

Hebrews 6:4-5 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
Click chart to enlarge
 Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Swindoll's Chart](#), [Interesting Pictorial Chart of Hebrews](#), [Another Chart](#)

The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18			EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
REVELATION			RESPONSE	
PRECEPTS			PRACTICE	
DOCTRINE			DUTY	
Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13	Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18		Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
BETTER THAN PROPHETS, ANGELS MOSES Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER THAN AARON'S PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER THAN THE OLD COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER THAN ANIMAL SACRIFICES Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE IN CHRIST THAN IN ADAM!
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST		MINISTERS FOR CHRIST	
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68 AD				

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)
 (See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

	a.d.	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Death, resurrection of Christ (a.d. 33 [or 30]) ¹		●										
Reign of Nero (54–68)								■	■	■		
Letter to the Hebrews written (60–70*)									■	■		
Fire in Rome; Nero blames and kills many Christians (64 [July 19])										●		
Paul and Peter martyred in Rome (64–67*)									■	■		
Destruction of the Jerusalem temple (70)										●		

Hebrews 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**, ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [Adunaton gar tous](#) haphax [photisthentas](#). (AAPMPA) [geusamenous](#) (AMPMPA) [te tes doreas tes epouraniou kai metochous genethentas](#) (APPMPA) [pneumatos hagiou](#)

Amplified: For it is **impossible** [to restore and bring again to repentance] those who have been once for all enlightened, who have consciously tasted the heavenly gift and have become sharers of the Holy Spirit ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: For it is **impossible** to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, those who tasted the free gift from heaven, those who were made sharers in the Holy Spirit ([Westminster Press](#))

ESV: For it is **impossible** to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit ([ESV](#))

KJV: 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,

NET: For it is **impossible** in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit ([NET Bible](#))

NIV: It is **impossible** for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit ([NIV - IBS](#))

NLT: For it is **impossible** to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: When you find men who have been enlightened, who have experienced salvation and received the Holy Spirit ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: for it is **impossible** in the case of those who have been once for all enlightened, and have both tasted of the heavenly gift and have become companions of the Holy Spirit [willingly being led along towards the act of faith in the pre-salvation work of the Holy Spirit]

Weymouth: For it is **impossible**, in the case of those who have once for all been enlightened, and have tasted the sweetness of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

Young's Literal: for it is **impossible** for those once enlightened, having tasted also of the heavenly gift, and partakers having become of the Holy Spirit

- **Impossible** (NAS waits until Heb 6:6, but most translations have it in v4) Heb 10:26-29; 12:15-17; Matthew 5:13+; Mt 12:31,32,45; Luke 11:24-26; John 15:6; 2 Timothy 2:25+; 2 Timothy 4:14+; 2 Peter 2:20+; 2 Peter 2:21+; 2 Peter 2:22+; 1 John 5:16

RESTORATION IMPOSSIBLE

Notice the NAS translation can be very confusing as it does not have the word **impossible** here in Hebrews 6:4 even though *adunatos* is in the Greek at the beginning of the verse! In fact the NAS places "**impossible**" in Hebrews 6:6. I therefore prefer the other translations and thus quote the ESV below.

For (*gar*) is a term of explanation and begs the question "What is the writer explaining?" What has he just stated about their spiritual condition - He has said they will press on to maturity ("this we will do") if God permits or allows it. The question is why might God not allow it? The "**for**" introduces an explanation of why it is crucial for believers to progress in their faith. It gives the reason God might not allow them to press on to maturity and Hebrews 6:4-6 indicates it will not happen if they make the willful choice to fall away (fall away is active

voice). Falling away is the antithesis of pressing on to maturity! In that scenario God does not just say it is unlikely but it is absolutely impossible for them!

(ESV) **It is impossible** ([adunatos](#)) **to restore again** (anakainizo) **to repentance** ([metanoia](#)) **those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit** (ESV) - Note that literally the Greek begins with the phrase **It is impossible** ([adunatos](#)). Don't miss the fact that the author has shifted pronouns. In Hebrews 6:1-3 the writer has used **'us'** (Heb 6:1) and **'we'** (Heb 6:3). And now in Hebrews 6:4 he switches to form the first person plural (us, we) to the third person plural **'those'** and to **'them,'** **'they,'** and **'themselves'** in Hebrews 6:6. You say "So what?" While the writer had identified himself with his readers in Heb 6:1-3, he clearly distances himself from the severe warning passage in Heb 6:4-6. This is interesting because if all 5 characteristics listed in Heb 6:4-5 indicate believers as some propose, the author, clearly a believer, choose not to include himself in this description! The shift in pronouns suggests that while the danger is real for the audience, the writer has hope they will not fall into it. He confirms this in Hebrews 6:9: "But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you ... though we are speaking in this way."

Peter T. O'Brien - While Heb 6:1-3 are in the **first person (we, us)**, this section (Heb 6:4-6) is expressed in the **third person (those who)**. The change is significant: our author does not explicitly identify *those who have fallen away* with the listeners of Hebrews. Some (*tines*) are apparently in great danger; but it is not asserted that they have committed apostasy. The warning (like the encouragements and promises) is intended to prevent this from happening, and apparently the author believes that his listeners (or at least some of them) can still avoid such disastrous consequences (note Heb 6:9). Otherwise there would be no point to the warning (see on Heb 6:6). (Pillar New Testament Commentary – The Letter to the Hebrews).

*If you have a heartfelt longing to live for Jesus Christ,
that desire alone shows that your heart has not been hardened to Him!*

Dwight Pentecost has a good note if you are a believer who is experiencing distress over Hebrews 6:4-6 - It is unfortunate that some believers struggle and agonize under the misconception that, although they desire to walk with God, they have regressed beyond some "point of no return" and can never again walk in fellowship with Him. If you have a heartfelt longing to live for Jesus Christ, that desire alone shows that your heart has not been hardened to Him! All that remains is for you to turn to Him in commitment and submission, and to resume your progress toward maturity. (See [Faith That Endures: A Practical Commentary on the Book of Hebrews](#))

R Bruce Compton has an summary of the interpretations of Hebrews 6:4-6 commenting that...

The warning passage in Hebrews 6:4-6 continues to be a notorious crux in New Testament interpretation. The difficulty comes in harmonizing the description in He 6:4, 5 of those who have "tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit" with the statement in He 6:6 about their "falling away" and not being able to be brought back to repentance. The juxtaposition of these verses has raised a number of questions. Are the experiences predicated in He 6:4, 5 tantamount to salvation, or are they describing something that approximates salvation but falls short of it? If He 6:4, 5 are describing salvation, is He 6:6 describing the loss of salvation? Furthermore, why does He 6:6 say that it is "impossible" to restore those who fall away, or is restoration possible? And, lastly, what precisely is the danger being warned about in these verses? Are those in view being threatened with the loss of reward or with eternal condemnation, with hell itself? The purpose of this article is to survey the views found in the commentaries and related literature on this passage and to update the arguments for the view that supports both the eternal security of the believer and the need for believers to persevere in the faith.

The various interpretations of this passage in contemporary literature may be conveniently catalogued under four views. The views themselves are generally distinguished according to their understanding of the spiritual status of those addressed and the nature of the warning being issued. The four views are

(1) true believer: apostasy/loss of salvation;

(2) true believer: apostasy/loss of reward; (ED: favored by Charles Swindoll. [Zane Hodges](#))

(3) true believer: hypothetical apostasy/loss of salvation; and

(4) false believer: apostasy/eternal condemnation. (ED: favored by [John MacArthur](#), [John Piper](#), Wayne Grudem, S Lewis Johnson, Steven Cole, myself - Bruce Hurt)

These views are briefly discussed in this section to identify their salient strengths and weaknesses and to establish a basis for a more detailed examination of the passage in the following section...

... **Conclusion:** The chief strength with the **fourth view** is its interpretation of Hebrews 6:6. Specifically, it defines the sin in the warning passages as the sin of apostasy, a conscious and deliberate rejection of the gospel. Furthermore, this sin as an irremediable act whose ultimate consequence is eternal condemnation and judgment. The preceding discussion has substantiated this interpretation. This rules out the **second view** which argues that the judgment in these verses is that of the saved. The judgment in the warning passages is not that of the saved. It is the final and eternal judgment of God against the unsaved. In addition, it has been demonstrated from He 6:6 that this sin is neither hypothetical nor impossible. In fact, it was argued from He 10:25,26 that some who had been associated with

the readers had actually committed this sin. This negates the **third view** which argues that this sin was both hypothetical and impossible.

Lastly, it was argued that Scripture teaches the **eternal security of those who are saved**. Salvation, once received, can never be lost. This rules out the first view which argues that the warning involved the loss of salvation. Neither this nor the other warning passages, in describing the action of an apostate, are describing one who is saved. That leaves the fourth view as the only alternative.

The author of Hebrews had confidence in the salvation of his readers, as was seen in He 6:9, 10, 11, 12. Yet, in He 10:26, he indicates that some had forsaken the services of the local congregation and had repudiated the faith they had at one time professed. Moreover, in He 5:11, 12, 13, 14, the author of Hebrews chastises the readers for growing inattentive to God's Word and to their responsibilities for spiritual growth. This combination compels him to exhort his readers to perseverance and to warn any who might fall away of the dire consequences of such an act. They were to **persevere in the faith** because, according to He 3:14, only those who persevere show themselves to be partakers of Christ and truly saved.

*This does not mean that perseverance in the faith
is a condition for salvation.*

Rather,

*perseverance in the faith is understood
as the mark of those who are saved.*

Were any to fall away, they would show they had not been partakers of Christ, that is, that they never had been saved. Furthermore, by falling away they would be committing an irremediable act which would inevitably bring God's condemnation and wrath. (See the full 33 page discussion [Persevering And Falling Away: A Reexamination Of Hebrews 6:4-6](#) Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal 1. Spring 1996 p136) (Bolding added)

Related Resources:

- Steven Cole's sermon Hebrews 6:4-8 When Repentance Becomes Impossible - excellent summary of the 4 most common interpretations
- S Lewis Johnson's sermon Hebrews 6

The KJV Bible Commentary - For centuries Hebrews 6 has been a battleground. That fact alone ought to warn us to study carefully and to conclude slowly concerning the teaching of these verses. The crux of the issue is whether or not a born-again believer can lose his salvation. Though many interpretations of these verses have been proposed, four common, contemporary views merit listing. ([KJV Bible Commentary](#))

J Vernon McGee - As we study this section, we are immediately confronted with the amazing fact that generally commentators have avoided this chapter. Even such a man as Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, the prince of expositors, has completely bypassed it in his book on Hebrews. However, when we do come upon the interpretations available and summarize each, we can well understand why men have chosen to remain clear of this scene of confusion because we can get many interpretations. (See [Thru the Bible](#))

F B Hole notes that...

