

Eternal Security, Security of the Believer, OSAS, and Hebrews 6:4-6

⁴For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶If 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 6:4-6*

The thought here is that these were once Christians who had since lost their salvation. These are people that had heard the gospel, received it, been filled with the Holy Ghost, understood God's Word, and had received wondrous revelation, only to have turn their back on it all. Therefore, it's impossible to renew them again unto repentance because only a heart as cold and hard as a rock could ever do so – or so it seems. But let's have a closer look.

Heb. 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴But 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.

To properly understand Hebrews 6:4-6, we must first begin at Hebrews 5:12. To be brief, the context is that of backslidden Christians, and there are several ways to tell. Here, Paul begins by scolding these believers for their lack of maturity.¹ They ought to be teachers by now, but they're not. But you know that these are saved people that he's talking to because you should never allow a lost person to serve as a Bible teacher.² By definition, these would be false teachers, and so this is our first indication that Paul is addressing Christians.

Second, Paul told them that they needed to learn (again) the "first principles of the oracles of God;" he didn't say they needed to repent of their sins. He said they were "dull of hearing"; he didn't say they were unrepentant. So if these are lost people, it's the wrong message. So again, these are Christians.

Third, and perhaps most important, spiritual milk is for Christian babies; and you don't become a babe in Christ until you've first repented of your sins and become "born again." And once this is done, it's then, and only then, that you're now ready to be fed the milk of the Word. But not before. And so what we have here are backslidden Christians and not apostates. The context demands it.

¹ For the sake of argument, Paul will be referred to here as the author of Hebrews.

² Tit. 1:10-11; Rev. 2:2 etc.

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, ²Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³And this will **we** do, if God permit.

Therefore is a conjunctive adverb that ties the previous thought of Hebrews 5:12-14 with those beginning in Hebrews 6:1. And since Hebrews 5:12-14 was speaking of backslidden Christians, then we must keep that same frame of reference when beginning in Hebrews 6:1. Had the writer of Hebrews not been talking to Christians, he wouldn't have said, "let **us** go on unto perfection." In doing so, he's equated himself – as a Christian – with those of whom he's writing. He says that "**we**" will do this (3). And in Hebrews 6:9, he calls these same people "beloved" – and you don't refer to lost people as being "beloved" as it's only patronizing. And so what we have here is a mature Christian writing unto his fellow brothers who are in a backslidden state, but still brethren. This is our fourth indication that the writer of Hebrews is addressing Christians and not the unsaved – as in Christians that have lost their salvation. But there's more...

In v.1, Paul told them that they weren't going to lay again "the foundation of repentance from dead works," etc. And since 1 Cor. 3:11 defines this foundation as being that of Jesus Christ, and since they're not going to lay this foundation of repentance from dead works again, then this can only mean that they're not in need of salvation or in need of getting "resaved." And besides, if the popular interpretation is correct, they can't get "resaved" because v.4 says that it's "impossible" to do so. And if they were unsaved, and could be saved, he would've told them to repent but he didn't. He told them that they were going to move on. They weren't going to leave these principles behind because they weren't important, they were going to leave them behind because they'd already been accomplished in their lives; i.e., they were already saved.

⁴For *it is* impossible for those who were [past tense] once enlightened, and have tasted [past tense] of the heavenly gift, and were made [past tense] partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵And have tasted [past tense] the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come [past tense], ⁶if 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.

Again, the context of Heb. 5:12-6:3 is that of backslidden Christians and not apostates. Note the use of the past tense which clearly demonstrates that these were saved people. This also means more than having an intellectual perception of the gospel because you don't partake of the Holy Ghost without being saved. You don't "try" Jesus.

But v.6 is where many begin to stumble. To begin, it's noteworthy that the "if" found at the beginning of v.6 isn't found in any Greek manuscript and could just as easily have been translated "And". Furthermore, the Greek word for "fall away" doesn't mean to become *apostate* (Gr. *apistos*), it means to *backslide* (Gr. *parapipto*). The difference here is that an *apostate* hears and perceives the gospel, but rejects it (def. 2 Pet. 2:19-22). But a *backslidden* or *carnal Christian* is one who fails to grow and mature as they should (1 Cor. 3:1-7). So when

the writer of Hebrews says that it's impossible "to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame," he's *not* saying they've lost their salvation, he's saying it's impossible to get them re-saved because it isn't necessary! They're already saved! They're backslidden, not apostate – and the proof of this was established in Heb 5:12-6:3. Again, v.1 established the fact that they weren't going to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works. So if these are lost people, it's the wrong message.

