

# WARNING THREE (PART II): FEAR, LEST YOU FALL AWAY HEBREWS 06:04–08

## *Introduction*

This is one of the most severe warnings in all of Scripture and it is one of the most controversial. It is so controversial that no matter what a person says about it, there are a host of people who differ with him. What we must keep in mind is this: one of the primary reasons why there are so many differences is because we come to this passage with our minds already made up. We already hold a theological position and have a theological system that we follow and interpret all Scripture by. Therefore, we interpret this passage...

- in light of what we already believe instead of letting Scripture speak for itself.
- in light of our theology instead of letting the passage speak for itself.
- in light of what we have been taught by others instead of letting Scripture speak for itself.
- in light of what we have already concluded that Scripture teaches elsewhere instead of letting this passage speak for itself.
- to keep our system consistent instead of admitting there are some teachings of Scripture that are beyond our understanding and accepting the meaning as a warning to all believers.

Of course, everyone thinks he is right — that what he believes is exactly what Scripture teaches. And he should think this; he should be a person of conviction or else he should sit down, study and find out the truth to the best of his ability and become a person of conviction. However, three things are needed when we approach a passage like this where so many true believers differ.

=> We must let Scripture speak for itself — be as objective and honest as we can and make a supreme effort not to twist the Scripture to fit our beliefs (theological system). That is, we must — as much as we possibly can — be truthful to the Scripture and let it speak for itself.

=> We must be humble and understanding toward each other as we pray and seek the Lord for understanding and as we seek to share His Word with one another and the world. And we must learn from each other despite our different views. No one of us and no body of us have a corner on the truth. We are at most only a speck of sand in a universe of truth. Just think how mammoth the universe is and how unsearchable God and His Word and ways are (cp. Rom. 11:33-36.) What God wants us to do is to be humble and to learn from each other.

=> We must let the Scripture speak to us — let its message guide and warn us — to the fullest extent possible. We must let the Scripture work in our lives and not get hung up on interpretation and in getting our point across. What is important is what God is saying and letting what He says take effect in our lives. We *must* let the Scripture work in us.

*The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible* is written for the ministers of God, every true minister regardless of belief or denomination. For this reason we deliberately, strenuously or constantly keep before our minds the utter necessity to let the Word speak for itself and to present no denominational position. Our purpose is to study and write, first of all, for our own personal growth in the Lord, and then to share what God has fed to our hearts. That is what *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible* is — all it is. It simply arises out of our own personal devotional studies where our hearts cry out to God to conform us to Christ so that we can better witness to His mercy and grace — to His eternal mercy and grace which He has poured out upon us by saving us and delivering us from the sin and death of this world.

The point is this: a deliberate effort — even to the point of straining — is being made to let the Scripture speak for itself in studying this passage. In fact, we are writing this even before we begin our study and exposition of it. May God touch our hearts and warn all who read hereafter — all to His glory and to our growth in Christ Jesus our Lord. (The following passages should be studied along with this passage for a complete overview of the severe warnings in Scripture. See notes, 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 1 Cor. 5 :3-5; 9:27; 11:27-30; Heb. 2:1-4; 3:7-19; 4:1-13; 5:11-6:3; 10:26-39; 12:25-29; *Sin, Brother's Judgement*, 1 Jn. 5:16.)

- I. The Christian privileges (vv. 4-5).
- II. The warning: it is impossible to repent of falling away (vv. 6).
- III. The meaning illustrated (vv. 7-8).

### HEBREWS 6:04–08 WARNING TO BELIEVER

There are four main interpretations of this passage.

1. A hypothetical case. There are those who say that *falling away from Christ* is only a wrong idea that exists in the minds of some people. Therefore, the writer is only trying to correct the wrong idea that these people have. These people are causing themselves an undue amount of anxiety, tension and worry by believing false ideas: therefore, they must be corrected and saved from their false belief. Most of these interpreters hold that falling away from Christ is impossible, but if the belief is held by some, then it needs to be corrected. Therefore, this is exactly what the author is doing. Note how he goes about correcting the false idea in this interpretation:

*“All right, you say a person can fall away from Christ. What happens if he does?”*

*If would be impossible to renew him again, for Christ would have to be crucified again. And this is utterly impossible; Christ can never be crucified again. Therefore, falling away is impossible. To say that a saved person can fall away is an incorrect idea that is not taught by Scripture. “*

2. A saved-lost interpretation. A saved person can *fall away* into sin or apostasy and lose his salvation. Those who oppose this position say that this position must deal with two basic facts.  
  