After this very encouraging word in verse 3, we drop abruptly into a very dark passage extending from verse 4 to verse 8. Though the transition is very abrupt it is not without very good reason. If Christians do not go on they invariably go back; and if it almost seems as though they will not go on, grave fears are aroused lest their unwillingness springs from the unreality of their profession; in which case their going back might proceed to the length of open apostasy. In the case of a Jew it would do so without fail.

It is apostasy that is contemplated in these verses, not just ordinary back-sliding — not the true believer growing cold and falling into sin; not persons, who have once professed conversion without reality, dropping their false profession and going back into the world — but that total falling away from, and repudiation of Christianity root and branch, which is APOSTASY.

No true child of God ever apostatizes, though not a few professors of the Christian religion have done so. **If an Hebrew threw up his Christian profession and wished to get reinstated in the synagogue and amongst his own people, what would happen? He would find that as the price of re-admission he would have to call down a curse upon Jesus as an impostor.** He would have in effect to crucify to himself "the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Now to go to such lengths as that is to bring oneself under the governmental judgment of God, just as Pharaoh did in the days of old when God hardened his heart, so that it is impossible to be renewed unto repentance.

In verses 4 and 5 it is contemplated that those liable to fall away may have shared in privileges common to believers

in those times, and that in no less than five ways. We may well ask if it is possible for anyone to share in this way without being truly converted; and this question may well be specially urgent as regards the third of the five. Can it be possible to be a partaker of the Holy Ghost" without being born again?

The answer to that question is, that it is quite possible. Only a true believer can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but all within the circle of Christian profession, whether truly converted or not, partake or share in the benefits of the presence of the Spirit. A man may be enlightened without being saved. He may taste the heavenly gift without receiving it. He may taste the good word of God without digesting it in his inward parts. He may share in "the powers of the world to come." (i.e. miraculous powers) without experiencing the real power of the world to come.

The terrible case of Judas Iscariot furnishes us with an illustration of this very thing. He walked for over three years in the company of the Son of God. What floods of light fell upon his path! What tastes he had of the heavenly gift and of the good Word of God! It could not be said of course that he was a partaker of the Holy Ghost, but he was a partaker of the benefits of the presence of Christ upon earth; and he shared, in common with the other apostles, in those miraculous powers which are here called "the powers of the world to come." He was one of the twelve to whom the Lord gave power over unclean spirits, and of whom it is said, "They cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." (Mark 6:13). Yet the miracle-working Judas was all the while a "son of perdition" and not a saved man at all. He fell away and it proved impossible to renew him unto repentance.

You will notice that the word here, is "impossible" and not "improbable." This one word is quite sufficient to show that there is no support in this scripture for the idea of a true believer falling away and being lost for ever. ALL those who "fall away" in the sense spoken of in this passage are for ever lost. It is not that they may be, but that they must be; and there would not be a single ray of hope for any back-slider, did it refer to such.

It refers then to the sin of apostasy — a sin to which the Jew, who embraced the Christian religion without being really converted, was peculiarly liable. By turning back to his ancient and worn out religion, thereby utterly condemning and disowning the Lord Jesus, he proved himself to be utterly bad and worthless ground. ([Hebrews Commentary Notes](#))

Charles Ryrie summarizes the interpretative views of Hebrews 6:4-6 writing that...

This much-debated passage has been understood in several ways.

(1) **Arminians hold that the people described in these verses are Christians who actually lose their salvation** If this be so, notice that the passage also teaches that it is impossible to be saved a second time.

(2) **Some hold that the passage refers not to genuine believers but to those who only profess to be believers.** Thus the phrases in verses 4-5 are understood to refer to experiences short of salvation (cf. v. 9). The "falling away" is from the knowledge of the truth, not personal possession of it.

(3) **Others understand the passage to be a warning to genuine believers to urge them on in Christian growth and maturity.** To "fall away" is impossible (since, according to this view, true believers are eternally secure), but the phrase is placed in the sentence to strengthen the warning. It is similar to saying something like this to a class of students: "It is impossible for a student, once enrolled in this course, if he turns the clock back which cannot be done, to start the course over. Therefore, let all students go on to deeper knowledge." In this view the phrases in verses 4-5 are understood to refer to the conversion experience. ([The Ryrie Study Bible](#) = Note Ryrie leaves on the "Hypothetical" Interpretation favored by Spurgeon)

Respected Pastor and Commentator **Ray Stedman** entitles his section on Hebrews

The Danger of Knowledge Without Faith (Hebrews 6:4-8) This solemn warning marks one of the great theological battlefields of Scripture. Here the clashing proponents of Calvinism and Arminianism have wheeled and charged, unleashing thunderous volleys of acrimony against one another, only to generate much heat and little profit. The Calvinists, mindful of the doctrine of the [perseverance of the saints](#) (eternal security) (ED: SEE Heb 3:6+, Heb 3:14+), seize upon the words **It is impossible ... if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance** "These cannot," they say, "be truly regenerated Christians, no matter how strongly the descriptive phrases of verses 4-5 seem to imply they are, for otherwise they would not fall away into irremediable apostasy." On the other hand, the Arminians focus on the descriptive phrases and say, "It is impossible to portray true Christians any more powerfully and accurately than is done here; therefore, since they are said to fall away it is clear that regeneration can be lost after it has been obtained." A third group of interpreters insist that the question of eternal salvation is not in question here at all, since it is only a matter of urging new Christians on to further understanding of their fellowship with Christ.

As in the case of many clashes over Scripture, there is truth in different views. We are helped here by viewing the readers not as a homogenous group who must all be classified in one category or another. Rather, they are a mixed assembly, among whom were many genuine believers needing a degree of prodding to go on in their experience of truth. There were also some who professed faith in Christ but who gave no evidence in their behavior or attitudes that they were truly regenerate. This is the case in many churches today and has been so in every generation of believers

from the first century on. No matter what careful expedients are employed to make sure that all church members are born again, it is almost certain that there is no congregation which is not just such a mixed multitude as the writer of Hebrews addresses. The ratio of true believers to apparent believers may vary widely, but since we cannot distinguish these by observation (or even careful testing), we must view these warnings as applying to us all. ([Hebrews 6:4-8 The Danger of Knowledge Without Faith](#))

In the chart below note the last column "Hypothetical." One might ask why put in a description of something that could not happen if you are trying to keep the readers from falling away? **Spurgeon** is one who believes this is hypothetical and explains it this way...

"But," says one, "if Christians cannot fall away (**ED: IT SEEMS THAT SPURGEON THOUGHT THE DESCRIPTION IN Heb 6:4-6 WAS OF GENUINE BELIEVERS, EVEN THOUGH THE FATE OF FALLING AWAY WAS HYPOTHETICAL BECAUSE GENUINE BELIEVERS CANNOT LOSE THEIR SALVATION**), what is the use of putting this text in to frighten, like a ghost that does not exist?" If God has put it in, he has put it in for wise reasons and excellent purposes. It is put in to keep us from falling away. God preserves his children, but he keeps them by the use of means. One of these is to show what would happen if they were to fall away. There is a steep cliff—what is the best way to keep anyone from going near it? To tell him that, if he did, he would inevitably be dashed to pieces. The fact that we are told the consequences keeps us from it (**ED: SO CLEARLY SPURGEON INTERPRETED "FALL AWAY" AS NOT JUST A LOSS OF REWARDS AS SOME DO!**). A friend puts away a cup of arsenic and says, "If you drink it, it will kill you." Does he suppose for a moment that we will drink it? No. He tells us the consequence and is sure we will not do it. So God says, "My child, if you fall over this cliff, you will be dashed to pieces." What does the child do? He says, "Father, keep me. Hold me up, and I will be safe." It leads the believer to greater dependence on God, to a holy fear and caution. This holy fear keeps the Christian from falling away."

John Piper has a thought provoking conclusion (which I agree with) in his sermon on Hebrews 6:4-8 writing...

For these five reasons (See [When is saving repentance impossible?](#)) I conclude that if a person falls away and re-crucifies the Son of God, he **has never been justified**. His faith was not a saving faith.

What Then Do These Verses Mean for Us? I'll be very personal, to give it its sharpest point. If in the coming years I commit apostasy and fall away from Christ, it will not be because I have not tasted of the word of God and the Spirit of God and the miracles of God. I have drunk of his word. The Spirit has touched me. I have seen his miracles and I have been his instrument for a few.

But if, over the next ten or twenty years, John Piper begins to cool off spiritually and lose interest in spiritual things and become more fascinated with making money and writing Christless books; and I buy the lie that a new wife would be exhilarating and that the children can fend for themselves and that the church of Christ is a drag and that the incarnation is a myth and that there is one life to live so let us eat drink and be merry -- if that happens, then know that the truth is this: John Piper was mightily deceived in the first fifty years of his life. His faith was an alien vestige of his father's joy (**ED: HIS FATHER WAS A PASTOR**). His fidelity to his wife was a temporary passion and compliance with social pressure; his fatherhood the outworking of natural instincts. His preaching was driven by the love of words and crowds. His writing was a love affair with fame. And his praying was the deepest delusion of all -- an attempt to get God to supply the resources of his vanity.

If this possibility does not make me serious and vigilant in the pursuit of everlasting joy, what will? The practical conclusion of this awesome truth is given in next week's text. In the meantime, I pray that you will not be glib, but serious, about whether Christ is your highest joy. If you really bank your hope on him and in him, he will not let you go. (Read his full discussion and reasoning for coming to this conclusion - [When is saving repentance impossible?](#))

Impossible (102) (**adunatos** from **a** = without + **dunatos** = possible, able, or powerful from **dunamai** = to be able or have power by virtue of inherent ability and resources. Note the stem *duna-* or *dyna-* conveying the basic sense of ability or capability, power, strength, might) means impossible, incapable of being or of occurring, incapable of being done. **Adunatos** is used twice to convey the idea of one who is impotent, has no strength or lacks capability in functioning adequately, once in a literal sense (Acts 14:8 below = powerless) and once in a spiritual sense (Romans 15:1 = of those who do not "strongly" believe).

