

## The Patio Pulpit For February 17, 2021

### Studies in the book of Hebrews

I personally embrace the idea of “eternal security,” and it’s because I see my salvation as beginning with God and my staying saved as the on-going work of God in my life. If God didn’t keep me saved, or sustain me, I would not be saved now. And ya gotta admit that since God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son that whosoever should believe on Him might not perish but have eternal life, there is no wiggle room for describing the life He gives us as contingent life on our good behavior. God is not Santa Claus.

Our being saved is contingent on whether or not we believe but our believing is assured by the effectual calling of God. Without God drawing us to Jesus we would never come to Him and be saved (Jn. 6:44) and without the effectual ministry of the Spirit we would never believe (Jn. 6:63). And without hearing and believing the gospel we could never have saving faith (Rom. 10:17).

If God had left us to our own devices, we would never have been able to come to faith in Jesus. The dead can’t do anything, much less come to saving faith in Jesus. That’s Paul’s argument in his letter to the Ephesians, 2:1-13. It seems to me from my study of the word of God that salvation is all of God and that Paul was spot on when he wrote this,  
<sup>6</sup> *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:6 NAU).*

Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 6 and v.4 (repeat).

#### **Hebrews 6:4**

<sup>4</sup> *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,*

<sup>5</sup> *and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,*

<sup>6</sup> *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. (Heb. 6:4-6 NAU)*

We are back in the letter to the Hebrews again this week on the Patio Pulpit and we're finally getting around to the sections of this letter that have troubled the most people. And why do these sections disturb so many church members? Because they consistently ignore their context. And in this particular letter if the student ignores the context, he or she could easily get the idea that he or she could possibly either fall away from their faith or be rejected by God and never get another shot at being saved. In the verses we will examine tonight it can sound like it. And let me caution you about what I just said. There are indeed people who believe for a while and then leave their profession behind. They're called "apostates," they are those who "rebel against God after the trials and temptations of this life and the power of the devil snuff out the light of the gospel that they were exposed to. You will remember that Jesus taught a parable on that very thing in Matthew 13:3-23.

And what is the context of the letter to the Hebrews? This is it in a nutshell.

This letter is named "The Letter to the Hebrews" because it is a letter written to Hebrews, Biblical scholars have almost unanimous agreement on that. And the Hebrews it was written to had heard the gospel but with a mixed reaction to it. Some had heard the gospel that declared their Messiah had come and had paid for their sins and had reconciled them to their God Yahweh and believed it. Others were debating the truth of the gospel and were at the time they heard this letter read were straddling the fence. And then there were those who rejected the gospel preferring rather the law of Moses. So, do yourselves a favor and keep the context of this letter in mind beginning with chapter 1 and v.1 and ending with chapter 13 and v.25. You will be so glad you did.

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I don't know about you, but that sounds like the experience of someone who was genuinely saved to me. And for the vast majority of those who read those two verses it sounds like a genuine convert.

However, what is not mentioned in these verses is more important than what has been mentioned. Read those verses again and I'll break them

down this way, <sup>4</sup> *For in the case of those, first,*

*“who have once been enlightened,” then,*

*and*

*“have tasted of the heavenly gift,”*

*and*

*“have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,”*

<sup>5</sup> *and*

*“have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,”*

But there is something missing in verses 4 and 5.

Notice that the author doesn't use words like “salvation” and “justification” and “sanctification” and “born again” or “faith.” He's drawing an image of someone who has been invited to a feast who has walked around the table full of delicious food and can see what he can have and has even sampled some of it but decides he can do better at Burger King. All he would have to do is have a seat and the host would serve him. But, no, he would rather go to Burger King and have it his way. Listen to the choice of words, *enlightened, tasted, partakers and the word tasted again, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.*” The problem with that analogy is Burger King's sandwiches are pretty good, there is nothing good about what the Jews thought the law offered them.

And that's the context of this letter. Jesus has invited the Jews, His

own people to come to His table, but they have said, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

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“...and then have fallen away.” And then, after all that. After having come this far and hearing all that and they still reject their own Messiah. God has done all He’s going to do through the gospel. So if you finally say no to the gospel, there’s nothing left for God to do but give them over to what they want.

“...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.”

God put up with the stiff-necked Jews for thousands of years and they wouldn’t bend. God’s patience and justice do have their limits. <sup>3</sup> *Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." (Gen. 6:3 NAU).* And what does our text tonight say about the Spirit? The Jews who had heard and rejected the gospel had been *made partakers of the Holy Spirit* and God was saying to these Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, “My Spirit will not strive with you forever.”

He isn’t through with Israel, there is still a remnant of Abraham’s seed left by the grace of God, but not all who are Jews are Jews of the heart, not all are of Abraham’s seed. But just those who have believed the Scriptures and the gospel.

*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. (Heb. 6:4-6 NAU).* In our context, who is “them?” The Jews. They

denied Him and crucified Him once back in Jerusalem, now by deliberately rejecting Him again, they are crucifying Him again. And not even God will allow them to renew their opportunity after that.

The same is true for all who hear the gospel and walk around the banquet table and then say, “I think I prefer Burger King.”

So, I still embrace the doctrine of eternal security. I hope you do. It’s a matter of acknowledging that our salvation, our justification, our redemption, and our reconciliation are all of God’s doing and none of ours.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.