

Can a Christian Lose Salvation?

Hebrews 5:6-6:6

INTRODUCTION: As I said last week we skipped over Hebrews 6 in order to keep the Melchizedek material together. This week we are going to go back and cover chapter 6.

Here's what's going on - the writer brings up Melchizedek and begins to connect the dots between him and Christ. Then he says something interesting.

TEXT: Hebrews 5:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ About this (*Melchizedek*) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² **For though by this time you ought to be teachers,**

Some of these readers had professed christianity for several years and still couldn't teach others the basics of Christian doctrine. In fact, they were in need of being retaught constantly.

12b. you need someone to teach you again the **basic principles** of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

Basic Principles is simply who Jesus is and what he has done in order to save us - that's milk... that's what we get when we are first birthed into the Kingdom.

Now a diet of milk is good if you are a baby, but if you are 14 and all you get is milk... that's a problem. There comes a time when you stop cutting up the hot dog for junior and say, "son learn to use a fork".

¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But **solid food** is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Solid food is what he felt that he might not be able to give them... namely the truth about Melchizedek and how he related to Christ.

So note that the author isn't wanting us to necessarily move away from Christ and the Gospel, but rather to press deeper into it.

You can almost hear the frustration in his voice... over the next chapter (chapter 6) he vents a little. He expresses his frustration over their immaturity.

And he says in effect - that it may be that they have never been saved in the first place.

Hebrews 6:1–8 (ESV)

¹ Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.

Let me ask you an honest question - are you able to explain to another person what God has done so that they could be saved? How did the death of Christ gain your forgiveness? If you can't answer those basic questions and explain them to someone else - why do you think you are truly saved?

NOW here is the verse that has literally birthed denominations - I can't tell you how many late night conversations I've had with my friends in college over this verse...

⁴ 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, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ 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.

There are three questions that MUST be answered -

1. Who are the People he refers to?
2. What is meant by falling away?
3. What is meant by the statement, "It is impossible... to restore them again"

1. Who are the People He Refers to?

There are three basic approaches to this text:

- Them = people who were saved but lost it.
 - Them = It's a Hypothetical them - Some suggest he is answering a hypothetical possibility, that couldn't really occur.
 - Them = People who were very close to salvation but fell away before fully committing.
- a. They have been enlightened
 - b. They have tasted the Heavenly Gift
 - c. They have shared the Holy Spirit
 - d. They have tasted the goodness of God

e. They have tasted the power of the age to come

What is meant by all of that?

ILLUSTRATION: There was a car dealer by in the 90's that would allow you (if you had good credit) to take a new car home for a week at a time. You could treat it like it was your own.

- See how it felt wrapped around you.
- See how smooth the ride was.
- Listen to the sound system.

THEN and ONLY THEN at the end of that week did you have to decide if you wanted to buy the car. It was assumed that if you owned the car for a week - you would certainly commit and buy it for a lifetime.

But sometimes this did not happen - sometimes you owned it long enough to realize it would not make your life easier. It would not cause people to respect you more deeply. And at the end of the week people would return the car with more miles, slightly used, and the dealer eventually halted the program all together.

Well the people of this text had taken the test drive perhaps for a year - the new car smell was wearing off... but they still hadn't signed on the dotted line.

For the author of Hebrews this was unthinkable! The Gospel to him was like a CLASSIC MASTERPIECE. Have you met someone who just saw cars differently than you do -

- They stare at it for hours
- They buy a t-shirt with the cars logo
- They examine the fine craftsmanship
- They give their car a name

In the same way there are two approaches to the Gospel. For some it is like a treasure hidden in the field that you would sell everything to own! For others it's cool... but I just can't make up my mind if I am ready to go all in.

The writer is saying - if you've test driven the gospel and you can't see it's beauty... and you intentionally choose a different path... you have no hope of ever seeing it for all it's worth.

Remember what we said the movement was about? He is addressing Jewish people - most likely those who were under the influence of the Essenes. It is quite

possibly that they were members of the Essene community in Qumran who were coming to faith in Christ.

That is why he addresses issues like the **worship of Angels** - you see it wasn't typical for Jews to worship angels... but this one group believed that God would send two messiahs a political and a religious Messiah both of which would turn and bow down to Michael the ArchAngel at the end of time.

Frequently, he addresses their salvation as a journey, comparing it to the wilderness wanderings... in other words, they are out of Egypt but not yet into the promised land, or the rest of God as he calls it. He repeatedly calls them to MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER THE REST.

Now that is not to say that everyone who was in the community who received this letter was lost - but they were certainly not all saved.

It is as if the Author was saying -

- a. I see some evidence that looks like grace in your lives and that gives me hope
- b. I'm hearing that some of you are wanting to turn back and embrace your old beliefs which troubles me greatly.

This is so similar to our context. I have learned that when a person walks the aisle and professes faith in Christ to be about 60% excited.

I've seen so many people weeping and crying, running to the alter, calling out to God... and you couldn't find them in 6 weeks with a search warrant.

- If I see them in 6 weeks staying with it I get 70% excited.
- If I seem then in 6 years staying with it I get 90% excited.
- If I seem them in 60 years staying with it - I turn a cartwheel and preach their funeral.

ILLUSTRATION: I used to see this all the time when I preached at high school student camps. Kids hardly get any sleep so by Thursday night they're exhausted; and I'd say something on that night that reminded some girl in the 3rd row about her boyfriend breaking up with her before camp... so she starts to cry... and feel sad... and, the girl next to her would see that she's crying and so she would start crying... and then, on down the line... because you know, with teenage girls, crying spreads like a disease... and so they all come down front crying and snotting on the altar, promising to be missionaries and not date boys until they are 30, and then they have a huge hug-fest and go back to their room holding hands and sing Kum-ba-yah until 2 a.m. And that spiritual blip lasts until about 10 a.m. the next morning. And next year at camp we go through the same ordeal. Rinse and repeat.