As an aside here are the other uses of **impossible** in Hebrews and all use [adunatos](#)

- It is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18).
- It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sin (Hebrews 10:4).
- It is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Note that **adunatos** is not present in this verse in the Greek but is found in Hebrews 6:4 where it is placed first in the Greek sentence for **emphasis**. It's as if the author wants to make it blazingly, blatantly clear... **Impossible it is...** "!" One can hardly miss his point. In regard to man's moral offense, there is no "permanent cure" effected by the physical blood of animals.

There are 26 uses in the **Septuagint (LXX)** (Job 5:15, 16; 20:19; 24:4, 6, 22; 29:16; 30:25; 31:16, 20, 34; 34:20; 36:15, 19; Pr 30:18; Joel

3:10) and 10 uses in the NT. Note the obvious concentration of "impossibilities" in the book of Hebrews!

Matthew 19:26 And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is **impossible**, but with God all things are possible."

Mark 10:27 Looking upon them, Jesus said, "With men it is **impossible**, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

Luke 18:27 But He said, "The things **impossible** with men are possible with God."

Acts 14:8 And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, **without strength** in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

Romans 8:3+ For what the Law **could not do** (adunatos), weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh (**Comment:** The truth in Romans parallels that in Hebrews 10, Romans dealing with the Law per se and Hebrews addressing the Levitical sacrificial system. Neither source had the inherent ability to make man right before the Holy God and both point ultimately to the Son, the perfect Sacrifice and the fulfillment of the Law!)

Romans 15:1+ Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those **without strength** and not just please ourselves.

Hebrews 6:4+ (**ESV**) For it is **impossible** to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (**Note:** the NASB places "impossible" in Hebrews 6:6) (Note also that commentators and some translators take **adunatos** to mean "**difficult**" but clearly from the other NT uses and specifically the uses in Hebrews this is inappropriate and leads to a thoroughly incorrect interpretation of this stern warning passage. Note also that the ESV is more accurate as the first word in Hebrews 6:4 is adunatos which usually signifies emphasis.)

Hebrews 6:18+ in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is **impossible** for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

Hebrews 10:4+ For it is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 11:6+ And without faith it is **impossible** to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Restore (340) (**anakainizo** from **aná** = again or back + **kainízo** = renew, to produce something new <> **kainos** = qualitatively new) means to restore. It is found only here in the NT. The verb anakainizō is a compound of **kainos** "new" and **ana** "again" and the kind of "newness" in kainos is qualitative rather than temporal. **Anakainizo** is used in the secular writing Isocrates Areopagiticus 3 meaning to renew, "to give new life to something already there," "to restore". **Related word studies:** **anakainoo** and **anakainosis**

TDNT writes **anakainizo** means "to bring to conversion again." The seriousness of the distinctive teaching of Hebrews that there is no second repentance is here shown from the standpoint of the Christian teacher who is speaking. He and his fellow-teachers cannot bring complete apostates to a new beginning which will lead to conversion. The miracle of becoming a "brand new creation" occurs only once. In early Christian writings anakainizo is a common word in connection with regeneration

Repentance (3341) (**metanoia** from **meta** = after + **noéo** = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and implies a change of mind. From the NT uses, it is clear that **metanoia** means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes a complete change of heart attitude, of interest, and of the general direction of one's life. True repentance represents a "conversion" in every sense of the word. Think of the military command "About face" calling for a complete change in direction.

It should be stated at the outset that there are some in evangelical circles who teach that all repentance involves is a **change of mind**. The problem with this definition is that it has nothing to do with one's attitude toward sin and does not necessarily result in any change in lifestyle. But in Mt 3:8+ John the Baptist clearly links repentance with fruit (conduct, actions, etc) declaring "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance." John is not just calling for them to change their minds but to change their lives!

FOUR INTERPRETATIVE VIEWS OF HEBREWS 6:4-6

PROFESSORS BUT NOT POSSESSORS	SAVED BUT SORRY	FOUND AND LOST	HYPOTHETICAL
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R Kent Hughes	Charles Swindoll	Arminianism	C H Spurgeon
Kenneth Wuest	J Vernon McGee	John Wesley	Warren Wierse
F F Bruce	Charles Stanley	R C H Lenski	Spiros Zodhiates
John MacArthur	Merrill Unger		Charles Ryrie ??
Steven Cole	William Barclay		Lawrence Richards
Ray Stedman	Zane Hodges (Bible Knowledge Commentary)		KJV Bible Commentary
Charles Hodge	William Lane (Word Biblical Commentary)		Homer Kent
John Calvin	IVP Bible Background Commentary		Hewitt - The Epistle to the Hebrews
William Hendriksen	Jewish NT Commentary		
Wayne Grudem	Thomas Oberholtzer		
S Lewis Johnson			
C I Scofield			
Leon Morris			
W E Vine			
William MacDonald			
Wycliffe Commentary			
Evangelical Commentary			
John Gill			
Stanley Toussaint (Dallas Theological Seminary)			
Jonathan Edwards ??			

QUESTION - [Does Hebrews 6:4-6 mean we can lose our salvation?](#)

ANSWER - Hebrews 6:4–6 states, “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance.”

This is one of the Bible’s most difficult passages to interpret, but one thing is clear—it does not teach that we can [lose our salvation](#).

There are two valid ways of looking at these verses:

One interpretation holds that this passage is written not about Christians but about unbelievers...

One interpretation holds that this passage is written not about Christians but about unbelievers who are convinced of the basic truths of the gospel but who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. They are intellectually persuaded but spiritually uncommitted.

According to this interpretation, the phrase *once enlightened* (Hebrews 6:4) refers to some level of instruction in biblical truth. However, understanding the words of Scripture is not the same as being regenerated by the Holy Spirit. For example, John 1:9 describes Jesus, the “true Light,” giving light “to every man”; but this cannot mean the light of salvation, because not every man is saved. Through God’s sovereign power, every man has enough light to be held responsible. This light either leads to the complete acceptance of Jesus Christ or produces condemnation in those who reject such light. The people described in Hebrews 6:4–6 are of the latter group—unbelievers who have been exposed to God’s redemptive truth and perhaps have made a [profession of faith](#), but who have not exercised genuine saving faith.

This interpretation also sees the phrase ***tasted the heavenly gift*** (Hebrews 6:4) as referring to a momentary experience, akin to Jesus’ “tasting” death (Hebrews 2:9). This brief experience with the heavenly gift is not seen as equivalent to salvation; rather, it is likened to the second and third soils in Jesus’ parable (Matthew 13:3–23), which describes people who receive the truth of the gospel but are not truly

saved.

Finally, this interpretation sees the **“falling away”** (Hebrews 6:6) as a reference to those who have tasted the truth but, not having come all the way to faith, fall away from even the revelation they have been given. The tasting of truth is not enough to keep them from falling away from it. They must come all the way to Christ in complete repentance and faith; otherwise, they in effect re-crucify Christ and treat Him contemptuously. Those who sin against Christ in such a way have no hope of restoration or forgiveness because they reject Him with full knowledge and conscious experience. They have concluded that Jesus should have been crucified, and they stand with His enemies. It is impossible to renew such to repentance.

The other interpretation holds that this passage is written about Christians....

The other interpretation holds that this passage is written about Christians, and that the phrases ***partakers of the Holy Ghost, enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift*** are all descriptions of true believers.

This second interpretation is based on an alternate translation, found in the KJV and a few others, in which Hebrews 6:6 begins with the phrase ***if they fall away***, with the key word being ***if***. According to this view, the writer of Hebrews is setting up a hypothetical statement: ***‘IF a Christian were to fall away.’*** The point being made is that it would be impossible (IF a Christian falls away) to renew salvation. That’s because Christ died once for sin (Hebrews 9:28), and if His sacrifice is insufficient, then there’s no hope at all.

In this view, the passage presents an argument based on a false premise (that a true Christian can fall away) and follows it to its senseless conclusion (that Jesus would have to be sacrificed again and again). The absurdity of the conclusion points up the impossibility of the original assumption. This reasoning is called *reductio ad absurdum*, in which a premise is disproved by showing that it logically leads to an absurdity. The weakness of this view is that the Greek text does not contain a word equivalent to the English *if*.

Both of these interpretations support the security of the believer in Christ. The first interpretation, which has a stronger textual basis, presents unbelievers rejecting Christ and thereby losing their chance of salvation; the second, weaker interpretation presents the very idea of believers losing salvation as impossible. Many passages make it abundantly clear that salvation is everlasting (John 10:27–29; Romans 8:35, 38–39; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:4–5), and Hebrews 6:4–6 confirms that doctrine. GotQuestions.org

FOR IN THE CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE ONCE BEEN ENLIGHTENED: gar touthapax photisthentas (AAPMPA):

- **Once been enlightened** - Hebrews 10:32+; Numbers 24:3,15,16+
- Hebrews 6 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Those who (3588) describes a group (see [three groups](#) below) of individuals who have received significant exposure to spiritual truth and spiritual fruit. Each of these participles (*“enlightened... tasted... made partakers... tasted... fallen away”*) is governed by the article **tous** (*“those who”*).

Those who have once been enlightened ([photizo](#)) - As described in more detail in the discussion of [photizo](#), the enlightenment spoken can describe either unbelievers or believers.

When Jesus first came to Galilee to minister, He declared that He had come to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-2, which, in part, reads, “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light” (Mt 4:16+).

All who saw and heard Jesus saw this “great light,” but not all who saw and heard were saved. Seeing God’s light and accepting it are not the same. Those people in Galilee, as all people who hear the gospel, were to some extent enlightened but, judging by the biblical accounts, few believed in Jesus. As explained below, the same thing had happened to the Jews being addressed in Hebrews 6:4-8. They were enlightened but not saved. Consequently, they were in danger of losing all opportunity of being saved, and of becoming apostate. It is of such people that Peter speaks in 2 Peter 2:20, 2:21+.

Once enlightened - What does he mean?

The word is not a “technical term” that means that the people in question were saved.

