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Sermon Notes

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The Eternal Danger of Apostasy

Hebrews 6:1-6

The most comforting doctrine in Scripture... the eternal security of the believer... “Once saved, always saved”... “You can’t lose your salvation”

Many sweet verses testify to this:

John 6:38-40 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 10:27-30 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Romans 8:29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

BUT... as we come to Hebrews 6:4-6, we come to one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament, one of the most commonly fought-over texts

In this passage we meet some people who not only “fall away” from Christ, but who can never be won back to faith.

It is an ancient battleground over which battles have been waged on this one question: can a truly converted person ever lose his or her salvation and end up condemned?

Novatians

- a. During the Roman persecutions, especially under the wicked Emperor Decius, some church attenders renounced their faith to save their lives; others refused to renounce and suffered many severe trials
- b. After the persecution ended, many of those who renounced Christ came back repentant and wanted to be reinstated to the church
- c. Some churches refused to allow them to come back; a Roman priest named Novatian set himself up as a rival pope and started a schism with the Roman church on stricter principles of not allowing lapsed Christians back in...
- d. They were eventually condemned as heretics; sadly, the Roman church that condemned them also linked their movement with the Book of Hebrews, and this passage in particular... the Roman church was thus slow to accept Hebrews as inspired Scripture!!

Calvinists vs. Arminians

John Wesley, the 18th century founder of Methodism in England considered Antinomianism the greatest plague on the Christian church... that is the view that, because we are forgiven of all our sins by the blood of Christ, we can live careless and immoral lives and still be assured we are going to heaven; Wesley HATED this view, but blamed Calvinism for it.

He said we need to preach that people can be true, genuine Christians and eventually LOSE their salvation and end up in hell!!

In his booklet, "Predestination Calmly Considered", Wesley took his readers through a back and forth debate over Hebrews 6:4-6, proving that the people described MUST be true Christians who then fall away and are lost:

It remains, that those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

When one of Wesley's protégé pastors was asked, "Do you believe in the perseverance of the saints?" he answered "Certainly!" The questioner was surprised and said "I thought you did not!" The Methodist preacher explained, "O sir, you have been misinformed. It is the perseverance of *sinner*s we doubt!" [Iain Murray, *Wesley and Men Who Followed*, p. 66]

How then, are we to understand this passage of Scripture? Does it teach that a genuine Christian can fall away from Christ? If so, how can we have any assurance of our salvation at all? If not, then what DOES it teach?

Basic approaches

- 1) The Arminian approach: this passage is clearly talking about true Christians and clearly teaching that truly saved people CAN lose their salvation, so you better keep following Jesus or you might end up in hell
- 2) The “straw-man” approach: this passage is clearly talking about true Christians, but it says “IF” they fall away, and no true Christian CAN fall away, so this is really a straw-man argument meant to scare Christians and keep them on the straight and narrow
- 3) This passage is NOT speaking about true Christians, but about people who derive great benefits from the Holy Spirit’s ministry in a local church but who at some point viciously repudiate Christ and reject him, saying such people can never be restored to their prior confession of Christ; it is a severe warning the effect of which helps the elect to the kind of “fear and trembling” needed to keep growing in godliness and finish this Christian race; and God will not allow the true Christians to fall away, but uses passages like this to keep them in Christ.

I. The General Exhortation: Let Us Go On to Maturity

A. Context from Hebrews 5

1. General context: Author warning a church of Jewish people who had made professions of faith in Christ but who were under intense and growing persecution, were being tempted to forsake Christ and go back to comfortable Old Covenant Judaism
 - a. The author is showing that to do so would involve an open rejection of Christ as Messiah
 - b. And to refuse God’s call to come into the Promised Land of New Covenant salvation in Jesus
 - c. So the Author has been consistently proclaiming in powerful and clear terms the greatness of Jesus Christ
 - i) The Son of God, radiant in glory
 - ii) Superior to angels
 - iii) The Captain of our Salvation and the Death Destroyer
 - iv) Greater than Moses
 - v) Giving a final “Sabbath rest” greater than Joshua did
 - vi) Greater than Aaron... a perfect and final High Priest in the order of Melchizedek

