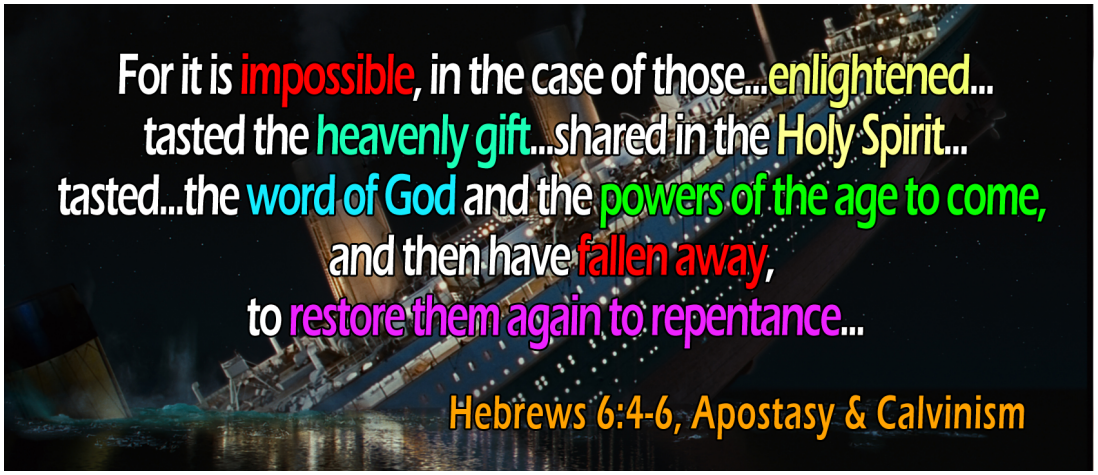
Hebrews 6:4-6, Apostasy and Calvinism

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Hebrews 6:4-6 – It is impossible to restore them again to repentance

> Heb 6:4-6 For it is **impossible**, in the case of those who have **once been enlightened**, who have **tasted the heavenly gift**, and **have shared in the Holy Spirit**, 5 and have **tasted the goodness of the word of God** and the **powers of the age to come**, 6 and then have **fallen away**, to **restore them again to repentance**, since they are **crucifying once again the Son of God** to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

(This post is taken from a section in my commentary on chapter 17 of the 1689 Baptist Confession, so there are some things here that have been previously argued for, as for example the positive case for the doctrine of Perseverance).

This is arguably one of the most difficult and notorious passages in Holy Writ. There is no consensus on its interpretation. I have consulted many commentaries and articles on this passage and I come to it knowing that I don't have all the answers. But I also come to it with presuppositions in mind. I am unashamed to say that the Bible does in fact teach the Perseverance of the Saints, therefore this passage cannot be describing the actual apostasy of a regenerate believer totally from the faith. It may be a warning about true believers, it may be hypothetical, but what it cannot be is say that some true and regenerate believers will in fact fall away completely from the faith. I have argued that even in the book of Hebrews itself, the doctrine of Perseverance and the perfection of the work of Christ on behalf of the elect is taught. I have consulted the following articles and commentaries and will cite from some of them freely in the following discussion:

The passage **does not say that regenerate believers apostatize**:

- John Calvin. Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. Hebrews 6:4-9. Can also be found at here.
- John Gill. Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. Hebrews 6:4-9. Can also be read at here.
- Arthur W. Pink. Exposition of Hebrews. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. Chapters 24-27. His commentary on Hebrews 6 can be found here.
- Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). Chapter 40.
- John M. Frame. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014). Chapter 44.
- J. Ligon Duncan III – Falling Away? (Sermon)
- Mathew Poole - English Annotations on the Holy Bible. Commentary on Hebrews 6, here.
- William Burkitt – Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New

Testament. Commentary on Hebrews 6, here.
- Albert Barnes - Notes on the New Testament. Commentary on Hebrews 6, here. He accepts that the descriptions describe a true Christian, but rejects that it is possible for a true Christian to apostatize.
- Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset, David Brown – Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible. Commentary on Hebrews 6, here.
- Matthew Henry – Complete Commentary on the Bible. Commentary on Hebrews 6, here.
- Bob Utley – You Can Understand The Bible (Not that explicit). Commentary on Hebrews 6, here and here.
- John Owen – Exposition of Hebrews. Commentary on Hebrews 6, here.
- Steven J. Cole – Lesson 17: When Repentance Becomes Impossible (Hebrews 6:4-8).

The passage describes **regenerate believers who have fallen away**:

- Adam Clarke
- James Burton Coffman
- Charles John Ellicott (Not very explicit)
- John Trapp (Not very explicit)
- Thomas Coke
- Daniel Whedon
- David Guzik
- Greek Testament Critical Exegetical Commentary (Too technical)

I have collected some commentaries, articles, and sermons on this passage in a document which you can download (it does *not* include all the commentaries listed above).

I believe that the passage speaks of false believers and warns about those who have sat under the preaching of the Word of God, the manifestation of the Spirit's work and who themselves have professed to belong to Christ, that they will perish eternally without the possibility of true repentance. That the description is not definitive proof that those spoken of are true believers, yet the analogy in vv. 7-8 moves us to say that those spoken of were unbelievers from the start.

I don't claim that by me consulting articles and commentaries on this passage that I will have an answer to every question on this passage, but what I do want to claim is that there are interpretations which are credible and do not force us to deny other biblical doctrines (i.e., the Perseverance of the Saints).

I do want to stress the context of Hebrews that it is an epistle written to Hebrew Christians steeped into the Old Testament and Israel's history, therefore I will try to interpret it with this in mind and not try to make a modern application every time.

Audience

Who are the ones being described in this passage? Is the audience the ones being described in vv. 4-6? No, they are not. Rather, they are a different group spoken of in the third person ("those" v. 4, "them…they…their own" v. 6). The Author is not describing his present audience, in fact he explicitly says that in v. 9. Previous to this passage the author spoke of the plural "you" to the audience (e.g. Heb 5:11-13), including himself in 6:1 by using "us". After v. 9 he speaks of the "beloved" and those who he encourages to "have the full assurance of hope until the end". The warning is not about them, but about those who receive a clear light of God's Gospel, make a profession of faith and appear to all to be true believers, yet later fall away. It is those who will not be brought to true repentance by God and be left in their sins to perish eternally.

