

IF THEY SHALL FALL AWAY

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, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 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.*

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

(Or hermeneutics)

"It shall greatly help thee to understand Scripture, if thou mark, not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after." — Miles Coverdale, 1535

A simple Biblical hermeneutic to follow: Believe what you read where you read it. If it doesn't seem to square with your personal understanding, or your long held tradition or doctrine, let that be pliable. If it does not work with your understanding of other parts of the Bible, evaluate all parts according to what is said above.

The Bible means what it says, and words have meaning. So do phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and full passages. It is reasonable to use a "passage priority" view, which is simply that. Believe what you read where you read it.

I bring this up because the passage in Hebrews under consideration today is probably the most difficult in the entire Bible for those of us who hold to and defend the eternal security of the Christian. This, if jumping in at this point and applying it to us personally as Christians, will teach you that there is danger of being saved, and then unsaved. After all —

*Ev'ry promise in the book is mine,
Ev'ry chapter, ev'ry verse, ev'ry line;
All are blessings of His love divine,
Ev'ry promise in the book is mine.¹⁰*

In teaching Hebrews over the first five chapters, I've tried to keep consistent with these fundamentals so as to not change meaning when it is convenient:

- The epistle is written to Hebrews — the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — God's covenant people
- The author is also an Israelite, therefore the use of "we" and "us" can be understood best that way, as well as uses of the term "brethren". See also Romans 9:3-5, Acts 3:17, Acts 13:26
- The people of Israel enjoyed a special place with God by covenant. An Israelite was an Israelite by birth, and therefore a partaker of that covenant. He could also be cut off from that covenant. This is not the same as a Christian who is by definition *in Christ*, and therefore identified with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

¹⁰ Traditional hymn, author unknown. Source: [Every Promise in the Book is Mine | Hymnary.org](https://www.hymnary.org)

- Jesus of Nazareth, a very real and specific person who is truly the Son of God and God's chosen ruler, i.e., His Christ, has come in the flesh and all of the promises in the scriptures are converging in Him. Notice that they are not done away in Him, but are made possible to be fulfilled only in, through, and by Him.
- The picture of the Israelites coming out of Egypt and getting to the borders of the promised land, then refusing to enter in because of unbelief, is a God-painted picture (and a very real event) that pictures Israel also at the borders (so to speak) of the promises bound up in God's Messiah, and refusing to enter in because of unbelief.

With all that said, we can now continue to discuss this passage.

Remember in the last section, we discussed going on to perfection. This was moving on from the principles of the doctrine of Christ (6:1, the things belonging to the Old Covenant) and moving on to the finished doctrine of Christ as a completed work of redemption.

It could be analogous to the class graduating. Those that don't wish to learn will not prevent the others from moving on. Those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ will be left behind, and those who will believe are going on to perfection.

"And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible..."

That is where we are starting.

For it is impossible for —

- Those once enlightened: These are people that had the truths of Scripture entrusted to them specifically. They also had the One who is "the Light of the World" walking physically and visibly in their midst. See:
 - John 1:1-14
 - John 3:16-21
 - John 8:12
 - John 9:5
- And have tasted of the heavenly gift: Brings to mind Psalm 34:8 — *"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."*
 - The heavenly gift could be understood as Jesus the Christ walking among them physically, and also could be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit going out from Him after His ascension. It could be both. Both are gifts from heaven that the Israelites had in their presence. They had Christ walking among them. Here is Peter addressing the people of Israel in light of their rejection of the Son of God:
Acts 2:22 — *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:"*
 - Just because they tasted did not mean that they received Him.
 - John 6:53–58 — *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and*

drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

- This has nothing to do with "the Eucharist", or with the Lord's Supper as the Bible calls it. John 6:47 says that *"He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."* 6:40 says that *"every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him may have everlasting life"*. 6:35 says *"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* When the Lord talks of eating of this bread, He is talking about believing on Him. There are things about this that the disciples didn't even understand (verse 60), but it is later revealed. The blood speaks of His death, which none of the disciples understood, much less believed. But Peter, understanding what was revealed, could confess this:

John 6:68–69 — *"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."*

See also Matthew 16:16, and 16:21-23

- And the powers of the world to come: Christ Himself exercised the powers of the world to come in their presence. The apostles after Him also did.
 - Remember Hebrews 2:1-4.
Hebrews 2:3–4 — *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"*
 - Remember John the Baptist's questioning and the response:
Luke 7:22 — *"Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached."*
 - This was the prophetic expectation of the Messiah, and the world to come that He would reign over: Isaiah 11:4, 35:6-10, 61:1-2, etc.

These are people that saw all of this physically in their midst. The Apostles after His ascension did all of this in the midst of the people who still refused to believe. We read of this in the Bible and believe. They saw it. Keep this in mind:

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE

"For it is impossible...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance"

Read that and let it sink in. How we understand this has implications. If we think of it as a Christian falling into sin, or something else of the sort, we could and probably should conclude that one who was once saved, and has fallen away so now is again lost, cannot be saved again. How does that work with the normal Christian understanding of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)?

If we understand it relating to God's working with the people of Israel during the time of the apostles, in view of their stubborn rejection of Jesus Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit, we can have this in the proper perspective.

There is a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit that the Lord spoke of in the Gospels:

Matthew 12:31–32 — "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

This was done in history, by the nation of Israel as a whole. You can read about it in the book of Acts. It is a whole history of the Jews rejecting Christ's ministry through His Apostles in the land, and abroad. They have become judicially blinded (although individually not without hope, Romans 10). Hebrews 6 has in view those individuals who have believed to not be held back by those who will not.

Those that will not believe are standing by their wicked deed of crucifying the Son of God, so it can be said that they crucify Him afresh. Every time that they refuse Him, they are saying again *"We will not have this man to reign over us"* (Luke 19:14), and *"Let Him be crucified"* (Matthew 27:22, 23), and *"Let His blood be on us, and on our children"* (Matthew 27:25).

John 19:13–15 — "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."

Every time that these Jews rejected Christ, they replayed this. They are no longer being ministered to as special. Every Jew individually can come to Christ, but can only come to God through *Jesus the Christ*. Those that will believe are called to move on. To enter in to the promised land, so to speak, while the unbelieving are left behind on "the other side of the flood". The believers are called to not be held back by the stubborn and rebellious but to go on to perfection, and to those things that will be taught as we progress in this epistle.