2. As soon as he mentions Melchizedek, however, the Author interrupts himself and gives the Hebrew Christians a full chapter and a half of rebuke, exhortation, warning, and encouragement...Hebrews 5:11-6:20; THEN he resumes his train of thought and returns to how Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7
 - a. The rebuke is first, Hebrews 5:11-14... that they are spiritual babies unable to eat solid food after all that time
 - b. The exhortation is in Hebrews 6:1-3... “Let us go on to maturity...”
 - c. The warning runs from Hebrews 6:4-8... “It is impossible to bring apostates back to repentance”
 - d. The encouragement runs from Hebrews 6:9-20... how the Author sees better things in them, things that accompany salvation; he remembers their labors for Christ and points them to God’s awesome power to finish their salvation... he exhorts them one more time not to be LAZY but to imitate
- B. The General Exhortation: Let Us Go On to Maturity

1. The main concern of the Epistle: for these Christians to continue in Christ right to the end of their lives... for them not drift away, turn away or fall away; for them to run their race with endurance and enter God’s rest at the end of their lives
2. So here we have this clear exhortation:

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity

- a. Maturity is the goal... spiritual maturity in Christ
- b. He has compared them to spiritual babies... he wants them to be spiritual adults... MATURE in Christ
- c. In order to do this, they have to have a proper vision for the Christian life... for the final goal of our salvation: total conformity to Christ
- d. Since we go from this exhortation to one of the direst warnings in the entire Bible, it is clear that to remain spiritually immature is DANGEROUS... there is a connection between continued growth and protection; conversely there is a connection between failure to grow and eventual apostasy
- e. The issue here has to do with their inability to hear, understand, and apply Christian DOCTRINE... (specifically about how Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek)

3. No need to lay again the foundation... it's time to move on to build the rest of the building
 - a. The foundation is laid DOCTRINALLY by the basic preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b. The Apostle Paul speaks of this foundation

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 *By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

C. What are the “elementary” doctrines listed here?

Hebrews 6:1-2 *Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

1. Repentance from dead works
 - a. Repentance is foundational... turning away from SIN
 - b. “acts that lead to death”... violation of God’s holy laws

Romans 6:21 *What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*

2. Faith in God
 - a. These are the twin graces of the beginning of the Christian life
 - b. Turning AWAY from sin in repentance and TOWARD God in faith
3. Instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands
 - a. These have to do with proper relationship to the church by the Holy Spirit
 - b. The new converts are instructed about water baptism, and the deeper baptism with the Holy Spirit
 - c. The “laying on of hands” probably referred to the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the book of Acts often connected with the laying on of the Apostle’s hands

Acts 8:17 *Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

4. The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment
 - a. Again, basic Christian doctrines about the future of every Christian
 - b. These would have been covered in the initial gospel presentation, and then reiterated early in the Christian life
5. THESE ARE THE BASICS of the Christian life, the beginner doctrines of the faith
6. The writer to Hebrews says it is not appropriate to go back to SQUARE ONE and lay that foundation all over again
7. Instead, he exhorts these Jewish Christians to press on to maturity

“Let us leave the elementary things and GO ON to MATURITY...”

D. Key Statement: “God permitting, we will do so...”

Hebrews 6:3 And God permitting, we will do so.

1. You might think, “What an odd statement! Why wouldn’t God permit us to go on to maturity?”
2. But this is no mere throwaway line! Rather it is the key to everything that follows!!!
3. ALL CHRISTIAN GRACES come from the sovereign will and pleasure of Almighty God
4. Jesus put it very plainly

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

- a. Apart from the ONGOING SUSTAINING grace of Almighty God through Jesus Christ, we would all be lost within a day’s time
- b. We can’t make a single step of spiritual progress apart from God
- c. Only if GOD WILLS can the Hebrew Christians 1) keep being Christians, and 2) make progress as Christians
- d. TO GOD ALONE be all glory for our salvation, from beginning to end

NOW... the author turns to this terrifying warning of Apostasy

The third and final step in his progression of warnings coming across in the NIV as don't "drift away" (Hebrews 2:1), don't "turn away" (Hebrews 3:12), and don't fall away (Hebrews 6:6) from the living God

II. The Terrifying Warning of Apostasy

- A. Common experience in the life of the church: those who fall away
 - 1. Everyone of us knows people who started well in the Christian life and failed to continue
 - 2. Immediately questions come with tremendous concern...
- B. Common fear in the hearts of Christians: "Will I be lost in the end?" "Can I lose my salvation??"
- C. Central question: Does this text teach that we can lose our salvation?

