

Basic Training Bible Ministries

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL



**Colorado Bible Conference
May 23–24, 2014**

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Introduction

The above quote is a promise of security. Yet it comes in a chapter that is often used by some, based on Heb 6:6–8, to introduce doubts as to the security of our salvation in Christ Jesus. As I have traveled around much of this world, I have found this to be the number one question troubling believers who ask, “Is my salvation secure, or can I lose it?” This is true not only of new converts, but also of pastors, evangelists, and teachers. I have spent entire days in seminary classes explaining all the passages, which to some seem to suggest that a believer, once saved by faith in Jesus Christ, might in some way lose that salvation and be eternally condemned.

The question is a serious one. If salvation can by any means be lost, then everyone who has believed must be made aware of it. Furthermore, if this is true, then should the Gospel message ever be proclaimed without also adding this warning? We have no right to say, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,*” if that salvation could be placed in doubt. We should then say, “if you believe in Jesus Christ, you **might** be saved.”

Ultimately, the question concerns not us or our conduct, but rather the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The question that must be asked and honestly faced is this:

Is the blood of Jesus Christ all-sufficient for our salvation?

The moment we add **anything** to the cross, we have declared that it is not. This is true whether the additional condition is placed before or after salvation. As we will see, and as the above message boldly declares, the **Anchor of our Soul**—which is the finished work of Christ—is **sure** and **steadfast**! It is my prayer that this small work may lead many who doubt into “*the full assurance of hope*” (Heb 6:11, Heb 10:22).

From the passage cited above, there are five points that should be clear:

1. The word “*immutable*” means “unchangeable.” God’s promises cannot be changed or amended.
2. It is “*impossible for God to lie*” (Heb 6:18), therefore, His promise of eternal life based on simple faith in Christ alone stands sure.
3. The phrase “*strong consolation*” is meaningless if there exists any means whatsoever by which one might lose the gift of eternal salvation.
4. Those who “flee for refuge” are helpless, and therefore cannot be expected in any way to secure that refuge.

5. The word “*hope*” means “confident expectation,” and this is supported by the words “*sure and steadfast*,” defined as “not liable to fall . . . that which is firm within itself” (cf., *Vines Expository Dictionary* and *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*).

With such strong evidence, why are so many believers confused regarding this question? This is surely due to a lack of spiritual maturity.

I. PRESSING ON TO MATURITY

“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do if God permits.” Heb 6:1–3

The central challenge of the book of Hebrews is found in the phrase “*press on to maturity*.” It is evident that such a challenge can only be made to those who are already “in Christ.” The means to this end is to “*see Jesus*” (Heb 2:9), to “*consider Jesus*” (Heb 3:1), and to “*fix our eyes on Jesus*” (Heb 12:2). For this reason, the first eight chapters show the superiority of Jesus to prophets (Heb 1:1–3), angels (Heb 1:4–2:8), Moses (Heb 3:1–6), Joshua (Heb 4:8), and Aaron (Heb 7:1, Heb 8:6).

The recipients of the letter, Jewish Christians once thrilled by the message of the coming of the Messiah in the person of Jesus, had now become “*dull of hearing*” (Heb 5:11). The word for “*dull*” is *nothroi*, and is the same word translated “*sluggish*” in Heb 6:12. It speaks of spiritual apathy.

There is no question that they were in the process of “*hardening the heart*” (Heb 3:8, Heb 3:15, Heb 4:7). The indication is that in the face of increasing persecution for faith in Jesus, they were inclined to “*forsake the assembling of themselves together*” (Heb 10:25), and to return to the safe and accepted—yet apostate—worship of the Jewish temple. It is this “*shrinking back of the soul*” (Heb 10:38–39) from the reality of Christ to the shadows of dead ritualism (the “*dead works*” of Heb 6:1 and Heb 9:14) that the author seeks to combat. To overcome their increasing “*spiritual sluggishness*” (Heb 6:12) and to “*press on to maturity*” is the goal of the author.

GRADUATING FROM THE BASICS

The word “*leaving*” does not mean forsaking, nor rejecting, but rather “*graduating*” from the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. As the babe graduates from the milk to solid food (Heb 5:13–14), so the believer must grow from basic to advanced teachings of the Word of God. The word *aphieme*, in the aorist active participle, indicates a first step in attaining the ultimate goal—maturity. That step is in learning—and then building upon—the foundational teachings about the Christ. The author then gives us, in Heb 1:1b–2, the six “*elementary principles*” or basic doctrines of the faith:

1. Repentance

The word “repent” is from *meta*, meaning “to change,” and *noeo*, which is “thinking” from *nous*—the mind. To repent is to change one’s mind, which will result also in a change of action. As we will see, the primary focus of this verb is to change one’s mind about Jesus Christ. Here, the repentance is “*from dead works*.” When one enters eternal rest in Christ (Heb 4:3; Mat 11:28), he has “*ceased from his own works*,” Heb 4:10. In other words, he trusts in the cross of Christ completely as being all-sufficient for his salvation. That our salvation is totally apart from our own works is certain (Eph 2:8–9; Rom 4:3–5). All attempts to work for or to earn salvation are called “dead works.” The flesh can produce nothing but death, Rom 8:6, 13. But the work of Jesus Christ on the cross completely “*finished*” (Joh 19:30) God’s plan for salvation. Therefore, the very first step of spiritual experience is to “[repent] *from dead works*,” Heb 6:1. (See Appendix A: Doctrine of Repentance.)

2. Faith Toward God

The second basic doctrine is the counterpart of repentance, that is “faith in God” which follows “*repentance from dead works*,” Heb 6:1. As the Apostle Paul says in Phi 3:3, “*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*.” When one turns away from trusting in their works or religion, there is nowhere else to go but to faith in Christ. As Paul said to the Thessalonians, “*You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God*,” 1Th 1:9. All true faith toward God will be directed through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 5:24, 37–38; 6:29, 40). (See Appendix B: A Biblical Faith.)

3. The Doctrine of Baptisms

Baptism is an extremely important teaching in Scripture. However, its true importance cannot be appreciated unless it is seen, as here, in the plural. In fact, there are seven distinct baptisms presented in the New Testament. We must recognize that the root meaning of the verb *baptizo* is “to initiate or to identify.” It is only by acquired usage that the meaning is “to immerse.” Of the seven baptisms, four are literal, and three are ritual or symbolic.

A. Literal Baptisms (a new identity is established)

1. Baptism of the Cross (Mar 10:38; Luk 12:50). On the cross, Jesus was literally identified with the sins of the world. He was “*made to be sin*” (2Co 5:21) and judged in our place.
2. Baptism unto Moses (1Co 10:2). The children of Israel were identified as God’s delivered people, in connection with God’s chosen Deliverer.
3. Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Mat 3:11; 1Co 12:13). Here, the believer is permanently identified with Jesus Christ forever. This wonderful union never occurred until after the cross and began at Pentecost (Joh 7:37–39; Act 1:8; 2:3–4).

4. Baptism of Fire (Mat 3:11–12; 2Th 1:7–8). This is the identification of the unbeliever with eternal fire.

B. Ritual Baptisms (a previous identification is acknowledged)

5. Baptism of John (Mat 3:11; Mar 1:4). A baptism in water, identified with repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah.
6. Baptism of Jesus (Joh 1:29–34). John makes it clear that baptism was to be the means of identifying the Messiah. He would be the One on Whom the Spirit would descend in the form of a dove.
7. Christian Baptism (Act 19:3–5). I refer to this particular passage because it clarifies that there is a distinction between Christian baptism and the baptism of John. Christian baptism identifies one as a believer in the “*death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (see 1Co 15:3–4). It is a public ritual celebrating the spiritual baptism received at salvation (1Co 12:13). It serves as a public dedication to live in “*newness of life*” (Rom 6:4)—in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. It is a “sacrament” in the truest sense of the word, since the Latin *sacramentum* originally meant “a soldier’s oath of loyalty.”

So, we are able to see that in the “doctrine of baptisms” would be included an understanding of the distinction of Old and New Testament doctrine, of the dispensational change from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant, and of our greater privileges and provisions in Christ, which is a major emphasis of the book of Hebrews, Heb 12:18–24. Baptisms have to do with identifying one’s **position**. The next doctrine relates to one’s **practice**.

4. The Laying on of Hands

This is another doctrine over which there is much confusion. Where the baptisms have to do with one’s **identification** or **position**, the laying on of hands has to do with one’s **association** or **practice**. The laying on of hands originated with the Old Covenant system of sacrifice. The one offering the sacrifice would “*lay his hand on the head*” of the sacrifice being offered (Lev 1:4, Lev 3:2, Lev 3:8, Lev 3:18, Lev 3:4:24, Lev 3:29, etc.). There was a symbolic sense of substitution and of representation in which his guilt was transferred to the innocent offering, while the innocence of the offering was transferred to him. The offering was therefore slain for his guilt, while the offender went away forgiven and free from guilt. By the **association** created in laying his hand on the offering, he was enabled to go forward in **practice** as one who is declared “not guilty.”

Later, the laying on of hands became a common form of ordination as with Joshua under Moses (Num 27:18). In this way, Joshua’s **association** with Moses became the basis for his **practice**. The mantle of leadership was passed from Moses to Joshua. This same use of “*laying on ... hands*” was continued in the early church for ordination to service (Act 13:3; 1Ti 4:14, 1Ti 5:22). Jesus and the apostles would often lay hands on those being healed (Mat 9:18; Act 28:8),

and it was a means of imparting the gift of the Holy Spirit in the beginning (Act 8:17). There is no biblical basis for such practices continuing beyond the time of the apostles.

