

Doctrine of Salvation and Hebrews 6

Hebrews 6:4-6

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Exhorting Immature Believers Not to Fall from Faith Lest they be Confirmed in an Inability to Repent of Doctrinal Error

1. One of the most important discussions in Christendom deals with the question of whether or not a person can lose their salvation.
2. Those who oppose the doctrine of the eternal security of the soul often appeal to Hebrews 6:4-6 in support of their position.
3. However, it must be kept in mind that the general intent of Paul's letters to the church is to exhort them to continue in their journey of grace. The idea of a Christian becoming a non-Christian is not in view. The Christian is to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.
 - *2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*
4. While spiritual maturity is essential in the Christian's walk, the Lord knew that Christians are like sheep, and as sheep, they stray. Nevertheless, upon gospel repentance, the Lord brings His own back into the fold. The Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Parable of the Lost Coin, and the Parable of the Lost Son illustrates this concept (Luke 15:1-32).
5. The story of the Prodigal Son should be kept in mind when studying Hebrews 6:4-6. If Hebrews 6 teaches that a person cannot return home to the Father, then the story of the Prodigal Son has no real meaning.
6. Now notice that Hebrews 6:4-6 does not say it is "impossible" to be brought back to God. The text does say that, in some sense, it is impossible to be brought back to repentance. The distinction will prove to be significant.
7. A critical phrase is, "*to renew them again unto repentance*" in the Authorized Version. The NIV is "*to be brought back to repentance.*"

- *Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*
 - *Hebrews 6:4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*
8. Question. “Who is the One who renews a person?” In spiritual matters, the answer is, God. Only God can create something out of nothing. Only God can give life. Only God can make the dead to live. Only God can resurrect a soul. Only God can renew an erring Christian. Only God can do the impossible.
- *Matthew 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*
 - *Mark 10:27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*
 - *Luke 18:27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*
9. Since Hebrews 6:4-6 cannot be about the impossibility of being saved, it must mean something else. The context of Hebrews 5:13-6:2 becomes very important.
- *Hebrews 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*
- Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*
10. The author of Hebrews wants to move the discussion beyond the foundational, or basic Bible doctrines.
- Doctrine of Repentance
 - Doctrine of Faith
 - Doctrine of Baptisms (Ritual Purifications)
 - Doctrine of Laying on of Hands (Miracles / Authority)
 - Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead

- Doctrine of Eternal Judgment

11. In order for Christians to move on in maturity, they had to embrace the concept of salvation by grace through faith, and not of works, lest they be found “*crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace*” (Heb. 6:4b).
12. The author of Hebrews seemed to be frustrated that the Christian community was not leaving the elementary teachings about Christ. They were falling away by falling back into the idea of salvation not being a free gift of God’s grace, but something earned by works.
13. If the Christian community did not stop their falling away, any good works they had performed would be consumed in the fire of judgment in the day of divine review.

- *Hebrews 6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*
- *1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Special Note.

The burning away of human good is to be distinguished from the burning of a soul with eternal judgment in the day of God’s wrath.

14. In Hebrews, the author is concerned about individuals, who have tasted what the Lord offers, becoming enamored again with the idea that good works will save a soul. That concept shows contempt for the grace of God. The time would come when such Christians would not be able to be brought to repentance about the error of this doctrine.

Special Note.

History has proven this exhortation of concern to be valid. The Catholic Church fell away from the idea of salvation by grace through faith. They returned to a form of Judaism whereby works plus faith produces salvation. Rome has never been able to repent of this doctrinal error which led to the Reformation.

Other Interpretations

Addressing A Hypothetical Situation of Apostasy

15. This passage has been understood to be referring to a hypothetical situation, based on verse 9. The idea is that if a person were to come to faith in Christ, and then return to a system of salvation by works, they would have fallen away from the truth faith and it would be impossible to bring them to repentance.

- *Hebrews 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

**Addressing a Person who is Almost,
but not Altogether Saved**

16. Some Bible teachers, such as C. I. Scofield, believe this passage presents the case of Jewish professed believers who halt short of faith in Christ after advancing to the very threshold of salvation. They even go along with the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightenment and conviction.

- *John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

These professors do not have faith. Such a person is like the spies of Kadesh-Barnea (Deut. 1:19-26). The spies saw the Land of Promise but drew back with the fruit of the land in their hands.