Wayne Grudem on **enlightened** - The word **enlightened** translates the Greek term φωτιστω (G5894) which refers to learning in general, not necessarily a learning that results in salvation—it is used in John 1:9+ of “enlightening” every man that comes into the world, in 1 Cor. 4:5+ of the enlightening that comes at the final judgment, and in Eph. 1:18+ of the enlightening that accompanies growth in the Christian life. The word is not a “technical term” that means that the people in question were saved. (See [page 695 Systematic Theology](#))

Kenneth Wuest explains that **“once** is literally “once for all,” and is used of that which is so done as to be of perpetual validity, and never needs repetition. That means that as these Hebrews listened to the message of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit enlightened their minds and hearts to clearly understand it. The work of the Spirit with reference to their understanding of New Testament truth had been so

thorough that it needed never to be repeated for the purpose of making the truth clear to them. These Hebrews had understood these issues perfectly. The type was set aside for the reality, the First Testament for the New. They were enlightened as every sinner is enlightened who comes under the hearing of God's Word. But as the unsaved in an evangelistic meeting today clearly understand the message of salvation but sometimes refuse the light and turn back into the darkness of sin and continued unbelief, so these Hebrews were in danger of doing a like thing." ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

*Though knowledge is prerequisite to faith,
it does not always indicate that saving faith is present.*

-- Ray Stedman

Ray Stedman writes that **enlightenment** "plainly means an intellectual understanding of God's redemptive actions...though knowledge is prerequisite to faith, it does not always indicate that saving faith is present. ([Hebrews 6:4-8 The Danger of Knowledge Without Faith](#))

*One can have a great deal of light
and still not be a genuine believer in Christ.*

-- S Lewis Johnson

S Lewis Johnson asks

"What does it mean to be **enlightened**? For some people "**to be enlightened**" would necessarily mean to be converted. Now it is of course true that all people who are converted have indeed been **enlightened**. However, the question is whether all who have been **enlightened** are converted? Turn to Numbers 24 and listen to what is said about Balaam the prophet (the NT makes clear that he was a false prophet).

Numbers 24:4; 16 - The oracle of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered... 16 The oracle of him who hears the words of God, And knows the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered.

Then in the NT we have 3 texts to which Balaam is referred:

Jude 1:11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

2 Peter 2:15 (note) forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

Revelation 2:14 (note) 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

Clearly, Balaam had a great deal of the knowledge of the Lord God. He was a prophet, that is one who gave prophecies. Furthermore, if you have ever studied those prophecies you will find that they consist of 4 magnificent Messianic prophecies. Balaam's prophecies are not dealing with insignificant things but rather with the coming of the Messiah and the things that would be characteristic of His person and kingdom. So out of his mouth have come some magnificent prophecies that are part of the Word of God, yet the NT apparently regards Balaam among those who are lost. **The point that I am making is simply this: one can have a great deal of light and still not be a genuine believer in Christ.** ([Hebrews 6:1-12 The Thing God Cannot Permit](#); [Hebrews 6:1-12 Peril of Apostasy](#))

Now carefully observe the **pronouns** used by the writer in **Hebrews 6:1-12**... **Did you observe three distinct groups?** The pronouns suggest that there are three groups of individuals being described. The **first** group (us, we) is clearly believers, the writer including himself in this group. The **second** group is the problematic group the identity of which has been interpreted in radically different ways by various commentators. Finally, the **third** group (you, your) points toward believing Jews worshiped and studied together.

THREE GROUPS Hebrews 6:1-12		
Group 1	Hebrews 6:1-3	us, we
Group 2	Hebrews 6:4-8	those who, them, those
Group 3	Hebrews 6:9-12	(we) you, your, you. each one of you

I personally believe that the teaching of the NT in general (that one cannot lose genuine salvation), the flow of the epistle of Hebrews up to this point and the distinctive descriptions of the three groups favors the interpretation of **Group 2** as represented by Jewish readers who are not born again, not regenerate, not redeemed, not justified, and in short are not genuine believers. They had clearly witnessed the power, glory, and truth of the gospel in the Scriptures and they had observed the dramatic testimony of radically transformed lives in other Jews, but they were not born again. To paraphrase Jesus (see Mark 10:21, 12:34) "*they were those who were not far from the Kingdom of God*

but one thing they lacked... genuine, saving faith in the Messiah".

Note what Hebrews 6:4-8 does not say. There are no definitive terms which uniquely describe salvation. In other words there are no terms that can only be used to describe a saved person -- **justification, sanctification, new birth, regeneration, new creature, in Christ, etc.** Stated another way "**those who... them... those**" (Group 2) are not spoken of as born again, made holy or made righteous. On the other hand, none of the descriptions of Group 2 is ever used elsewhere in NT as a definite synonym for a saved person! And this even includes "partakers of the Holy Spirit". Now if he had stated something like they are "those who possess the seal of the Spirit" or "those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit", etc, then we would know beyond a shadow of doubt that he was describing genuine believers.

Are there any examples of "**Group 2**" individuals seen anywhere in Scripture? Clearly, the answer is yes, the prime example being Judas Iscariot, who even his fellow disciples did not suspect. Was Judas not enlightened? Absolutely, for he traveled for 3 years in the company of the very One Who described Himself as the Light of the World (John 8:12). Judas Iscariot was like "those who" were not in darkness concerning the way of salvation. He had been enlightened but he rejected the light and he gave the Son of God over to be crucified by evil men (compare verse 6 "... since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame")

EXAMPLE OF SIMON MAGUS

Another vivid example is seen in Acts 8 in **Simon Magus** of the city of Samaria. Luke records (read all of chapter 8 to get the proper context) that when Simon witnessed the miracles of Paul and the response to Philip's preaching of the good news...

even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. (Acts 8:13-see commentary)

Remembering that **Acts** is a transitional book (from Old Covenant to New Covenant), we read Luke's explanation that these new believers had not yet received the promised Holy Spirit although they had received (accepted deliberately and readily) the Word of God. And so the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John who came to Samaria and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." (Acts 8:16-24+)

Clearly **Simon** had believed but like the demons who believe, he lacked a saving belief as the subsequent events demonstrated. He shared in the experience of the Holy Spirit but there is no direct statement that he ever received the Holy Spirit. In fact Peter's strong words clearly reflect that he did not think Simon was saved.

Finally, **Jesus** Himself described those who had experienced incredible spiritual power but failed to experience Jesus Himself...

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does [present tense](#) - HABITUALLY, NOT PERFECTION BUT AT LEAST "DIRECTION" - AKA "HEAVENWARD" AND NOT THE CONVERSE) the will of My Father who is in heaven.

22 "**Many** (NOTE THIS SAD WORD "MANY") will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (NOTE: HE DOES NOT DISPUTE THAT THEY DID THESE THINGS - WE KNOW JUDAS CARRIED OUT SUPERNATURAL ACTS BUT HE WAS NOT SAVED. CLEARLY SUPERNATURAL ACTS DO NOT SAVE. ONLY GENUINE FAITH IN JESUS SAVES!)

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **DEPART** FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE [present tense](#) = as their habitual practice, they have never manifested any evidence or fruit of a changed behavior in keeping with

true repentance and faith.) LAWLESSNESS.' (Mt 7:21-23- **notes** Matthew 7:21; 7:22; 7:23)

COMMENT - Note that Jesus did not dispute their claims of **prophesying**, casting out of **demons** or performing **miracles**, all things that otherwise might be taken as the accoutrements so to speak of those who had experienced genuine salvation. And yet clearly these were **those who** continually practiced lawlessness and therefore **those who** Jesus never knew in a salvation sense.

On the other hand it should be noted that although the descriptive terms in Hebrews 6:4-5 do not absolutely imply regeneration, these descriptions are such that they do suggest exposure to the salvation experience. To be sure, the description in Hebrews 6:4-5 is not that of every non-believer's exposure to the truth but clearly describes "**those who**" had seen and participated in great spiritual blessings and experiences, much like Judas Iscariot, Simon Magus and those Jesus described in Matthew 7:21-23. And yet these same individuals are among **those who** fall away and in so doing, crucify the Son of God and put Him to open shame, coming to the point where it is impossible to renew them to repentance.

D. J. DeHaan wrote the following regarding the other major warning passage in Hebrews 10 noting that...

Today's text speaks of trampling underfoot the precious Son of God. This warning, along with Hebrews 6:1-8, has caused untold agony to many sensitive Christians. It's as if Satan uses Hebrews 6:4 and Hebrews 10:26+ to create hopelessness and despair. But what do these passages teach?

F. F. Bruce points out that they refer to people who have deliberately abandoned reliance on the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

Raymond Brown said that theirs is not a single act of falling away, but a state of willful, determined renunciation of all dependence on Christ's atoning work. God has no other plan for saving those who regard Christ's sacrifice as useless. (Our Daily Bread)

Once (530) (**hapax**) means literally once or one time. It is used to describe a simple numerical occurrence of once (2Co 11:25). It can also be used to convey the sense of something done uniquely and thus means once for all. It is that which is so done as to be of perpetual validity, and never needs repetition (see note Hebrews 9:28).

Friberg - adverb; once; (1) as a strictly numerical concept in the sense of one time once (2Co 11.25); once a year (Heb 9.7); (2) of something done uniquely only once, once for all (Heb 9.28); (3) idiomatically a[. kai. di.j literally once and twice, i.e. more than once, several times (Php 4.16) (BORROW [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

Gilbrant - From the time of Homer, classical Greek writings contain this term as an actual numeral. However, this word, like the Latin *semel*, also could refer to the quality of perpetual validity, **that which did not need repetition**. Sometimes it was employed in connection with the enactment of a law that was given once and for all. This once-for-all sense came to be far more important than the simple numerical significance.

In the Septuagint **hapax** translates the Hebrew terms 'echādh, "one (the number), one (of something), once," and pa'am, (with reference to time) "just once, this time, once or twice" (Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon, "echādh," and "pa'am"). Abraham requested that he be allowed to speak "once more" on behalf of Sodom (Genesis 18:32; cf. Judges 6:39). "Once a year" Aaron made atonement for the people (Exodus 30:10; 3 Maccabees 1:11; cf. 1 Chronicles 11:11 of a "single" encounter). "Once" in terms of finality is the expression in Psalm 89:35 (LXX 88:35): "Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness" (NIV).