The audience the Author is writing to is one of Hebrew Christians in general who are being tempted to go back to the old Judaism and abandon their current religion. The Author throughout the letter shows that the New Covenant and its Mediator are better and they are the fulfillment of the promises and shadows in the Old Testament and therefore, there is nothing to go back to. The apostasy being spoken of here is that in which a person leaves Christianity to go to Judaism before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Obviously, it can have modern applications of those who leave their profession of Christianity wherein they have clearly seen God's work and His Word, yet later deny that profession and go openly to another religion or to atheism. But mainly, this passage is about those who are being tempted to apostatize to Judaism.

Impossible

The passage begins with denoting an impossibility, namely, the impossibility of renewing certain people to repentance. I

take the word “impossible” here to mean absolute impossibility and not merely impossible in the sense of “very difficult”, or “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Mt 19:26) The Greek word ἀδύνατος (*adunatos*) literally means no power, ability or strength. The word is used by the Author of Hebrews 4 times.

In **Heb 6:18** he says that “it is impossible for God to lie” which does not indicate that it is very difficult, although it can happen, but denotes an absolute impossibility of such a thing happening. In **Heb 10:4** the Author says that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Does he here mean that it is merely very difficult for this to happen, or rather that it is absolutely impossible? The answer seems obvious. The last instance is in **Heb 11:6** where it is said of God that “without faith it is impossible to please him”. Does the Author mean that it is merely very difficult, or it is simply not possible of such a thing happening? Romans 14:23 says that anything outside of faith is sin, therefore, is it possible that God be “pleased” by sin? No, rather God is pleased by faith.

Therefore, on the basis of the Author’s usage of this word I believe that he here refers to the absolute impossibility of a particular thing happening, namely, restoring certain persons to repentance.

The Description of the Apostates

On the outset that I would like to say, that Arminians who raise this passage as proof of apostasy of true believers do so rightly. This passage is not like passage wherein some of them find the word “choose”, “will”, “whole world”, “everyone” and try to attack the five points. Rather, this is a passage which at first sight seems to describe those who are genuine believers. Therefore, this passage especially deserves an answer consistent with the rest of Scripture.

There are five descriptions given in vv. 4-5 and it describes the apostates as:

1. Those who were once enlightened;
2. Those who have tasted the heavenly gift;
3. Those who shared in the Holy Spirit;
4. Those who have tasted the goodness of the word of God; and
5. Those who have tasted the powers of the age to come.

When we first look at this description, it is understandable that consistent Arminians raise this passage as proof for their doctrine of falling away and it is the job of the Calvinist to provide a consistent exegesis of this passage showing why it does *not* say that regenerate believers will fall away beyond recovery.

What we must keep in mind is that these descriptions are given of people who were in church life. They are not given about people who were “solo” and Christians on themselves, but rather it speaks of those who lived within the congregation of the believers. This means that we should be very careful not to personalize every description and make it individual, rather than corporate.

1. Those who have once been enlightened

What does mean to be enlightened? Does it mean to be saved? The basic meaning of φωτίζω (*photizo*) is “to shed rays, i.e. to shine”[1] and “to enlighten, light up, illumine” (Thayer’s. G5461). It is used in **1Cor 4:5** about the Lord coming in judgment who will “bring to light the things now hidden in darkness” where the idea given is that secret things will be manifest. They will be brought to light. Paul claims in **Eph 3:8-9** that to him grace was given to “bring to light” for everyone the plan of mystery. This is used here in the sense to teach and explain what the “plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God” means. In **Eph 1:18** Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts may be “enlightened” whereby we “what is the hope to which he has called you.” This does *not* refer to conversion, rather it refers to us receiving more knowledge into the mystery of Christ. It is used in **John 1:9** to speak of Christ being the light who “gives light” to everyone which *definitely* does not mean that He saves everyone without exception, but rather He gives light of knowledge. It’s use in **Hebrews 10:32** does neither lend the idea that it is a technical term for saving faith or regeneration. John Owen defines this word as “to give light or knowledge by teaching” and gives the following basis of this definition:

> Φωτίζομαι, is “to give light or knowledge by teaching;” — the same with הוֹרָה, which, therefore, is so translated ofttimes by the Greeks; as by Aquila, Exo 4:12; Psa 119:33; Pro 4:4; Isa 27:11, as Drusius observes. And it is so by the LXX., Jdg 13:8; 2Ki 12:2; 2Ki 17:27. Our apostle useth it for “to make manifest;” that is, “bring to light,” 1Co 4:5, 2Ti 1:10. And the meaning of it, Joh 1:9, where we render it “lighteth,” is to teach. And φωτισμός is “knowledge upon instruction:” 2Co 4:4, Εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι αὐτοῖς τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, — “That the light of the gospel should not shine into them;” that is, the knowledge of it. So 2Co 4:6, Πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως, — “The light of the knowledge.” Wherefore to be “enlightened,” in this place, is

to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a spiritual apprehension thereof.[2]

The true believer *is* enlightened, but he is enlightened in a much deeper way through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, than the apostate through the outward teaching of God's word and truth and the ministry of the Spirit. The enlightening of the believer leads to a changed life according to the truth with which he is enlightened. These apostates likewise had some kind of repentance and change of life obviously, having once lived with the people of God, they were not wild sinners and Christ rejecters as they became after their apostasy. Therefore, this enlightening, which is the knowledge they received through teaching did have some effect on them, but it did not have a lasting effect on them because it was not joined by faith neither was this knowledge worked into the believer's life through the Holy Spirit. These apostates had merely natural knowledge of the things of God as they heard them within the congregation and not true and spiritual knowledge of them. John Owen observes that

> "There is a knowledge of spiritual things that is purely *natural and disciplinary*, attainable and attained without any especial aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost. As this is evident in common experience, so especially among such as, casting themselves on the study of spiritual things, are yet utter strangers unto all spiritual gifts. Some knowledge of the Scripture, and the things contained in it, is attainable at the same rate of pains and study with that of any other art or science."[2]

Some in the early church have connected this enlightening with baptism, which was called "illumination", but I believe that this has little to do with the present passage as the Author does not make this connection and the use of "illumination" to refer to baptism came later in history.[3]

Concerning the word "once" Wayne Grudem says:

> Similarly, the word once that is used to speak of those who "have once been enlightened" is the Greek term hapax, which is used, for example, in Philippians 4:16 of the Philippians' sending Paul a gift "once and again," and in Hebrews 9:7 of entrance in the Holy of Holies "once a year." Therefore, this word does not mean that something happened "once" and can never be repeated, but simply that it happened once, without specifying whether it will be repeated or not.[4]

And adds in a footnote that:

> This is not the same word as ephapax, which is more regularly used in the New Testament of nonrepeatable events (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).

