

The Book of Hebrews

6. The Promise of Salvation

Hebrews chapter 6 continues from the discussion in Chapter 5 regarding those addressed in Hebrews 5:11-14. Who, because they are living on milk and not solid food are unable to grow in their walk. In this chapter, the writer of Hebrews wants them to understand their position and relationship with Christ.



13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself Hebrews 6:13

In understanding Hebrews, it is important to understand who the audience is. Depending on the audience, the interpretation can vary. Hebrews Chapter 6 is one of the more discussed chapters of Hebrews and is used by those of both *Arminist*¹ and *Calvinists*² as a proof text to justify their position of the “saved” believer. Hebrews 6:4-6, is the section often in question. Are those addressed, believers or unbelievers? If believers, is this an argument for the losing of one’s salvation? If unbelievers how could they have been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, been partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come?

Hebrews 6

1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this we will do if God permits.

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the

age to come,

6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;

8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

First Principles

Verses 1-3

Elementary Principles of Christ: The Greek word translated to “Principles” is *arche* (*Arche* (ar-khay’); **which** translates into beginning or first. The same word is used in Hebrews 5:12

¹ Arminism is the theological stance of James Arminius, and the movement, which stemmed from him. In Arminius’s view, believers may lose their salvation and be eternally lost, using passages as I Peter 1:10, “Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall” Arminians seek to nourish and encourage believers to so that they remain in a saved state.

² The theological position of John Calvin (1509-1564) which taught the unconditional atonement of the believer, meaning salvation could not be lost, if someone is truly saved. Calvinism is best known for the acronym T.U.L.I.P.: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and the Perseverance of the saints

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Hebrews 5:12

John Mac Arthur in his commentary writes that those referenced here are unbelieving Hebrews who have never committed to the Gospel of Christ. Elementary means the types and shadows of Christ pictured in the Old Testament as opposed to basic Christian teachings.

“Elementary teaching about the Christ (Messiah) that the unbelieving Jews were to leave was the Old Testament teaching about Him—another indication that it is not immature Christians (Babes) that are being addressed...the issue here is not that of growing in spiritual maturity as a Christian, but of coming into the first stage of spiritual maturity by becoming a Christian.³

The other option is that those being addressed in Hebrews 5:12- 6:8 are believing Hebrews, but immature in their faith walk, the result of just living on milk. In that case, the “Elementary Principles” would apply to basic Christian doctrines.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
Hebrews 5:12

Perfection: The Greek word for “Perfection” is Greek word, *τελειότης Teleiotes*, meaning the state of the more intelligent, or moral and spiritual perfection.

Views of those addressed in Hebrews 5:11-6:3

	Professing but Non-believing Jews⁴	Believing but immature Jews
Who is being addressed in Hebrews 5:11-6:3	Jews who have heard the Gospel, but have not committed to Christ. They are holding on to the “First Principles” rather than turning to Christ. (Mac Arthur, Hebrews) ⁵	Jewish believers who are still immature after an extended period where by this time many should be “Teachers” (Heb 5:12) but are in need of being taught. The writer of Hebrews wants to move beyond these “First Principles” to solid food. Which is covered from Hebrews 7 to 13.
.....repentance from Dead Works	Now that the New Covenant is in effect repentance without Christ is meaningless (Pg. 138)	The belief that one can aid their salvation through “Good works” is a sign of immature Christianity. (John 6:29, Eph 2:8-9)
Faith toward God	They believed in God but were not saved (Pg. 139)	Faith in Christ, is foundational understanding for any Christian, The writer of Hebrews wants to take his readers from milk to solid food. (Hebrews 5:13-14)
Baptisms	(<i>Baptismos</i> ..Washings) Every Jewish home had a basin by the entrance for the family and a visitor to use for ceremonial cleansings...It's these washings the reader is told to abandon and forget. (Pg 139)	Baptism is a basic Christian doctrine for those who come to faith in Christ. (Eph 4:5, Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12)
Laying on of hands	Under the Old Covenant, the person who brought a sacrifice had to put his hands on it. (Lev. 1:4; 3:8,13) (Pg. 140)	The “Laying on of hands”, the intercessory prayer of Christians for one another, by laying hands on those being prayed for. Acts 8:18, 9:17, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6
Resurrection	The Old Testament doctrine of resurrection is not clear or complete (Pg. 140)	The doctrine of resurrection is a first principle and the hope of every believer (1 Cor. 15, Romans 6:5, Philippians 3:10)
Eternal judgment	Leave the ABCs of eternal judgment for the full truth of	Eternal Judgment, the rewarding of the saints and the punishment of those who reject the

³ The Mac Arthur New Testament Commentary Hebrews, Moody Press, 1983 pg. 137

⁴ Ibid,

⁵ ibid.,

	judgment and rewards as revealed in the New Covenant. (Pg. 141.)	Gospel are "First Principles" along with the resurrection
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We will do: The writer plans to go on to more substantial issues beyond the "First Principles", which is hard because his audience is "Slow to learn", because they need milk and are still infants in their understanding. In Hebrews 5:10 reference was made to Melchizedek, which will be continued after this parenthetical break from Hebrews 5:11 to 6:20.

