

be fruitful and multiply

hebrews 6

Hebrews chapter 6 this morning. This chapter is a flash point for a particular doctrinal argument over salvation. Some groups use a few verses from this passage as a big, bedrock text for their teachings.

What we want to do is address the issue and then, beyond that, beyond explaining where we stand, figure out what this chapter means for us as men today. Because these verses are more than just a pin on the map of doctrinal debate. The word of God is alive and powerful and is meant to speak to us for our daily life as well.

So let's look at our text and see what we see.

Hebrews 6.1-20 - Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. 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, 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. 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 do 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. 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.

The topic of whether we can lose our salvation is important. If we *can* lose our salvation, our lives are going to be radically different than if we couldn't. More importantly, if I *can* lose my salvation but I don't know that I can, then I better figure it out soon so that I'm not walking around thinking I'm saved and destined for heaven when I'm really not.

We only have 20 minutes here, so if you'd like to tackle this topic more in depth I suggest you read H.A. Ironside's *The Eternal Security Of The Believer*, as well as Spurgeon's expository study of this passage in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons, Volume 42*, and finally, I'd recommend Charles Erdman's commentary titled *Epistle To The Hebrews*.

The question is: Can I, through neglect or sin, lose or forfeit my salvation and, if I can, is this passage saying that I can never repent and be saved once again?

The answer is no.

Let's build the case for why we know the answer is 'no'.

First, let's think about this theologically.

If it were true that you could genuinely be saved and then lose that salvation, then many, many other verses and passages in the Bible would be totally scrambled and stripped of their plain and contextual meanings.

This is what happens any time you try to build a doctrine off of a verse or two. You're then forced to twist and redefine and rebuild countless other verses in order to support the system that you're trying to construct.

For example - if it's true that you can lose your salvation - then we have to redefine John 3:16. Because there when Jesus said, "everlasting life," apparently He didn't actually *mean* 'everlasting', but He must have meant, "everlasting unless it doesn't last."

Or, think about First Peter 1 verse 23. Let me read it to you:

1 Peter 1.23 - ...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever..

If it's possible to lose your salvation, then apparently Peter, and by extension the Holy Spirit, when writing that verse don't actually mean 'incorruptible,' they mean, 'possibly corruptible.'

Or think about John 10:28, where Jesus said:

John 10.28 - And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Instead of the plain, clear meaning, what Jesus must have meant was, "Every now and then some of them *do* get snatched out of My hands by the Devil or the world or the individuals themselves."

When we make a doctrinal decision in the Church or in our own minds, we must take that decision to its theological conclusion to see how it would impact the rest of Scripture, because the Bible cannot contradict itself.

Theologically, salvation is explained in the Bible as God giving us His righteousness by His grace when we believe in Him. We do not earn salvation in order to receive it and we do not earn salvation in order to keep it. In fact, one group of Christians is specifically rebuked in the New Testament for having begun in the Spirit, begun in grace, then trying to retain salvation through works.

I like how Ironside frames the issue of salvation. He points out that when Jesus died for your sins, yours and mine, He died in the past for what we would do in the future. That is understandable and rational.

But if we believe that you can lose or forfeit your salvation through sin or neglect, we're suggesting that Christ only died for a certain number of your future sins and that beyond that number, whatever it is, we're responsible to purge those additional sins ourselves.

Theologically, this is unacceptable.

But let's keep building the case. Let's think about this issue logically. Let's say you could lose your salvation and that, according to that sort of reading of Hebrews 6.4-6, once you've lost your salvation it's impossible to repent again.

Well let's think about that in light of a Biblical example - Peter. If that were true, then logically we would have to conclude in light of Peter's denial of Christ that he was either not a believer before the denial, or he was and he never was able to repent again *after* the denial of Christ.

Logically, given the many examples we have in the Bible, the idea that you can lose your salvation and that there's sin that cannot be repented of in this life, doesn't make sense.