The major impact of this expression can be seen in the New Testament. While it sometimes is seen as "once" in contrast to two or three times (2 Corinthians 11:25; Philippians 4:16; Hebrews 9:7), its major significance relates to the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ as something that cannot and need not be repeated. Both the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 9:26-28) and Peter (1 Peter 3:18) used this adverb to express the once-for-all nature of God's actions, especially as related to the sacrifice of Jesus for mankind. While the high priest had to enter the Most Holy Place every year with a blood offering, Jesus did so only once. Furthermore, the high priest first had to sacrifice for his own sins, but Jesus had none. Jude also employed this term to refer to the once-and-for-all body of doctrine given to the Church (Jude 3). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

In the NT **hapax** is found most often in the book of Hebrews. Below are the 14 uses of **hapax**...

2 Corinthians 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, **once** I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

Philippians 4:16 (note) for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than **once** for my needs.

1Thessalonians 2:18 (note) For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than **once**-- and yet Satan thwarted us.

Hebrews 6:4 (note) 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,

Hebrews 9:7 (note) but into the second only the high priest enters, **once** a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.

Hebrews 9:26 (note) Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now **once** at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself²⁷ (note) And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die **once** and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ (note) so Christ also, having been offered **once** to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Hebrews 10:2 (note) Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having **once** been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

Hebrews 12:26 (note) And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet **once** more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." ²⁷ (note) And this expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

¹ Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins **once** for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was **once** for all delivered to the saints.

Jude 1:5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things **once** for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

There are **30** uses in the Septuagint (LXX) Gen. 18:32; Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16:34; Num. 16:21, 45; Deut. 9:13; Jos. 10:42; Jdg. 6:39; 15:3; 16:18, 20, 28; 20:30f; 1 Sam. 3:10; 17:39; 20:25; 26:8; 2 Sam. 17:7; 23:8; 1 Chr. 11:11; 2 Chr. 9:21; Neh. 13:20; Job 33:14; 40:5; Ps. 62:11; 89:35; Isa. 66:8; Dan. 2:35; Hag. 2:6).

Enlightened (5461) (photizo from phos = light) means to bring to light, to shed light upon or to cause light to shine upon some object, in the sense of illuminating it. Figuratively, photizo means to give guidance or understanding, to make clear or to cause something to be known by revealing clearly. It may mean to make known in reference to the inner life or transcendent matters. **Photizo** was used in pagan initiation rites.

There **38** uses in the Septuagint (LXX) Ex 37:17; Nu 4:9; 8:2; 1 Sa 29:10; 2 Ki. 12:2; 17:27f; Ezra 2:63; 9:8; Neh. 7:65; 9:12, 19; Ps. 13:3; 18:28; 19:8; 34:5; 76:4; 105:39; 119:130; 139:12; Pr 4:18; Eccl. 8:1; Isaiah 60:1, 19; Dan. 4:11; Hos 10:12; Mic 7:8)

PHOTIZO - 11 uses in the NT...

Luke 11:36 "If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp **illumines** you with its rays."

John 1:9 There was the true light which, coming into the world, **enlightens** every man.

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both **bring to light** the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

Ephesians 1:18 (note) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be **enlightened**, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Ephesians 3:9 (note) and to **bring to light** what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things;

2 Timothy 1:10 (note) but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and **brought** life and immortality to **light** through the gospel,

Hebrews 6:4 (note) 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,

Hebrews 10:32 (note) But remember the former days, when, after **being enlightened**, you endured a great conflict of sufferings

Comment: Note that in this verse **enlightened** clearly refers to those who not only experienced the light but received the light and were changed by the light of the gospel message as demonstrated by their "good works" - enduring a **great conflict of sufferings**. However, one can hardly use this verse to warrant interpretation of the enlightenment of those in Hebrews 6:4 as indicating that they were genuine believers. As John 1:9 and 2Ti 1:10 above indicate, enlightenment is just that - exposure to truth. But exposure to truth does not guarantee reception

of the truth in a way that transforms one to the point that they are willing to endure a great conflict of sufferings. Had the writer indicated that the readers in Hebrews 6:4-6 had fruit in keeping with repentance, one could justifiably label them as believers. There is simply no evidence of real fruit in their lives.

Revelation 18:1 ([note](#)) After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was **illuminated** with his glory.

Revelation 21:23 ([note](#)) And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has **illuminated** it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Revelation 22:5 ([note](#)) And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall **illumine** them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

From these NT uses we note that photizo is used in John 1:9 to describe "every man" as enlightened! Enlightened yes, but saved no, for clearly not all men are saved. There is a similar use of photizo in the OT David recording that...

The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, **enlightening** (LXX = photizo) the eyes. (Psalm 19:8)

Photizo is used in 2 Timothy in a similar way Paul recording that Jesus had been foretold from eternity past...

but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to **light** through the gospel, (See note 2 Timothy 1:10)

Comment: In other words Jesus showed that true life and eternal life were found in the gospel, but not everyone who heard the gospel experienced true life and eternal life even though they were exposed to the source.

The psalmist used **photizo** in

The unfolding of Thy words gives light (LXX - photizo); It gives understanding to the simple. (Ps 119:130)

In these passages from the **Septuagint**, **photizo** means to give light by knowledge or teaching. Photizo therefore means to make one mentally aware of something or to instruct or inform them. Photizo describes the objective reality of one's exposure to the truth, but conveys no sense of how the recipient will respond - they can either accept or reject the light. They can either believe or disbelieve. Exposure to the light does not guarantee belief in the light.

John explains that God's word **enlightens** or **gives light** but not every one receives or accepts the light so as to be saved. John spoke of two responses (and there are only 2, apathy or indifference is tantamount to rejection!) that occur when sinners are exposed to the light...

And this is the judgment, that the **light** is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the **light**; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the **light**, and does not come to the **light**, lest his deeds should be exposed. But (the contrast describing believers) he who practices the truth comes to the **light**, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. (John 3:19-21+)

Although the word **photizo** is not used, there is a similar idea in **2 Peter 1:19**...

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19+)

AND HAVE TASTED OF THE HEAVENLY GIFT: geusamenous (AMPMPA) te tes doreas tes epouraniou:

- Matthew 7:21+; Matthew 7:22+; Luke 10:19,20; John 3:27; 4:10; 6:32; Acts 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; Romans 1:11+; 1 Corinthians 13:1,2; Ephesians 2:8+; Ephesians 3:7+; Ephesians 4:7+; 1 Timothy 4:14; James 1:17+; James 1:18+
- Hebrews 6 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

And have tasted ([geuomai](#)) **of the heavenly gift** ([dorea](#)) - The metaphor changes from light to food, both of which are basic human experiences.

Wayne Grudem on **tasted** ([geuomai](#)) - The text further says that these people "have tasted the heavenly gift" and that they "have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4-5). Inherent in the idea of tasting is the fact that the tasting is temporary and one might or might not decide to accept the thing that is tasted. For example, the same Greek word (γεύομαι, G1174) is used in Matthew 27:34 to say that those crucifying Jesus "offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it." The word is also used in a figurative sense meaning "come to know something."¹⁴ If we understand it in this figurative sense, as it must be understood here since the passage is not talking about tasting literal food, then it means that these people have come to understand the heavenly gift (which probably means here that they had experienced some of the power of the Holy Spirit at work) and to know something of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come. It does not necessarily mean that they had (or did not have)

genuine saving faith, but may simply mean that they came to understand it and have some experience of spiritual power.¹⁵(See [page 695 Systematic Theology](#))

Wuest explains the tasting writing that "They had **tasted of the heavenly gift**, and in such a way as to give them a distinct impression of its character and quality, for the words "**once for all**" qualify this word also. These Hebrews were like the spies at **Kadesh-Barnea** who saw the land and had the very fruit in their hands, and yet turned back (Hebrews 4:1-13). One of the pre-salvation ministries of the Spirit is to enable the unsaved who come under the hearing of the gospel, to have a certain appreciation of the blessedness of salvation. He equips them with a spiritual sense of taste with reference to the things of God. Many a sinner has been buoyed up by the message of the evangelist, has had stirrings in his bosom, has had a pleasant reaction towards the truth, and yet when the decision time came has said, "The world is too much with us;" (**Ed note:** Or "I will have to give up too much to come to Christ") and has turned back into sin. [Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Ray Stedman on tasted - Some have made the point that Jesus' tasting of death (Hebrews 2:9) clearly describes a full and complete death. Therefore, they argue, tasting the heavenly gift must mean an actual participation in the life of Jesus. But "taste" (Gk *geuomai*) is not always used in this way. In Matthew 27:34 it refers to Jesus' tasting the wine that was offered him on the cross but refusing to drink it. Thus here and in Hebrews 6:5 "tasting" may indicate something only partial.

What is the **gift**? While we cannot be absolutely certain, comparison with the other uses of *dorea* recorded below suggest that the gift could be a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit (as in Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17)

Regarding the identification of the **heavenly gift**, **Stedman** writes that "The gift can be the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:4) or Jesus himself (Jn 4:10; 2 Cor 9:15), since both come from heaven. The mention of the Spirit in the next phrase seems to indicate the gift here is Jesus. ([Hebrews 6:4-8 The Danger of Knowledge Without Faith](#))

Tasted (1089) (*geuomai*) means literally to taste with the mouth. Metaphorically *geuomai* means to experience, prove, partake of or come to know. Figuratively *geuomai* (as used in secular Greek) meaning to "come to know" or to experience something. (Mt 16:28, Mk 9:1, Lk 9:27, Jn 8:52, He 2:9, 1Pe 2:3). It is used in idiomatic expressions like "taste death" which is another way to say "to die".

BDAG - (1) to partake of something by mouth = to taste, partake of (2) to experience something cognitively or emotionally = to come to know.

Geuomai - 15x in 15v in NAS - Mt 16:28; 27:34; Mk 9:1; Luke 9:27; 14:24; John 2:9; 8:52; Acts 10:10; 20:11; 23:14; Col 2:21; Heb 2:9; 6:4f; 1Pe 2:3. NAS = eat(1), eaten(1), taste(8), tasted(4), tasting(1).

