



eLesson 025

Text: Hebrews 6:4-6

Subject: Eternal Security

Born-again again?

That is a question that could be asked after reading Hebrews 6:4-6 ... the passage I have been asked about more times than any other in the Bible. These verses are often taken out of context, misunderstood, and misapplied. *"For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame,"* Hebrews 6:4-6. Does this passage mean that you can lose your salvation and need to be born-again again? Some think it is about nonbelievers who come close to being saved ... but lose their opportunity by rejecting the Gospel. Many people just see it as a difficult passage. However, it becomes simple when studied in the context of Hebrews 5 - 7. Understanding the context simplifies this passage about atrophy and maturity. Be forewarned ... this teaching contains some strong exhortation.

The book of Hebrews is about Jesus. It describes His superiority to the Old Testament Levitical priests and sacrifices. Jesus established a greater covenant ... was a greater high priest ... offered a greater sacrifice ... shed greater blood ... and offers a greater forgiveness. The Levitical priests were descendants of Levi (Israel's third son). They were not descendants of Judah (Israel's fourth son). Jesus was a descendant of Judah. His priesthood was non-Levitical. There was another non-Levitical priest in the record of Old Testament history. His name was Melchizedek. Levi (his sons, their sons, and so on were the priests) was the great grandson of Abraham. Levi's great-grandfather Abraham was blessed by, and gave a tithe to, the priest Melchizedek, Genesis 14:17-20. Melchizedek was not part of the Levitical priesthood. He predated it by multiple generations. The author of Hebrews had much to say about Melchizedek. Hebrews 6:4-6 appears in the middle of his description of the similarities of the priesthoods of Jesus and Melchizedek. Understanding Melchizedek helps us understand Jesus. This is the stuff of solid food. It is beyond the milk of basic teaching. It is solid food.

"I'd like to tell you more about Melchizedek ... but it would be difficult to make you understand his significance. Your spiritual ears seem to have become partially plugged. You have been believers long enough to be teaching others. However, spiritual atrophy has set in. You seem to have become babies again ... needing a milk diet of the basics. Solid spiritual food is for adults who have applied what they have learned ... not for infants like you." Hebrews 5:11-14 (my paraphrase). The author of Hebrews started writing about Melchizedek ... but abruptly stopped at 5:10. He seemed frustrated trying to give solid food to milk drinkers. Spiritual atrophy limited their spiritual digestion (and probably taste). Enough time had gone by to produce teacher-quality maturity in them. However, they needed to be re-taught the simple things. They had slipped back into spiritual infancy. He did not leave them with just a reproof. He told them how to correct their problem ... how to press on to maturity. He exhorted them to leave behind the *"elementary teaching about the Christ,"* Hebrews 6:1. True spiritual growth does not come from hearing the old, old story again and

again. If you want to grow up, you must apply what you have learned and move on to solid spiritual food. Moreover, you do not need repeatedly to lay the foundation of salvation. Once saved, you do not need to keep repeating the sinner's prayer ... seeking to be born-again again. That actually hinders growth. The basics in a milk diet include teachings about washings (baptism) ... teachings about laying on of hands (gifts) ... and teachings about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (basic prophecy), 6:1-2. Such teachings are important ... important basics. Learn the basics. However, you must move beyond the basics to reach maturity. If you want to grow up, move on beyond the basics to solid food.

Therefore ... Hebrews 6 begins with the word *therefore* connecting it to chapter 5. Whenever you see a *therefore*, find out what it is *there for*. The Hebrew believers had atrophied into spiritual infancy, 5:11-14. *Therefore*, they needed to move beyond the basics of saving faith and first teachings, 6:1-3. Notice what follows these verses in 6:4-6. *"For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."* Do not disconnect 6:4-6 from the previous verses. There is a continuum of thought. These Hebrew believers had atrophied to infancy ... but were *true* believers. They had been enlightened, given the gift of God, become partakers (partners) with the Holy Spirit, were fed by the Word, and been empowered. Such descriptions cannot be used of nonbelievers. But what does it mean that when such believers *"have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance"*? Some say this means that believers can lose their salvation. It does not and cannot mean that. If it did, it would also mean that it was *impossible* for them to regain lost salvation. That is wrong. It does teach that going back to the cross to be born-again again is inappropriate. The cross is vitally important. We were *"bought with a price,"* 1 Corinthians 6:20. We are redeemed by the *"precious blood"* of the Lamb, 1 Peter 1:18-19. We should keep Christ's sacrifice in our minds and hearts. However, in time of need, believers do not need to go back to the cross ... they need to go to the throne. *"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need,"* Hebrews 4:16. Believer, go to the throne of grace in time of need ... not back to the cross to be born-again again.