The discussion about Melchizedek resumes in Chapter 7, along with an explanation of Jesus Christ, the *High Priest*, of the New Covenant in Chapter 8, and the shadow of the *Earthly Temple* in chapter 9. To understand these issues requires a foundational understanding of Christianity, from which the writer of Hebrews wishes to take his audience.

*What is impossible?
Verses 4-8*

It is impossible; To understand this contentious text, the Greek word translated *impossible*, ἀδύνατος *Adunatos* (ad-oo'-nat-os); needs to be understood. This word literally means (a) no (*dunatos*) power. This same word is used in Hebrews 6:18 ("It is impossible for God to Lie"), in 10:4 ("It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins") and 11:6 ("Without faith it is impossible to please Him"). Some have tried to translate this word as "Difficult" these earlier verses would make no sense if this were the case. "*Adunatos*" means it is without power, *impossible*.

The question is, *What is impossible?* The answer is "*Those who fall away*" to "*Renew them again to repentance*".

Who then has fallen away?

Three options have been proposed about who is being referred to here.

- A hypothetical group, that does not exist.
- Unsaved individuals who have been associated with the Gospel
- Saved individuals who have lost salvation

3 Options	A Hypothetical Impossibility since the truly saved "Cannot be snatched out" of the hand of Christ	These individuals were never saved but only had a taste of salvation by association⁶	These were saved individuals who have lost their salvation.
Once enlightened;	Saved, they have seen the light. (Eph. 1:18)	The enlightenment has to do with intellectual perception of spiritual biblical truth (Page 142)	These individuals were saved and knew Christ.
Tasted the heavenly gift:	Salvation is God's Gift to man. Romans 6:23 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Romans 11:29	The did not feast but only tasted Christ (2 Cor. 9:15) Page 143	Experienced the gifts of salvation.
Partakers of the Holy Spirit:	The "Holy Spirit" is God's Guarantee of Salvation. We are sealed till the day of redemption. (Eph 1:14)	"Gr. Metochos" has to do with association, not possession. These Jews never possessed the Holy Spirit, they were	Being saved, they had the Holy Spirit, hence they were partakers.

⁶ ibid

		simply around when he was around. (Page 144)	
If they fall away:	If someone is truly saved they cannot fall away, Since that would mean Christ lost one of his Sheep which He says He cannot loose.	They could not be brought back to the place of excitement about Christ. (Page 147)	If they fall away from Christ, losing their salvation.

The word impossible is like a wall, its telling us something is impossible. The reason those in verses 4-6 cannot be saved, is because if they were saved, once they fell away they could not be brought back to repentance and thus were never "Saved" to begin with. In addition they being saved and losing "Salvation" would violate The promises and power of the Father, Son and Spirit.

These verses are more likely demonstrating an impossible situation, because if it were possible then Christ would have to die again. The position of those who are "Truly" saved is a secure position not based on our ability but on Christ's sacrifice.

Salvation Proof Texts

Proof Text	Reasoning
<p>Ephesians 1:4,13-14 4 just as <u>He chose us</u> in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 13 <u>In Him you also trusted</u>, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, <u>you were sealed with the Holy Spirit</u> of promise, 14 who is <u>the guarantee</u> of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God choose us we did not choose Him. • The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee of redemption. • We are God's purchased possession
<p>John 10:26-29 26 "But you do not believe, because <u>you are not of My sheep</u>, as I said to you. 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and <u>I know them</u>, and they follow Me. 28 "And I give them eternal life, and <u>they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand</u>. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and <u>no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand</u>."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ knows his sheep • They shall never perish • They cannot be snatched from Christ. • They cannot be snatched from the Father.
<p>2 Corinthians 5:5 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given <u>us the Spirit as a guarantee</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Spirit is God's Guarantee
<p>John 6:37,39 37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 39 "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me <u>I should lose nothing</u>, but should raise it up at the last day.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Father gives will come to Christ. • Christ will lose none that are given by the Father.
<p>Romans 8:28-29 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For <u>whom He foreknew</u>, He also <u>predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son</u>, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God foreknew the saved • The saved are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. • The predestined are called, justified and glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?	
2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: " <u>The Lord knows those who are His.</u> " and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those who are the Lords are known by the Lord.