=> There are only a few passages that support it and each of the passages can be interpreted another way (cp. Mt. 24:13; Mk. 3:29; Lk. 9:62; Heb. 10:26; 1 Jn. 5:16).  
  
=> There are innumerable passages that teach the eternal security of the believer (cp. Jn. 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1, 35-39; Eph. 1:12-14; 4:30; Ph. 1:6; Heb. 8:12; 10:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:3-5).
3. A non-Christian or false profession interpretation. Some Jewish people (Judaizers) of the writer's day professed Christ and were exposed to the privileges of the Christian life. However, they never took the final and genuine leap of faith. Those who oppose this position say that this position is difficult to see in light of the five statements in verses 4-5.
4. A disqualified believer. Some believers deliberately sin so much that they become hardened and past feeling any wrong (Eph. 4:18-24). They are in danger of falling away and suffering the severest chastisement and consequences (see notes, 1 Cor. 9:27; 11:27-30; Heb. 2:1f; 10:26f; *Sin, Brother's Judgement*, 1 Jn. 5:16). □

### **I. Hebrews 06: 04–05 Believer's Great Privileges**

The believer's great privileges. It is difficult to see how these five experiences could be said about a person unless he was a true believer. Being as honest and objective as possible, we would have to strain the meaning to make them apply to anyone else. The Greek Scripture definitely uses the aorist tense which means that the person had a *once-for-all* experience, an experience that was once-for-all completed, fulfilled and finished. How could this apply to anyone else other than a believer? Note how each of these read in the aorist tense: the person...

- was once-for-all enlightened
- *had once-for-all* tasted the heavenly gift
- *had once-for-all* shared in the Holy Spirit
- *had once-for-all* tasted of the goodness of God's Word.
- *had once-for-all* tasted the powers of the coming age.

The word “tasted” (*geusamenous*) means to partake of, to take in, to experience, to come to know. The Greek scholar Marvin Vincent says that it means to “have consciously partaken of” (*Word Studies In The New Testament. Vol 4, p. 445*). The very same word is used of Christ when it said that He “tasted death” for us (Heb. 2:9). And one thing is sure: Christ tasted, that is, *consciously experienced*, death for us. Therefore, this passage must mean that this person *fully tasted and fully experienced* salvation. As stated, it seems that we have to twist Scripture to make it say any less than a conscious and full experience. Note the glorious experiences and privileges these persons received in Christ.

1. They were once-for-all enlightened. Enlightened means the light of the gospel and of salvation: the light of Christ, that is, seeing Christ as the Saviour and Lord of men: the light of salvation that breaks through the darkness of sin and death. Note: receiving the light happened once-for-all. It was an actual experience of the people, a once-for-all experience. That is, it really happened and it was fulfilled and completed in the people’s lives. They received the light of Christ, of His gospel and salvation once-for-all.
2. They had tasted the heavenly gift. The “heavenly gift” refers to Christ and His salvation which God *gave* to the world. Scripture proclaims time and again that Jesus Christ and His salvation are God’s gifts.

=> Christ is God’s “indescribable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

=> Christ is God’s gift to a lost world (Jn. 3:16).

=> Salvation is “the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8-9).

=> Christ is the One who came down out of heaven as the gift of God to a lost world (Jn. 3:13; 3:16; 3:31-32; 6:32-33, and a host of other verses. See notes, Jn. 3:32-34; “*God has Sent*”, John 3:34.)

Note that this is again a once-for-all experience. They had experienced Christ and His salvation once-for-all.