5. The Resurrection of the Dead

The focus here is of the resurrection of believers. This was a fundamental part of the early preaching of the apostles (Act 2:32, Act 4:2, Act 4:33, Act 17:18). Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life,*” Joh 11:25. While the Bible teaches the resurrection of believers to eternal life, and of unbelievers to eternal judgment (Dan 12:2; Joh 5:24), because of the following doctrine, the focus here is of believers.

6. Eternal Judgment

This is the end of all who will not believe in Jesus as their personal savior. Ultimately, the basis of judgment is unbelief (Joh 3:18–19; 2Th 2:12). It must be made clear that without Jesus Christ there is no hope of eternal life, for He Himself said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me,*” Joh 14:6.

It is worth noticing that these six doctrines come in three “couplets” that present three “categories” of biblical truth: **First**, the doctrines of **salvation** (repentance and faith); **second**, the doctrines of **spirituality** (position and practice); and **third**, the doctrines of **eternal destiny** (resurrection and judgment). Further, they line up perfectly with the three areas of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit: sin, righteousness, and judgment, Joh 16:8–11.

These basic doctrines must be mastered as foundational to all further growth in the faith. However, once understood, it is time to progress to the “strong meat” of the Word. One aspect of advanced doctrine is the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus, as taught by the book of Hebrews.

Press on to Maturity

The phrase “*press [go] on*” is from *phero*, and is in the passive voice, meaning “to be carried or to be borne along.” The same word is used passively in 2Pe 1:21 of the prophets who were “*moved [borne along] by the Holy Spirit*” in the inspiration of Scripture. “Maturity” is from *teleos* and speaks of completeness or fulfillment. The word is used of Paul’s continued spiritual progress (Phi 3:14), and though often translated “perfect,” it is not used in the sense of sinlessness. It is better understood in the sense of that which is completed or has come to fulfillment.

As seen in Heb 5:14, maturity implies being accustomed to advanced doctrines. That is the practical application of those truths in life, resulting in one who is “*trained to discern good and evil.*” This is a designation for biblical wisdom, 1Ki 3:9. Such discernment is an evidence of spirituality, 1Co 2:15. The reason such discernment is so difficult is that the height of evil is Satan’s counterfeit of all that is good (2Co 11:4, 2Co 11:14–15).

All who continue to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18) will be “carried along” into maturity by the inner-working power (Eph 3:20) of God’s indwelling Spirit and His Word, received by faith, Rom 10:17.

II. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE IS SAVED

“For it is **impossible** for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come ...” Heb 6:4–5 (emphasis added)

As our author develops his argument, he gives a list of the spiritual blessings that take place at salvation. We will come back to the phrase “*it is impossible*,” after we are certain about the people to whom he is speaking. The following five works define those who are referred to in Heb 3:1 as “*holy brethren*.”

1. They Have Been Enlightened (Heb 6:4)

The word translated “*enlightened*” is *photizo*. Paul uses the same verb in Eph 1:18 for the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. This term is used again by the author of Hebrews, in Heb 10:32, where it has the obvious reference to the salvation of the recipients of this epistle. This granting of spiritual enlightenment is part of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, Joh 16:7–11. It is described as “*coming to the light*” in Joh 3:21. The Psalmist said, “*The entrance of Thy words gives light*,” Psa 119:130. It is at the point of enlightenment that one “[repents] of *dead works*” as in Heb 6:1. Note that this occurs once; the word *hapax*—a favorite of the author—means “once for all, never to be repeated.” (See Appendix A: Five Works of the Holy Spirit.)

2. They Have Received the Gift

The word “*tasted*” (Heb 6:4) is *geuomai*, the same word used of Jesus, who “*tasted death for every man*” in Heb 2:9. Peter speaks of those who have believed as having “*tasted that the Lord is good*,” 1Pe 2:3. “*The verb is used in this common idiomatic sense and means to experience something to the full*” (*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, on Heb 2:9, pg. 669). Regarding its use in Heb 6:4, the same source says “*The verb expresses a real and conscious enjoyment of the blessings apprehended in its true character.*” When Jesus spoke of those who believe as those who “*eat the flesh of the son of Man and drink His blood*” (Joh 6:53), he was using the idea of tasting or eating and drinking as a figure of faith. The “*heavenly gift*” can be nothing other than the gift of eternal life (Joh 10:28; Rom 3:24, Rom 6:23).

3. They Are Partakers of the Holy Spirit

The phrase “*have become*” is from *ginomai*, which means “to become something you were not.” No unbeliever can be a partaker of the Holy Spirit. “*Partakers*” comes from *metochos*, made up of *meta*, a preposition of association, and *echo*, “to have,” therefore “to have association with.” It is the same word used in Heb 2:14 of Jesus’ “*partaking of flesh and blood.*”

4. They Have Tasted the Good Word of God (Heb 6:5)

Again, we have the same word as in Heb 6:4 with the idea of feeding on the Word of God. The word “*good*,” *kalos*, indicates what is profitable, healthy. That this word came to them by teaching is indicated by *rhema*, which means “the word spoken, or verbally communicated.” One of the first and most lasting evidences of salvation is a love and hunger for the Word of God, which to the needy soul is “*sweeter than honey*,” Psa 19:10.

5. They Have Experienced Resurrection Power

The power in the coming age is the power of resurrection. This is the power given to all who believe in Jesus Christ. When we live in that power, we are spiritual. When we do not, we are carnal. Paul’s expressed desire was “*that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection*,” Phi 3:10. Our desire ought to be to live in “*newness of life*,” Rom 6:4.

It should be pointed out that the form of all the verbs here is the same. The aorist participle speaks of five things that all occur at the same time—the moment of salvation. This form is also used to indicate that which is preliminary to the action that is to follow—whether of “pressing on to maturity” (illustrated by Paul in Phi 3:12) or of “*fall[ing] away*,” Heb 6:6. These are the only two possibilities for the believer. One simply cannot “*fall away*” from something he never had! It is the eternal reward and blessing of the one, and the awful penalties of lost blessing and reward of the other course of action, that our author is presenting.

Take just a moment to see how these five blessings relate to the first five of the basic doctrines. There is a strong parallel here, and we certainly understand that the basic teachings of Christianity are designed to give us solid grounding in what occurred when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sixth, eternal judgment, relates to believers only in the sense of rewards—won or lost—at the judgment seat of Christ, 1Co 3:11–15.

THE AUTHOR OF HEBREWS ON ETERNAL SECURITY

Before we deal with what is “*impossible*,” and why, we must affirm the author’s understanding of the security of our salvation. One thing is certain—no man can hold two opposing viewpoints at the same time. That is, not if he is of a sound mind! So the writer of Hebrews could not hold to a position of absolute eternal security, and at the same time teach that loss of that salvation was possible. To do so would be self-contradictory and self-defeating! Keep in mind that this is the same man who writes, “*For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries*” (Heb 10:26–27), and “*it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb 10:31), and “*Our God is a consuming fire*,” Heb 12:29. We will look at these verses in time. But first, what did the author believe about the all-sufficiency of the cross of Jesus Christ?

1. Perfect Sacrifice (Heb 10:1–9)

The position of the author is clearly given in the tenth chapter of the book. He begins by showing what the law and animal sacrifices could not do, Heb 10:1–4. They could not “*make perfect*” the worshipers. By his own definition he means to have a conscience cleansed of the guilt of sins, knowing full and complete forgiveness for all time. If the Old Testament sacrifices could have done this, “they would have ceased to be offered,” Heb 10:2. In other words, once the work of cleansing was finished, it would never have to be repeated. This is exactly what Jesus Christ’s death accomplished. “*When He had by Himself purged our sins*” (Heb 1:3), Jesus cried out, “***It is finished!***” (Joh 19:30, emphasis added). At that point, He had completed the work the Father sent Him to do.

By means of his human body, Jesus did what all the sacrifices of history could not do, Heb 10:5–9. He fulfilled the will of God to save sinful men (1Ti 2:3–6; 2Pe 3:9). “*The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost,*” Luk 19:10.

2. Saved Forever (Heb 10:10)

Here we are told that in fulfilling the will of God, offering His own body on the cross, “*we have been sanctified ... once for all.*” The word for “*sanctified*” is *hagiazō*, meaning “to set apart to God, to make holy.” It is the same root for the word “saint” and “holy.” The verb is in the perfect tense, speaking of what has been accomplished in the past, with permanent results. This meaning is strengthened by the phrase “*once for all,*” which is the intensified verb *ephapax*, which means “once for all, never to be repeated.” In the original manuscripts of Scripture, words that only occur one time in the entire Bible are called *hapax legomenon*, that which is “spoken only once.” The preposition *epi* (“over, above”) prefixed to *hapax* serves to intensify the meaning. You will find this same word used in Heb 7:27, Heb 9:27–28, Heb 10:2. In the strongest possible terms, our author has declared the security of our salvation. But, he does not stop here!

3. All Sins Paid at Once (Heb 10:12)

In contrast to the necessary repetition of animal sacrifices (Heb 10:3, Heb 10:11), Jesus “*offered one sacrifice for sins for all time.*” Here all the sins of human history are included, and this means your sins—past, present and future! The phrase, “*for all time,*” means “unto all perpetuity, perpetually, forever.”

