

Hebrews 6:4-5 You can lose your salvation

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 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.

First we must investigate Context, Context, Context

Context of The book of Hebrews:

Dr. Barnhouse: Hebrews is written to Hebrews to tell them to stop being Hebrews and to be Christians. And to tell them to sever themselves from the O.T. concept of law & covenant and to adopt the new covenant which was sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Context of Scriptures to review: Hebrew 6:1-10

6:1 Therefore let **us** leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, **we** will do so. It is impossible for **those** who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 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. Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to **those** for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. Even though **we** speak like this, dear friends, **we** are confident of better things in **your** case--things that accompany salvation. 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.

This is a hard set of verses as the writer of Hebrews is speaking to Jews. Since it is Jews it is not so simple to say it is Greeks or Christians but Jews believe many of our concepts of God and look forward to a Messiah. As a Calvinist, they believe in the Election of God so loss of salvation is not comprehensible in this system. As Armenians, the loss of salvation is as easy as obtaining salvation. You lose it because you do one thing wrong. There are verses to support both extremes so I believe that the truth lies somewhere in between.

Historical Context

The context of the times in Jerusalem when this book was written was that the Jews said they were disciples as long as there was not pressure. When pressure came, they were to recant before the priests of their faith in Jesus the false messiah. They had not gone through regeneration. If this is teaching that you can lose your salvation then it also teaches that you can't get it back. This is not consistent with Christian experience based on the Word of God.

According to Occam's Razor, the simplest answer is probably the correct one.

The simple view that the verses are speaking of unbelievers

For me, the simplest answer is the one that uses the bold words of these verses as shown in the verses above. Note that the writer is talking about "us" and "we" prior to these verses and then suddenly switches to "those", "they" and "those". Then after the two verses in question he switches back to "we", "your" and "you". This is very indicative of an author speaking of two different groups of people. Verses 6 and 7 seem to support this as they explain what is meant by the previous two verses. "Land" here could mean metaphorically, "people" and we see there are different kinds of people easily assumed to be the lost and saved. The parable of the sower also seems to support this conclusion.

The view that those that fall away were unbelievers

In vs. 6 the word "fallen away (NAS)" means to "turn aside". It is not the Greek word apostasia, which means to slide back from what you said you believed. This means turn aside to renew them again to repentance; versus; People underwent repentance, which means they had a change of mind and heart and received the word gladly like in the parable of the sower, and when problems came they were not rooted and so withered and perished.

It is possible to repent and not believe. It is possible to have a change of mind and not to walk in the light with God. It is possible to hear the good Word of God, to see the powers of the world to come, such as the restoration of human beings in divine healing, and the conquest of demons by the power of God. Also, to taste of the heavenly gift, in the sense that the individual who is professing to be a believer, bases it upon their understanding and their comprehension of the Word of God. And their fellowship in whatever church or churches they may chose to go to.

The passage is teaching that there are individuals that are the best counterfeits in the world they would fool anybody. They are similar to the tares in the wheat field. They can go along with the Holy Spirit, They can taste the heavenly gift, (The word taste is the same as when Jesus was given gall and vinegar on the cross. He tasted it, but he would not take it in.)

There are people that taste the blessings of God, that taste the power of God, that experience if you will, these things which we have experienced, as believers. And yet have never ever made a total commitment to God. Never said, whatever it takes, whatever it costs, I will be your disciple, denied themselves, taken up the cross, and come after him.

The key is "coming after him". It's possible to deny yourself, its possible to even endure suffering, taking up the cross, for the sake of Christ, and yet never to have walked with him. John 6:66. Some of Jesus disciples did not walk with him any longer. When Jesus brought them to a point of commitment they stopped following. The world is full of tares and the tares are sown by the enemy. We will not know them until the harvest.

It is possible to be enlightened. Which means to have knowledge of or know something is true, and agree with the truth. They have tasted of the heavenly gift. But they have not taken it in. They were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, just as Judas was, in that he was sent out

and used the name of Jesus, and the power of God to heal the sick and cleanse the lepers and raise the dead and cast out demons. Yet The scripture says that Judas was never a believer. He was a devil. Who masqueraded as a Christian.

You are hanging yourself by your own rope if you say that vs. 4 is teaching that you could lose your salvation as vs. 5 says it is impossible to again renew them to repentance. Which means that any person who has ever turned aside, from their faith. The room is filled with them. Who at some time or another because of sin in their lives have walked away from Christ in the light and into darkness. Because of the fact that it is impossible to again return, this doesn't make sense. How many people have turned aside from their faith in Christ at one time or another in their lives and walked in their own directions. Now you are back doing the works of God, you have obviously returned. Therefore, the passage does not teach this.

There are those that can do all this and truly repent but they do not persist in their faith, they do not persist in what they said they have believed, and therefore they are not renewed to repentance.

