

An Anchor for Our Souls!
 Hebrews 5.11 – 6.20

Introduction – Hebrews 6.4-8 is one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament because it makes it sound like you can lose your salvation.

We are going to explore this passage by asking 3 primary questions:

1. What does it SAY?

- a. **Hebrews 6.4-6** simply says that it is impossible to restore someone to repentance that has fully and finally fallen away from the faith.
- b. But we should also note that “repentance” is considered a description of / label for conversion. There is no conversion without genuine faith AND repentance. (verse 4)

2. What does it MEAN?

4 primary interpretations:

<p>Loss of salvation</p>	<p>This passage actually makes it sound like it is possible to lose your salvation. If you have experienced the amazing blessings of salvation...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tasted the heavenly gift • shared in the Holy Spirit • tasted the goodness of God's Word • tasted the powers of the age to come <p>...and then you fall away, it is impossible to restore you to repentance.</p> <hr/> <p>BUT... This interpretation seems to fly in the face of so many texts about the assurance and security of the Christian believer that it just doesn't seem to fully account for what is going on in the New Testament or in this text.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">- John 6.37-40 - John 10.28-29 - Romans 8.29-30 - Philippians 1.6 - 1 Thessalonians 5.23-24</p> <p>If salvation is first and foremost a work of God, then it is primarily dependent on HIS faithfulness, and therefore, loss of salvation is NOT a valid interpretation.</p>
<p>Evidence of no true conversion</p>	<p>Probably the most popular interpretation of this passage in more “Reformed” circles is that it is simply saying that if you fall away from the faith you are demonstrating that you never were truly converted to begin with.</p> <p>This interpretation was championed by the reformer John Calvin, the Puritan theologian John Owen, and in our day by John MacArthur.</p> <hr/> <p>Although I believe that the Bible teaches the doctrine that someone who fully and finally falls away (apostatizes) never was truly a Christian, I do not think that this is the interpretation of this particular passage. In other words, I think that it is the right truth, but from the wrong text. Why? Because the descriptions of Christian experience are too strong to be descriptions of a false profession.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come” are all descriptions of true faith and true experience of conversion, not a false profession. For example: • “been enlightened” – Hebrews 10.32 • “tasted the heavenly gift” – Ephesians 2.8 • “shared in the Holy Spirit” – Galatians 3.2 • “tasted the goodness of the Word of God” – 1 Peter 1.23

<p>Hypothetical</p>	<p>This interpretation attempts to acknowledge the very strong descriptions of salvation in verses 4-5 and yet acknowledge that true Christian believers are held by God’s faithfulness and do not fall away.</p> <p>The interpretation goes something like: “If you <u>could</u> fall away (which you can’t) it would be impossible to restore you to repentance.)</p> <p>However, these verses are NOT presented as an “if / then” statement, much less an “if / but you really can’t / then” statement. The hypothetical interpretation is invalid simply because the structure of the passage is presented as a statement of fact.</p>
<p>Warning as means of preservation</p>	<p>This interpretation seeks to acknowledge the apparent descriptions of genuine conversion, the (non-hypothetical) severity of the warning, AND still not say that it is possible to lose your salvation.</p> <p>Warnings, even severe warnings, are part of the “means” by which God preserves His true children. The warnings are real, but are intended to strengthen us to “hold fast” not question whether or not our conversion was genuine or whether or not we can lose our salvation.</p> <p>This interpretation is based on several points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Salvation” in Hebrews is primarily seen as future. • The author of Hebrews warns his readers, but at the same time he expects “better things – things pertaining to salvation” from his readers (Hebrews 6.9). • Scripture can warn of things that are “conceivable” but not “probable”. • Hebrews 6 immediately follows these warnings with pointing the reader to God’s promises. Warnings and promises are the two means God uses to preserve His children. <p>So perhaps we could put this in the most stark terms: <i>Hebrews 6.4-6 is saying that if you fully and finally fall away from the faith, you will go to hell! But this warning itself, as well as the promises that are mentioned in the context, are designed to motivate us to press on in the faith. They simply are not designed to answer the question of whether or not someone can lose their salvation or whether or not someone was genuinely saved.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>These warnings are like the guard rails at Niagara Falls!</i> • <i>These warnings are like those movies they showed us in driver’s education to scare the carelessness and foolishness out of us!</i> • <i>This is like taking us up to the precipice of a cliff and saying, if you jump down there, you WILL die!</i>
<p>“If God has put it in [referring to this severe warning / threat], He has put it in for wise reasons and for excellent purposes. Let me show you why. First, O Christian, it is put in to keep thee from falling away. God preserves His children from falling away; but He keeps them by the use of means... There is a deep precipice: what is the best way to keep any one from going down there? Why, to tell him that if he did he would inevitably be dashed to pieces... The very fact of the guide telling us what the consequences would be, keeps us from it. Our friend puts away from us a cup of arsenic; he does not want us to drink it, but he says, ‘If you drink it, it will kill you.’ Does he suppose for a moment that we should drink it? NO; he tells us the consequences, and he is sure we will NOT do it. So God say, ‘My child, if you fall over this precipice you will be dashed to pieces.’ What does the child do? He says, ‘Father, keep me; hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.’ It leads the believer to greater dependence on God, to a holy fear and caution, because he knows that if he were to fall away he could not be renewed, and he stands far away from that great gulf, because he knows that if he were to fall into it there would be no salvation for him.” - Charles Spurgeon</p>	

3. Finally, how does this apply to us?

- a. **Be WARNED!** – 6.4-8
- b. **PRESS ON in the faith!** - 5.11-6.3
 - i. Pay close attention to the preaching of the Word of God. **5.11-14**
 - ii. Make a serious effort to study God’s Word as deeply as you can. – **6.1-3**
- c. **Love God and serve people with DILIGENCE!** – 6.9-12
- d. **ANCHOR your soul to the promises and character of God!** – 6.13-18
- e. **Anchor your soul to JESUS!** – 6.19-20