The work of Christ on the cross is all-sufficient for time and eternity. It never stops having its saving effect! If the “*blood of Christ*” (Heb 9:14) is the eternal solution to all sins for all time and eternity, doesn’t it seem ludicrous and foolish to think that any sin we might commit could “undo” what He has done forever? In other words, how can the cross of Christ be sufficient for all sin, and at the same time, not be sufficient? **His strongest argument is yet to come!**

4. Perfected Forever (Heb 10:14)

Someone might argue, “Yes, the work of Christ is sufficient for all sins for all time, but while it covers all sins, it may not take care of the sinner!” Yet here the author says that those “*sanctified*” ones he mentioned in Heb 10:10 have been “*perfected forever.*” The word translated “*forever*” or “for all time” is the same phrase as in Heb 10:12, with the same meaning, “perpetually, forever.” The force of this phrase is especially strong in signifying “in unbroken continuance.”

The word “*perfected*” clinches the argument. It is the exact same word, in the very same form as the cry of victory Jesus gave on the cross. “***It is finished!***” The word *teleioo* means “finished, completed.” The perfect tense means that the work of the cross, once accomplished, has ongoing results throughout all time and eternity. And this is the word translated “*perfected*” that is applied to us. There is no way to avoid the author’s absolute stand on the eternal security of the believer in Jesus.

Since it is abundantly clear that the author’s stand is beyond doubt, it is just as certain that he could not, in another passage, teach the position the one could by some means, “lose their salvation.” Coming back now to chapter 6, we must now identify just what it is “*impossible*” to do, once one has “fallen away,” Heb 6:6.

III. CASE OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN AWAY

“... if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.” Heb 6:6–8

It should be clear that we are discussing believers in this passage. That believers often “*fall away*” is not denied by the writer. We have probably all seen believers who have fallen away, for one reason or another, and perhaps have ourselves fallen away at some point of time. But we need to determine what is involved in such a fall, and to see that the consequences, though very severe, do not include loss of one’s salvation. The key issue is just this: What are we falling from? And what are we falling to? The answers are clearly given in the Bible.

Falling, Defined Biblically

The words “fallen away” come from the common verb for falling down, which is *pipto*. It is prefixed by the preposition *para*, which means “from or beside,” depending on the construction. When used of a believer, this term is the exact opposite of “*standing firm*” (Eph 6:13–14) in one’s faith.

This verb is used in 1Co 10:12: “*Therefore let him who thinks he **stands** take heed lest he **fall***” (emphasis added). A child of God may fall into pride (1Ti 3:6), reproach (1Ti 3:7), or temptation (1Ti 6:9). However, the condition spoken of here in Hebrews is far more serious and

prolonged. In Heb 4:11, he says, “*Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest [of faith], lest anyone fall through following the same example [of the Exodus generation] of disobedience*” (emphasis added). Here, the word for “disobey” is *apetheia*, from which we get “apathy.” It literally means “disobedience through unbelief.” When a believer develops a habit or lifestyle of such disobedience he or she is said to have “*fallen from grace*,” as in Gal 5:4 and Heb 12:15. This condition is extremely dangerous, for the simple reason that it is so subtle and deceptive.

The specific danger to these Hebrews was not that of “*falling*” into temptations of the flesh, or of immorality. Such sins are easy to spot and identify. They were in the far greater danger of falling from a sure trust in the grace of God, to a return to the temple and all its “*shadows*” and rituals (Heb 8:5, Heb 10:1). Even today, when a Christian rejects the grace of God and trusts instead in religious requirements, it is very difficult to convince them that they are wrong. While many religious practices are contrary to the Bible, they are still perceived to be “*good*.” And this is precisely where maturity in God’s Word is needed to “*discern [between] good and evil*,” Heb 5:14. Paul warns of these subtle dangers in Colossians 2, and in Gal 2:11–21, we find Paul’s rebuke to Peter and Barnabas, who fell into the same error. Many believers today have turned from the Word of God to trust in the works of religion, thus have “*fallen from grace*” (Gal 5:4; Heb 12:15). As Peter warns in 2Pe 3:17, “*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.*”

THE PROCESS OF FALLING AWAY

In the five “*warning*” sections of Hebrews, we are given a picture of the progressive nature of such a fall. There are many today who contend that these passages either refer to unsaved people, or to believers who have lost their salvation. However, by careful study, we find neither of these positions to be true. Let’s take a brief look at these sections:

1. **Warning against Drifting** (Heb 2:1–4)

“Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.” Heb 2:1

Take note that the author includes himself in the word “*we*,” which he uses five times in Heb 2:1–3. Is there any doubt as to the salvation of the author of Hebrews? What he is warning against here is what we might call the first step in “*falling away*”—that of “*drifting away*” from the “*things we have heard*.” If we “*neglect so great a salvation*” (Heb 2:3) as what we have in Christ, we cannot escape “*a just reward*,” Heb 2:2. The reward for disobedience is divine discipline in time (Heb 12:3–11) and loss of reward in eternity, 1Co 3:11–15.

2. **Warning against Doubting** (Heb 3:7–15)

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” Heb 3:12

Again, note that he is speaking to “*brethren*” in the faith. The stage of spiritual decline that follows that of drifting is that of doubting. Here, the author uses the Exodus generation as a negative example. To what specific incident is the author pointing? He calls it, “*in the rebellion, in the day of trial,*” Heb 3:8.

This incident is recorded for us in Numbers 13–14. One year after the crossing of the Red Sea, God prepared to take the people into the Promised Land. Moses sent twelve spies into the land and awaited their report. Two spies, Joshua and Caleb, were men of faith. They urged the immediate taking of the land, based on the promises of God (Num 14:6–10). They said to the people, “*only do not rebel against the LORD ... the LORD is with us,*” Num 14:9.

The other ten spies, however, sowed doubt and fear in the hearts of the people, and they would not go in and take the land. Therefore, they received “*a just reward,*” in that God ordered Moses to take them into the wilderness to wander until all the adults of that generation died, Num 14:26–38. When the rebels heard this sentence from God, they sought to repent (Num 14:39–45), only to find that there are times when it is too late, and there is no way of escape (see Heb 2:3 with Heb 12:16–17).

At the end of the forty years, only Joshua and Caleb survived to go in and claim the blessings of the Land. They received the reward of faith, while the others of their generation received the reward of disobedience. The issue here was not salvation, but the reaping of blessings God had promised to those who would walk by faith.

3. **Warning against Dullness (Heb 5:11–14)**

“Of whom [Jesus Christ] we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” Heb 5:11

The previous steps of drifting and doubting inevitably lead to “dullness of hearing.” This is because of the gradual process the Bible calls “hardening the heart.” Again, there are those who say that true believers will never harden their hearts. However, the disciples did, and they were obviously saved men (Mar 6:52, Mar 8:17).

It is also very clear in this text that the author considers the recipients of his letter to be believers. He says, “*by this time you ought to be teachers,*” Heb 5:12. The problem was not the lack of salvation, but rather the lack of spiritual growth. Again, you cannot urge non-believers to “go on to maturity,” Heb 6:1. That these believers were able to “*partake ... of milk*” simply proved that they were still spiritual babies, Heb 5:13. They had refused to exercise the spiritual discipline to grow up in their faith. Sadly, this is the case of far too many believers today!

4. **Warning against Despising (Heb 10:26–31)**

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” Heb 10:26

First of all, consider that from Heb 10:19–26, the author uses the words “we” and “us” a total of five times. He begins by calling his listeners “brethren,” indicating that they share with him in eternal life. In Heb 20:22–24, he exhorts them to join him in engaging in spiritual ministries of prayer, witness, and service. Only those who have become new creatures in Christ can do such things.

He then warns them of the danger of “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” Heb 10:25. Then, the very next verse calls this action a “willful sin.” The thrust of the book is that, under persecution, they were leaving the Christian assembly to return to the temple sacrifices and rituals. Therefore, he warns them that “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,” Heb 10:26. Is there anything in this text that says anything about loss of salvation? Absolutely not! In fact, the solution to the difficulty is near at hand.

From Heb 10:5–14, he shows how Jesus Christ, in His human body, became the “Lamb of God”—the perfect sacrifice for sins. Because of His finished work, those who believe “have been sanctified ... once for all” (Heb 10:10) and “perfected forever,” Heb 10:14. No stronger terms could be used for the security of our salvation.

Then the author shows, in Heb 10:15–18, that the work of Christ on the cross was the institution of the New Covenant promised long ago (Jer 31:31–34; Eze 36:22–28). Since the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has fully paid the penalty for sins, he then says in Heb 10:18, “there is no longer an offering for sin.”

The differences in wording between Heb 10:18–26 are slight. In Heb 10:18, the word implies “an offering,” where in Heb 10:26, he uses the word that specifically means “sacrifice.” The chief change is that in Heb 10:26, he adds “no longer remains.” The word *apoleipetai*, literally means “to be left behind.” With the changing of the covenants, no provision was made for any of the Old Testament sacrifices to remain.

When Jesus cried, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30), the veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom (Mat 27:51), indicating that the way to God was open to all who would believe in Jesus Christ. This meaning is given by the author in Heb 10:19–20.

Therefore, if these Jewish believers forsake the Christian assembly, and go back to the temple, with its animal sacrifices, God will accept no sacrifice on their behalf. Their involvement in temple worship—which the priests re-instituted even after the veil was rent (Mat 27:51)—would amount to “crucify[ing] again for themselves the Son of God” (Heb 6:6), and anyone so involved will have “trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace,” Heb 10:29. Note that these are people who were “sanctified,” which can only refer, in the context, back to Heb 10:10 and Heb 10:14.