Finally, Matthew Henry notes that:

> "Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened (Num. xxiv. 3), and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness."[5]

This description is not particular to true believers alone. But what we also must take note of is the fact that these people, whose renewal to repentance is an impossibility after apostasy, were not regular backsliders, but were those who knew the truth of the Gospel clearly, confessed it and professed the true faith for a time, but then turned their back on it. While in their time of profession, I don't think we would have been able to say that they were not true believers as they appeared to be on all accounts as many apostates are (e.g. 2Pet 2:20-22).

To be enlightened does not mean that we were saved, but rather that we received instruction and knowledge in the truth.

2. Those who tasted the heavenly gift

The word "tasted" is used concerning the heavenly gift, the word of God and the powers of the age to come. What does it mean to "taste" something? I think that the basic meaning is to know it by experience.

The word γεύομαι (*geuomai*) and its basic meaning is "to taste" and "perceive the flavour of, partake of, enjoy" (Thayer's. G1089). It is used in **Heb 2:9** about Christ who "taste[d] death for everyone." It speaks of an experience which *is*

real, yet merely momentary. Even in the case of Christ the Lord who died for our sake, His "taste of death" was momentary and not never-ending. It is used in **Matt 27:34** where it is expressly said that tasting does not meaning accepting the thing. I mean, the Lord tasted the wine, He tried it, but rejected it later. Therefore, this word does not have the meaning of tasting and then accepting in it, the acceptance of the thing or rejection is not included in the word. It merely speaks of an experience of knowledge of a thing.

These apostates have tasted – they have had an experience with the heavenly gift, but this tasting does not imply that they've received the heavenly gift in truth or eternally. They have tasted it, but after a time rejected the heavenly gift.

Arthur W. Pink observes the following on the meaning of "taste":

> Second, they had "tasted" of the heavenly gift. To "taste" is to have a personal experience of, in contrast from mere report. "Tasting does not include eating, much less digesting and turning into nourishment what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savor, on some other consideration. The persons here described, then, are those who have to a certain degree understood and relished the revelation of mercy; like the stony-ground hearers they have received the Word with a transcient joy" (John Owen). The "tasting" is in contrast from the "eating" of John 6:50-56.[6]

Dr. Grudem observes the following in a footnote about the word "taste":

> The word *tasted* is also used in Heb. 2:9 to say that Jesus "tasted death," indicating that he came to know it by experience (but "tasted" is an apt word because he did not remain dead). The same could be true of those who had some experience of heavenly gifts, as can be true even of unbelievers (cf. Matt. 7:22; 1 Cor. 7:14; 2 Peter 2:20–22). In Heb. 6:4–5 these people's experience of the Holy Spirit's power and of the Word of God was of course a *genuine experience* (just as Jesus *genuinely* died), but that by itself does not show that the people had an experience of regeneration.[7]

What is the heavenly gift? Commentators and preachers are divided on this one although the majority think that it either refers to the Lord Christ (e.g. Gill, Com. Cri. & Expl., Steve J. Cole,) or the Holy Spirit (e.g. Owen, Pink, Henry, Grudem, Piper). Both have good reasons to think so although as Pink observes, there is not a great difference since 'the difference is without a distinction, for the Spirit is here to glorify Christ, as He came from the Father by Christ as His ascension "Gift" to His people.'[6]

John 4:10 seems to be a strong verse to see "the gift of God" which came down from heaven to be the Lord Jesus Himself. Note that the passage does not speak of *a* gift of God, but *the* gift of God. See also John 3:16; Romans 6:23. This description would then imply that these apostates had some kind of experience with the Lord Jesus, without being regenerated which is not impossible. Being within the congregation of His called-out-ones they would have certainly known the Lord Jesus through experience in some way. These are not people who have come to church one day, "accepted" Jesus and then went into the world. Rather, these people were steeped into Christ's religion and then apostatized. They had seen Christianity confirmed in various ways before their eyes and yet still choose to abandon their profession and reject the Christian faith and its founder, Christ the Lord.

For the Holy Spirit being the gift of God, Acts 2:38 is primary where the Holy Spirit is said to be the gift given by God to those who repent. He is heavenly, because He comes from heaven – He comes from God and is God. John Owen humbly defends this view:

> It is, as many judge, the person of Christ himself in that place which is intended. But the context makes plain that it is the Holy Ghost; for he is the "living water" which the Lord Jesus promiseth in that place to bestow. And so far as I can observe, δωρεά, "the gift," with respect unto God, as denoting the thing given, is nowhere used but only to signify the Holy Ghost. And if it be so, the sense of this place is determined, Act 2:38, "Ye shall receive," τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος— "the gift of the Holy Ghost;" not that which he gives, but that which he is. Act 8:20, "Thou hast thought δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ," — "that the gift of God may be purchased with money;" that is, the power of the Holy Ghost in miraculous operations. So expressly, Act 10:45; Act 11:17. Elsewhere δωρεά, so far as I can observe, when respecting God, doth not signify the thing given, but the grant itself. The Holy Spirit is signally "the gift of God" under the new testament.[2]

This indeed seems more natural, but even if the gift is Christ, this would not exclude the work of the Spirit as the experience

of the believer of Christ is through the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us.

Owen now expects an objection, namely, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the next clause, so why would the Author repeat the same thing twice? Owen thinks that this is done for (1) emphasis; (2) the following clause ("have shared in the Holy Spirit"), maybe exegetical (i.e., explanatory) of "the heavenly gift"; (3) the Holy Spirit is the gift of God in gospel times as he in the previous quote tried to link the gift of God with the Holy Spirit.

These apostates had an experience of the Holy Spirit or the Lord Jesus which was momentary and they rejected it after a while, turning their back on the Triune God after knowing Him in some non-salvific way. That this experience was merely momentary and not lasting is seen through the use of the word "taste" as we observed above.[8]

3. Those who shared in the Holy Spirit

What does it mean to share in the Holy Spirit, or be partakers of the Holy Spirit as the KJV puts it? Does it imply sharing in the Holy Spirit intimately?