3. They had once-for-all shared in the Holy Spirit. The word “shared” (*metochous*) means to share as partners. W.E. Vine says that it means “the *fact of sharing*” [*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1966, p. 162). The Greek scholar A.T Robertson says, “These are all given as actual spiritual experiences” (*Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. 5, p. 375*). These people were sharers in the Holy Spirit. It is very difficult to see how they can be made to be a false profession without straining the Scripture.
4. They had once-for-all tasted God’s Word. This is the gospel of Christ, of His glorious salvation. The Greek scholar Marvin Vincent says that this means that they had received...

- life (Acts 5:20)

- spirit and life (Jn. 6:63)

- salvation (Acts 11:14)
- cleansing (Eph. 5:26).
- the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:34; Acts 5:32; 10:44; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 2:4)  
(Word Studies In The New Testament, Vol. 4, p. 445.)

5. They had once-for-all tasted the powers of the coming age. They had experienced some of heaven upon earth. They had actually experienced the presence and power of Christ in their lives...

- the power of Christ in conquering the trials, temptations and sufferings of this world.
- the healing power of Christ in touching both their bodies and spirits.

*1 John 3:24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

*1 John 4:13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

## **II. Hebrews 06:06 Warning: Impossible to Repent**

The warning is severe and frightening to any heart that will listen.

*“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened.... if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance”* (v. 4, 6). As discussed in the previous point, this is bound to be speaking to believers. But what does it mean? Note exactly what Scripture says and only what it says.

First, Scripture says “impossible”: if a believer “falls away,” it is impossible for him to ever repent again. The word *impossible* just cannot be made to mean anything other than impossible — not without straining and twisting the Scripture. As Marvin Vincent says: “Impossible (aduvaton). It is impossible to dilute this word into *difficult*” (*Word Studies In The New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 444).

Second, Scripture uses the words “fall away” (para-pesontas). This means to turn aside; to turn away; to deviate. It means...

- to turn aside from Christ.
- to turn away from Christ.
- to deviate from Christ.

Third, Scripture is talking about bringing people back to repentance. These people had gone beyond the point of repentance. No matter how strong an appeal was made to them — no matter how often their sin was pointed out to them — no matter how much the love and cross of Christ was proclaimed to them — they would never again repent. They had gone too far into sin and rebellion against Christ to ever have their hearts touched again. They would never repent — no matter what.

Now, for the critical question: What would ever cause a believer to reach such a stage in life? What could a believer do that would harden his heart so much that he would never again repent? Again note exactly what Scripture says:

*They are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace (v. 6)*

The action is present: they continue on and on to crucify Christ and to shame Him — to publicly disgrace Him. They continue on and on in their sin, disobedience and rebellion against Christ. The continuous action is critical to note.

The believer turns back to the world, back to a life of sin, disobedience, and rebellion; and he *continues on and on, never repenting and never turning back to Christ*. This, of course, breaks the heart of Christ and adds suffering upon suffering for Him to bear.

=> It is stirring and causing the pain of the crucifixion for Christ all over again. In fact, it is continuing to crucify Him over and over again; it is putting Him through a continuous experience of suffering upon the cross.

=> It is also disgracing Him. Being a professing believer and returning to the world and continuing to live in sin day after day and month after month brings disgrace upon Christ and His holy name.

Note a critical fact in this point: the person is continuing on and on in sin, never repenting. He has returned to the world and its sin and is never going to repent. He has gone so far into sin that his heart has hardened. No matter how much the love and forgiveness of Christ is shared with him, he will not repent. Never again will he walk with Christ, not while he is on earth. Scripture says that he is beyond repentance. He has returned to the world and *fallen away* from Christ. And, tragically, he is harming Christ and His mission. He is breaking the heart of Christ by crucifying Christ afresh — by heaping suffering upon suffering on Him. And he is shaming the Name of Christ among men by living a hypocritical life.

**Thought 1.** Note a critical fact. This cannot refer to what is commonly called *backsliding*. Why? Because Scripture is clear: a backslider can repent. A backslider is never beyond reach. This passage is bound to be speaking of a person who backslides and begins to love his sin more and more. Therefore, he keeps on in his sin *ccc* sinning and sinning and sinning — until he becomes so hardened in his sin that he will never repent. He keeps on and on crucifying Christ and shaming Him and nothing stirs him to repentance. Can believers ever reach this point? F.F. Bruce states it well:

*“God has pledged Himself to pardon all who truly repent, but Scripture and experience alike suggest that it is possible for human beings to arrive at a state of heart and life where they can no longer repent”* (The Epistle to the Hebrews. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964, p. 124).