The Bible testifies throughout that it is possible for believers to fall to such a debased spiritual condition. In the many case histories we find in Scripture, we see the most severe forms of divine discipline fall upon them. So severe, in fact, that it is worse than “[dying]

without mercy,” Heb 10:28. It is the worst condition any believer can face—to live and die alienated from the grace of God, Gal 5:4.

In order for a believer to come to such a state, he must “*cast away [his] confidence, which has great reward,*” Heb 10:35. This is the same “*confidence*” he urges them to “*hold fast*” in Heb 3:6, and is the same word translated “*boldness*” in Heb 10:19. In other words, he ceases to trust, or have confidence in, the sure promises of God.

The declared will of God for every believer is found in the words “*the just shall live by faith,*” Heb 10:38. When we cease trusting God, we go into spiritual retreat. The phrase “*if anyone draws back*” in the same verse is not well translated, for there is no Greek word for “anyone” in the verse. Literally, it says “*if [he] draws back,*” using the third person singular form in the verb, and can only refer to “*the just,*” that is, the believer. It is worth noting that Paul uses this very word for the actions of Peter in Antioch in Gal 2:12, translated “*he withdrew ... himself.*” Peter was not “living by faith” at the time.

5. **Warning against Disregarding (Heb 12:25–29)**

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks ... from heaven ... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Heb 12:25, Heb 12:28

Throughout these warning sections, the author has spoken to the recipients of this letter as “*brethren.*” Repeatedly, he has included himself with them by the use of the pronoun “*we.*” Nowhere has he indicated any doubts as to their salvation. His grave concern is for their spiritual welfare as children of God. He now concludes all the warning sections with these words, “*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace [literally, “let us keep holding grace”], by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear For our God is a consuming fire.*”

Note that he speaks of “*our God,*” and the “*fire*” is the execution of His holiness, which will ultimately burn everything in our lives that is not honoring to Him (see 1Co 3:11–15).

Having done a brief overview of the warning passages, we can conclude certain things:

- a. All through the book of Hebrews, the same author is speaking to the same people. In other words, he is not talking to believers in one passage, then to unbelievers in another.
- b. In all of the warning passages, the author identifies himself with the recipients, using the word “*brethren*” repeatedly, and using the pronouns “*we*” and “*us*” inclusively.
- c. Not one threat of loss of salvation is found in the entire book. Every warning is to believers concerning impending judgment (70 A.D.), as well as loss of blessings and eternal rewards.
- d. The author does not minimize the severity of divine discipline. All the adults of the Exodus generation died under discipline due to their refusal to enter the land.

- e. The five warning passages show a process of spiritual decline; each increase in the hardening process comes with intensified disciplinary consequences.

Having looked at the various so-called “problem passages” (they are only a problem when they are misinterpreted!), we will now return to our consideration of Hebrews 6.

CRUCIFYING TO THEMSELVES THE SON OF GOD

“Having willfully fallen away it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they keep on crucifying to themselves the Son of God, and keep on putting Him to open shame.” Heb 6:6 (author’s translation)

The above translation accurately reveals the force of the verbs in this verse, and throws much light on what the author is saying. “Fallen away” is again *para* “beside,” and *pipto*, the verb for “fall.” The aorist tense speaks of a definite point of time when this occurs, that is, the decision to count the blood of Christ as insufficient and to turn back to works of the law. Many believers do this very thing. The active voice declares that this is a willful decision. In fact, this is the “willful sin” of Heb 10:26. The participle is temporal and explains why it is impossible to restore these rebels. It is because they persist in their rebellion. It would be the same as saying that we cannot restore an adulterer or a thief to repentance, if they choose to continue in such activity.

The ongoing effects of this decision are now declared. These are shown in two present participles, both of which are also active in voice. This means that the first erroneous decision has developed into a continued practice. The word “*crucify*” is made up of a preposition of repetition, *ana*, with the verb for crucifixion, *stauroo*. The personal pronoun *heautois*, showing the direction of force to be reflexive, “to themselves, to their own disadvantage.” The dative case is often called “dative of advantage/disadvantage.” Now what is the effect of crucifixion? Death or separation! Paul applies this truth when he says, “*But God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*” (Gal 6:14, emphasis added). The construction here is virtually the same.

The effect of this crucifixion was a “separation” between Paul and the world. When a believer willingly “crucifies Christ to himself,” he has caused a separation to come between himself and his Lord. This is exactly what Paul said to the Galatian believers, “*Christ will profit you nothing ... you have been estranged from Christ,*” Gal 5:2, Gal 5:4. The problem is not loss of salvation, but the loss of fellowship and the dynamic of the Spirit of God in their lives.

We must never forget that at the time we believe in Jesus, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is called “*the Spirit of Christ*” in Rom 8:9. In Joh 14:18, before His crucifixion, Jesus said to the disciples, “*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*” He has done this by means of His Spirit. When we sin, we grieve the Spirit of Christ in us (Eph 4:30), and are, therefore, grieving Jesus Christ. What we do not consider is that this is the very word Jesus used in Mar 14:34 when He said, “*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful [grieved], even to death.*” The anticipation of coming into direct contact with our sins, and paying the penalty of spiritual death in separation from the Father, filled Him with dread. In “*crucify[ing] again ... the Son of God*” (Heb 6:6), we bring sin into “*the temple of the Holy Spirit,*” 1Co 6:19. We cause this same grief

again! Let us daily come to Him for cleansing and restoration to His blessed fellowship (1Jo 1:7–9, 1Jo 2:2). (See Appendix A: Divine Discipline.)

We must often be reminded that while God’s grace is free to the believer, it is not cheap. The cost of our so-great salvation was the cross of Christ. The prophet Isaiah tells us that the greatest suffering of Jesus on the cross was the grief and anguish of His soul (Isa 53:10–12) due to contact with sin. This is the grief we impose on the indwelling Spirit of God when we sin.

As one jealously guards the affection of their beloved, so the Spirit of God exhibits a godly jealousy, lest our affection be turned toward the sinful nature (Gal 5:17; Jam 4:5). Persistent sin in the believer’s life causes the same kind of grief to the Spirit and, therefore, to Jesus Christ Himself, as what He faced in the Garden. It was the grief of coming into direct contact with sin. It must also be understood that, having been spiritually united with Jesus Christ by means of His Spirit, we cannot grieve Him and find any genuine happiness by our involvement in sin. All sinful gratification is short-lived and brings the price tag of sorrowful reaping, Gal 6:7–9.

In addition to grieving the Spirit, they are putting Jesus Christ to public shame. The verb *deigmatizo* means “to expose one publicly to shame,” and is intensified by the preposition *para*, meaning “beside.” It is as if Jesus Himself was beside them, as they return to the rituals and requirements of dead Judaism, and is being publicly shamed the whole time. Once the promised Messiah had come, and His work of redemption was accomplished, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom (Mat 27:51; Mar 15:38). This was signifying that the way into God’s presence was now open forever to all who come through Christ (Heb 9:8, Heb 10:20). To repair that veil, as the priests in Jerusalem did, and return to an abolished system of worship (Heb 10:18), was an act of willful defiance against God and continued rejection of the only way of salvation, Joh 14:6. As the author later says, to those who willfully sin in rejection of the all-sufficiency of the cross of Christ, “*there remains no more sacrifice for sins*,” Heb 10:26. Christ brought an end to the sacrificial system of the Law (Rom 10:14) by fulfilling it all on our behalf.

How much worse is this, when being done by believers? To receive the gift of eternal life by simple faith in Christ, and then accept a false doctrine (Act 15:1, Act 15:5; Gal 1:6–9), which declares the work of Christ to be insufficient and in need of additional works on our part, is the height of apostasy! Yet this is exactly what everyone who suggests that we can lose our salvation is in effect saying. When a believer “*harden[s his] heart*” (Heb 3:8, Heb 3:13, Heb 4:7) producing “*an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God*” (Heb 3:12), and like the Exodus generation follows “*the same example of disobedience*” (Heb 4:11), then, because of their hardened and darkened condition, “*It is impossible ... to renew them again to repentance*,” Heb 6:4, 6. As we have seen in Heb 4:10, 6:1 and 9:14, biblical repentance involves turning from “our own works” which are “*dead works*” to trust in the merits of the cross of Christ alone.

We cannot, at the same time, fully trust in the cross and attempt to add some merit of our own. There is a point of no return in the spiritual life, where the apostate believer will come to a ruined end, and a premature and dishonorable death.

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

“And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say: ‘How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! I was on the verge of total ruin, in the midst of the assembly and congregation.’” Pro 5:11–14

“There is a sin unto death.” 1Jo 5:16

The Bible is full of examples of believers who have died the “*sin unto death*.” This is not a particular sin, but rather a habitual continuation in a sin that becomes so destructive to the soul and our witness, that God executes maximum divine discipline in physically removing the believer from this life. (See Appendix A: Divine Discipline, cf., Gal 5:16, “*You cannot do what you desire!*”)

Their salvation is secure, but often these examples are pointed out as instances where believers have “lost their salvation.” One notable Old Testament example is King Saul, who died for rebellion and witchcraft (1Ch 10:13). However, as the incident in 1Sa 28:8–19 makes clear, Saul’s eternal life and salvation was not in question. His death was dishonorable and was prolonged with much pain (1Sa 31:1–4).

