

# SECOND CHANCES?

Hebrews Chapter 6 Verses 4-6

# So, what does 'The Word' say?

'For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. '

Hebrews 6:4-8

ESV

- That this passage has been subject to substantially different interpretations.
- Do verses 4-5 depict people who were once 'true' Christians or not?
- Some believe that only the most hardened cases of 'apostasy' are irretrievable!
- (apostasy is generally defined as a 'falling away, a withdrawal, a defection'. In Christianity it is seen as a withdrawal from faith and trust in God – although the term is not found in the English versions of the NT, it is in the Greek original, to express abandonment of the faith).
- Most believe that those who fall away were never true Christians in the first place, because they have not made a true saving response to the gospel – like the seed that fell on rocky ground, "they have no root" – Mark 4:17 - so they fell away.
- It is suggested that these verses are simply intended to be warnings to true believers, intended to keep them on the path to salvation.
- Note that the writer does not think it applies to many in his audience - see verse 9 – "yet in your case beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation".

## What do my ESV Bible Notes say?

# Scripture is CLEAR that true believers CANNOT lose their salvation

John 10: 27-29 - 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one will snatch them out of my hand.** '


Ephesians 1:4 - ' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he **chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love '

John 6: 39-40 - 'And this is the will of him who sent me, that **I should lose nothing of all that he has given me** but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.' '


Romans 8:35 - '**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? '

# And there's more ...

Romans 8: 38-39 - 'For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus** our Lord.'



Philippians 1:6 - 'And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ.'



Peter 1: 3-5 - ' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** '

- James 5:20 - 'My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that **whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul** from death and will cover a multitude of sins. '
- 1 John 5:16 - 'If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. '

**Why bother if there is no way back for those who fall away?**

Scripture tells us to pray for those who have fallen away - and to bring them back!

# So how should we interpret these verses in Hebrews?

## See Hebrews 3:12-14

*“Take care brothers lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day as long as it is called ‘today’, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **For** we have come to share in Christ **if indeed** we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”*

1. Hebrews 6: 4-6 should be understood **in connection with Hebrews 3: 13-14** as is indicated by the linking word “for” - verse 14 is linked to the exhortation not to become hardened (in unbelief and sin). Thus, the logic of the argument is that those who are hardened or become hardened give outward evidence that they are not (and never have been) genuine believers who “share in Christ” because **genuine believers do not become hardened, instead they persevere** – that is, they hold onto their original confidence firm to the end.
2. The message should therefore be **viewed as a ‘sober warning’** – intended as a means that God uses to keep Christians resolved in faith and obedient to the end but is a grave warning to everyone who claims to be saved – that is, to examine oneself carefully to be sure that one is in fact a genuine believer!

# What does David Herring think?

Believing "Once saved always saved" is the only ground for our full assurance of salvation.

The key, therefore, to understanding a passage such as Hebrews 6 v 4 - 6 is to remember that we are talking about 2 different aspects of our spiritual life;

- our eternal salvation; and
- our spiritual walk with its blessings and rewards

In other words, our sanctification. The key point is, we can lose our blessings, but not our salvation. This passage shows that a truly born-again person can then so mess up their spiritual lives that God can no longer use or trust them, even to the point of taking them away to Heaven before they can do more damage to His Name.

Always remember - God knows those who are His.