Listen: praying a prayer to ask Jesus into your heart, even if it's followed by a flurry of emotion and religious fervor, is not proof that you are saved.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND - when we baptize you we are only acknowledging your verbal profession. It is no guarantee you are legit.

2. What is Meant by Falling Away?

Someone might well say - Pastor it seems the author is warning us of the distinct possibility of falling out of salvation - he says "if they fall away"

Let me remind you though - there is a distinct difference between FALLING AWAY and FALLING.

ILLUSTRATION: There were many time's Noah and his family fell in the ark no doubt, but they never fell out of the Ark.

People read this passage and tend to assume that there is a certain sin a Christian can commit that once they commit it - they are no longer saved. If that were true it would contradict the lion share of the Bible.

John 6:37-39 (ESV)

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ 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.

John 10:27-30 (ESV)

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

GOD who started the work - IS FAITHFUL to complete it!

Even the greatest Christians fall back into old sinful habits—sometimes really bad ones, and sometimes for long periods of time. It's called backsliding.

- Peter denied Jesus three times in the space of an evening.
- A disciple named John Mark abandoned the mission field because he was afraid and unwilling to pay the price missions required.

- King David committed adultery, murder, lied about it, and refused to repent for nearly a year
- Abraham, whom the writer uses in this chapter (Hebrews 6) as an example of persevering faith (6:15), doubted God so severely that he told another man his wife was his sister and that he could sleep with her—just to save his own skin!

Jesus (John 6:37) said that no one who came to Him He would ever, for any reason, cast out. Ever.

The bible says - THE RIGHTEOUS FALLS SEVEN TIMES BUT RISES UP AGAIN... some of you need to hear that this morning... it does not say, "The righteous doesn't fall" it says - the RIGHTEOUS FALLS.... 7 TIMES.... but gets up 8.

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine if you saw someone this morning walking through church and fall down... you'd laugh... but then he does it again... you'd get out your camera phone and video... he does it a third time you'd post it to youtube... but man after 7 times you realize bro's got a problem... you feel bad for posting it...

Well here's the deal - you got a problem called sin. Indwelling sin that lives within you... you are prone to wander.. .prone to leave the god you love.

SO WHAT IS HEBREWS REFERRING TO? He is referring to people who come and examine the Gospel, they are convinced of the reality of the Gospel... they just aren't impressed with the Gospel and they fall back decisively and intentional to their old ways.

ILLUSTRATION: My great grandmother helped raise me - I spent a lot of time at her house. But here is the deal, she didn't have toys for me to play with. She had tea cakes and playing cards. She only knew one game - 5 card stud. So, when I was about 5 years old I learned to play poker and... how to cheat.

It is as if the writer to the Hebrews is saying - I've played every card I have got.. it is a royal flush - if it doesn't win your heart NOTHING will.

- Card one - You were created by a perfect and holy God - ah that's interesting.
- Card two - God will judge sinners forever by his wrath in Hell. fascinating...
- Card three - But God in his love sent his only Son to pay your penalty... how nice of God.
- Card four - Because your debt was fully paid.. God raised Jesus from death and gave him a name above every name. Yeah cool...
- Card five - If you will believe and turn to God he will save you forever! That's really neat... but I'm into world of warcraft at this phase of my life....

The writer is saying - I don't have any more cards! If that truth doesn't grip your soul - there is no greater truth!

Look at verse 7...

⁷ 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. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Do you see how he confirms the point? If you have land that you till, irrigate, cultivate, do soil tests on, apply the best fertilizer, plant healthy seed, it gets plenty of rain and sun... but it still doesn't produce a crop.... guess what - IT'S NEVER GOING TO PRODUCE A CROP. Move on to new land!

3. What is Meant by it is Impossible for them to be renewed?

Scripture in several places about rejecting God's voice so often and so decisively that God finally honors our refusal and leaves us alone. Forever. God said in Genesis, "My Spirit will not always strive with man." In the Gospel of Luke Jesus refers to this as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, a sin for which He says there is no forgiveness.

The Blasphemy means to speak against - in Luke they were saying that Jesus did his work by the power of Satan. They saw what he did, they say who he was and they ultimately rejected him in the face of the very power of God. Jesus said in that context - you can do that to me and be forgiven but if you do that to the Holy Spirit it will not be forgiven.

In other words - If the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel vividly clear to you... you see it to be true... you consent that it is actually true... but you are unimpressed and reject it.... you decisively choose another path... it is impossible for you to come to faith.

THIS IS VERY DIFFICULT Some may say - Pastor what if I've committed that sin? Well if you are concerned about it your probably haven't. But I would say this - the time for games is over.

However it is sobering - you see there is not MORE than the gospel... there is not some other agent than the Spirit.

So today if you hear his voice don't harden your heart, how will you escape?

SPURGEON -

Is there anything more powerful than the sword of the Spirit? That has not pierced the man's heart; is there anything else which will do it? Here is a man who has been under the hammer of God's law; but that has not broken his heart; can you find anything stronger? The lamp of God's spirit has already lit up the caverns of his soul: if that be not sufficient, where will you borrow another? Ask the sun, has he a lamp more bright than the illumination of the Spirit! Ask the stars, have they a light more brilliant than the light of the Holy Ghost? Creation answers no. If that fails, then there is nothing else.