Well-known New Testament examples are Ananias and Saphira (Act 5:1–11), and the immoral man in Corinth (1Co 5:1–5), who happily appears to have repented and recovered, 2Co 2:5–8. One glaring example mentioned previously, that is too often overlooked is that of Peter, who fell into the “Galatian heresy” of seeking to return to the Law (Gal 2:11–21, Gal 3:1–14). In fact, the very word translated “*draw back*” in Heb 10:38 is used by Paul of Peter’s action in Gal 2:12. The very snare that entangled Peter is the same one that the author of Hebrews is fighting against.

In John 15, Jesus warns that “unfruitful branches” will be “*take[n] away*” (literally, “lifted up”) (Joh 15:2) and will be cast away “*as a branch*” (still a child of God) and wither (final, severe divine discipline) and be “*burned*,” Joh 15:6. This is consistent with Paul’s teaching about non-productive believers in 1Co 3:10–15 who are nevertheless “*saved, yet so as through fire*.” Fire is often used in Scripture to indicate severe trial (1Pe 1:7, 1Pe 4:12) or severe divine discipline (Jam 5:3; Jud 1:23). It is to this our author refers when he says, “*our God is a consuming fire*,” Heb 12:29. Whatever is of gold (faith), He will refine. Whatever is not of faith, He will consume.

IV. WORKS WORTHY OF SALVATION

“But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name in that you have ministered to the saints and so minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Heb 6:9–12

Having emphasized the total reliance of faith upon the work and merit of Jesus Christ, we now see the proper relationship of faith and works. As mentioned earlier, in all aspects of the spiritual life, works are only “good works” when generated by faith, and performed as a **result**, never as a **means to attain**. For example:

- Because we have salvation by faith in Christ, we are “*created unto good works*” (Eph 2:10), and enabled to “*bring forth works worthy of repentance*,” Mat 3:8.
- Because spirituality is by faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 5:16), we are enabled to produce “*the fruit of the Spirit*,” Gal 5:22–23.
- Because our eternal security is a matter of faith, being “*sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*” at the moment of salvation (2Co 1:22; Eph 1:13, Eph 4:30), we are enabled to perform works worthy of “*the full assurance of hope*” (Heb 6:11, Heb 10:22).

And so the author says, “*We are convinced of better things concerning you, things that accompany salvation*,” Heb 6:9. The word “*accompany*” is the present middle participle of *echo*, “to have in possession.” These works are the property of salvation. They rightly belong to it. Just as the fruit of the vine does not belong to the branches (Joh 15:1–7) but to the vine, so these works are the work of Jesus Christ in and through His child, Gal 2:20. The spiritual life, godliness, is “*Christ manifested in the flesh*,” 1Ti 3:16. As He lived His earthly life in “*the form of a bond servant [being made] in the likeness of men*” (Phi 2:7), so His will is now to live His resurrection life in and through the believer. Thus, the “*better*” “*Mediator*” (Heb 8:6) who offered Himself a “*better sacrifice*” (Heb 9:23), brings in a “*better hope*” (Heb 7:19), producing in us “*better things*,” Heb 6:9.

The greatest evidence of a new creature is the change in their relationship with their heavenly Father. He speaks of “*your work and ... [the] love which you have shown*,” Heb 6:10. This is expanded in 1Th 1:3, “*constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father*” (NASB, emphasis added). Again, **faith**, **hope**, and **love** appear as the great virtues of the spiritual life. These works are “*shown toward His name*.” That is, they are offered to Jesus Christ by these believers who have “*ministered to the saints*,” Heb 6:10. Our service to other believers is an offering to God. We show our love for Him by loving one another. “*If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*” 1Jo 4:20. It is important that with all the grave warnings he has given them, he affirms the fact that “*God is not unjust so as to forget your work*,” Heb 6:10. What is done in faith, by the power of the Spirit, will stand forever for the simple reason that it is a work of God. What may appear to say otherwise in Eze 3:20 must not be taken out of context. There, the prophet is warning Judah of the impending judgment of Babylon’s devastation. Those who are living wickedly at the time of judgment, will not be delivered because of past acts or works of faithfulness, nor will the faithfulness of one believer be able to deliver another (Eze 14:13–14, Eze 14:16, Eze 14:20–21). Remember, the key to understanding Scripture is to “*compare spiritual with spiritual*” (1Co 2:13), and to not forsake the **context**.

THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE

In order for these Hebrew believers to continue as they had begun, to keep on “running well” without being hindered (Gal 5:7), would require five spiritual disciplines. We might call these the daily disciplines of the Christian life:

1. They must “show the same diligence” as at the beginning. The word for diligence comes from *spoudazo*, which includes the ideas of urgency, zeal, and exertion. This is the same word translated “*diligent*” (study) in 2Ti 2:15. Diligence, like faith (Rom 10:17), is actually generated by spending much time in the Word of God. The fire of God’s Word (Jer 23:29) ignites the fire in our souls. This same word is used in Heb 4:11, translated “*diligent*.” There must be strong inner motivation and endeavor. This is the “*diligence*” by which we “*add to [our] faith*” (2Pe 1:5–7) the virtues of continuing growth and maturity.
2. They aim at the **goal** of “*the full assurance of hope,*” Heb 6:9. It is biblical hope that bridges the gap between saving faith and maturity in love. Please take the time to see the relationship of these three in Rom 5:1–5; 1Th 1:3; Gal 5:5–6; and Heb 10:22–24. The Apostle Paul tells us that, “*For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen in not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance,*” Rom 8:24–25. Hope takes us beyond the realm of sight into the invisible, and beyond the present into the unknown future. Yet, it leads into the future invisible and unknown void with **assurance**! The absolute life-changing power of **hope** (assurance based on the promises of God, Heb 6:18–19) is so great that it is described in three different word pictures:
 - a. It is the **blessed hope**, Tit 2:13. This is the certainty of the return of Jesus Christ, which constantly brings an element of blessedness into every area of our lives.
 - b. It is the **living hope**, 1Pe 1:3. This is the quality that takes a normal and common existence, and imbues it with divine life—spiritual life, abundant life.
 - c. It is the **purifying hope**, 1Jo 3:3. This is the focus of the eyes of the soul on the eternal horizon, which leads us ever upward and onward to a higher plane of obedience.

This is why Paul declares that “*hope does not disappoint,*” Rom 5:5. Though many hopes in this life will be shattered, no hope that rests on the promises of God’s Word will fail. The aim of our life is to so strengthen our assurance in the promises of God, that we gain “*the full assurance of hope,*” Heb 6:11. Such strong assurance requires both **understanding** of the Word (Col 2:2) as well as the full **conviction** of its truth (1Th 1:5).

3. There must be the determination to **never quit**! The phrase “*until the end*” is a common theme in the Bible. (Compare Heb 3:6, 14, “*If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end ... if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.*”) To those who do this, there is the assurance that “*Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house [household] we are if we hold fast*” (Heb 3:6) in that

He lives and rules in us, and “we are partakers of Christ” or “we are partners” in His life and reign.

So often we fail to consider the inestimable loss of those who fail to endure “*to the end.*” “*He who endures to the end shall be saved*” (Mat 10:22, Mat 24:13; Mar 13:13), taken out of context, is used by some to suggest loss of salvation. The deliverance, however, is from failure to be faithful in service to our Lord, even in the face of severe persecution. The race of faith is an endurance race.

If what seemed afar so grand,
Turns to nothing in your hand,
On again! For virtue lies
In the struggle, not the prize.

While God will not forget past works of faithfulness (Heb 6:10), of what real value is it if we never finish the race? “*Run ... that you may obtain it,*” 1Co 9:24. Again, we forget what may be forfeited by not following through to the finish. Those long-cherished fulfillments of “*the desires of your heart*” (Psa 37:4) may be just over the hill, or beyond the next time of trial. “*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise,*” Heb 10:36 (emphasis added). Whatever your trials, don’t give up. Be like Moses, “*for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible,*” Heb 11:27.

4. We need to daily guard against “spiritual sluggishness.” The first three disciplines are designed in part to help us overcome the spiritual inertia—the gradual cooling of spiritual zeal that leads to a lukewarm existence, Rev 3:15–16. “*That you do not become sluggish*” encompasses the entire process of “falling,” from “drifting” (Heb 2:1) to “despising” (Heb 10:29, Heb 12:25). The word *nothros* means to be “slow to apprehend, lazy, lethargic.” A look at the “*sluggard*” in the book of Proverbs gives a good idea of the attitude to the spiritual life we want to avoid.
5. We need to enter the **school of imitation**. “Imitators” comes from *mimetai*, from which we get “mimic.” The practice of being “imitators” is repeatedly urged in Scripture. Paul tells us to “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*” (1Co 4:16, 1Co 11:1). He commends the Thessalonian believers who “*became followers [imitators] of us and of the Lord*” (1Th 1:6), and by so doing also “*became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe,*” 1Th 1:7. To the Philippians he says, “*Brethren, join in following my example,*” Phi 3:17. And always at the head of the class is the ultimate example—the Lord Jesus Christ. “*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps,*” 1Pe 2:21. Sociologists tell us that small infants begin the long learning process by developing the art of imitation. It is the strong desire to imitate, “to be like,” that drives them to walk, eat, and talk. Imitation requires daily observation, followed immediately by application. As it works in the physical life, so also in the spiritual.

To imitate Christ, we have to first “observe” Him (“*looking unto Jesus,*” Heb 12:2), then begin to apply in our life what we see in His. This is also called “abiding” in Joh 15:4 and in 1Jo 2:6 which says, “*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*” If we daily imitate “*those who through faith and patience inherit the promises*” (Heb 6:12), for example Abraham (Heb 6:15), then we, like them, will also become “*heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him,*” Jam 2:5.

