

I. Review

- A. The writer of Hebrews has been expounding upon the greatness of our faithful and merciful High Priest, starting in chapter 3, up until midway through chapter 5. At this point, the writer sadly has to stop expounding because he is teaching things of Christ that only the mature can understand. The very unfortunate truth of this section is that the readers were at one point mature enough to hear and understand but they have actually regressed in their understanding by drifting and growing dull. The text is unclear of how this happened but the writer does point out a few things concerning drifting and growing dull.
1. Drifting - When we stop giving earnest heed to growing in our understanding of the method, means, and eternal manifestation of our great salvation, our spirits and minds drift away from the preeminence and beauty of Jesus and on to lesser things.
 2. Growing Dull - The writer tells us that they grew dull through neglecting the use of their spiritual senses to discern the word through meditation and prayer. The context is the knowledge of God found in the person of Jesus.
 3. Neglecting Fellowship - Multiple times the writer exhorts the reader to remain steady and growing in faith through fellowship and encouragement of the body. The writer warns strongly not to neglect a lifestyle of intentional community with other believers for the purpose of exhorting one another in the faith.
- B. The writer covers six elementary principles of Christ that these believers have grown dull and drifted away from. These principles need to be re-established before the writer can move on to the deeper things of Christ.
1. Repentance from dead works; Faith towards God ; Doctrine of baptisms; Laying on of hands; Resurrection of the dead; Eternal judgment

II. Evaluating the doctrine of Eternal Security

- A. They have drifted into immaturity and now the writer speaks of the great dangers of continuing to drift and grow dull because that will ultimately cause them to disqualify themselves from inheriting salvation.

- B. The Perseverance of the Saints - This widely held doctrine states that if someone is truly a believer in Jesus and has put their faith and trust in Him, they cannot lose their salvation. This position would say that if a person at some point was part of the church through confession of faith in Christ but later in life confessed atheism or in some other manner denied faith in Christ, they never were truly saved to begin with.

Reformed theology maintains that all true believers will persevere in the faith and that they cannot lose their salvation precisely because of the sustaining work of God in their lives. This doctrine is consistent with the broader Reformed understanding of salvation. All those eternally elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit will finally be brought to certain salvation on the last day through the sovereign grace of God. All those who are chosen, called, and converted by God are kept by God. - The Gospel Coalition

1. This position is also known as “Once saved, always saved”. It is the conviction of this leadership team that this doctrine does not hold up in the broader text of the bible. This is especially true in light of the multiple passages that warn of apostasy or falling away from the faith. (Mt. 24:10-14; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:17)
2. The proponents of “eternal security” would argue that the multiple warnings of walking away from salvation or falling away are not actually warning us about something that could actually happen.

The warnings are the means by which God keeps true believers in the faith. In this case, the warnings are real in their threats but say nothing about the actuality of those threats being carried out in reality. Why? Because the writer (and God through him) marshals the warning as a way of keeping believers on the path of obedience thus assuring their eternal security. - The Gospel Coalition

3. It is of note that the biblical idea of falling away is progressive and happens over time through repeated and ongoing searing of the conscience towards God. To not hold the doctrine of “the perseverance of the saints” does not mean that we have no confidence in our salvation and are worried every day of losing it. It simply means that we soberly understand there is a very real danger of walking away from the faith through continual turning away.

You don't lose your salvation as if you have done something and it's taken from you, or it leaves you at some point. However the warnings are clear and very real that you can over time turn your back on salvation and in that posture you have lost salvation. - Dr. Michael Heiser

4. We do not believe that this doctrine falls into the category of “essential”. Therefore, the differences we have with those who hold it are not grounds for breaking of fellowship or viewing them as anything less than brothers and sisters in Christ.
5. For the sake of staying on task in the leading of the Spirit to do a verse by verse study of the book of Hebrews. I will not be going in depth on arguments for or against this doctrine. I will only be covering the immediate verses before us in the book of Hebrews. However, I am very aware that this doctrine is a core conviction for many. I want to make myself available to any who would like to discuss this topic further. Feel free to reach out via email at justinfrie@restorationfellowship.net

III. Verse by Verse

- A. The writer now gives a sobering and grim warning to the readers that the result of continuing to drift and grow dull as a lifestyle will result in their disqualification of salvation through their eventual denying of Jesus. The argument of the writer is that once faith or belief in the work, person, and full reliance upon Jesus as savior is lost, then their inheritance in salvation will be lost along with it.
 1. For it is impossible - What does the writer mean when they say it's “impossible to be renewed in repentance again”. I do not think that this passage is saying that if you stop believing or walk away from the faith that it is impossible for you to return to faith. I believe the heartbeat of this letter is repeatedly saying that the only way of repentance and salvation is through faith in Jesus only. It is impossible to be saved through any other means.
 - a. The sacrifice cannot apply - If someone no longer believes upon Jesus by faith for their salvation, then His work on the cross can no longer apply to their life. I believe this impossibility is only applicable to their current state of faith. (Rom. 11:20-22)
 - b. Greater difficulty - It is very scriptural that if someone has experienced God through faith for a season, and then they turn from Him, there is a searing of their spiritual senses that causes their spiritual state to be actually worse off than if they had never known Him to begin with. There is more than one passage that seems to suggest this idea. (2 Pet. 2:20-22)

2. Who were once - This particular verse is very straightforwardly speaking of a “true believer” to borrow the verbiage from the doctrinal statement “of once saved always saved”.
 - a. Enlightened - To enlighten spiritually, permeate with saving knowledge. (Jn 1:9; Heb. 10:32; Eph. 3:9)
 - b. Tasted - To feel, make trial of, experience. (Lk. 9:27; Jn. 8:52; Heb. 2:9)
 - c. The heavenly gift - Speaking of the gift of salvation. (Jn. 4:10; Eph. 2:8)
 - d. Partakers - To share in and to continue to share or partake of. (Heb. 3:1, 3:14, 12:8)
 - e. Tasted the word of God - To have tasted the word is by definition of “tasted” to have experienced, felt it in their lives, and to have tested it through time and trial. (1 Thes. 2:13)
 - f. Tasted the powers of the age to come - The restorative miracles of the kingdom age breaking into this age; i.e., healing and deliverance. (Mt. 12:28; Lk. 9:2)
3. If they fall away - Most translations say “and then have fallen away”. The scriptures are clear that apostasy or falling away has happened to some and will yet happen to many.
4. To renew them to repentance - The word translated “renew” here is only used once--right here--in the entirety of the scriptures. It literally means to renovate or to do over.
5. Since they crucify again and shame the Son - They cannot be renewed in their repentance because in their hearts they joined the crowd who in their hate and indifference crucified Jesus for His ministry and His claims. They shame the glorious work of Jesus on the cross into something to be dismissed. This is exactly what someone does who leaves the faith.
6. For the Earth bears fruit or thorns - The writer now continues their warning with a litmus test of if you are on a journey of walking away or falling away from the faith. Is the work of God in your life bearing fruit or not? Would you say you're more tender in your love for Jesus or less than you once were? Would you say that you can see the fruit of the Spirit more in your life now than in past seasons or is it the other way around? (Mt. 5:3-11, 7:16-20; Gal. 5:18-25)