The word translated as *fallen away* in Hebrews 6:6 is a general word for stumbling, falling down, getting off the right path, or making an error. Its meaning is not *leaving or losing one's faith*. A simpler and possibly clearer translation of verse 6 could be, *"and then have stumbled."* This verse is about stumbling ... not about losing one's salvation. The Hebrew believers had gotten off course. Instead of continuing on the path to maturity, they had gotten off course onto the road back to infancy. This passage simply states that trying to get re-saved is not the cure for stumbling. The problem in an immature Christian's life is not a faulty foundation. There is nothing wrong with our foundation in Christ. The problem is lack of growth on top of that foundation. We cannot blame Jesus for our stumbling, atrophy, and immaturity. Trying to be born-again again is wrong because it does not work ... being the wrong prescription for the problem. Moreover, those who do it *"again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."* Imagine a couple who has been married for several years ... their relationship has not grown ... and their love has grown cold. Why is their marriage in trouble? It is not because their pastor or priest did an inadequate job in the marriage ceremony. His work was fine. Their part in building the marriage was not. It would be insulting to blame their marriage problems on him. Redoing the wedding does not fix the marriage. The same is true of stumbling, atrophied, immature believers who ask Jesus to re-lay the foundation of their faith. Their problem is not His inadequacy ... it is theirs. The foundation that Jesus laid was sufficient and complete. It was their growth that was insufficient and incomplete. They atrophied ... He did not. The temptation to be born-again again is a temptation to ignore personal responsibility. It attempts to shift the blame from us to Jesus ... thereby announcing to the world that His work was incomplete. In that way, we would put Him to open shame.

The order is important. The Holy Spirit has intricately woven the Bible together in precise order. The verses before and after Hebrews 6:4-6 are there by design. An illustration of 6:4-6 follows in verses 7-8. *"For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful*

to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned." The maturing believer drinks spiritual rain from God ... grows ... bears fruit ... and is blessed. Severely atrophied believers are those who yield "thorns and thistles" ... ones who are "worthless", 6:8. The word translated as *worthless* means *not approved* or *unfit*. It does not mean *eternally rejected*. God strongly disapproves of, but He does not cast out, atrophied believers. Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out," John 6:37. The atrophied Hebrew believers were "close to being cursed," Hebrews 6:8 ... but not cursed. Do not take the word *close* out of that verse. Being *close* to being cursed is very different from being cursed. What about that, "and it ends up being burned" statement in 6:8? The answer is in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. In this rewards-judgment passage, Jesus is the secure foundation of our personal salvation ... and each of us will be judged based on the works we build on that foundation. Good works bring the blessing of rewards. Bad works result in loss of rewards. The rewards judgment is by fire ... testing the quality of each man's work. The fire that will test our works, the fire of Hebrews 6:8, is not the fire of Hell. The wood, hay, and straw of our bad works will be burned in the rewards judgment. We are not burned. What would happen if someone had no good works remaining after that fire? What if only the foundation of Christ were left standing? "If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:15. The security of our salvation is dependent solely on the foundation of Jesus Christ ... not on our house of good works. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9. The work of Christ is sufficient. It never has atrophied ... nor will it atrophy. Our salvation is secure on the foundation of Jesus.