The Deceitfulness of Sin

This is why he warns so urgently in Heb 3:13, “*But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*” Sin always deceives us with the promise of fulfillment and satisfaction, but the result is always sorrow and shame, and the resultant “hardening of the heart.” Peter explains, “*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust, **which war against the soul,***” 1Pe 2:11 (emphasis added). All of the deceit and destructiveness we see in the world around us is due to the damage done by sin. But we should also remember that sin has a far more sinister and devilish side than just wrongdoing and immoral acts. That aspect of man’s fallen nature is called **evil**. It is Satan’s counterfeit of genuine good. It may be said, “good without God is evil.” So often devilish actions and plans are cloaked in the guise of being “good.” This is sin’s ultimate deception! We must be on guard for “*every form of evil,*” 1Th 5:22.

The New and Living Way

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Heb 10:19–25

In considering the “works worthy of salvation,” this passage is extremely important. In it, we find a very brief but helpful sketch of what spiritual living is all about.

The Foundation Stone (Heb 10:19–20)

Often, living the spiritual life is compared to building a house (Pro 9:1, Pro 24:3–5; Mat 7:23–27). The key to any building is its foundation. “*No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ,*” 1Co 3:11. We, as believers, can “*come boldly to the throne of grace*” that is, the throne room of God (Heb 4:16) on the basis of “*the blood of Jesus,*” Heb 10:19. His substitutionary sacrifice, in which He took our sin and death on the cross and gave to us His eternal life, is the sole basis for our confidence in coming to God. This means our entrance is a “*new and living way,*” in contrast to the “*obsolete and disappearing way*” (Heb 8:13) of the Mosaic Covenant. By His death on the cross, Jesus inaugurated for us a way “*through the veil.*”

The veil stood as a symbol, in the temple, of the barrier of sin and death between God and men (Heb 9:3, Heb 9:8). When Jesus “*bore our sins in His body on the tree [cross]*” (1Pe 2:24), the veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom (Mat 27:51; Mar 15:38). This signified that the way into the presence of God was now open on the basis of faith in His work. It is upon this “finished” work that all our confidence and, in fact, all our effective service, rests. The word “consecrated” is *egkainizo* and is used in the Septuagint (Greek version) of the Old Testament for the dedication of the altar and temple (see Heb 10:19–20). It means “to renew, to make new.” It is the work of Christ who is the “[great] *Priest over the house of God*” (Heb 10:21), meaning the “household of believers.”

Our Priesthood (Heb 10:22)

The Bible makes it clear that every believer is a priest (1Pe 2:5, 1Pe 2:9). This equips us to represent ourselves before God’s throne (Heb 4:16) and to intercede on behalf of others, Heb 13:15. We are exhorted here to “*draw near,*” the word signifying the approach of a priest to serve. We are to come “*with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*” The word “true” (sincere) is *alethinos*, meaning “true, genuine.” This genuineness is grounded upon the “*full assurance of faith,*” that is, a total and firm reliance on our High Priest’s finished work, Heb 10:19–20.

There are two practical reasons for such confidence. First, we have had “*our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.*” The sprinkling returns to the picture of the blood of the sacrifice being applied, Heb 9:21. The verb is *rantizo* and is in the perfect tense, indicating that which is done in the past with ongoing results. This is the accomplished work of Christ in Heb 10:10, 12, and 14. This is not something we do. The passive voice means that it has been done to us, and the participle speaks of our new character in light of this finished work. As the author said earlier (Heb 10:2), only a perfect sacrifice could cleanse the conscience of sins forever. Second, the word, “*washed*” is *louo*, and is also a perfect passive participle. As stated in Rienecker/Rogers’ *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, pg. 703, “*The participles express not conditions of approach to God which are yet to be achieved, but conditions already possessed.*” Since the benefits of the blood of Christ have been applied to us by faith, we are cleansed to enter into God’s presence. We should do so regularly by prayer—for others and ourselves.

Our Ambassadorship (Heb 10:23)

This verse tells us we should be consistent and faithful in our witness to others. The “*confession of our hope*” is the Gospel message. To this we should “*hold fast*” which is *katecho*, “to hold down in the sense of maintaining or mastering.” Like Abraham (Rom 4:20), we should not “waiver” in our faith. *Akline* has the connotation of “not yielding, declining.” Paul says, “*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God,*” 2Co 5:20. We can be bold and confident in our ambassadorship because “*He who promised is faithful.*” The key to effective evangelism begins with giving Christ His rightful place of authority in our lives, so that others see the “*hope that is in [us]*” and ask for a reasonable answer for the source of it, 1Pe 3:15.

Our Ministry (Heb 10:24)

As believers, we have been spiritually gifted to serve within the family of God (Rom 12:6; 1Co 12:7; 1Pe 4:10). Therefore, it is necessary that we “*consider*” the plan and will of God for that service. The word *katanoeo* is the same as in Heb 3:1, and means, “to bear down in concentration.” Our spiritual gift and the function of its corresponding ministry are worthy of careful consideration, study, and prayer. It is our God-given means to “*stimulate*” (NASB) other believers to grow to maturity. The word *paraxysmos* means, “to provoke, irritate, incite” and implies friction and heat, the means by which “*iron sharpens iron,*” Pro 27:17. The evidences of growth toward maturity are our goal, as we urge others and ourselves onward to “*love and good works.*” This love is the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (1Co 13:4–8; Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22) and the “*good works*” are the benevolent fruit of grace and truth at work which brings blessings to other.

Loyalty to the Body of Christ (Heb 10:25)

For us to achieve effectiveness in the three spheres of Christian service mentioned, we must be dedicated to the local assembly of the saints. Under persecution, many of these Hebrew believers were going back into the temple. While the environment was safe, it was not sanctified. The word “*forsaking*” is *egkataleipo*, meaning, “to leave in the lurch, to forsake.” In the time when believers needed—as never before—to “stand firm,” many of them were fleeing. They were, in fact, traitors to Christ, who would “shrink back” (Heb 10:38–39) in the face of suffering.

Of these, God says, “*My soul has no pleasure,*” Heb 10:38. The author is quoting the Septuagint (Greek) version of Hab 2:4. In this construction, the phrase “*if anyone draws back*” can only refer to “*the just [one],*” meaning a believer. As noted earlier, Paul uses this very word for Peter’s fall into heresy and hypocrisy in Gal 2:12. Not only divine disapproval, but ultimately, “destruction” awaited such ones, if they did not repent. And this was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Titus, the Roman, destroyed Jerusalem, leaving “*not one stone*” of the temple standing “*upon another,*” Luk 21:6. Most likely, this was the “*Day approaching*” (Heb 10:25b), which required their faithful encouragement of one another. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you cannot practically fulfill the three aspects of the Christian life apart from the local church. Make sure you find one that is faithful to the Word of God!

Let us return once again to Hebrews 6.

V. OUR ANCHOR HOLDS

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Heb 6:13–20

In this last section of Hebrews 6, the author gives the reason for all hope, assurance, and security in the believer's life. Again, it goes without saying that it is not possible for the writer of this book to hold two opposing theological positions at one time. He cannot hold to eternal security **and** teach loss of one's salvation. Neither could he suggest that the believer may lose eternal life in Heb 6:4–8, then turn around in Heb 6:13–20 and tell us that we have a refuge and anchor that cannot be removed. This would be inconsistent with logical thinking; but how much more with the inspired Word of God, which cannot ever contradict itself? *“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace,”* 1Co 14:33.

The Promise and the Oath (Heb 6:13–17)

The burden of these verses is that God had a great desire to show His people that His purpose, which is revealed in His promises, could not be changed! When we read the promises of Scripture, we see the express purpose of God for us. And that purpose will never change. Once we become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus, we also become *“heirs of promise”* (Heb 6:17) because we are born of promise. *“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise,”* Gal 4:28. Three times in Scripture, God promised a child to barren women, and each time he outlined His purpose for the child before it was even conceived. These were Isaac (Gen 17:19, 21, Gen 18:9–15), Samson (Judges 13), and John (Luk 1:5–17). All three of these—great though they were—were born sinners (Rom 3:23, Rom 5:12), failed in their lives, and some of their failures are recorded. Yet God fulfilled His purpose for their lives. *“The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable,”* Rom 11:29. The actual word used here means “without regret,” referring to God. He will never regret His plan for us! The writer in Hebrews 6 says His purpose is “unchangeable,” Heb 6:17, NASB.

The word *ametathetos* is a legal term used at the time and signified that a ruling had been made, or a contract was written up, which was incapable of being set aside or annulled. It was, in fact, irrevocable. The theological word *“immutability”* (Heb 6:17) speaks of the same principle, but bases it on the character of God, *“with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning,”* Jam 1:17. All of these passages affirm the same wonderful truth—that God's plan for us is as changeless as He is!