The word μέτοχος (*metochos*) basically gives the idea of sharing in or partaking of something. It is used 6 times in the NT, 5 of which in the book of Hebrews (Heb 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8) and the last in Luke 5:7. In **1:9** the word is translated with "companions". In **3:1** it speaks of those who "share" (ESV), are "partners" (NET), "partakers" (KJV) and "companions" (HCSB) in a heavenly calling referring to fellow believers. In **3:14** it speaks of the believers having "come to share in Christ" (ESV), become companions of the Messiah (HCSB), made partakers of Christ (KJV) and become partners with Christ (NET). In **12:8** it speaks of the believers, who are sons of God, sharing in God's discipline. Lastly, in **Luke 5:7** it is translated as "partners" (ESV) when referring to the relationship of Simon Peter to fishers he associates with or with whom he worked. It seems that sometimes the word is used to speak of a close relationship as in Heb 3:14; 12:8 for example, while other times such a thing is not necessarily implied as in Luke 5:7; Heb 1:9 for example. Therefore, the meaning and extent of this sharing must be decided not merely on the basis of the usage of the word, but more importantly, based on the context. A.W. Pink observes:

> First, it should be pointed out that the Greek word for "partakers" here is a different one from that used in Colossians 1:12 and 2 Peter 1:4, where real Christians are in view. The word here simply means "companions", referring to what is external rather than internal. It is to be observed that this item is placed in the center of the five, and this because it describes the animating principle of the other four, which are all effects.[6]

To say that these apostates partook and shared in the Holy Spirit in the past, is not conclusive proof that they were regenerated by the Spirit and He indwelt them. It would have been easy for the author if he wanted to give the idea that these people were regenerate and indwelt by the Spirit, to say things like they were "indwelt" by the Spirit or "filled with" the Spirit, etc., but this the Author does not. To partake here means to have some association and participation in the Spirit.[9]

Grudem observes here:

> Hebrews 6:4–6 speaks of people who have been "associated with" the Holy Spirit, and thereby had their lives influenced by him, but it need not imply that they had a redeeming work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, or that they were regenerated. By similar analogy with the example of the fishing companions in Luke 5:7, Peter and the disciples could be associated with them and even to some degree influenced by them without having a thoroughgoing change of life caused by that association. The very word metochos allows for a range of influence from fairly weak to fairly strong, for it only means "one who participates with or shares with or accompanies in some activity." This was apparently what had happened to these people spoken of in Hebrews 6, who had been associated with the church and as such associated with the work of the Holy Spirit, and no doubt had been influenced by him in some ways in their lives.[10]

The question we must next answer concerns the manner in which these apostates shared in the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit only work with the elect? Or does He even work in some of the reprobates? I think that this is an easy answer because we have a clear word from the mouth of our Lord concerning those who worked miracles, yet whom He *never* knew. In Matthew 7 we read of people who will come before our Lord claiming that they're His:

> Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not **prophesy** in your name, and **cast out demons** in your name, and do many **mighty works** in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you**; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

These are not people who have “fallen away” who were at some time in the past were true and regenerate believers, rather they were never true believers to begin with. This is seen from the strong language that the Lord uses against them. He does not say “I knew you for some time”, but rather the rejection is too strong, He says “I *never* knew you!” There was never a time in which Christ the Lord had a special and loving relationship with these “workers of lawlessness.” But, He does not refute their claim that they prophesied, performed exorcisms and did mighty works in Jesus’ name, because spiritual gifts are not the criteria for knowing if one is a true believer or not. The criteria is fruit. How did these “workers of lawlessness” perform these mighty things if it was not by the Holy Spirit? Therefore, they had some sort of relationship and association with the Holy Spirit and His powers. I believe that Hebrews 6 passages refers to the apostates either themselves possessing spiritual gifts like tongues, prophecy, miracles, healing and other things, or they receiving the benefit of these gifts.

When the Lord gave authority to His disciples “over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (Matt 10:1) do we read anywhere that Judas was not able to perform these? Even to the last moment, they were not saying “yes, it is Judas”, but rather questioning individually if they are the betrayers by saying “Is it I?” (Matt 26:22). There was not a special signal or sign on Judas which said that he was a wolf. Nowhere do we read that he was not able to perform something which the other disciples were able to perform. But we also know that he was “the son of destruction” or the one “the one destined for destruction” (NET) concerning whom the Lord said that “It would be better for him if he had never been born.” (Matt 26:24)

Judas did have a share in the Holy Spirit’s ministry, while being reprobate and not a true believer. The “workers of lawlessness” did likewise have a share in the Holy Spirit’s ministry, yet Christ says of them that He *never* knew them. Therefore, it is possible to share in the Spirit’s gifts, while at the same time not be regenerate or truly know Christ.

4. Those who tasted the goodness of the word of God

The word “tasted” is again used here which should be contrasted with the believer who hides God’s Word in their heart (Ps 119:11), treasures His words (Job 23:12) and as Jeremiah 15:16 says, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.” The experience of the apostates with the Word of God is merely natural and not spiritual. Even unbelievers can see that the Bible says a lot of things which even to their sinful worldview seems right and good, but that does not lead them to acknowledge the full authority and inspiration of the Bible as the believer does.

I agree with Calvin that by the Word of God here is meant primarily the goodness of the Gospel message. He writes in his commentary on verse 4:

> He calls it the *participation* of the Spirit; for he it is who distributes to every one, as he wills, all the light and knowledge which he can have; for without him no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, (1Co 12:3;) he opens for us the eyes of our minds, and reveals to us the secret things of God. He calls it a *tasting of the good word of God;* by which he means, that the will of God is therein revealed, not in any sort of way, but in such a way as sweetly to delight us; in short, by this title is pointed out the difference between the Law and the Gospel; for that has nothing but severity and condemnation, but this is a sweet testimony of God’s love and fatherly kindness towards us.[11]

They have heard of salvation by grace through Jesus Christ and heard it taught from the Word of God, but they still turned their back and went back to the work’s religion that is called Judaism. Their “acceptance” of the Gospel was momentary and not lasting, therefore, the Gospel was not truly received by them. They merely accepted its truth, but did not conform and transform their lives according to that truth. They had the Scriptures even before Christ’s coming in what we know the Old Testament, yet since Christ’s coming we have a greater revelation of God in the last days, namely, a revelation through His Son (Heb 1:1-2) which is far superior to the previous ways of revelation by God. This “Word of God” would include, I believe obviously, fulfilled prophecies concerning Jesus much like how the Apostles began on the day of Pentecost by seeing the fulfillment of the coming of the Spirit, Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. They had seen such passages applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, but with this clear knowledge in mind after a while, they abandoned the church and the Christian religion and went back to Judaism without that knowledge in mind.