Salvation must be maintained-Arminism⁷

Proof Text	Reasoning
Hebrews 6:6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance,	Hebrews demonstrates the possibility of falling away. Therefore salvation must be maintained.
Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, <u>there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.</u>	Here we see that if sin is committed after knowledge of truth is received that there is no other hope
Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.	Salt loosing flavor is an picture of the Christian loosing salvation
John 15:6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.	The Christians can choose to abide or not abide (Live) in Christ those who turn are burned in the fire.
2 Peter 2:20-22 20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."	Verse 21 says these individuals knew the way of righteousness but turned from it demonstrating one can loose their salvation
1 John 15:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.	The brother (The Believer) can sin to point where it is useless to pray for that person.
Matthew 7:21-22 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'	Many who claim to know the Lord will not enter into Heaven. Even though miracles were done through their ministry.
Matthew 12:31-32 31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.	The Christian can loose salvation when sinning against the Holy Spirit.
2 Peter 1:10	The potential of stumbling is possible for

⁷ The author of this text, does not agree you can loose your salvation these verses are here only to demonstrate the view of those who think it is possible, and verses which are used to justify this view.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

those who are not diligent.

earth which drinks in the rain; Using the example of nature, the productive Christian life will produce a good crop, the unfruitful life only thorns and thistles.

The beloved

Verses 9-12

9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Beloved: the Greek word **ἀγαπῆτοῖς** *Agapetos* comes from agape, the highest kind of love.

The beloved are the saved, this is the same group in Hebrews 5:11 to 6:3. Though the writer of Hebrews was hard on them, and calling them infants, who need milk but should be eating solid food, here he encourages them. Telling them they do not fall into the hypothetical category, because they are saved. He hopes to take into deeper, "Solid food", away from elementary teaching.

Accompany salvation: The Greek word **ἐκὼς** *Echos* (ekh'-o) means to have, hold, own or possess. They possess salvation. MacArthur separates this group in verses 9-12 from those in 5:11-6:5, he understands these as unsaved Jews, as opposed to saved Jews. He writes,

Accompanying salvation is not infancy but maturity, not milk but solid food, not inexperience in righteousness but perfect righteousness, not repentance in dead works but repentance toward God unto life.⁸

To separate this group from those being addressed in 5:11 to 6:8, forces the text. Either, somebody is saved, or not saved. But those who are saved have fruits of salvation which are mentioned here.

Your work: Works and fruit separate those who are saved, from those who not saved, but claim to be saved. This is the point the writer is trying to make with this group of struggling believers.

This group has fruits of salvation, they are involved in ministry, they love the Name of the Lord and support the brothers in Christ.

Same diligence: The writer is encouraging them to keep going, to not rest. Paul uses the example of the runner in I Corinthians, who trains for a race,

²⁴Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

²⁵And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

²⁶Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

²⁷But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

I Corinthians 9:24-27

⁸ ibid, page 152

Assurance: Means having "Full confidence", not questioning your status, but resting in Christ and his work. He is warning the reader to not slow down, but to keep progressing in their walk till the very **end**.

Become sluggish: The warning to believers is to not become "Dull", Greek **νωθρός** *Nothros*, this same word is used earlier in 5:11, where he wants to explain to them more about Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10), but is limited because they have become "*Nothros*" or dull in hearing. Here, he is warning them to not do the same in their walk, as they have done in their hearing. The writer, like Paul in I Corinthians is urging them on in their walk, to imitate the those who inherited the promise through faith and patience, inherited God's promise. Abraham is then used as an example of God's promise and why we can be confident

Abraham as an example

Verses 13-20

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Promise to Abraham: The promise quoted here is from Genesis 22:16, after Abraham took Isaac, his son, to the top of Mt. Moriah. God swore by Himself, to bless Abraham.

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Genesis 22:17-18

Swore by Himself: God swore by Himself, because there is none greater, He is the standard of "Truth", for this reason it is impossible for Him to lie. He would have to deny his person to lie.

In Genesis 15:7-8 God passed through the divided animals signifying his "Covenant" with Abraham. The Hebrew word for Covenant is **ברית** *Beriyth* (ber-eeth'); meaning "To cut", when an covenant was made both parties walked between the divided animals to signify that if either party failed to live up to their agreement, may they be cut in half like the animals who they are walking between. In essence, God was telling Abraham, if He did not fulfill his agreement with him, may God be cut in half. Abraham did not walk through the animal halves, only God passed through the animal parts.

The heirs of promise: The promise was to Abraham and to his seed, those who would inherit the promise God made to Abraham. The Church, the body of Gentile and Jewish Believers, is grafted into the promises of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Romans 11).

Immutability: The Greek word means, ἀμεταβλητός *Ametathetos* means not transposed, not to be transferred, fixed, or altered. God's word is unchangeable, for the reason God cannot lie, He is the standard of what is true.

The two items his *Promise* and *Oath* and since it is impossible for God to lie, we can rest in his promise.

Strong consolation: For this reason, the believer can be confident in Jesus, because he has entered the "Holy of Holies" in Heaven. He is our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

High Priest forever: The Earthly Temple and Priesthood were only a shadow and type of what was to come. This Heavenly picture is described in detail from Hebrews 7 to 10. For this reason we can put our rest in Jesus. He is our **forerunner**, He has gone ahead of us to prepare a place for us, in His Father's house. (John 14:1-3)