Do you have some spiritual indigestion? Maybe you have atrophied a little ... slipping back to needing, or preferring, some of the milk diet of infancy. Has the solid food of this section of Hebrews been difficult to digest? Then the Spirit's exhortation is clear ... press on to maturity! Put into practice what you have already learned. Relearn the basics if you need to. Then move on to solid food. Do not keep trying to be born-again again. An immature seedling needs sun, water, and fertilizer to grow. It does not need to be repeatedly pulled out of the ground and replanted in the same hole. Doing that prevents growth. The same is true if you keep going back to be re-saved ... you do not grow. Do not blame Him for your self-created atrophy. Instead, press on to maturity. These have been harsh words of exhortation. Please take them seriously. Possibly, they have been a little stronger than you needed. If so, Hebrews 6:9-12 is for you. "But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Be sure that you have learned this part of Hebrews. Re-read Hebrews 5 and 6 ... and continue into chapter 7's teaching on the priesthoods of Jesus and Melchizedek. Do not just read it ... study it. It is solid food ... good food. Lock it into your mind and heart. Then continue serious study into other unfamiliar areas of the Word. God gave the Bible to us to teach us. Let us press on to maturity.

An important note on doubt. True believers should not try to be born-again again. However, you may have some doubt that you were ever truly saved. If, in any way, you doubt your relationship with God, there is something that you should do immediately. Visit www.911GOD.org to find out how to settle this once and for all. If you have any questions, please contact John Morris (the author of this lesson) by email at John@911GOD.org. It is very important that you take care of this immediately ... do not delay. And after you are sure of your relationship with God, begin the exciting process of growing up as His child. And for additional solid food visit www.eBread.org and www.MyDisciplemaker.org.

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Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. Whom is Jesus compared to in Hebrews 5:7-10?
 2. Where is Melchizedek's appearance in the Old Testament?
 3. What made it difficult for the author of Hebrews to compare the priesthoods of Jesus and Melchizedek?
 4. What elementary teachings are the maturing to grow beyond?
 5. Hebrews 6:6 uses the word *impossible* rather than *improbable* ... what does *impossible* mean in that verse?
 6. If one could lose one's salvation, what would Hebrews 6:6 teach about the possibility of regaining salvation?
 7. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that we as Christians should approach which ... the cross or the throne?
 8. From Hebrews 6:6, attempting to be resaved does what to Christ?
 9. Does Hebrews 6:8 mention being close to being cursed or being cursed?
 10. What does 1 Corinthians 3:15 state about the man who is saved but has minimal good works?
 11. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, what saves us and what does not save us?
 12. What good work saves us?
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Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. Has Hebrews 6:4-6 been confusing to you in the past? Why?
2. Have you tried to be re-saved ... born-again again?
3. Jesus has saved you completely. How does trying to get resaved bring shame to Him?
4. How should you approach the throne of grace ... how should you pray in doing so?
5. What descriptions in Hebrews 5:11-14 might apply to you?
6. What basic doctrines do you need to master ... and then move beyond?
7. Do you live on spiritual diet of milk or meat? Which does your church provide?
8. What do you need to do to grow up?
9. Teaching about Melchizedek is meat rather than milk. What do you know of him? According to Hebrews 7, how is the priesthood of Jesus like that of Melchizedek? What does that mean to you?
10. Do you need to visit www.911GOD.org to be sure, once and for all, that you are saved?

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Answers to Study Questions

1. Whom is Jesus compared to in Hebrews 5:7-10? **Melchizedek**
2. Where is Melchizedek's appearance in the Old Testament? **Genesis 14:17-20.**
3. What made it difficult for the author of Hebrews to compare the priesthoods of Jesus and Melchizedek? **Those receiving the book of Hebrews had become hard of hearing (spiritually) ... time had not produced maturity ... they had atrophied to needing milk instead of meat ... they had not practiced what they were taught.**
4. What elementary teachings are the maturing to grow beyond? **Baptism, spiritual gifts, and basic prophecy.**
5. Hebrews 6:6 uses the word *impossible* rather than *improbable* or *difficult* ... what does impossible mean in that verse? **Impossible means that it cannot happen.**
6. If one could lose one's salvation, what would Hebrews 6:6 teach about the possibility of regaining salvation? **That it would be impossible.**
7. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that we as Christians should approach which ... the cross or the throne? **The throne.**
8. From Hebrews 6:6, attempting to be resaved does what to Christ? **Puts Him to open shame.**
9. Does Hebrews 6:8 mention being close to being cursed or being cursed? **Close to being cursed.**
10. What does 1 Corinthians 3:15 state about the man who is saved but has minimal good works? **He will be saved ... but suffer loss.**
11. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, what saves us and what does not save us? **We are saved by grace through faith ... and not saved by works.**
12. What good work saves us? **The work of Jesus Christ alone.**

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