Wayne Grudem on *geuomai* - BAGD p. 157. They mention other examples of γεύομαι ("taste"), such as Herodotus 6.5, where the people of Miletus had "**tasted** of freedom," but it was certainly not their own possession. They also cite Dio Chrysostom, 32.72, where he speaks of the people of Alexandria in a time when they "had a **taste** of warfare" in an encounter with Roman troops who were simply harassing them and not actually engaging in genuine war. Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2.158, speaks about the theological views of the Essenes "whereby they irresistibly attract all who have once **tasted** their philosophy." Here again Josephus makes it clear that those who have "**once tasted**" have not yet made the Essene philosophy their own, but are simply very strongly attracted to it. By analogy, in Heb. 6 those who have "**tasted**" the heavenly gift and the word of God and the powers of the age to come may be strongly attracted to these things, or they may not be, but mere tasting does not mean that they have made it their own—quite the contrary, if all the author can say of them is that they have "**tasted**" these things, it suggests that they have not made what they tasted to be their own. The word **tasted** is also used in Heb. 2:9 to say that Jesus "**tasted** death," indicating that he came to know it by experience (but "**tasted**" is an apt word because he did not remain dead). The same could be true of those who had some experience of heavenly gifts, as can be true even of unbelievers (cf. Matt. 7:22; 1 Cor. 7:14; 2 Peter 2:20–22). **In Heb. 6:4–5 these people's experience of the Holy Spirit's power and of the Word of God was of course a genuine experience (just as Jesus genuinely died), but that by itself does not show that the people had an experience of regeneration** (See page 696 of [Systematic Theology](#))

Gift (1431) (*dorea* from *didomi* = to give) refers to a free gift and emphasizes the gratuitous character of the gift. **Dorea** describes that which is given or transferred freely by one person to another. It is something bestowed freely, without price or compensation. In ancient Rome we find **dorea** used in an Imperial writing during the time of Hadrian referring to the Emperor's **beneficium** (in Roman law this referred to some special privilege or favor granted) to the soldiers.

Dorea in the NT often emphasizes the freeness of God's grace and gifts, whereas **charisma** (gift) highlights the gracious aspect of what God has done. **Dorea** does not focus on the undeservedness of the gift as does *charismata* (the special "gifts"; see above 1Cor. 12:4; cf 1 Peter 4:10+) nor on the spiritual source of the gift as does *pneumatikon* ("spiritual gifts," literally spiritual things as in 1Cor 12:1). In other words, *dorea* places the stress on "free" and does not emphasize the quality or character of the gift as much as it does the gratuitous nature.

Peter used **dorea** 4 times in Acts to refer to the gift of the Spirit...

Acts 2:38+ And Peter said to them (to the Jews), "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the **gift** (dorea) of the Holy Spirit. (**Comment:** Contrary to much contemporary teaching, Peter attached no condition to receiving the Spirit except repentance. Nor did he promise that any supernatural phenomena would accompany their reception of the Spirit)

Acts 8:20+ But Peter (to Simon the Sorcerer) said to him, "May your silver perish (ruin of all that gives worth to existence) with you, because you thought you could obtain the **gift** (dorea) of God with money (source of our English word simony - he buying or selling of a church office, pardons or other ecclesiastical privileges)!"

Acts 10:45+ And all the circumcised believers (born again Jews) who had come with Peter were amazed, because the **gift** (dorea) of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also (Roman centurion Cornelius and those with him - they discerned the Gentiles had the gift because they spoke in tongues - God wanted the Jews to know that the church was to be composed of Jews and Gentiles on equal grounds at the foot of the Cross!).

Acts 11:17+ "If God therefore gave to them (the Gentiles who believed in Messiah) the same **gift** (dorea) as He gave to us (Jews at Pentecost, Acts 2) also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

Here are the other 9 NT uses (4 uses in the Septuagint - Da 2:6, 48; 5:17; 11:39) of **dorea**...

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the **gift** (dorea) of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water (fulfilled in New life through the Spirit, as in John 7:37-39)."

Romans 5:15 (note) But the free gift (charisma) is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the **gift (dorea)** by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many (who received Him by faith).

Romans 5:17 (note) For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the **gift (dorea)** of righteousness will reign in life (especially as they supernaturally experience power over their former master "Sin") through the One, Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable (incapable of being adequately uttered or expressed) **gift** (dorea)!

Ephesians 3:7 (note) (Paul speaking of the gospel through which the mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body was revealed says that in regard to this gospel) I was made a minister, according to the **gift** (dorea) of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

AND HAVE BEEN MADE SHARERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: kai metochous genethentas (APPPMPA) pneumatos hagiou:

- Hebrews 2:4-note; Acts 15:8; Galatians 3:2,5
- Hebrews 6 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Have been made ([1096](#)) (ginomai) means to become or come into existence.

Wayne Grudem on **partakers** - The text also further says that these people "have become partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 6:4). The question here is the exact meaning of the word μέτοχος which is here translated "**partaker**." It is not always clear to English-speaking readers that this term has a range of meaning and may imply very close participation and attachment, or may only imply a loose association with the other person or persons named. For example, the context shows that in Hebrews 3:14 to become a "**partaker**" of Christ means to have a very close participation with him in a saving relationship. On the other hand, μέτοχος can also be used in a much looser sense, simply to refer to associates or companions. We read that when the disciples took in a great catch of fish so that their nets were breaking, "they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them" (Luke 5:7). Here it simply refers to those who were companions or partners with Peter and the other disciples in their fishing work. Heb. 1:9 also uses the same word to speak of "comrades" (RSV) or "companions" (NIV, NASB). Ephesians 5:7+ uses a closely related word (συμμέτοχος, summetochos, a compound of μέτοχος and the preposition σύν - "with") when Paul warns Christians about the sinful acts of unbelievers and says, "do not associate with them" (Eph. 5:7+). He is not concerned that their total nature will be transformed by the unbelievers, but simply that they will associate with them and have their own witness compromised and their own lives influenced to some degree by them. By analogy, Hebrews 6:4-6 speaks of people who have been "**associated with**" the Holy Spirit, and thereby had their lives influenced by him, but it need not imply that they had a redeeming work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, or that they were regenerated. By similar analogy with the example of the fishing companions in Luke 5:7, Peter and the disciples could be associated with them and even to some degree influenced by them without having a thoroughgoing change of life caused by that association. The very word μέτοχος allows for a range of influence from fairly weak to fairly strong, for it only means "one who participates with or shares with or accompanies in some activity." This was apparently what had happened to these people spoken of in Hebrews 6, who had been associated with the church and as such associated with the work of the Holy Spirit, and no doubt had been influenced by him in some ways in their lives. (See [page 696 of Systematic Theology](#))

Partakers (3353) (**metochos** from **metecho** = have with, describing participation with another in common blessings) describes one who shares with someone else as an associate in an enterprise or undertaking. It speaks of those who are participators in something. Business partner, companion. Participating in. Accomplice in. Comrade.

Metochos is used 6 times in the NT...

Luke 5:7+ and they signaled to their **partners** in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

Hebrews 1:9+ "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy **companions**."

Hebrews 3:1+ Therefore, holy brethren, **partakers** of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

Hebrews 3:14+ For we have become **partakers** of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;

Hebrews 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,

Hebrews 12:8 + But if you are without discipline, of which all have become **partakers**, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Metochos is used elsewhere in Hebrews in the context of believers (Hebrews 3:1 "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,;" Hebrews 3:14 "For we have become partakers of Christ") and thus the statement that the readers **have been made sharers of the Holy Spirit** seems at first glance to be strong support that true believers are being addressed. Paul's admonition in (Romans 8:9+) that "*If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ*" identifies the indwelling presence of the Spirit as the seal of a regenerated life.

But the judicious reader (and interpreter) does well to remember that there are other ministries of the Holy Spirit that precede the indwelling of believers. It is very plausible to envision an individual becoming a sharer in or partaker of the Spirit (and his pre-salvation ministry - e.g., convicting of sin, righteousness and judgment to come) by responding for a time to His drawing power intended to lead sinners to Christ. The translation "shared" implies something done in company with others and before salvation all believers shared in the convicting ministry of the Spirit Who drew them to salvation.

Note also that the writer does not state that these individuals were **indwelt** by the Holy Spirit or **sealed** by the Holy Spirit or **possessors** of the Spirit's **pledge** (guarantee) of future inheritance!

The question many ask is can a person partake of the Spirit and fall away and yet be truly born again? In other words can a truly saved person be lost? Or can you have these incredible "experiences" and yet not be truly saved? Either possibility should be sobering.

In the immediate context (Hebrews 6:7; 6:8) the writer describes **Rain, Ground and Growth**, the picture the writer presents is **not** that of a field that had life and vegetation and then lost it, but of two different kinds of fields, one fruitful and blessed contrasted with another which is barren and burned. If we have set in the midst of the assembly and experienced light, the Word, the ministry of the Spirit and to some extent been shaped by that environment and then turn away, we are like a field that never had vegetation and which comes into judgment. The rain produced no life. Then in Hebrews 6:9+ the writer presents a strong contrast (See note on Group 3): a picture of truly saved recipients. So these in fact are truly saved and their vegetation will not be "forgotten" by God. He believes "BETTER" things than fruitlessness & apostasy accompany salvation.

In Hebrews 3:6+ and Hebrews 3:14+ the writer describes perseverance in the faith as proof that one has become a partaker of true salvation. What would be the opposite of persevering? In the present context it would be **falling away** from the faith which would equate with no evidence of salvation. Stated another way, the one who does not persevere in the faith, does not show that they have fallen out of partaking in Christ, but that they had never become a partaker of the free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus. It seems clear that the writer does not believe one can be in Christ and then out of Christ at a later time.

In Hebrews 13:20,21 the writer prays...

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (see notes Hebrews 13:20; 21)

Comment - This prayer speaks of an eternal covenant in His blood and such a covenant implies finality. Furthermore, in Hebrews 13:21 we see that **every good thing** we do is enabled by His working through us (as we surrender our will to His Spirit's filling and strengthening) and thus whether we persevere in faith and bear fruit depends not on us but upon God working in us. And He who promised is faithful (Heb 10:23+). God Alone can bring forth fruit that would

be pleasing in His sight. So we see in summary that God is fulfilling His new covenant promise to preserve His beloved safe until the end and then eternally ("eternal covenant in His blood")

In summary, I believe that the one who **falls away** never had saving faith. He may have have faith but not a faith that produced a circumcision of the heart from which there would "no return" (i.e., you cannot uncircumcise what has been circumcised!). It is important to remember that we all express faith every day and yet that faith does not necessarily save us. When we go through a green light, we act on our belief that the oncoming traffic has a red light (even though we cannot see it) and that they are going to stop. Similarly, the Scripture speaks of faith or belief that is not saving faith. There are many verses that speak to a "faith" that falls short of regenerating the soul.

For example **John 2:23-25+** records the following...