Therefore, this clause describes those who among other things sit under the faithful preaching of the Word of God, see its transforming effects on people, even experience some transforming effect in their lives, see the prophecies concerning the Messiah fulfilled in Jesus and yet with this knowledge in mind, turn their back on Him.

5. Those who tasted the powers of the age to come

I believe that the word “tasted” at the beginning of v. 5 about the word of God, also applies to the powers of the age to come. This would mean that they had some experience with the powers of the age to come. But what is meant by the age to

come?

The KJV uses the word “world” instead of “age” (ESV, HCSB, ISV, NET, NKJV) as the majority of English translations do, but I believe that the idea is captured in the KJV that this speaks of the renewed world. I believe that the “coming age” or “the age to come” refers to the eternal state. The eternal state where there will be no sin, no sickness, and no pain. About the sin against the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus says that the person committing that sin “will not be forgiven, either in this age or in **the age to come**” (Matt 12:32) by which He means that the person will never be forgiven, either in this life or in the next. In Ephesians 1:21 Paul writes about the sovereignty of Christ that He is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in **the one to come**.” In Mark 10:30 the age to come is connected with eternal life (c.f. Luke 18:30).

Based on that I believe that this verse means that these apostates experienced some things from the new world, like healing and miracles. When God heals He displays His graciousness and care and He gives a foretaste about the eternal state where all sin and sickness will be removed. These apostates had some experience with the powerful working of the Spirit in the church as Hebrews 2:4 says, “while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” These things are the effects of the Spirit’s work in the world and the effect of Christ’s Kingdom. God has given us a taste of this even now. In a sense, the age to come has partially arrived, though not fully, just like God’s Kingdom which is among us (e.g. Luke 18:21), yet we still pray “Thy kingdom come!” (Matt 6:10)

These apostates had some taste and experience of the Holy Spirit’s work, yet it was not evidence that they were truly regenerate believers. They merely tasted the Spirit’s work, but we’re not being filled or indwelt by the Spirit

Putting the descriptions together

These apostates had (1) received instruction in the word of truth and have been made familiar with the way of truth. (2) They’ve had an experience with the Holy Spirit and His Work. (3) They had participated in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (4) They had seen the truth of the Gospel from the Word of God, the fulfillment of the long-awaited Messiah in the Lord Jesus. (5) Finally, they had seen and themselves were recipients of God’s powerful working in the church by the Holy Spirit. After experiencing all these things, which would have naturally led to their true conversion (as the land analogy in vv. 7-8 shows), they still remained unfruitful and in their unregenerate state. They had a form of godliness, but it was not the true godliness of the regenerate believer. These apostates were like Judas as we described above. Sam Storms observes the following about the apostates:

> These, then, “have tasted” the power and blessings of the new covenant, but they have not personally prized, cherished, embraced, loved, trusted, treasured, or savored the atoning death of Jesus as their only hope for eternal life.
>
> Those in Matthew 7:22-23 preached, prophesied, performed miracles, and cast out demons in Christ’s name . . . *but were not saved*. Jesus said to them: “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers” (v. 23). These, then, “have tasted” the power and blessings of the new covenant, but *they have not personally prized, cherished, embraced, loved, trusted, treasured, or savored the atoning death of Jesus as their only hope for eternal life*.[12]

Dr. Grudem observes the following on these apostates:

> What has happened to these people? They are at least people who have been affiliated closely with the fellowship of the church. They have had some sorrow for sin and a decision to forsake their sin (*repentance*). They have clearly understood the gospel and given some assent to it (they have been *enlightened*). They have come to appreciate the attractiveness of the Christian life and the change that comes about in people’s lives because of becoming a Christian, and they have probably had answers to prayers in their own lives and felt the power of the Holy Spirit at work, perhaps even using some spiritual gifts (they have become ‘associated with’ the work of the Holy Spirit or have become *partakers* of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the heavenly gift and the powers of the age to come). They have been exposed to the true preaching of the Word and have appreciated much of its teachings (they have *tasted* the goodness of the Word of God). These factors are all positive, and people who have experienced these things may be genuine Christians. But these factors alone are not enough to give conclusive evidence of any of the decisive beginning stages of the Christian life (regeneration, saving faith and repentance unto life, justification, adoption, initial sanctification). In fact, *these experiences are all preliminary to those decisive beginning stages of the Christian life*. The actual spiritual status of those who have experienced these things is still unclear[12]

Lastly, Dr. John Frame weighs in on this with the example of Judas who experienced these things:

> Can we regard the people in this passage as false believers? I think we can. Think of Judas Iscariot, chosen by Jesus to be one of the twelve disciples. By joining Jesus' band of followers, he turned away from the sinful world, a kind of repentance. Doubtless he received the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, either from Jesus or from John. He was enlightened by hearing Jesus' teaching. He tasted the heavenly gift [Dr. Frame understands this to refer to supernatural gifts] as he watched Jesus heal and prophesy.1267 He shared the Spirit, at least as much as King Saul did when he prophesied, and people asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam. 10:11). Judas also tasted the good word of Christ and Jesus' miraculous powers, the powers of the age to come, the powers of the coming kingdom. Judas himself preached Christ and worked miracles in his name (Matt. 10:1–42). But he proved to be reprobate, unbelieving. He betrayed Jesus, who said of him that it would have been better if he had not been born. Externally, he seemed to be a believer, and indeed, he had many advantages that believers have, hearing Jesus' words and watching his miracles.
>
> Perhaps even more to the focus of the letter to the Hebrews: OT Israel was much like this—enlightened in comparison with the other nations, experiencing all sorts of heavenly gifts, powers, and words. But many of the Israelites were wicked and turned against God.[13]

Then have fallen away

This falling away, is a total falling away and not a falling *into* sin for example, but it is a falling by which the person renounces completely the Christian faith. They have not fallen from their regenerate state, they have not fallen from the hand of God, but rather, they have fallen away from their previous profession. Though all of the descriptions given in vv. 4-5 could describe a true Christian, yet they are not conclusive as Judas and the "workers of lawlessness" of Matthew 7:21-23 experienced many of the same and similar things.

The word "then" is not in the original Greek, but it is supplied by the translators for a better translation in the English and a better understanding of the passage. In this way, their falling away is described against the background of their experience with the Christian faith as described in vv. 4-5. It is as if the Author said, "if even after experiencing these things, which, if regeneration were a natural work, would have undoubtedly led you to regeneration and you fall away from your previous profession, then there is no hope for you after having so much knowledge and yet rejecting it."