The key is in vs. 7. Only good ground is spoken of here. You only know good ground by the fruit which it produces. You have to wait and see. Ground that doesn't is burned and then it lays fallow and regenerates and produces fruit (Still bad fruit?). What the Holy Spirit is trying to say is; "what kind of fruit do you have in your life, and take a good look at it because that is going to tell you what kind of ground you are. If you produce the fruit of the spirit you are good ground. If you don't produce good fruit you are a tare and are burned. Jesus said the angels will separate the tares from the wheat. Vs. 9 is proof that saints are saved if they persevere. If there isn't good fruit then you aren't dealing with a believer. Vs. 10; God is not going to forget the good works you do in the Body of Christ.

There are people with whom God deals, gives them the Word of God, shows them the powers of the age to come, reveals himself to them, even granting them repentance so that they can say I'm sorry and turn around and start to walk in the right direction. There are people who get to this place who turn from God and persistently walk away from him. When you persistently walk away from light you can only walk into darkness. If we are really believers we will walk in the light. Only each of us and God can know if our ground is good or not. We however, can look and tell where we are. We are to have a hunger for his word and a thirst for his righteousness and know we are his as we love the brethren. If it really is teaching that you can lose it, you will find out that you cannot come back. Impossible is the same in vs. 18.

John 6:37 is proof. This is our security and hope. This should encourage us.

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Thus, the issue is can a person "profess" but not "possess" the Holy Spirit?

The view that those that fall away were believers

First of all the word for "fall away" can mean to drift and is not a one way action. The fact that it is impossible for them to again repent means that they are secure in their salvation and could not lose it. This makes it impossible to do again. The text seems to indicate that there is no more need for drifters to repent again and get saved all over any more than there is for Christ to die again on the cross (verse 6). Lastly, the writer calls those he is warning "beloved", a term that is hard to believe would be appropriate for unbelievers. The bottom line of these verses is not inspiration but interpretation and this is a hard one as it can swing with your world view or theological bias.

The view that there are those that can deliberately walk away

There is room for one aspect of losing salvation that is not addressed by any of this. What if the person actively disavows any connection to Jesus? One verse seems to support this position.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

1 Timothy 4:16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Hebrews 10:36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

This seems like very strong language. Jesus disowns me? This seems much like my mother disowning me. It is not a situation I can correct so disowned seems permanent to me. The Lord's prayer seems to put some tough love on things too.

Matthew 6: 14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

If he does not forgive my sins, am I not lost?

Anyway, this is a tough set of verses. Not all are this difficult. Again the issue is not a problem with accuracy or inspiration, but with interpretation. What is clear from all views is that if you believe that these verses teach that you can lose your salvation, it is permanent. This is even hard to take for Armenians.

What is a sin unto death?

1 John 5: 16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

Using the Rules we learned from the first class, what would you recommend as the approach to this verse in interpretation?

Context of Chapter

1 John 5: 13-20 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Context of the Letter

From the emphasis on the incarnation, we may assume that the opponents held to the divinity of Christ but either denied or diminished the significance of His humanity. Their view may be an early form of Docetism, the heresy that emerged in the second century which claimed that Jesus only seemed to be human.

On the one hand, the Scriptures speak of God's free and unconditional forgiveness to all who want it.

Acts 13:38-39 38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

Romans 5:20 And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

On the other hand, Jesus spoke of an unpardonable sin that can never be forgiven. See Matthew 12:31-32. And John declares here that there is a "sin leading to death."

Bible Commentators differ on just what John had in mind here. No surprise as this is one of those difficult to crack verses. Some say he was referring to **repeated** sin. Others believe he was speaking of a **grave** sin. Still others believe he had **apostasy** in mind.

Repeated Sin: A person whom habitually practices sin is not born of God. Whoever IS born of God does not continually practice sin. Both a believer and an unbeliever can fall into the same sin, but a believer cannot stay in it and feel comfortable.

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God ("Continually"- Present continuous tense) practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Grave Sin: A grave sin is a sin that perhaps Jesus mentioned for not giving forgiveness or the one that has been called the unforgivable sin. That is, the sin of attributing to the Holy Spirit, the acts of Satan.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 18:35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Matthew 12: 31-32 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Mark 3: 28-29 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."

Apostasy Sin: In light of last weeks lesson, we concluded that there may be areas that a person might lose their salvation since the truth of salvation lies somewhere between Calvinism and Armenianism. Truth lies somewhere between impossible to probable. Here Peter is speaking of apostasy from the Christian faith. Is the sin leading to death, this sin? Is the reference to physical death or spiritual?

2 Peter 2:20-21 For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Whatever John may have envisioned, there is no reason that it could not refer to a sin so serious that it would result in physical death. Paul mentioned that the Corinthians had so participated in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner that some were sick and others were dead as a result.