**Mark 3:29** “But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”

**1 Cor 9:27** No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**Heb 3:12** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

**Heb 6:6** If they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

**Heb 10:26** If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,

**Heb 12:17** Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

**1 Tim 1:19-20** Holding on to faith, and a good conscience. Some have rejected these so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

**1 Tim 4:1-2** The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

**2 Tim 4:3-4** For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

**2 Pet 3:17** Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.

### **III. Hebrews 06:07–08 Warning Illustrated**

The meaning of the warning is illustrated. This is a simple illustration about the soil of a vineyard keeper or a farmer.

1. The good soil drinks in the rain and produces fruit and crops for those who dress and keep it. That is, believers are the good soil who drink in the Word of God and produce fruit for God and Christ and for His ministers and teachers.
2. The bad soil drinks in the rain also, but it brings forth its thorns and thistles. Therefore, the bad soil is rejected and near to being cursed. Its end is to be burned. Mathew

Henry was unquestionably one of the greatest Bible scholars and probably the most inspirational Biblical writer who has ever lived. He strongly believed in the eternal security of the believer, but even he said the following. His exhortation stresses the utmost necessity that all heed this warning and the severity of it:

*“Its end [the rejected ground’s end] is to be burned. Apostasy will be punished with everlasting burnings, the fire that shall never be quenched. This is the sad end to which apostasy leads, and therefore Christians should go on and grow in grace, lest, if they do not go forward, they should go backward, till they bring matters to this woeful extremity of sin and misery” (Mathew Henry’s Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 914.)*

F.F. Bruce, one of the most excellent Bible scholars of the twentieth century, who would also hold strongly to the security of the believer, says this:

*“Our author compares those believers who persevere in faith to fertile land which produces fruit, while those [believers] in whose lives the fruits of righteousness do not appear are compared to land which will never produce anything but thorns and thistles, to be kept down by burning, for our God is a consuming fire’ (Ch. 12:29)” (The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 125)*

**Thought 1.** This passage is a most severe warning to us all no matter our position on the security of the believer. It is a passage that serves as a warning to us all and must be heeded by us all. It is a passage that Biblical writers — those who give strong indications of walking with the Lord — strongly urge us to heed, even when they hold to the security of the believer. F.F. Bruce is one of these, and what he has to say should be noted by us all:

*“The Scriptures contain encouragement enough and to spare for the feeblest believer, but [the Scriptures] are full of solemn warnings to those who think they stand to beware lest they fall. A credible profession of faith must be accepted as genuine, but ultimately it is only the Lord who knows those who are His.*

*“For it is possible for people who can be described in the language of verses 4 and 5 to fall away irretrievably. This warning has been both unduly minimized and unduly exaggerated....for men and women who have taken Christ’s name upon themselves [do] commit apostasy; and biblical writers (the writer to the Hebrews being no exception) are not given to the setting up of men of straw [men who never exist]. The warning of this passage was a real warning against a real danger, a danger which is still present so long as ‘an evil heart of unbelief can result in falling away from the living God’ ([Heb.] Ch. 3:12)....*

*“Our author’s meaning can be exaggerated to the point of distortion when he is understood to say that for sins committed after baptism there can be no repentance....*

*“But the writer to the Hebrews himself distinguishes (as did the Old Testament law) between inadvertent sin and wilful sin, and the context here shows plainly that the wilful sin which he has in mind is deliberate apostasy. People who commit this sin, he says, cannot be brought back to repentance; by renouncing Christ they put themselves in the position of those who, deliberately refusing His claim to be the Son of God, had Him crucified and exposed to public shame. Those who repudiate the salvation procured by Christ will find none anywhere else” (The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 122f)*

**Mat 3:10** *“The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

**Mat 7:17-19** *“Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

**Mat 13:22** *“The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.”*

**Luke 13:6-9** *Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”*

**Heb 6:8** *But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. ■*