Impossible to restore them again to repentance

Why is it impossible to restore them to repentance? Two reasons are given which are one: (1) they are *re*-crucifying the Son of God and thereby (2) holding Him up to contempt. But let us first inquire as to what it means to "restore them again to repentance." Does this imply that these apostates at a time where truly repentant? Only if this is the only way repentance is spoken of.

Μετάνοια (*metanoia*) is simply "a change of mind" (Thayer's. G3341.), but does not imply a genuine and *godly* repentance. Repentance has also an idea of grief in it for doing things that we now change our minds about. John Gill observes that:

> repentance does not suppose that persons may have true repentance and lose it; for though truly penitent persons may lose the exercise of this grace for a time, yet the grace itself can never be lost: moreover, these apostates before described had only a show of repentance, a counterfeit one; such as Cain, Pharaoh, and Judas had; and consequently, the renewing of them again to repentance, is to that which they only seemed to have, and to make pretensions unto; now to renew them to a true repentance, which they once made a profession of, the apostle says is a thing "impossible":[14]

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul the Apostle teaches that "godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation" while on the other hand "worldly grief produces death." Grief is a part of repentance, but true *godly* produces repentance that leads to life, while at the other hand worldly grief does *not* produce repentance leading to life, but on the contrary produces death. This does not mean worldly grief produces no repentance at all, but the point of the Apostle is that it is not repentance unto life.

Judas displayed some kind of repentance when it is said of him "when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver" (Matt 27:3) where a different though a synonymous word is used, μεταμέλλομαι (*metamellomai*) to express Judas' change of mind. Judas was grieved and changed his mind and realized the wickedness that he did in delivering Someone completely innocent in the hands of the wicked, though his change of mind and repentance were not godly. This repentance was worldly, which indeed did produce death, leading him to suicide.

The repentance of the these Hebrew apostates may have also consisted in some points of doctrine as for example in v. 1 “repentance from dead works”. The Epistle surprisingly says nothing about the Judaizing heresy within which the Apostle Paul, for example, was concerned when he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians where some Jews were troubling the Gentile Christians. These apostates in Hebrews 6 may have given even intellectual assent to the doctrine of justification by faith rather than works, yet mere intellectual assent does not justify. It is not the *profession* of the doctrine of justification by faith, but the *possession* of the faith that justifies the sinner.

John Owen observes that repentance can be in twofold, (1) inward renewal and regeneration, or (2) outward renewal and change and on the second he observes:

> It is *outward in the profession* and pledge of it. Wherefore renovation in this sense consists in the solemn confession of faith and repentance by Jesus Christ, with the seal of baptism received thereon; for thus it was with all those who were converted unto the gospel. Upon their profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, they received the baptismal pledge of an inward renovation, though really they were not partakers thereof. But this estate was their ἀνακαινισμός, their “renovation.” From this state they fell totally, renouncing Him who is the author of it, his grace which is the cause of it, and the ordinance which is the pledge thereof.[2]

Their repentance and change of mind was merely outward and not internal and produced by the Spirit of God, otherwise it would have lasted. Therefore, this “renewal” or “restoration” spoken of is about their outward repentance. It is impossible to bring them back to that state again because of two reasons.

(1) By falling away and rejecting the Christian faith, they are in a sense re-crucifying Christ the Lord. They are siding with the Jews who shouted “crucify Him!” and demanded His death. They are siding with the enemies of Christ after their rejection of the Christian religion. They are crucifying Him once again *to their own harm.* They are rejecting the only way of salvation. They are siding with those who will be judged severely by Him. They reject the only way of salvation that God has provided and therefore, it is not possible that they be saved, for there is salvation in no other way. True and godly repentance is granted by God (e.g. 2Tim 2:25), yet God has declared here that He will *not* give it to such apostates.

(2) The apostates by their rejection of Christianity hold the Lord Christ up to contempt, they hold Him as an object of hate and scorn, siding again with His enemies who demanded His death. They in a sense say that His death was well deserved for a false prophet (as they perceived) and if He were, here again, they would have done the same again. On this point, Albert Barnes observes:

> Their apostasy and rejection of the Saviour would be like holding him up publicly as deserving the infamy and ignominy of the cross. A great part of the crime attending the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, consisted in exhibiting him to the passing multitude as deserving the death of a malefactor. Of that sin they would partake who should reject him, for they would thus show that they regarded his religion as an imposture, and would, in a public manner, hold him up as worthy only of rejection and contempt.[15]

Therefore, the restoration to their previous state is impossible because they have rejected the only way of salvation, *after* knowing and experiencing it.

How the apostates were not described

We have tried to argue that all of these five descriptions given in vv. 4-5 were not exclusive to regenerate believers, but could also be applied to false professors, by giving these descriptions the Author was not intended to say that these persons were regenerate and true believers inwardly, but rather, as seen from a human viewpoint, they would have been identified as true Christians. It is important to note how these apostates are *not* described in contrast to how the believers *are* described with the book of Hebrews. The following is taken from Sam Storms’ article:[12]

1. God has forgiven their sins (Heb 10:17; 8:12)
2. God has cleansed their consciences (Heb 9:14; 10:22)
3. God has written his laws on their hearts (Heb 8:10; 10:16)
4. God is producing holiness of life in them (Heb 2:11; 10:14; 13:21)
5. God has given them an unshakable kingdom (Heb 12:28)
6. God is pleased with them (Heb 11; 13:16,21)
7. They have faith (Heb 4:3; 6:12; 10:22,38,39; 12:2; 13:7; etc.)
8. They have hope Heb 6:11,18; 7:19; 10:23)

9. They have love (Heb 6:10; 10:33-34; 13:1)
10. They worship and pray (Heb 12:28; 13:15; 4:16; 10:22)
11. They obey God (Heb 5:9; 10:36; 12:10,11,14)
12. They persevere (Heb 3:6,14; 6:11; 10:23)
13. They enter God's rest (Heb 4:3,11)
14. They know God (Heb 8:11)
15. They are God's house, his children, his people (Heb 3:6; 2:10,13; 8:10)
16. They share in Christ (Heb 3:14)
17. They will receive future salvation (Heb 1:14; 7:25; 5:9; 9:28).