1 Corinthians 11:29-30 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

In fact, the priest Nadab and Abihu were smitten dead for their disobedience to the Lord (Numbers 3:4), as were Ananias and Saphira for their sin (Acts 5:1-9). So, it is entirely possible that John has some such serious sin in mind here whereby the believer is turned over to Satan for "the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus".

1 Corinthians 5:1 and 5 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.... I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Finally, why could the sin referred to not be death in the spiritual sense? Is it not true that sin is the cause of spiritual death? The context of 1 John 5:16 is about spiritual life.

2288. thanatos, than'-at-os; from G2348; (prop. an adj. used as a noun) **death (lit. or fig.)**:-- X deadly, (be . . .) death.

The Greek word does not require that the reference be to only physical death. Losing your salvation is certainly a sin that leads to "spiritual death". The fact that it is a sin leading to death implies that Hebrews 6:4-6 may in fact be discussing the possibility that you can lose your salvation and you can't get it back. Thus, it is possible this is a reference to the one way nature of losing your salvation.

Food for thought...

Is the Mormon Principle of Baptism of the Dead Valid?

1 Corinthians 15: 29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?

Reading the context of the verses around does not help with this verse. We can see that Paul is talking about the Resurrection and injects this verse right in the middle of his discussion with no explanation as to why or further understanding of baptism for the dead.

It is clear that the reference is to another group of people as he again as in Hebrews 6:4-6 switched his personal pronouns from us and we to "those". It appears that Paul is clearly speaking to another group of people but it is not clear that this other group is Christian or not.

This is one of those verses of which there is only a single verse in the entire Bible that appears to address the Mormon doctrine of baptism of the dead. Does this mean the Mormon doctrine of baptism on the account of a dead person is true, thus, the the deceased will be saved?

First of all, the science of interpretation does not allow the use of a single verse to base our doctrine. This is a very dangerous stance for anyone to take. For example, if you want to decide if women should have long hair or not, there is also only one verse in the Bible that you can refer to. This is clearly not an issue of the spiritual world and to base such on this one verse is ludicrous. Especially since women have had long and short hair all through the ages what is the proper length? The point is that the verse cannot be implemented in any reasonable way. Remember the "S" in your Hermeneutics notes?

Conversely, a subject like baptism in water has dozens of references in the Bible. The doctrine is not weakly based on a single verse and we practice such for the new believer.

So we cannot use the context of the nearby verses, the chapter, or the book. The fact that the book is written to the Corinthians does not shed any light. So what can we do? We must look to the harmony of scripture for guidance. This doctrine will not stand against other very clear doctrines on the issue of salvation and death. This doctrine stands in conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture that anyone old enough must believe for himself or herself to be saved.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 10:9-13 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Ezekiel 18:20-22 The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man

will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live.

One should always use the clear passages of Scripture to interpret the unclear ones. The Bible is emphatic that baptism does not save. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works. Further, we cannot do anything that would obtain salvation for another person. Each person must personally believe. Everyone must make his own free choice.

Baptism does not save...

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Saved by Grace...

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.

Cannot do anything to save another...

Titus 3:5-7 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--

Each of us must believe and choose...

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Scholars differ as to what Paul means in this passage. The following are possibilities.

1. Some believe Paul is referring to a cultic practice among the Corinthians who had many other false beliefs. (See Corinthians 5 and 12). In effect, Paul would be saying, "if you don't believe in the Resurrection, then why engage in the practice of baptizing people for the dead. You are inconsistent with your own false beliefs." They think that the practice

was so obviously wrong that Paul does not need to condemn it explicitly. They point the fact that Paul says "they" (others) not "we" baptize the dead.

2. Others suggest that Paul is simply referring to the fact that baptism of new converts is replenishing the depleted ranks of believers who have died and gone on to be with the Lord. If so, then his sense here would be, "Why do you continue to fill the church with baptized converts, who replace those who have died, if you do not really believe there is any hope for them beyond the grave?"
3. Some suggest that Paul is referring to the fact that baptism symbolizes the believer's death with Christ. The Greek word "for" (eis) can mean "with a view to." In this sense, he would be saying, "Why are you baptized with a view to your death and resurrection with Christ, if you do not believe in the Resurrection?"

Romans 6:3-5 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

4. Still others, point out that the proposition "for" in Greek (Huper) can mean "for the sake of." In this case, baptism would be for the sake of those who are dead. They point to the fact that Paul says "if the dead do not rise at all; why then are they baptized for the dead?" Since it was common in the NT period to be baptized as one accepted the Gospel, this was a sign of one's faith in Christ. Thus Paul would be saying, "Why be baptized if there is no resurrection?" For Paul later says that if there is no resurrection, then "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die".

1 Corinthians 15:32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Whatever the correct interpretation, there is no reason to believe Paul is here contradicting his clear teaching elsewhere or the rest of Scripture which insists that every person must freely choose or reject God's gift of salvation.