This is what is meant when he says, *“because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,”* Heb 6:13. This oath stands on the very existence of God. It was made to Abraham and to his “heirs” or “seed,” that is all who are in Christ, Gal 3:7, 9, 16. The oath referred to was given in Gen 22:16–18, after Abraham had offered up Isaac his son and *“received him back as a type,”* Heb 11:19, NASB. It was at this point that the long period of trials and testing were finished for Abraham, *“and he was called the friend of God,”* Jam 2:23. By living a life of trust, by “hoping against hope” (Rom 4:18), by “enduring to the end,” Abraham *“obtained the promise.”*

Just as an “oath” or a binding legal document puts an end to any dispute in a court of law (Heb 6:16), so God's design and desire is that by basing His promises on His very existence, all cause for doubting would be banished from our souls. We can confidently say, “The promises of God reveal the purpose of God, and are based on the Person of God!” As Paul puts it in Eph 1:11, *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose*

of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” The amazing and thrilling thing is that this plan is “according to the good pleasure [kind intention] of His will,” Eph 1:5, 9. God’s purpose for us is the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” Rom 12:2. What He has purposed is for our ultimate benefit—both in time and eternity. How we should echo the words of Christ Jesus in saying, “I delight to do Your will, O my God!” (Psa 40:8; Heb 10:9).

The Anchor and the Rock (Heb 6:18–20)

The best anchor in the world is of no value when it is sitting in the ship. You could stand and admire the sturdiness and workmanship of your anchor, in the midst of a raging storm, but it would not secure you! The anchor is only of value when you cannot see it. And of greater importance than the strength of the anchor is the immovability of the rock to which it holds.

In the surging waves of the storm of life we have “fled for refuge” to the Lord Jesus Christ, and have attached our anchor of “hope” upon the Rock of our Salvation (Psa 62:2, 6). The word “fled” is *katapheugo*, used in Deu 4:42 and Jos 20:9 in the Greek (Septuagint) version for one fleeing from the avenger of blood. It is a flight from certain death to a place of blessed refuge. In taking this refuge in Christ, it is God’s expressed desire that we have “strong consolation” (encouragement). Here, we find the strongest word in the Greek language of the Bible for the power of God, from *ischuros*—the power of God Almighty! It is combined with *paraklesis*, for the consolation of one who is near. The specific comfort we have is based upon “two immutable things,” meaning the promise of God, combined with the oath of God (Heb 6:17 and Gen 22:15–18). The promise included three specific things:

1. Regeneration or eternal life. See Gal 3:16, “to your Seed” means in “Christ.”
2. Blessing. So great is God’s plan for this, that if we “love God,” “all things work together for good,” Rom 8:28.
3. Victory to “possess the gate of their enemies” (Gen. 22:17), is echoed by Jesus to His Church in Mat 16:18 “on this rock [Himself] I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

God’s desire that we would be certain of these three things in Christ was so great that He strengthened it with an oath. The oath rests upon His own self-existence. “I swear by Myself” (Jer 22:4) means that the promise is as secure as the existence of the Everlasting God! Christian! God wants you to be sure in your spiritual life of three things:

- You have eternal life forever ...
- You are assured the blessings of God ... and
- You are guaranteed ultimate and final victory!

All of these are your present possession “in Christ”:

- In Him, you are “perfected forever,” Heb 10:14;
- In Him, you are “blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,” Eph 1:3; and
- In Him, you are “more than conquerors through Him who loved us,” Rom 8:37.

These priceless possessions are claimed the moment we “*lay hold of the hope set before us,*” Heb 6:18. The word *krateo* is “to seize firmly, to grasp.” The aorist tense looks at our initial faith in the Savior.

When We Barter Our Blessings

You may say, “But I don’t feel saved, and my life is certainly not one of victory.” Then, you must understand the problem correctly. You have not lost the things God has so surely promised. By spiritual apathy, or by sin in your life, you have forfeited your joy and enjoyment of what is rightly yours. The analogy to Esau in Heb 12:15–17 is not a warning of loss of salvation, but of the loss of the blessing—which is your birthright. As believers, we as can—and often do—trade the rich spiritual blessings of fellowship with God and obedience to His Word for the “mess of pottage,” of this world. And when we do, we “*grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom [we] were sealed for the day of redemption,*” Eph 4:30. By doing this, we begin a process in which the “*root of bitterness*” springs up in our life (Heb 12:15), bringing untold “*trouble*” into our lives, and causing, by its ongoing effects, others to be “*defiled.*” The Scripture is clear: we cannot escape either from the disciplinary hand of God (Heb 12:5–11), or from reaping the consequences of our decisions and actions, Gal 6:7–9. (See Appendix A: Divine Discipline.)

The solution to the “lost blessings” we so often forfeit, is to come back to the “Anchor.” Restoration to fellowship and joy, as well as obedience and usefulness, is possible if we **repent** (a spiritual change of mind from a “*broken spirit,*” Psa 51:17), **confess** our sin to God (Psa 32:5; 1Jo 1:9), and **return** to a life of faith and the obedience it produces (Jer 3:12, 22). In spite of our wanderings, our anchor holds!

The Solid Anchor (Heb 6:19–20)

The “*hope*” spoken of here is in the “absolute assurance” we have in God’s promises. The biblical word “*hope*” is *elpis* meaning “a firm and confident expectation.” There is no connotation of “maybe” in this hope. It is steadfast reliance upon the secure promises of God. “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself,*” 2Ti 2:13. Such hope is the “*anchor of the soul.*” This anchor is described as “*sure and steadfast.*” The word “*sure*” is *asphales*, which means “not able to fall or fail.” This is followed by the word *bebaios*, meaning “that which is secure in itself.” The reason for such security of the anchor is given as the rock to which it is attached. Our “Anchor” “*enters ... behind the veil*” into the holy of holies in Heaven, “*where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus.*” Jesus is the Rock of our salvation. To Him, all faith, hope, and love are due. By means of His resurrection, He has entered into the presence of God “*for us,*” that is, as our personal representative. He is our “*Mediator,*” 1Ti 2:5.

But in addition to this, He is said to be our “*forerunner.*” The word used here is *prodromos*, a military word that speaks of an “advance scout” who went ahead to prepare the way for those who followed. Jesus said, “*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also,*” Joh 14:2b–3 (emphasis added).

Two Divine Oaths

According to Hebrews, our eternal destiny is as secure as Jesus Christ Himself, in whom we have believed. Only two times in the entire Bible does God take an oath. The first we have seen is regarding the “seed of Abraham,” those who are His heirs by faith in Jesus Christ. The second is in Psa 110:4 where the Lord says, “*The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You [Jesus Christ] are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’*” Heb 6:19 refers to this in saying “*having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*” Does it not seem significant that God would take an oath upon His own existence twice? Is it not significant that one oath regards Christ’s eternal priesthood, the other our eternal life and destiny? Does it seem possible by any stretch of the imagination that one of those oaths could fail? He has shown us that once “in Christ,” we are secure in Him forever!

VI. DO YOU HAVE AN ANCHOR?

I will relate a story I read somewhere back along the years. It concerned an old Scottish sea captain who lay dying. He had trusted Jesus Christ as Savior many years earlier, but had lived the rough-and-tumble life known to those who make their living upon the swelling tide. Just as he was departing this world, he was asked by the visiting parson, “Amos, are ye certain ye’re saved?” To which the aged captain answered with his dying breath, “Aye, the Anchor holds!”

The very real question for every soul living now is “Do you have an Anchor?” You may have a “religion” or be in your own eyes a “good” or moral person. None of these things will anchor your soul against the storm of sin and death, followed by an eternal separation from your Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

If you were asked the question, “Should you die today, what assurance would you have that God would receive you into Heaven?” and your answer is anything other than that of simple faith in Jesus Christ, you are without Anchor! Your soul is adrift and the current of sin and death will carry you faster and faster into the eternal lake of fire.

“This is the second [and eternal] death [the lake of fire]. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Rev 20:14b–15 (emphasis added)

Jesus said, “*And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*” Joh 11:26 (emphasis added). **Do you believe this?** It is my prayer that each one who reads this will know the joy and **security** of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of eternal life. “*Most assuredly, I [Jesus] say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life,*” Joh 5:24 (emphasis added).

For all who have taken this step, who are believers, I pray you may be encouraged in those times of doubts and uncertainty. The Apostle John writes, “*And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the*

*name of the Son of God, that you **may know** that you have eternal life,*” 1Jo 5:11–13 (emphasis added). If you are lacking in the “*full assurance of hope*” (Heb 6:11), it is not that your anchor has slipped. But either through sin or slackness, you have wandered from the fellowship of joy of the heavenly Father’s presence.

The solution is to rise up and return to the Father, Luk 15:17–20. Carefully and prayerfully examine your life (1Co 11:31): confess known sins and omissions honestly to God (1Jo 1:9; Rom 14:23b, with Jam 4:17), and begin today to walk—to live a life of trust and obedience (1Jo 1:7; Joh 8:12). Study and grow in God’s Word (2Ti 2:15; 2Pe 3:18) and in the exercise of your faith (2Pe 1:5–7; Heb 5:14). Serve God by serving others (Joh 13:13–17; 1Pe 4:8–11). If you do these things, you will find that God will renew, strengthen, and make you useful in His plan and service (Psa 51:10–13; 2Ti 2:10–22). As you give Jesus Christ His rightful place in your life (1Pe 3:15), you will be able to effectively witness to others, leading them to Jesus Christ:

The Anchor of our Salvation!

APPENDIX A

Doctrine of Repentance

1. The word “repent” comes from *meta* (to change) and *noia* (the mind). It is a spiritual reversal of thinking.
2. Repentance involves turning from self to God through faith in Jesus Christ (Luk 13:3–5, 15:7, 10; Rev 2:4–5).
3. Repentance not only turns from sin, but also from reliance upon human good, which is called “*filthy rags*” (Isa 64:6) and “*dead works*” (Heb 6:1, 9:14).
4. Repentance and faith are two sides of the same issue (1Th 1:9–10; Heb 6:1).
5. Repentance comes from “*a broken and contrite*” spirit (Psa 51:17) for “*godly sorrow produces repentance,*” 2Co 7:8–11.
6. However, another word, *metamelomai*, means to feel sorry, yet may not include repentance. This word is used of Judas in Mat 27:3.
7. The prodigal son in Luke 15 is a good picture of both inner and outer changes resulting from genuine repentance, “*fruits worthy of repentance,*” Mat 3:8.