It would have been easy if the Author said "they had their sins forgiven" as he says concerning the believers. Or "those who once had their consciences cleansed". Or "those for whom Christ died". Or "those who had the law of God written on their hearts". Or "those who had faith" and so we could go on, but the fact is that no such definitive descriptions are given to the apostates, because these descriptions may and do apply to a true Christian, but these are not the evidences of his true faith, but rather as our Lord taught is, fruit is the evidence of a true and lasting faith (Matt 7:16, 20). These five things may be true of those who are unbelievers, but are engaged in the church.

The land analogy

Our interpretation is further strengthened by the analogy or parable given by the Author, let us read the text again:

> Heb 6:7-8 For land that has **drunk the rain that often falls on it,** and **produces a crop useful** to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if **it bears thorns and thistles**, it is **worthless and near to being cursed**, and **its end is to be burned.**

The land here signifies a person and the rain signifies blessing. When we connect v. 7 with vv. 4-6, we understand that the land here intended is the professor (whether true or false) and the rain are the five things described in vv. 4-5. Notice what is said of the rain, namely, that it "often falls on it [the land]". This is not speaking of people who went to church one or two times and then rejected the faith. No, it speaks of those who were daily and weekly immersed in the Christian church and teaching and had the (outward) blessings of God all around them.

It is important not only to see this "land" or "earth" to be the professor in the church, but also to see it as a reference to the land of Israel whose destruction was nigh when the Author was writing. In connection with the often falling raising and Israel Pink says:

> The reference is to the repeated and frequent ministerial showers with which God visited Israel. To them He had called, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord!" (Jer. 22:29). It was looking back to these multiplied servants which Jehovah had sent to His ancient people that Christ said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together" (Matthew 23:37). This then was the "earth" in which were the plants of God's husbandry.[16]

The Jews in general did not bear fruit and turned to Christ and in accordance with the Lord's prediction in Matthew 23-24, they were destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Therefore, the land analogy is to be seen in two ways, (1) a reference to the believer (whether true or false) and (2) the land of Israel.

Now we continue with v. 7. If the land produces fruit it will receive a blessing from God. The fruit specified in v. 7 is said to be "crop" or as the KJV has it "herbs" which is said to be "useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated". The herb, crop and vegetation (HCSB, NET) which this land produces thank to the rain that has gone into the earth (drunk) and that often fell on it is useful for God, the Vinedresser and therefore God blesses such persons. On the other hand, if this land produces "thorns and thistles" it is said to be worthless and its end is to be burned.

Notice that there is nothing said about the bad land receiving less rain or drinking less rain. The same amount of rain is assumed for both the bad and the good land. The issue is not in the rain, but rather in the land.

The bad land produces "thorns and thistles", a reminder of the consequences of the Fall of man. The Lord told Adam that because of his disobedience the earth is cursed and "thorn and thistles it shall bring for you" (Gen 3:18), the words are identical in the LXX and Hebrews 6:8. These apostates, who are the bad land which is "near to being cursed" is applied, *still* bear the effects of the Fall. They were not at some time reformed, but then became a bad land again, but rather this analogy

leads us to say that the land *from the beginning* was bad. This is similar to the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9, 18-23). There were four kinds of land and only one kind of seed:

1. Some seed fell along the path and were devoured by the birds (Matt 13:4, 19).
2. Some seed fell on rocky ground, did not have much soil, immediately sprang up and later withered away (Matt 13:5-6, 18-19).
3. Some seed fell among thorns and were choked as soon as they grew up (Matt 13:7, 20).
4. Some seed feel on the good soil and produced grain (Matt 13:8, 21).

They all received the same seed, but the ground was different and therefore their response was different. We should obviously not see this as "there are some good people who will accept the Gospel, while bad people will not." This parable is not a treatment on the human condition and we should not force it to be. It is rather a treatment on how the Gospel proclamation works among those who in some way receive it. Only the good soil produced fruit, all the others fell away, why? Because their ground was not good. In Luke 8:13 it is even said of the seeds which fell on the rock that they "believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away". A temporary faith is nowhere said to be true faith, because true faith worked in the heart by God is everlasting. There seems to be no problem with the idea that some unbelievers were at some time temporary believers. They gave assent to the truths of God's Word and the Gospel, but they had no root, and therefore fell away.

We turn again to the Hebrews passage and say that the issue is with the land and not the rain. From the beginning, it was not a land which was appropriate for fruit, but one which was fitted for destruction.

The bad land, in contrast with the good land which both received and drunk the same rain, is "near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned." As we said above this refers to the land of Israel as well as to the apostates. The Lord worked in His vineyard, but it did not produce fruit and therefore now that all His work is done, He will send to destroy His vineyard as in Isaiah 5.

The true believer and the apostates both participated in the five things described in vv. 4-5, but these blessings lead to true fruit only in the good land, i.e. the true believer and not in the false professor which increases their liability to judgment. Concerning this analogy, Dr. Grudem says the following:

> For this reason he immediately passes from this description of those who commit apostasy to a further analogy that shows that these people who fell away never had any genuine fruit in their lives. As we explained above, verses 7–8 speak of these people in terms of "thorns and thistles," the kind of crop that is brought forth on land that has no worthwhile life in itself even though it receives repeated blessings from God (in terms of the analogy, even though rain frequently falls upon it). We should notice here that people who commit apostasy are not compared to a field that once bore good fruit and now does not, but that they are like land that never bore good fruit, but only thorns and thistles. The land may look good before the crops start to come up, but the fruit gives the genuine evidence, and it is bad.[17]

And finally, in addition, as cited by Storms:

> "the idea of land that once bore good fruit and now bears thorns is not compatible with this picture. The implication is this: While the positive experiences listed in verses 4-6 do not provide us enough information to know whether the people were truly saved or not, the committing of apostasy and holding Christ up to contempt do reveal the true nature of those who fall away: all along they have been like bad ground that can only bear bad fruit. If the metaphor of the thorn-bearing land explains verses 4-6 (as it surely does), then their falling away shows that they were never saved in the first place" ("Perseverance of the Saints: A Case Study from Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Other Warning Passages in Hebrews," in *Still Sovereign,* Baker; 156-57).[12]

Though we speak in this way

> Heb 6:9 **Though we speak in this way**, yet in your case, beloved, **we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.**

Finally, we turn to v. 9 to conclude our discussion of Hebrews 6. Hebrews 6 is the proof that this passage is *not* spoken about the audience of the Author, but rather is spoken of those who might have such an experience. The Author admits that he spoke in some strange or difficult way. It was a sober warning to those in the church who were merely professors. But assures them after such a stern warning that his audience in fact will share in "better things."

