

Can a Christians Lose their Salvation?

1. Hebrews 6:4 is one passage that Arminians like to quote to show that Christians can lose their salvation. *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”*
2. Dr. Richard Belcher, who is a Reformed and baptistic professor of Theology, shares his thoughts on this matter in his book *A Theological Journal in Salvation*. His entire series can be reviewed on line at: <http://www.richbarrypress.com/journey.htm>
3. Several questions need to be answered about Hebrews 6:4.

I. Who Were the Recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

- The recipients were second generation Jewish Christians.
who had professed faith in Christ
who had manifested Christian works and love
who had served the other saints
who had formerly endured great suffering
who were known by the author
who had been in contact with the author
- *Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,*
- *Hebrews 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*
- *Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*
- *Hebrews 6:9-10 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. 10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*
- *Hebrews 10:32-34 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*

- *Hebrews 13:19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*
- *Hebrews 13:23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.*

II. What were the Recipients Doing and Not Doing?

- The total picture seems to be as follows. This is a group of Jewish believers. who had profess faith in Christ but are now thinking of leaving Christ and His full work for their salvation because of their love for the OT and its ritual which love has been enhanced by what they are suffering as Christians
- *Hebrews 1:4-12 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? 6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. 7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*
- *Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;*
- *Hebrews 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.*
- *Hebrews 5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.*
- *Hebrews 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.*

- *Hebrews 12:3-4 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*
- *Hebrews 12:5ff*
- *Hebrews 7-10*

III. What Were They in Danger of Doing?

- They were in danger:
 - of letting the truth slip away
 - of hardening their hearts against the truth
 - of defecting from God
 - of not entering into full rest in Christ
 - of missing the full truth of the Word of God
 - of turning loose of their profession of faith
 - of going back to the Old Covenant and Judaism
- *Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*
- *Hebrews 3:7-8 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*
- *Hebrews 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*
- *Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*
- *Hebrews 3:15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*
- *Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*
- *Hebrews 4:2-3 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. 3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*
- *Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

- *Hebrews 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*
- *Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

IV. What did they Need to Do?

- They needed
 - to relearn the basic elements of faith in Jesus Christ
 - to advance beyond initial Christian doctrine
 - to go on in faith, patience and perseverance
 - to grip the truth with strong persuasion
 - to lay hold of the hope set before them
 - to hold fast their profession—no wavering
 - to learn the fruit of true faith
 - to look to Jesus Christ supremely and attentively
- *Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*
- *Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*
- *Hebrews 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*
- *Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*
- *Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,*
- *Hebrews 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*
- *Hebrews 11:1ff Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*
- *Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

- *Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Final Summary: These are Jews who have professed faith in Christ, but who are now considering a return to the old Jewish faith and covenant. The question is, what is their condition now (are they really saved), and what will be their spiritual condition if they were to go back to Judaism?

V. **What is the Message of the Author of Hebrews for these Professing Jews?** To convince them of continuing in their profession of faith, the writer of Hebrews argues the superiority of Christianity

- Jesus Christ in His person is greater than the angels
- Jesus Christ in His position is greater than Moses
- Jesus Christ in His priesthood is greater than Aaron
- Jesus Christ in His performance and provision in His New Covenant work is greater than the provision of the Old covenant

Summary: Thus the contest of the book of Hebrews is that the author is addressing Jews who have professed faith in Christ, who are now considering a return to Judaism. He is seeking to convince them of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old covenant, and of the necessity of continuing in the former rather than to return to the latter.

VI. **What is the Message of the Writer in Hebrews 6 for these Professing Jews who are Considering a Return to Judaism?**

- Question: Are these saved people? The author of Hebrews addresses them as believers.

In Hebrews 3:1 he calls them holy brethren who are partakers of a heavenly calling

In Hebrews 4:3 he includes them in those who have believed

In Hebrews 4:14 he says they have a great high priest

In Hebrews 5:11-14 he says they are only spiritual babes who are not capable of strong meat

- The author also recognizes another possibility. He calls to their attention in 3:6 the possibility that these may not be truly saved people.

He tells them they are Christ's IF they hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end

He is not telling them that by doing this they are made Christians or kept saved, but he sees this as the proof of their salvation—perseverance to the end

He calls to their attention those among the people of God in the OT times who were not truly the people of God as their hearts were filled with unbelief and therefore they did not enter into the rest of God

He states in Hebrews 4:3 that we who have believed do enter into rest—a statement that recognizes again some who did not believe and did not enter into rest

He is saying that it is not a matter of one continuing so that he may not lose his salvation, but it is a matter of proving the reality of their salvation

He warns that if they have received the marvelous enlightening grace in such an amazing manner as described in verses 4-6, and yet have not been truly saved, that now if they fall away and go back to Judaism, it will be impossible to bring them back to the point of repentance once again.

He gives them in 6:7-8 that the proof of salvation is fruit, and the proof of being lost is lack of fruit

He tells them further after this bold pointed challenge that he is persuaded of better things for them (Heb. 6:9), that he is aware of the evidence of their salvation (Heb. 6:10), but that he is desirous of their giving full evidence of their salvation (Heb. 6:11-12)

- The context thus guides us in interpreting Hebrews 6:4-6. These phrases do not speak of the salvation of

those who were once enlightened
those who have tasted the heavenly gift
those who were made partakers of the Spirit
those who have tasted the good word of God
those who have tasted the future world.

- These phrases do speak of people

who have been with God's people
who have been blessed by such association
who have been spiritually enlightened
who have tasted of the blessing of salvation
who have partaken of the reality of the Spirit
who have tasted the good word by preaching
but they have not been saved!

- This is the challenge the writer gives to them. They must continue in the faith to prove their salvation or return to Judaism and prove they are lost. But even worse than proving one is lost one is left in an unsalvable state because a return to Judaism closes the door to ever being brought again to the plateau of salvation, to the possibility of repentance, to the previous enlightenment and leaves them in a lost estate forever because they are

rejecting Christ, putting Him to open shame and agreeing with His Crucifixion. What a horrible state that will be!

- But remember above that the author says. He is persuaded of better things for them. He is persuaded they possess true salvation. Their actions will not keep them saved but their actions will prove if they were ever truly saved.

Conclusion. If this passage teaches one can lose his salvation, then it proves more than the Arminians wants to prove. It teaches that the one who loses his salvation, cannot ever be saved again. Thus it is not once saved, always saved, but it is once saved, never to be saved again if salvation is ever lost.