# What does Derek Cleave think?

- I believe the issue here is not simply a contrast between two Christians, but rather a contrast between those who hold onto Judaism and the those who receives Jesus Christ and so moves into the maturity of the new covenant in Christ.
- In this passage, those who are still hanging onto the old covenant are warned that if they continue to do that, if they stand on the edge of faith in Christ – they’ve heard it all; they’ve got all the information, but they never make the right decision, then they’re in danger of turning back and being lost forever.
- This has special importance to anyone who comes to the edge of a decision in Jesus Christ and plays around with it, never makes it real, turns around and falls away.
- People can go to church for years and hear the Gospel over and over again and never really make a commitment to Jesus Christ. That kind of person would definitely fall into the category of those here. One who knows the truth, who’s seen it in action, who’s heard it preached, who’s seen it operate in the lives of others, yet turns around and walks away from Jesus Christ. And that’s what always happens to anyone who’s indecisive. He turns his back, winds up with an evil heart of unbelief, and departs from the living God.
- So, it’s a serious warning then, to those who hear, who know the truth, but who make no response of faith in Christ. Maybe those who go to church, who understand it all, who maybe even believe it intellectually, who even pretend to be a part of it, but who never knew Christ.
- Like these people to whom he writes with these warnings, they have adopted the form without the reality. And there are many people in the church of Jesus Christ who have adopted the form, but don’t have the reality. Jesus said, “Many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and I’ll say, ‘Depart from Me, I don’t know who you are. I never knew you. I have no love relationship with you.’”
- So, I believe this to be the issue here. He is saying in a parenthetical statement, (the main part of Hebrews is written to Christians,) but in this parenthetical statement, he is saying to the intellectually convinced who have not really received Christ, “You better get real lest you fall away and be lost forever.” Be warned!
- Alternatively, the true believer can never be lost. If you’ve been born again by the Spirit of God, given a new nature, you can’t be ‘unborn’! You can’t go back to your old nature. You are into book 2 of your life, you can’t go back to book 1.

# What does Sam Gordon think?

This is one of the Bible's most difficult passages to interpret, but one thing is clear—it **does not teach that we can lose our salvation.**

There are two valid ways of looking at these verses:

**A. One interpretation holds that this passage is written not about Christians but about unbelievers who are convinced of the basic truths of the gospel but who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. They are intellectually persuaded but spiritually uncommitted.**

According to this interpretation, the phrase *once enlightened* refers to some level of instruction in biblical truth. However, understanding the words of Scripture is not the same as being regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the “true Light,” giving light “to every man”; cannot mean the light of salvation, because not every man is saved. Through God's sovereign power, every man has enough light to be held responsible. This light either leads to the complete acceptance of Jesus Christ or produces condemnation in those who reject such light. The people described in Hebrews are of the latter group—unbelievers who have been exposed to God's redemptive truth, but who have not exercised genuine saving faith.

This interpretation also sees the phrase *tasted the heavenly gift* as referring to a momentary experience, akin to Jesus' “tasting” death. This brief experience with the heavenly gift is not seen as equivalent to salvation; rather, it is likened to the second and third soils in the parable of the sower which describes people who receive the truth of the gospel but are not truly saved.

Finally, this interpretation sees the “falling away” as a reference to those who have tasted the truth but, not having come all the way to faith, fall away from even the revelation they have been given. The tasting of truth is not enough to keep them from falling away from it. They must come all the way to Christ in complete repentance and faith; otherwise, they in effect re-crucify Christ and treat Him contemptuously. Those who sin against Christ in such a way have no hope of restoration or forgiveness because they reject Him with full knowledge and conscious experience. They have concluded that Jesus should have been crucified, and they stand with His enemies. It is impossible to renew such to repentance.

**B. The other interpretation holds that this passage is written about Christians, and that the phrases *partakers of the Holy Ghost, enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift* are all descriptions of true believers.**

This second interpretation is based on an alternate translation, found in the KJV and a few others, which begins with the phrase *if they fall away*, with the key word being *if*. According to this view, the writer of Hebrews is setting up a hypothetical statement: “IF a Christian were to fall away.” The point being made is that it would be impossible (IF a Christian falls away) to renew salvation. That's because Christ died once for sin, and if His sacrifice is insufficient, then there's no hope at all.

In this view, the passage presents an argument based on a false premise (that a true Christian can fall away) and follows it to its senseless conclusion (that Jesus would have to be sacrificed again and again). The absurdity of the conclusion points up the impossibility of the original assumption. This reasoning is called *reductio ad absurdum*, in which a premise is disproved by showing that it logically leads to an absurdity. The weakness of this view is that the Greek text does not contain a word equivalent to the English *if*.

**Both interpretations support the security of the believer in Christ. The first interpretation, which has a stronger textual basis, presents unbelievers rejecting Christ and thereby losing their chance of salvation; the second, weaker interpretation presents the very idea of believers losing salvation as impossible.**

Bible Study 22-11-22  
conclusion ...

You CANNOT lose  
your salvation!