III. Four Key Questions of Interpretation

Hebrews 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

- A. Who is the Author speaking about—Christians or not?
 - 1. Notice he doesn't say "US" or "YOU" but he speaks of "THOSE WHO..."
 - 2. What he DOES NOT say
 - a. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world
 - b. Regenerate, born again, by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - c. Justified through faith
 - d. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit
 - e. Adopted as a child of God
 - 3. Actually, a statement after this passage makes it clear that he DOES NOT believe these people to be saved:

Hebrews 6:9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case-- things that accompany salvation.

In other words, he had good confidence that these Hebrews were genuine Christians who were being tested... BUT he does feel they need to be WARNED nonetheless

4. What he DOES say about these people in verses 4-6:
 - a. "once been enlightened"
 - b. "tasted the heavenly gift"
 - c. "shared in the Holy Spirit"
 - d. "tasted the goodness of the word of God"
 - e. "[tasted] the powers of the coming age"
5. Can these descriptors be speaking of someone who never really was a true Christian? OR can a true Christian fall away and finally be lost?
6. I believe these descriptors ARE speaking of people who were deeply involved in the powerful, apostolic-era church, who were experiencing in an overwhelming way the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the daily and weekly life of that church, but who were not really regenerate
7. ***"Once been enlightened"***
 - a. The word enlightened comes from the Greek word for light, "photos" from which we get the word "photography" or "photon"
 - b. Some commentators believe this word is speaking of water baptism at the beginning of the Christian life; they point to some instances from the ancient church in which baptism is called "illumination", by which someone is transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light... however... this interpretation lacks any clear biblical support
 - c. The Greek word translated "enlightened" usually means "to give light or knowledge by teaching"; or "knowledge gained by instruction"

Ephesians 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

- d. The coming of Jesus Christ into the world is said to be a light that in some way enlightens everyone in the world

Matthew 4:16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

2 Timothy 1:10 it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

- e. NOW... everyone who is truly converted is marvelously ENLIGHTENED by the gospel's teaching... but I say to you that not everyone who is ENLIGHTENED is truly converted!!
- f. When the gospel is preached clearly, people listening can be “enlightened”, they can receive some astonishing new insights about the spiritual world, about heaven and life after death; they can learn new things about goodness, truth, morality, etc. their minds can DELIGHT in some way with many “AHA!!!” moments... this is precisely why the stony ground hearers in the parable of the seeds and the soils receive the gospel message WITH JOY... something in it excites them, they find its teaching desirable; their minds are enlightened and their hearts are moved to even great emotion
- g. BUT it is possible to feel all these things and still not be converted!!
- h. So also some can hear of the wrath of God and the judgment of sin that will happen on Judgment Day and become enlightened in some powerful ways and be made to fear... but still not be converted

Acts 24:25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

- i. In Hebrews 6, these people were ONCE enlightened by the gospel message; they found some moments of powerful spiritual insight, but they were not genuinely converted by the Holy Spirit

8. “Tasted the heavenly gift...”

- a. Two questions: What is meant by “the heavenly gift”? And what is meant by “tasting of it”?
- b. The “heavenly gift” is frequently spoken of as the Holy Spirit, the gift of God from heaven

Matthew 3:16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

1 Peter 1:12 the Holy Spirit sent from heaven

Acts 1:4-5 *On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 2:2 *Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

Acts 2:37-38 *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

c. So what does it mean to "taste" of the heavenly gift?

- i) It means to sample, or try, or make an experiment of something
- ii) Like a sample tray at Costco... tasting, but not feasting; not sitting at table and eating the meal, but rather merely sampling the Holy Spirit's ministries
- iii) There is a difference between tasting and consuming

Matthew 27:34 *There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.*

- iv) Such people are sampling the ministries of the Holy Spirit, but not eating, drinking deeply, deriving life-giving sustenance and nourishment from them
- v) There is a spiritual EATING and DRINKING of Christ through the Holy Spirit; and then there is merely the tasting of these things

9. "partakers of the Holy Spirit"

- a. Two options: either these people received the gift of the indwelling Spirit as a testimony that they were adopted children of God OR they shared in the benefits that come from other people using their spiritual gifts in their lives
 - i) If the first is true, if you can have the indwelling Spirit for a while then lose Him, how then can Jesus' promise be true:

John 14:16-17 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

- ii) How can we be adopted children of God one day, evicted from the family the next?
- b. Rather, these people merely were partakers in the BENEFITS that flow through the gifts of the Holy Spirit... surrounded by the evidences of the Holy Spirit's ministries... the ongoing, prophetic teaching of the word; gifts of encouragement, giving, mercy, love, servanthood, etc. that set that local church apart as a waystation of heaven
- c. These people were PARTAKERS in that life, sharers in the benefits that flowed
- d. BUT they had not received the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit

10. *"tasted in the goodness of the Word of God..."*

- a. Once again, there is this verb "tasted"... these people SAMPLED the goodness of God's Word preached, proclaimed, taught, explained, applied
 - i) We will discuss it again in a moment
 - ii) The Author keeps himself to this term, showing that He is not intending those who really and truly BELIEVE the Word, feed on it, derive nourishing power from it
 - iii) No... these folks were SAMPLERS of the goodness of the word of God
- b. They heard unfolded the mysteries of the gospel, the promises of life to come, the attributes of God... His goodness, His love, His mercy, His kindness and compassion... this is the GOODNESS of the Word of God
- c. Especially, they heard again and again the goodness of God in sending Jesus Christ as our Savior... how He had died on the cross for sins
- d. BUT as samplers only, their ears were stimulated but their hearts unconverted

11. *"[tasted] in the powers of the coming age..."*

- a. The last of the five descriptions refers I believe to the MIRACLES the Holy Spirit was working in their midst
- b. We have already seen this mentioned in Hebrews 2:4

Hebrews 2:4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

- c. So these people saw signs and wonders, gifts of the Holy Spirit—speaking in tongues, astonishing prophecies, healings
- d. They are called the “powers of the coming age” or “of the world to come”... they give us a sense of the New Heaven and New Earth, of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, when all the elect are saved and in resurrection bodies, when there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain
- e. These people were in the room when sick people were miraculously healed... and yet, they remained unconverted!!

Summary: These people had been experiencing the healthiest, most powerful, spiritual experience, all under the various ministries of the Holy Spirit... they were there week after week at church; they heard the word of God unfolded, Christians used their spiritual gifts in their lives to heal them or bless them or encourage them; their minds had been enlightened by the gospel, and they had sampled these good things... BUT TRAGICALLY, they had not really believed or been converted

B. What does it mean to “fall away”?

Vs. 6 “if they fall away...”

1. What this does NOT mean
 - a. This does not refer to various temptations that may cause someone to stumble along the way... even grievous sins which may hold someone captive for a long period of time
 - b. It is not stumbling into this or that sin
 - c. It is not falling prey to some surprising temptation that seizes you and drags you away into sin
 - d. Neither is it falling into false doctrine through bad teaching or misunderstanding—like the Corinthians denying the resurrection of the dead, or the Galatians that denied justification by faith alone
 - e. Neither is it someone who was walking with the Lord and living a very disciplined upright life, having daily QTs, venturing out in evangelism, serving others, memorizing Scripture, but who then through weariness and laziness falls into patterns of neglect and habits of worldliness
2. What this DOES mean
 - a. It consists of a TOTAL RENUNCIATION of all the doctrines and commitments of the Christian faith... a full rejection of Jesus Christ as the

Son of God, as the Savior of the world, a denial of the saving power of the BLOOD He shed on the cross

- b. It consists in an avowed, deliberate repudiation of Jesus Christ, falling into another religion like Old Covenant Judaism, or Islam, or Buddhism or paganism or even atheism
- c. It could be done within one's heart privately or outwardly in open rebellion

John Owen: "A voluntary, resolved relinquishment of and apostasy from the gospel, the faith, the rule and obedience thereof; which cannot happen without that person casting the highest reproach and disgrace imaginable upon the person of Christ Himself."

3. Evidence

Hebrews 6:6 to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

- a. In effect, they are standing with those who crucified Jesus and assenting to the action... glad that Jesus is getting what He deserved as the blasphemer and deceiver of the people that He was
- b. Publicly disgracing Jesus... openly cursing His name
- c. Same themes again in Hebrews 10

Hebrews 10:26-27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

The word "deliberately keep on sinning" describes this apostasy... deliberately = willingly, with the full agreement of the heart... from the heart sinning by trampling the blood of Jesus under foot as if it were an UNHOLY THING:

Hebrews 10:29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

- C. What does it mean to "renew again to repentance"?
 - 1. The Author speaks of what any of us might want to do with such a person... renew them again to repentance
 - 2. We yearn to bring them back to their former profession, and that from the HEART