But let's also look contextually. People yank verses 4 through 6 out of this chapter and start building theology off of it but they never bring the rest of the book with them. And they certainly don't bring verse 9 with them where the author specifically says, "Hey, I'm not suggesting you guys are going to lose your salvation." Even though for chapters and chapters he's been warning them about drifting away from God and being dull and being sluggish and neglecting their salvation.

So what *is* this chapter talking about?

Well, chapter after chapter in this book has been about Christian progress and maturity and fruitfulness. We've been talking about how rich and full the Christian life is meant to be because of the work of Jesus Christ and how when Christians stop moving forward they miss out on incredible benefits of Christianity.

This theme continues in this chapter. And, though the opening remarks in verses 4 through 6 especially are a bit confusing, our author clarifies himself by using the analogy of a fruitful field in verses 7 and 8.

He's looking at the Hebrews and he's worried about the lack of spiritual fruit in their lives.

He says they're sluggish. They're hung up on stuff they should've outgrown a long time ago. He says they're just not bearing fruit and that a Christian is supposed to bear fruit.

And, as he's been saying for a while now, as long as they stay in that spiritual wilderness, that dry, barren state of fruitless Christianity, they're not going to be able to receive all the things that *accompany* salvation. Verse 9 points out that there is a wonderful, powerful inheritance that comes with salvation.

And I think every Christian needs the reminder that our faith, our Christianity, is not just an entry ticket into heaven, but with our salvation Christ has promised to give us a power and a purpose and a refuge in this life. Remember what Jesus said - He said that His intention is to give us a water so that we never thirst again. He said that His intention is to do things in your life that you can't even ask or imagine. He said that His intention is to produce in your life the power of heaven that is unstoppable and unexplainable.

So, since we've hopefully gotten past the argument over whether a person can lose their salvation, we should look at this text and see what it's trying to say to us right now. And the question for us this morning is: Since a Christian is meant to bear much fruit and since the hearers of this letter are being warned about *not* bearing fruit, am *I* bearing fruit?

Because we're supposed to. That's what is natural and expected of a Christian. And not just one little grape-sized fruit every once in a while. The Bible says that we should be bringing forth healthy, mature, exceptional fruit season after season.

I have 2 pomegranate trees at my house. They're right next to each other. One produces wonderfully. The other is decrepit. It doesn't produce a single edible pomegranate. It just has these sad, shriveled pods that are rotten. That tree is useless. It *should* be torn down. Something has stopped the natural production of fruit on that tree.

And that's the danger we face, which is why this letter goes to such passionate lengths to warn us. Because when we get hung up on some issue or some fundamental thing that we shouldn't get hung up on in our spiritual lives, then fruit production stops.

When we become sluggish and inattentive to our Christianity, fruit production stops. And then we are not only more and more useless to the Lord who's trying to get work done, but we also miss out on the promised inheritance of those things which accompany salvation.

Things like joy and peace and victory over sin and discernment and contentment. That's what God wants to do for us.

Every normal Christian thinks, "I want to have a great marriage. I want to not be knocked down by temptation. I want to have more patience and more self-control. I want to be joyful and not full of fear." And God says, "Yeah, I want that for you too!" Those things are all possible and available and promised to us, but they are fruit of a progressing relationship with God. They're not products we buy, they're fruit that grow in our lives as we grow in the Lord.

If I look at my life and I'm not producing spiritual fruit, if I'm not seeing any of those promises that accompany salvation, then there's some kind of disconnect in my walk with the Lord.

Either I'm hung up on some issue or problem that I should be moving past or I'm not soaking up the Living Water or I'm not cultivating fruit in my life.

Our author is encouraging us to faithfully, diligently cultivate our lives for spiritual fruit. He says we should be drinking in the water and laboring in love and serving the Body of Christ and orienting our lives toward the end goal of having the deepest possible Christianity I can have. Because that's the way we get what's promised to us. That way and no other way.

Jesus Christ wants to bless and multiply your life, but we have to want it too. If we want it, then we'll go for it.