Now when He (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, **many believed in His name**, beholding His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, **was not entrusting Himself** to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.

Comment: The [Believer's Study Bible](#) has this explanatory note "The contrast is between people who put their trust (pisteuo, Gk.) in Jesus, and Jesus, who does not put His trust in people because He knows their motives and thoughts. Enthusiasm for the spectacular is present in them, but Jesus looks for genuine faith."

Henry Morris [[Defenders Study Bible](#)] echoes the preceding comment writing that "Although many in the Jerusalem crowd "believed in his name when they saw the miracles" [John 2:23], Jesus did not "believe" in them because He knew their hearts and knew their outward faith in Him was only superficial.)

In a similar passage **John 8** records that...

As He (Jesus) spoke these things, many came to **believe** in Him. (this certainly sounds like genuine belief at first glance) 31 Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine 32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:30-32+)

Jesus addressing this same group who had ostensibly believed in Him goes on to say that...

"You are of your father the devil..." (John 8:44+)

Jesus climaxes His presentation by making a statement that His audience recognized as a claim to deity. Watch what these who had come to "believe in Him" in John 8:30+ sought to do to their "Savior"!

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (the "ego eimi" = the **Am** designation God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3:4) Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple. (John 8:58-59+)

To reiterate, these Hebrews became participators in the Holy Spirit insofar as an unsaved person can do so, namely, in the sense that they willingly co-operated with Him in receiving His pre-salvation ministry, that of leading them on step by step toward the act of faith. He had led them into the act of repentance. The next step would be that of faith. Here they were in danger of turning their backs upon the Spirit and returning to the sacrifices.

To repeat **partakers (metochos) of the Holy Spirit** in this context does not signify that the readers had been born of the Spirit, sealed with the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, anointed with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, or filled with the Spirit. If the writer had qualified their "sharing" with any of these designations, then we would conclude they were genuine believers and would have to deal with that problem (in regard to those who fall away). But the writer does not qualify his statement regarding their sharing and neither should we.

Ray Stedman agrees that "there are other ministries of the Spirit that precede those of indwelling. One can become a sharer in or partaker ([metochos](#)) of the Spirit by responding for a time to his drawing power intended to lead one ultimately to Christ. ([Hebrews 6:4-8 The Danger of Knowledge Without Faith](#))

Remember that this work of the Holy Spirit in leading them on towards faith was a once-for-all work, so thoroughly done that it needed never to be repeated. However, there was nothing permanent of itself in this work, for the work was only a means to an end. This is shown by the aorist participle used, referring to the mere fact, not a perfect tense, speaking of a finished act having present results.

It is possible to partake of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in different ways.

S Lewis Johnson writes that "It is possible to partake of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in different ways. It is possible to partake of the Holy Spirit as genuine believers do today, that is to receive the Holy Spirit as the indwelling 3rd Person of the Trinity according to the promise our Lord made in John 14:16-17. John 14:16-17 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. Thus, characteristic of this age is that every believer has the everlasting indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, "**partakers (metochos) of the Holy Spirit**" in other ways may not necessarily involve an everlasting indwelling. For example back in Heb. 2:3-4 we read: "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to

us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (see notes Hebrews 2:2; 2:3) In other words, the author here acknowledges that he and his audience have already known about the work of the Holy Spirit in the confirmation of the Word of God. The Word that was confirmed God bearing witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. He refers of course to mighty working of the Holy Spirit in the signs and wonders that characterized the ministry of our Lord and that of the apostles. So to **partake of** is to have been there and that is indeed what our author is talking about for these people had lived in that age. Like the **Galatians 3:3, Paul** speaks to them and says to them, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" He defines what he means by "having begun by the Spirit" in the previous verse by stating, "This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" (Galatians 3:2) Then in Galatians 3:5 he writes, "So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" (Gal 3:5) So the early church experienced the outworking of the power of God in the ministry of Holy Spirit through the apostles and so it could be said that in that sense they were **partakers** of the Holy Spirit. ([Hebrews 6:1-12 The Thing God Cannot Permit -audio](#); [Hebrews 6:1-12 Peril of Apostasy - audio](#))

*The Greek word translated partakers does not mean possessors,
in the sense that these Hebrews possessed the Holy Spirit as an indwelling Person
Who had come to take up His permanent abode in their hearts.*

Kenneth Wuest has a good word on **partakers** ([metochos](#)) of the **Holy Spirit** writing that "We must be careful to note that the Greek word translated **partakers** does not mean **possessors**, in the sense that these Hebrews possessed the Holy Spirit as an indwelling Person who had come to take up His permanent abode in their hearts. The word is a compound of the Greek verb "to have or hold" (echo), and a preposition meaning "with" (meta), thus "to hold with." It is used in Luke 5:7 where it is translated "partners," signifying one who co-operates with another in a common task or undertaking. It is used in Hebrews 1:9+ where the angels are "fellows" of our Lord, partners or associates with Him in the work of salvation. It is used in Hebrews 3:1 (note) where the recipients of this letter are called participators in the heavenly calling. That is, they participated together in the heavenly calling. These Hebrews had left the earthly calling of the nation Israel, and had identified themselves with the Church which has a heavenly calling. It is used in Hebrews 3:14+, where it speaks of those who participate together in the Lord Jesus. The word **metochos** was so used in secular Greek. Moulton and Milligan give examples of its usage in the following phrases: "We, Dionysius son of Socrates and the **associate** collectors;" "Pikos son of Pamonthes and his **colleagues**," "the joint-owner of a holding," "I am unable to take part in the cultivation," "Some do so because they are **partners** in their misdeeds." **Thus the word** ([metochos](#)) **signifies one who participates with another in a common activity or possession.** It is so used here. These Hebrews became participators in the Holy Spirit insofar as an unsaved person can do so, namely, in the sense that they willingly cooperated with Him in receiving His pre-salvation ministry, that of leading them on step by step toward the act of faith. He had led them into the act of repentance. The next step would be that of faith. Here they were in danger of turning their backs upon the Spirit and returning to the sacrifices. Peter in his first epistle (1Pe 1:2+) in the words, "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience," speaks of this work of the Holy Spirit on the unsaved, setting them apart from unbelief to faith. **This word** ([metochos](#)) **in its context does not at all imply that these Hebrews had been born of the Spirit, sealed with the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, anointed with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, or filled with the Spirit.** This work of the Holy Spirit in leading them on towards faith was a once-for-all work, so thoroughly done that it needed never to be repeated. However, there was nothing permanent of itself in this work, for the work was only a means to an end. This is shown by the aorist participle used, referring to the mere fact, not a perfect, speaking of a finished act having present results. The fact that the writer did not use the perfect tense here, which is a specialized tense, but rather the aorist, which is the maid of all work, points to the incompleteness of the work of the Spirit in the case of these Hebrews. So far as the work had been done, it was perfect, thorough. But it would not be complete until the Hebrews accepted the proffered faith from the Spirit. The incompleteness of the work would be due, therefore, not to the Spirit, but to their unwillingness to go on as a partner or cooperator with the Spirit. ([Hebrews Commentary online](#))

Hebrews 6:5 and have [tasted](#) the [good word](#) of [God](#) and the [powers](#) of the [age](#) to [come](#), ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [kai kalon geusamenous](#) (AMPMPA) [theou rhema dunameis te mellontos](#) (PAPMSG) [aionos](#).

Amplified: And have felt how good the Word of God is and the mighty powers of the age and world to come, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: those who tasted the fair word of God and the powers of the age to come, ([Westminster Press](#))

ESV: and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ([ESV](#))

KJV: And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come

NET: tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, ([NET Bible](#))

NIV: who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ([NIV - IBS](#))

NLT: who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come— ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: who have known the wholesome nourishment of the Word of God and touched the spiritual resources of the eternal world ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: and tasted the good word of God, also the powers [miracles] of the age that is about to come

Weymouth: and have realized how good the word of God is and how mighty are the powers of the coming Age, and then fell away—

Young's Literal: and did taste the good saying of God, the powers also of the coming age,

AND HAVE TASTED THE GOOD WORD OF GOD AND THE POWERS OF THE AGE TO COME: kai kalon geusamenous (AMPMPA) theou rhema dunameis te mellontos aionos:

- Matthew 13:20,21; Mark 4:16,17; 6:20; Luke 8:13; 1 Peter 2:3-note; 2 Peter 2:20-note)
- **Powers** - Hebrews 2:5-note
- Hebrews 6 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Tasted (1089) ([geuomai](#)) means literally to taste with the mouth. Metaphorically **geuomai** means to experience, prove, partake of or come to know. It is used in idiomatic expressions like "taste death" which is another way to say "to die".

The most direct commentary on the tasting of **the good word of God** is found in the preceding passages. In Hebrews Hebrews 4:1-3.

Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also (Israel heard the gospel); but **the word** ("the good word of God") **they heard did not profit them**, (why didn't it profit them?) because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, " AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (See **notes** Hebrews 4:1; 4:2; 4:3)

The writer's point is that Israel in the Old Testament had heard the truth of the gospel (Yes the gospel was present in the Old Testament! See Galatians 3:8+ "*Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham!*") but they failed to "mix it" with saving faith and as a consequence they did not enter salvation rest.

How did they **taste** it? This could be explained that as they heard the gospel preached, they were moved and drawn to it. They were like the seed that fell on rocky ground, the hearers responding to the word and receiving it with joy, but yet they had no root in themselves. They endured for a while, but when tribulation or persecution arose on account of the word of God, they promptly fell away (Mt 13:20, 21+). They fell away just like these in Hebrews 6:4-6 who were in danger of falling away into eternal separation from God.

Any person who has heard the gospel and perhaps made a profession of Christ, but who is uncertain of salvation, should take Paul's advice:

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; **examine** yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?" (2Cor 13:5+).

Comment: So what is the "test"? How do you "examine" yourself? He is not saying to "look within yourself" per se, but to look at the One Who is in you and look at the evidence that He is in you. What does that mean practically? Believer's Study Bible explains that "this verse is not intended to rob believers of the assurance and security of their salvation. It is, however, intended as a warning to those who would follow false teaching and adopt a lifestyle that is inconsistent with the message of reconciliation (cf. 2Cor 12:20, 21+). To persist in either activity is a cause for serious introspection and a testing to see whether or not one is truly "in the faith."

S Lewis Johnson commenting on **tasted of the good word** writes that...

