *“since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”* – Hebrews 6:6b
- a) Not literally crucifying Christ again; He died once for all. Heb 7:27; 9:12, 26
 - b) It is basically now rejecting Christ and joining those who crucified Him.
 - c) This apostate now stands with the world against Christ.
 - d) Salvation is only in Christ. For the pagan to reject Christ brings judgment, how much more so those who start off claiming Christ and then reject Him!

Hebrews 6:7-8

- 1) To drive the point home, the author uses an illustration: *“For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.”* – Hebrews 6:7-8
- a) The **Rain** is God’s grace, His Spirit, His Word.
 - b) The **Ground** is the visible church. (i.e. the church we see, made up of real and false believers. As opposed to the invisible church, those who have true faith that only God can see.)
 - c) But the crops that are brought forth show what type of ground it really is.
 - i) True ground, i.e. those who have true faith, bring forth crops, John 15:5-6
useful for the church. They are blessed by God.
 - ii) False ground, those who are in the church but then reject Christ, are a hindrance to the church like thorns and thistles, and in the end will be burned up.

Conclusion

- 1) Maturity requires that we hear all the Word of God, including:
 - a) The difficult parts to understand: Like Hebrews 6!
 - b) Or those parts that might seem unpleasant, such as those that declare God’s holiness, justice and judgment: Like in Hebrews 6!
 - c) Though the more a Christian matures the more he, or she, will find comfort in God’s holiness & justice.
- 2) Because, God has spoken!
 - a) He has declared Good News to us in Christ.
 - b) All the elemental teachings are about Christ: Repentance, faith, baptism, being brought into His church, the resurrection, and final judgment.
- 3) To turn away from those things is death and we need to hear this fierce warning.
- 4) Because it is for our good, to remain in Christ, in whom is complete joy.