

The Church of the Servant King
Soteriology Series

SO_4_Eternal Security & Frequently Misunderstood Passages – Part 4

We've been examining passages that are used to support or argue against the eternal security of the believer in one fashion or another. As we have seen, in some cases, certain passages (using a superficial reading) seem to indicate that a believer can lose his/her salvation. In other cases, certain passages (using a superficial reading) seem to indicate that a believer must demonstrate a certain lifestyle, else that person was never saved in the first place. In this lesson, we shall explore some special passages that have not been previously explored.

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁴ 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, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ 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.⁷

Some points explaining this passage follow:

- ❑ The context of this passage must be considered in order to properly interpret it.
- ❑ The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish believers of the 1st Century A.D. who had believed in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior and who were now facing the possibility of aposticizing and reverting to Judaism.
- ❑ The author of Hebrews uses a line of reasoning in his book designed to prove the superiority of Jesus over Judaism in the chapters and verses leading immediately up to and following our passage in chapter 6, verses 4-6.
- ❑ The superiority of Jesus is established with a line of reasoning that proceeds as follows:
 - Superior to the angels (who mediated the transmission of the Law to Moses) – 1:5 – 2:4
 - Jesus is the perfect man – 2:5-18, thus a superior High Priest of the order of Melchizedek – 4:14 – 5:10 & 7:1-28
 - Superior to Moses – 3:1-6
 - Superior to Israel – 3:7 – 4:13
- ❑ Chapter 6:4-6 is set in the middle of this line of reasoning and is part of a section in which these Jewish believers are being rebuked for their lack of maturity and faith (5:11 – 6:20)
- ❑ The writer of Hebrews draws from an event in Jewish history in which these Jews' ancestors failed due to their lack of maturity and lack of faith, i.e. the Exodus generation's wandering in the wilderness. He has already alluded to this same historical event in Hebrews 3 & 4.
- ❑ In Numbers 14, Israel had been enlightened, they had tasted some of the fruits of what the Promised Land held, they had experienced miraculous powers, they had tasted the good word of God, but they turned back because there were giants in the land.
- ❑ In similar fashion, Israel at Pentecost had been enlightened by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they had tasted the heavenly gift, and they had experienced the miraculous powers of the coming Kingdom age, and that generation also had turned back in unbelief.²

¹ *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

² Charles F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Grace Publications, 1994), 463.

- ❑ After their failure and provocation of God in Numbers 14, God closed the door upon their entry into the Promised Land and all over the age of 20 (except Joshua & Caleb) would die in the wilderness (see Numbers 14:29-30).
- ❑ Remember, these people were believers. All of Israel that left Egypt were believers according to Exodus 14:31 – “Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”
- ❑ These believers, who later became rebellious, attempted to enter the Promised Land on their own after their failure and the Lord’s pronouncement in Numbers 14:29-30 & 35. See Numbers 14:39-45.
- ❑ The writer of Hebrews makes an analogy to his generation of Jews in Hebrews 3:7-19 and 6:4-6.
- ❑ The Analogy: Israel had been given the opportunity to enter the promised Messianic Kingdom after Jesus’ death (e.g. Peter’s message in Acts 3:19).
- ❑ Israel (Jews) had failed, en masse, to accept Jesus, Who died on the Cross as the Messiah of Israel and their Savior. (Note their rejection of Peter and Paul’s preaching in Acts as they first went to the synagogues in every town and city).
- ❑ As a result, Paul was given the mystery doctrines of the Church Age (Eph 3:1-7).
- ❑ Many Jews who had become believers in Jesus as the Messiah were in danger of reverting to the Mosaic Law as they rejected basic Church Age truths (Heb 5:12 – 6:3).
- ❑ Evidently, they had come to believe that the keeping of the Mosaic Law would be their means of entering the promised Messianic Kingdom that had now been delayed for the duration of the Church Age much like the exodus generation believed they could take the promised land apart from God’s plan on their own (Numbers 14:39-45).
- ❑ Most likely, the problem was exacerbated by the fact that Christianity was becoming recognized as a separate religion by Rome, therefore Christianity was losing its protected status as a part of Judaism. Judaism was still protected, but Christians were being persecuted.
- ❑ The writer of Hebrews is saying “not so” in Hebrews 6:4-6.
- ❑ For these 1st Century believers to return to the Law of the Age of Israel would result in a hardening of heart (Heb 3:8) similar to that experienced by the exodus generation (Psa 95:8).
- ❑ If they hardened their heart, it would be impossible for them to repent again (Heb 6:6), reject the Mosaic Law as the governing rule of life, and accept the truths of the Church Age.
- ❑ They would not be able to enter God’s rest for the Church Age believer much like the Exodus generation did not enter the rest of the Promised Land (Heb 3:11).
- ❑ The issue in verse 6 is not salvation, but the issue is the believer’s repentance from the dead works (v 1) of the Mosaic Law as a rule of life for the believer.
- ❑ To fail and to revert to the Law would be tantamount to siding with those who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah and who crucified Him thus putting Jesus to an open shame (v 6).
- ❑ The result would be judgment in time via the sin unto death (1 Jn 6:16-17). An agrarian culture would have definitely understood the analogy to burning a field that had been overgrown with thorns.
- ❑ This judgment in time for these believers came in the form of cursing by association with Jewish unbelievers when Rome burned Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
- ❑ Consider the following as an example of the horrors of this siege:

NOW as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury, (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done,) Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison, as were the towers also spared, in order to

demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.³

Hebrews 10:26, 27

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

Some points explaining this passage follow:

- ❑ Insecurity teachers (those who do not believe in the eternal security of the believer as we do) interpret this passage to mean that if we sin willfully, then there is no more forgiveness for sins and the person will not be saved.
- ❑ However, based upon our analysis of the context above, a more acceptable interpretation that is consistent with the remainder of Scripture is obtained.
- ❑ If the Jewish believers to whom the book of Hebrews is addressed willfully returned to the Mosaic Law and Judaism as a result of the pressures they were experiencing, they would surely experience judgment in time (i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem) and in eternity (i.e. the bema seat judgment).
- ❑ There was no more sacrifice for sins available to them under the Mosaic Law since Christ completely fulfilled the Law.
- ❑ Judgment does not mean a loss of salvation for the believer.
- ❑ In a display of ironic justice, God allowed the Romans to be His instrument of the 5th cycle of discipline against the Jews (see Lev 26). Leviticus is part of the Mosaic Law to which the Jews were reverting. God used the very provisions of the Law that they were trying to recognize, but which had been set aside and fulfilled with Christ's death.

³ See Flavius Josephus, *The Writings of Flavius Josephus, War of the Jews, Book 7 – Chapter 1* (http://bible.crosswalk.com/History/BC/FlaviusJosephus/?book=War_7&chapter=1). In other chapters, Josephus notes how the sacrifices in the Temple continued while all types of incredible suffering was experienced by the Jews to include cannibalism.