A similar expression to this one is found in Jer 29:10 and Jer 33:14; however it is not specifically spelled out because it is found in a section where Jeremiah is laying great stress on the New Covenant which is to come and the promises of forgiveness that are related to it—those sovereign promises of the unconditional New Covenant. Thus, I would suggest that what this phrase, "**tasted the good Word of God**", has to do with is the Messianic Promises of the Old Testament.

So to have **tasted** them is to have come to hear of them and to have come to an understanding of them. I do not think that "to taste" means "to sip" as if they only heard a little bit and if they had truly tasted and eaten them it would have been different. In other words, I do not believe that this Greek word *geuomai* intended to suggest it was not a full participation. Rather it is a reference to the Messianic promises and these hearers (to whom the author speaks) have truly come to understand what these promises are.

The other day I was having a conversation with some Jewish Rabbis and we were discussing the question of whether a Jewish person, after they have converted to Christianity, could be still be called a Jew. One of these Rabbis was trying to make the point that if a Jewish person converts, then he is no longer a Jew. I was saying that he is a Jew, but he is a converted Jew. That is his Jewishness is something with which he is born and which he possesses forever, but his conversion to Christ is coming to the understanding of the Messiah and the receiving of Him.

After our discussion, the one Rabbi mentioned above of course disagreed. So I tried to point out that the early church was largely Jewish and the Jews then regarded them as being still Jews (even though they would have probably regarded them as apostate Jews—nonetheless they were still Jews). So finally this Rabbi said, "I understand what you are saying, I just don't agree with it." I simply use this illustration to show that it is possible to understand and to not accept. ([Hebrews 6:1-12 The Thing God Cannot Permit](#), [Hebrews 6:1-12 Peril of Apostasy](#))

Powers of the age to come - This refers to miracles which they had witnessed or experienced and which will be seen in the age to come (What age? The age that follows the church age is the Millennium)

These miracles had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah...

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah. (Isaiah 35:5-6+)

Jesus plainly saw himself fulfilling these words (Luke 7:22+). Like the Israelites who murmured in the wilderness, despite the miracles of supply witnessed, "**those who**" (See note on Group 2 - Hebrews 6:4) also failed to "share in the faith of those who obeyed" the word they heard.

It is exciting to contemplate that miracles will be performed in the **age to come**, the Messianic or Millennial Age when the Lord Jesus reigns on earth from Jerusalem & saints rule and reign with Him. This phrase **age to come** is also found in Mt 12:32+ Mk 10:30+ and Lk 18:30+.

WHAT ABOUT MIRACLES?

Do you mean to say miracles don't save people? Clearly they do not. One can see miracles and know full well that they are naturally impossible and thus must by default be supernatural. And yet they refuse to believe and be saved! The gospel of John has a number of these miracles (witness a lame man made to walk in John 5, a blind man made to see in John 8, Lazarus' resurrection from the dead in John 11, etc) and one of the early examples was the manifestation of Jesus' "power" performing the miracle of feeding the 5000. The Jews (some of whom had tasted *literally* and *figuratively* of the power of the age to come) listened to Jesus in the synagogue which is in Capernaum, by the side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus knew all men and He knew they were following Him because of the miracles and thus He called for commitment in John 6, as the apostle records...

26 Jesus answered them (those who had witnessed the miraculous feeding) and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. 27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal."...

53 Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. 58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever." 59 These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. 60 Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? 62 "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? 63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father." 66 **As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.** (John 6:26-27+, John 6:53-66+)

Jesus knew that although these Jews had **tasted a miracle**, (they ate the "miracle bread") they did not really believe in Him as Redeemer and Lord. And this is why they withdrew and ceased to walk with Him (cf, to "**fell away**" in Hebrews 6:6)

WAYNE GRUDEM'S SUMMARY OF Hebrews 6:4-6

Wayne Grudem asks a summary question "At this point we may ask what kind of person is described by all of these terms. These are no doubt people who have been affiliated closely with the fellowship of the church. They have had some sorrow for sin (repentance). They have clearly understood the gospel (they have been enlightened). They have come to appreciate the attractiveness of the Christian life and the change that comes about in people's lives because of becoming a Christian, and they have probably had answers to prayer in their own lives and felt the power of the Holy Spirit at work, perhaps even using some spiritual gifts in the manner of the unbelievers in Matthew 7:22 (ED: SEE ALSO Mt 10:1+ JUDAS AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES)(they have become "associated with" the work of the Holy Spirit or have become "partakers" of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the heavenly gift and the powers of the age of come). They have been exposed to the true preaching of the Word and have appreciated much of its teachings (they have tasted the goodness of the Word of God). But then in spite of all this, if they "commit apostasy" and "crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt" (Heb. 6:6), then they are willfully rejecting all of these blessings and turning decidedly against them. Perhaps all of us have known in our own churches people who (sometimes by their own profession) have long been affiliated with the fellowship of the church but are not themselves born-again Christians. They have thought about the gospel for years and have continued to resist the wooing of the Holy Spirit in their lives....

Now the author tells us that if these people willfully turn away from all of these temporary blessings then it will be impossible to restore them again to any kind of repentance or sorrow for sin. Their hearts will be hardened and their consciences calloused. What more could be done to bring them to salvation? If we tell them Scripture is true they will say that they know it but they have decided to reject it. If we tell them God answers prayer and changes lives they will respond that they know that as well, but they want nothing of it. If we tell them that the Holy Spirit is powerful to work in people's lives and the gift of eternal life is good beyond description, they will say that they understand that, but they want nothing of it. Their repeated familiarity with the things of God and their experience of many influences of the Holy Spirit has simply served to harden them against conversion.

Now the author of Hebrews knows that there are some in the community to which he writes who are in danger of falling away in just this way (see Heb. 2:3; 3:8, 12, 14–15; 4:1, 7, 11; 10:26, 29, 35–36, 38–39; 12:3, 15–17). He wants to warn them that, though they have participated in the fellowship of the church and experienced a number of God's blessings in their lives, yet if they fall away after all that, there is no salvation for them. This does not imply that he thinks that true Christians could fall away—Hebrews 3:14 implies quite the opposite. But he wants them to gain assurance of salvation through their continuing in faith, and thereby implies that if they fall away it would show that they never were Christ's people in the first place (see Heb. 3:6: "We are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope").

Therefore the author wants to give a severe warning to those in danger of slipping away from their Christian profession. He wants to use the strongest language possible to say, "Here is how far a person can come in experiencing temporary blessings and still not really be saved." He is warning them to watch out, because depending on temporary blessings and experiences is not enough. To do this he talks not of any true change of heart or any good fruit produced, but simply about the temporary blessings and experiences that have come to these persons and have given them some understanding of Christianity.

For this reason he immediately passes from this description of those who commit apostasy to a further analogy that shows that these people who fell away never had any genuine fruit in their lives. As we explained above, verses 7–8 speak of these people in terms of "thorns and thistles," the kind of crop that is brought forth on land that has no worthwhile life in itself even though it receives repeated blessings from God (in terms of the analogy, even though rain frequently falls upon it). We should notice here that people who commit apostasy are not compared to a field that once bore good fruit and now does not, but that they are like land that never bore good fruit but only thorns and thistles. The land may look good before the crops start to come up, but the fruit gives the genuine evidence, and it is bad.

Strong support for this interpretation of Hebrews 6:4–8 is found in the verse immediately following. Though the author has been speaking very harshly about the possibility of falling away, he then returns to speak to the situation of the great majority of the hearers, whom he thinks to be genuine Christians. He says, "Though we speak thus, yet in your case beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation" (Heb. 6:9). But the question is "better things" than what? The plural "better things" forms an appropriate contrast to the "good things" that have been mentioned in verses 4–6: the author is convinced that most of his readers have experienced better things than simply the partial and temporary influences of the Holy Spirit and the church talked about in verses 4–6.

In fact, the author talks about these things by saying (literally) that they are "better things, also belonging to salvation" (Gk. καὶ χόρμενα σωτηρίας).¹⁹ These are not only the temporary blessings talked about in verses 4–6, but these are better things, things having not only temporary influence, but "also belonging to salvation." In this way the Greek word καὶ (G2779, "also") shows that salvation is something that was not part of the things mentioned in verses 4–6 above. Therefore this word καὶ which is not explicitly translated in the RSV or NIV (but the NASB comes close),²⁰ provides a crucial key for understanding the passage. If the author had meant to say that the people mentioned in verses 4–6 were truly saved, then it is very difficult to understand why he would say in verse 9 that he is convinced of better things for them, things that belong to salvation, or that have salvation in addition to those things mentioned above. He thus shows that he can use a

brief phrase to say that people “have salvation” if he wishes to do so (he does not need to pile up many phrases), and he shows, moreover, that the people whom he speaks of in verses 4–6 are not saved.²¹

What exactly are these “better things”? In addition to salvation mentioned in verse 9, they are things that give real evidence of salvation—genuine fruit in their lives (v. 10), full assurance of hope (v. 11), and saving faith, of the type exhibited by those who inherit the promises (v. 12). In this way he reassures those who are genuine believers—those who show fruit in their lives and show love for other Christians, who show hope and genuine faith that is continuing at the present time, and who are not about to fall away. He wants to reassure these readers (who are certainly the great majority of the ones to whom he writes) while still issuing a strong warning to those among them who may be in danger of falling away.

A similar teaching is found in Hebrews 10:26–31. There the author says, “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left” (v. 26 NIV). A person who rejects Christ’s salvation and “has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him” (v. 29 NIV) deserves eternal punishment. This again is a strong warning against falling away, but it should not be taken as proof that someone who has truly been born again can lose his or her salvation. When the author talks about the blood of the covenant “that sanctified him,” the word sanctified is used simply to refer to “external sanctification, like that of the ancient Israelites, by outward connection with God’s people.”²² The passage does not talk about someone who is genuinely saved, but someone who has received some beneficial moral influence through contact with the church.²³....

What Can Give a Believer Genuine Assurance? If it is true, as explained in the previous section, that those who are unbelievers and who finally fall away may give many external signs of conversion, then what will serve as evidence of genuine conversion? What can give real assurance to a real believer? We can list three categories of questions that a person could ask of himself or herself. (SEE GRUDEM'S LENGTHY ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION DISCUSSING 3 QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK OURSELVES - THIS SECTION BEGINS ON PAGE 702). (See page 698 in [Systematic Theology](#))