He address them as “beloved.” They are beloved by the Author, but evermore by the God of their salvation who predestined them in love from eternity past and demonstrated His love for them in the cross and their redemption. This address is never used of unbelievers, but always of the believers.

The Author is convinced and feels sure of better things. He doesn’t merely wish for better things, but rather he is convinced and has confidence that, in fact, better things are in store for his audience. This could not have been said if he, in fact, described his audience in vv. 4-8, but it could be said if he wanted to give them a strong warning including to those who might want to draw them away from Christ. What are the better things? What are they better than?

I agree with Dr. Grudem that the better things contrast the good things in vv. 4-5. The five items there are good things, but what the Author is convinced of about his audience is that they have and will have greater evidences of their faith than these things in vv. 4-5.

> But the question is “better things” than what? The plural “better things” forms an appropriate contrast to the “good things” that have been mentioned in verses 4–6: the author is convinced that most of his readers have experienced better things than simply the partial and temporary influences of the Holy Spirit and the church talked about in verses 4–6.
>
> In fact, the author talks about these things by saying (literally) that they are “better things, also belonging to salvation” (Gk. kai echomena sōtērias). These are not only the temporary blessings talked about in verses 4–6, but these are better things, things having not only temporary influence, but “also belonging to salvation.” In this way the Greek word kai (“also”) shows that salvation is something that was not part of the things mentioned in verses 4–6 above. Therefore this word kai, which is not explicitly translated in the RSV or NIV (but the NASB comes close), provides a crucial key for understanding the passage. If the author had meant to say that the people mentioned in verses 4–6 were truly saved, then it is very difficult to understand why he would say in verse 9 that he is convinced of better things for them, things that belong to salvation, or that have salvation in addition to those things mentioned above. He thus shows that he can use a brief phrase to say that people “have salvation” if he wishes to do so (he does not need to pile up many phrases), and he shows, moreover, that the people whom he speaks of in verses 4–6 are not saved.[18]

What are then the “better things”? I believe they are the things mentioned in the following discussion, namely, (1) “your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints”; and the Author desiring that they (2) “have full assurance of hope until the end”; and (3) be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” These things display whether these people had true salvation or not. **See above** for our comments on this passage.

As observed above by Dr. Grudem, these “better things” belong to their salvation, they are not *added* to their salvation, but they are an aspect of true salvation. John Owen says the following on the phrase:

> For of these things it is added, Καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας, — “Such as accompany salvation:” literally, “such as have salvation;” that is, such as have saving grace in them, and eternal salvation infallibly annexed unto them, — things that are not bestowed on any, such as are not wrought in any, but those that shall be saved; that is, in brief, true faith and sincere obedience. For in whomsoever these are found, they shall be saved, by virtue of the faithfulness of God in the covenant of grace.[2]

This is therefore proof that the things in vv. 4-5 where not things which “accompany salvation”, but rather the fruit of faith is that which accompanies and belongs to true salvation wrought by God in the sinner and that is the evidence of whether one is a true or false believer.

The purpose of the passage

We have continually argued that this passage does not speak of those who are true regenerate believers, members of the New Covenant and indwelt by the Spirit and then they fall away, but rather of professors who, from the outside, could not have been separated from the true believers and then fall away, reject and oppose Christianity. This does not speak of the people who stop going to church because of scandals, personal problems or the difficulty in believing in a good God in a wicked world, but rather speaks of those who have great privileges, knew the truth of God’s Word, Gospel and power, and even after that they turned their back to God and did not come to true and godly repentance. This is therefore a warning about those people who have cross the line. They will not repent, because God has set to judge them for their sins and not grant them repentance.

The purpose of the passage is then to warn professors in the church to examine themselves and not be like those described in the passage. Furthermore, it leads the true believer who is not sure of their salvation to seek the Lord for assurance and

to examine themselves and their fruit. It is, among other means, through the warnings about apostasy that the Lord preserves His saints. Some object and say that "if it is impossible for the elect to fall away, then the warnings are useless." I do not agree with that. The impossibility for the elect falling does not consist within themselves, but rather consists in God who works perseverance within them. Therefore, theoretically, it would be possible for an elect person to fall away from the faith and therefore it is not a brute impossibility for an elect person to fall away. But in reality and as the Bible teaches, apostasy from true faith is impossible *because* God preserves us through many means, including warning us to examine ourselves and of apostasy.

Conclusion

This passage does not, contrary to many passages, teach that true believers do fall away, but rather teaches that those who make a profession, know and experience the truth and then apostatize will be damned forever with no chance of repentance.

Now we move on to a passage with similar input. [Hebrews 10:26-29 see here]

Footnotes

1. ^ *Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. G5461.*
2. a, b, c, d, e *John Owen. Exposition of Hebrews. in loc. www.studylight.org/commentaries/joc/hebrews-6.html#4 See also Greek Testament Critical Exegetical Commentary on this word here https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/hac/hebrews-6.html*
3. ^ *"And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed." Justin Martyr, Apology, chapter 61. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm*
4. ^ *Wayne Grudem. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). Chapter 40, p. 797.*
5. ^ *Matthew Henry. Complete Commentary. https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/hebrews-6.html*
6. a, b, c *Arthur W. Pink. Exposition of Hebrews. Chapter 24. http://pbministries.org/books/pink/Hebrews/hebrews_024.htm*
7. ^ *Grudem, Systematic. pp. 797-798, footnote 15.*
8. ^ *John Owen writes on the word "taste": "The expression of tasting is metaphorical, and signifies no more but to make a trial or experiment; for so we do by tasting, naturally and properly, of that which is tendered unto us to eat. We taste such things by the sense given us naturally to discern our food; and then either receive or refuse them, as we find occasion. It doth not, therefore, include eating, much less digestion and turning into nourishment of what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned, it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savor, upon some other consideration."*
9. ^ *"Ephesians 5:7 uses a closely related word (symmetochos, a compound of metochos and the preposition syn ["with"]) when Paul warns Christians about the sinful acts of unbelievers and*

says, "do not associate with them" (Eph. 5:7). He is not concerned that their total nature will be transformed by the unbelievers, but simply that they will associate with them and have their own witness compromised and their own lives influenced to some degree by them." Grudem, Systematic. p. 798.

10. ^ *Grudem, Systematic. p. 798.*
11. ^ *John Calvin. Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
12. a, b, c, d *Sam Storms. Hebrews 6:4-6 And The Possibility Of Apostasy. http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/hebrews-6:4-6-and-the-possibility-of-apostasy*
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