Biblical Faith

1. Faith is the foundation and first step to all spiritual life, Heb 11:1.
2. The focus of faith is Jesus Christ, seen through the Word of God (Rom 10:17; Joh 14:6; Heb 2:9, 3:1, 12:2).
3. “*Without faith, it is impossible to please [God],*” Heb 11:6.
4. Faith releases the power of God in our lives, bringing salvation and blessing (Rom 1:16–17; Eph 2:8; 1Th 2:13).
5. Faith is the foundation of Christian virtue (1Co 13:13; 2Pe 1:5–7).
6. Genuine faith bears spiritual fruit (Eph 2:10; Jam 2:14, 17, 26).
7. Faith overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4–5; Rev 12:11).

Divine Discipline

Not all suffering in the Christian life is due to sin. God often allows and uses various sufferings and trials to refine and purify our faith (Jam 1:2–4, 12; 1Pe 1:6–9). Here we are speaking of discipline for disobedience:

1. The Scripture is clear that all children of God will come under divine discipline (Heb 12:8; Rev 3:19).
2. According to Heb 12:5–6, discipline follows a pattern: “reproof, warning, discipline, and scourging” (severe pain).
3. There are two common failures under divine discipline: that of disregarding it, or of being overcome and fainting, Heb 12:5–6.
4. Discipline is designed to refine and purify our lives, so we become sharers of God’s holiness (Heb 12:10–11; 1Pe 1:13–25).
5. The severity of God’s discipline is displayed in both precept and example (Psalms 6, 28, 32, 51; Heb 10:30–31).

6. When we disregard discipline, we can suffer a great loss of blessings, Heb 12:14–17.
7. Continued sin in the face of God’s discipline may lead to premature death, and loss of reward in Heaven (Jon 15:2, 6; 1Co 3:15, 5:5; Act 5:5, 10; 1Jo 5:16).

Eternal Rewards

1. Eternal rewards can only be gained by those who have received the gift of eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16–17, 3:24, 6:23; Eph 2:8–9).
2. Believers will be rewarded for the fruitful labors of their faith and service to God (1Co 3:10–15, 9:24–25; Rev 22:12).
3. Rewards will be given at the Bema Seat of Christ (Throne of Reward) (Rom 14:10; 2Co 5:10).
4. Rewards include rank and authority (Mat 25:20–23; Luk 19:15–19).
5. If we are unfaithful, we can lose our reward (1Co 3:15; Rev 3:11).
6. There are five crowns included as eternal rewards:
 - a. The **incorruptible crown** (1Co 9:24–27) for exercising spiritual self-control.
 - b. The **crown of life** (Jam 1:12; Rev 2:10) for faithfulness through trials.
 - c. The **crown of joy** or rejoicing (Phi 4:1; 1Th 2:19–20) for faithful witnessing.
 - d. The **crown of righteousness** (2Ti 4:8) for faithful looking and living for the Lord’s return.
 - e. The **crown of glory** (1Pe 5:4) for faithfulness in ministry.
7. Eternal rewards are a *bona fide* basis for spiritual motivation (2Ti 4:8; Heb 10:35–36).

Five Salvation Works of the Holy Spirit

“Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things have become new.” 2Co 5:17

1. **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit** (1Co 12:13; Rom 6:3–4). By this work we are united with Jesus Christ forever. We have a new spiritual **position**, accepted and seated “*in Christ*” (Eph 1:6, 2:4–7; Col 3:1–3).
2. **Regeneration: the Renewing of the Holy Spirit** (Tit 3:5). By this work, we are “born” into God’s family and “made spiritually alive” (Joh 3:7; Eph 2:4–6); this is the basis of our new **life**.
3. **Indwelling by the Spirit** (Rom 8:9–11). By this, we become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co 3:16, 6:19). We have new **power** for living (Rom 6:4, 8:11; Eph 3:7, 20, 5:18).
4. **The Gifting of the Spirit** (1Co 12:7, 11, 18). God has a specific work for each of us to accomplish (Mat 25:15; Mar 13:34). Our spiritual gift gives us enablement for a new **purpose** (Rom 12:6; 1Pe 4:10).
5. **The Seal of the Spirit** (Eph 1:13–14, 4:30). Our eternal destiny is guaranteed by this seal (2Co 1:22, 5:5), which cannot be broken. The word “seal” has the idea of identification, safekeeping, and safe delivery to the final destination (Rom 15:28). Thus, our new **destiny** is assured.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Rom 8:31

APPENDIX B

The Seven “Nevers” of Jesus in the Book of John

Consider the following statements of Jesus. If it were possible to lose our salvation and eternal life, would it be honest to make these absolute offers? In the original Greek, these statements are made in the strongest possible way, using a double negative, meaning “absolutely never, ever”!

1. John 4:14: “*But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will **never thirst**.*” (emphasis added)
2. John 6:35: “*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall **never hunger**, and he who believes in Me shall **never thirst**.*” (emphasis added, see also Mat 5:6)
3. John 6:37: “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will **by no means cast out**.*” (emphasis added) (Though translated “by no means,” the construction is exactly the same as the others.)
4. John 8:51: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall **never see death**.*” (emphasis added)
5. John 8:52: “*If anyone keeps My word he shall **never taste death**.*” (emphasis added)
6. John 10:27–28: “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall **never perish**; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*” (emphasis added)
7. John 11:26: “*And whoever lives and believes in Me shall **never die**. Do you believe this?*” (emphasis added)

The final question is the greatest ever asked. And the answer of Martha in Joh 11:27 is the basis for receiving all of the above promises. She said, “*Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.*”

APPENDIX C

Some Answers to Other Questions/Difficult Passages

1. What about the passages where He says that if we deny Him, He will deny us? (Mat 10:33; 2Ti 2:12). The question is: what will He deny us? Notice that both are in the context of strong promises of eternal security (Mat 10:30–31; 2Ti 2:13). The context of both passages is of faithful service resulting in blessing in time and reward in eternity. But we can never lose that life which was purchased by Christ on the cross—the security of which rests not with us, but with Him who is *“the Presence behind the veil,”* Heb 6:19.
2. What about the passages that say that *“he who endures to the end will be saved?”* (Mat 10:22, 24:13; Mar 13:13). The question is: saved from what? The word *“saved”* is used for any kind of deliverance. These warnings mean exactly the same as Paul’s words to Timothy (1Ti 4:16), *“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them [i.e., endure to the end], for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”* In the context, he is being saved from apostasy (1Ti 4:1–2), false teachings (1Ti 4:7–8), neglect of his gift (1Ti 4:14), and from failure to fulfill his God-given ministry (1Ti 4:6, 12, 15).
3. What about Rev 3:5, which says, *“he who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life”*? First, remember that all who have believed in Jesus Christ are called “overcomers” (1Jo 5:4–5). Secondly, all who believe had their names in *“the Lamb’s Book of Life”* before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8, 17:8, 21:27). This verse, then, is actually a strong statement and promise of our eternal security. Obviously, God—who is omniscient (all-knowing)—would not write the name of someone He knew would later lose salvation! As opposed to *“the Lamb’s Book of Life,”* which contains only believers, the *“book of the living”* (Psa 69:28) contains the names of the living, from which—if one dies in unbelief—his name is blotted out, Rev 20:15.
4. Consider Eph 2:4–7 and Col 3:1–3. Since we are already *“raised ... up”* and *“made [to] ... sit together in the heavenly places with Christ”* at salvation, doesn’t it follow that in God’s eyes we are inseparable from Jesus Christ? Would God dethrone His own Son?
5. Often people will say, “If we are eternally secure, we can just sin all we want to, and it doesn’t matter.” Scripture says otherwise! First of all, we cannot do whatever we want. Paul says *“I say then: ‘Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish,’”* Gal 5:16–17 (emphasis added).

In the struggle of Spirit versus flesh, two things keep us in check: First, because sin grieves the Spirit (Eph 4:30), we come under progressive, divine discipline until we are corrected, Heb 12:5–11. Secondly, we will always reap what we sow, Gal 6:7–9. This is

corrective in itself. The final impediment to unrestrained sinning is premature death (Joh 15:6; Rom 8:13; 1Co 5:5; Jam 5:20; 1Jo 5:16).

In conclusion, we should discuss the issue of being honest with Scriptures and with the Gospel. If one believes it is possible to lose his salvation, he should never give the Gospel without warning his hearers of this possibility. Doesn't it seem strange that Jesus and the apostles never did this? Secondly, if the passages we have discussed are to be used to bolster the argument that loss of salvation is possible, then honesty demands that we also say that if sin causes us to lose eternal life, then we lose it for any sin. Then we are all lost! Further, since there is no passage teaching how to be "saved again," and since Heb 6:4–6 says, "*it is impossible ... to renew [restore] them again to repentance,*" we must conclude that a "second salvation" is not possible. The problem in all cases is a failure to faithfully study the Word of God in its context. Salvation means "eternal life." If it could ever end, it is not "eternal life."

Thank God for the security of the salvation we have through the cross of Christ!