Furthermore, if this is teaching that a Christian can lose their salvation, then you must also teach that if they change their mind, that God has to reject them! You simply can't have it both ways. You can't teach that a Christian can lose their salvation and then teach that they can get re-saved because this verse says that it's impossible to renew them unto repentance. (Unless you're interpretation is wrong, of course.) And far worse, if these are Christians who've lost their salvation that can't be accepted if they repent again because it's impossible, then you're also teaching that God has to turn down a repentant sinner! And he's never done that!

⁷For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet [fit] for them by whom it is dressed [tilled], receiveth blessing from God:
⁸But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* **nigh** [near] unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

The writer of Hebrews then gives us an example to prove his point. Paraphrased, God brings rain upon the earth to water the fields that have been planted. Some of these fields produce good fruit while others produce bad fruit viz. thorns and briers. And so the fields that produce thorns and briers are burned. The earth doesn't burn, only the "bad fruit" does – the thorns and briers. And so the context here is one of fruit and not salvation, or the loss of it.

But note that the fields that produced thorns and briers are "near" unto cursing. They aren't cursed, but they're close to it. Fields can be reworked, fertilized, and planted in an attempt to make them fruitful, but the field itself will always remain. So what Paul is trying to do is motivate these people not be slothful in their spiritual walk (12). They're saved. But because of their backslidden state, they're not very fruitful.

But what does it mean that they're nigh (near) unto cursing? Again, being cursed and almost being cursed are two different things. These people aren't unsaved – they're only close to it. First Peter 4:17-18 clarifies the matter:

¹⁷For the time *is* come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? ¹⁸And **if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?**

Our sin against God is so great that we're only barely saved, but that's good enough. And so we, as Christians, shouldn't ever think more highly of ourselves than we should. But did you notice the contrast? It's our works that'll be tried by fire and not us. The earth wasn't burned, but the fruit was. Works are not done to earn, retain, or maintain salvation, but to determine

the amount of eternal rewards we'll receive. First Cor. 3:11-15 sums up the context of this entire passage very well when it says:

¹¹For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³Every 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. ¹⁴If 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.

And so it should be clear that the context of this passage is about backslidden Christians and their inability to produce good eternal fruit and not about Christians losing their salvation. The context simply doesn't allow for that interpretation. The proof of this continues in v.9.

⁹But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak [so roughly].

Of all that's been discussed, notice that Paul says that it all pertains to "things that accompany salvation" and not salvation itself. And as previously demonstrated, the things that accompany salvation are works that produce fruit. Works aren't needed to earn, retain, or maintain salvation, but to earn rewards. All Christians produce fruit. The only question is, how much?

¹⁰For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: ¹²That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Verses 10-12 further support this interpretation. The Christians in Hebrews have produced some godly fruit. But at the same time, they should be much farther along than they are. They should be teachers by now, but they're not. They should be ministering to others, but instead they're needing to be ministered to. Hence, their backslidden state has led them to become unproductive. Not spiritually lost, as in having lost their salvation, just unproductive – just like the field that produced the thorns and briers. The field isn't burned, only the "bad fruit."

Suffice it to say that righteous fruit can only be produced from a righteous soul, and a soul can only be made righteous through faith and salvation in Jesus Christ.³ At one time these people produced good fruit, but had since lapsed into a backslidden state, and so Paul is trying to spur them into action. You don't resave Christians, but you do chasten them. Hebrews 6 therefore is not teaching that a Christian can lose their salvation, but how to deal with Christians in a backslidden state. The idea is to encourage them forward in meekness and gentleness so that they can obtain all that God has for them in this life (Gal. 6:1-2). Selah.

³ Mt. 7:17-19; Lu. 6:43