3. Some in the early church thought this meant baptism... it is impossible to bring them back to be baptized, because that would be like Jesus needed to be crucified all over again... but there is no mention of baptism here as the solution to this sin
4. Two other possible meanings of this:
 - a. Real, internal renewal to repentance... a restoration of genuine faith in Christ and love for the Savior... **BUT THIS IS NOT WHAT HE MEANS**, for these people **NEVER HAD** that
 - b. Restoration of their **OUTWARD PROFESSION** of Christ, their outward, happy, participation in the life of the Christian church... the word **“AGAIN”** means that they would make a new profession of faith in Christ, be water baptized again, and resume their life as they were before

BUT... the Author says this is **IMPOSSIBLE**

Literally, impossible to renew them again to repentance... it **CANNOT HAPPEN**

Those who fall away like this, trampling the Son of God underfoot and despising Him, blaspheming against Him... it is **IMPOSSIBLE** to renew them again to repentance

D. Why is it “impossible” to renew such people to repentance?

1. We have to go back to the beginning of verse 4 to understand this...

KJV Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened

- a. NIV inexplicably omits the word “for” which connects the impossibility back to verse 3

ESV Hebrews 6:3 And this we will do if God permits.

In other words, we will keep growing to maturity in Christ **IF GOD PERMITS IT!!** The implication is, that if God does **NOT** permit the growth, we will **NOT GROW**

- b. It is **IMPOSSIBLE** to renew such an apostate to repentance because God does not will it!
 - i) It is not **IMPOSSIBLE** because the apostate’s heart is so hard that God cannot reach them
 - ii) No... for Jesus said this

Matthew 19:24-26 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

iii) God can do ANYTHING to a human heart

Ezekiel 11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

iv) Look what He did to Saul of Tarsus in one moment

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.

But suddenly on the Road to Damascus, Jesus revealed Himself to Saul and in an instant converted him!!

2. The reason it is impossible to renew these apostates to repentance is that God has WILLED NOT TO!!!
 - a. He has made no promise to them to renew them
 - b. There is nothing in His character that obligates Him to reclaim the apostate
 - c. He is not forced or compelled in any way
 - d. And He is saying here that He will not bless any such efforts

3. John Owen's helpful insight

John Owen: "The apostle instructs us no further in the nature of future events but as our own duty is concerned in them. It is not for us either to look for, or hope, or pray for, or endeavor the renewal of such persons unto repentance. God gives law UNTO US in these things, not unto himself. It may be possible with God, for all we know.... Only he will not have us to expect any such thing from him, nor has he appointed any means for us to attempt it. What he shall do we ought thankfully to accept; but our own duty toward such persons is absolutely at an end. And, indeed, they put themselves wholly out of our reach."

IV. Key Questions of Application

A. Does this passage teach that a true believer can lose his/her salvation?

1. NO!! Such it cannot, for many passages give us sweet assurance of the security of the believer

2. I think it is plain that the five descriptions of the apostates in this passage come short of speaking of a genuine Christian

B. How should a Christian hear this dreadful warning?

1. It is clear that the Book of Hebrews is given to us as a WARNING to keep us in the healthy fear of the Lord
2. The Scripture gives no assurance to us if we willfully sin, arrogantly assuming that the “once-saved, always saved” doctrine gives us permission to live any way we want
3. There is a kind of life that leads to heaven:

Hebrews 6:11-12 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. ¹² We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

4. This warning against apostasy is meant to jar us out of complacency that just because we go to a good church, are surrounded by God’s people, receive the benefits of their spiritual gifts, enjoy happy feelings of spiritual enlightenment, that we are regenerate... rather, we must look deeper: is our faith working deep conviction of sin, and a pattern of growing holiness in our lives? Are we working out our salvation with fear and trembling? Are we trusting in Jesus day after day, confident that HE WILL SUSTAIN US to the end, but not allowing that confidence to be a license for sin?
5. A truly elect, regenerate child of God hears this warning soberly, and brings it back to Christ saying, O Jesus, deliver me from sin! Help me run this Christian race with endurance!!”
6. It stands over so many “evangelical” or “Baptist” churches that have an “easy-believism”, “walk the aisle” “raise your hand” instant baptism, pray the sinner’s prayer, receive full assurance of salvation, be taught “once-saved, always saved” and then live sinful, self-indulgent lives in which there is no pattern of holiness... eventually leave off attending church since you already have your FIRE INSURANCE
7. LOOK AFTER your genuine love relationship with Christ; put sin to death by the power of the Holy Spirit; by faith and patience inherit what has been promised

C. How does this passage urge the genuine salvation of lost people?

1. Christ is the only Savior!! FLEE TO HIM!!! Trust in Him!!
2. By His blood alone can we be delivered from judgment