

HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

CONTEXT

PART TWO

THE VERY DIFFICULT PASSAGE OF HEBREWS 6:4-6

BACKGROUND:

Catholicism has long taught that there is no assurance of salvation, but the Reformation restored to the church the Biblical teaching of “perseverance of the saints” or what we know as the “security of the believer”.

At this time, the majority of denominations no longer teach security of the believer, but teach a true believer may lose their salvation based on their behavior. This is true of Methodist, Pentecostals, Church of God, Nazarene, Catholicism, Church of Christ, and Holiness churches.

The Book of Hebrews:

The book of Hebrews is a very difficult to interpret in its entirety. There is controversy over who wrote the book, to whom it was written, and the purpose of its writing.

The book of Hebrews was one of the most debated books as to its inclusion in the canon of Scripture precisely because it seems to indicate a true believer can lose their salvation, a belief foreign to the earliest New Testament churches.

Today, our purpose is not to answer all the questions over this book, but to use the principle of context to see if Hebrews 6:4-6 teaches a true believer can lose their salvation.

There are three levels of context:

- 1. The immediate passage context**
- 2. The context of the book**
- 3. The context of other scriptures**

In order to properly interpret any passage, we must use all three of these contexts.

Read Hebrews 6:4-6

What words/phrases seem to indicate that the passage is written to believers?

What words/phrases seem to indicate a believer can be lost again?

**Pretty convincing! Seems pretty straightforward teaching!
So, maybe we Baptist are wrong in our belief?**

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

In order to grasp the context of these verses, it is necessary to return to 4:14. This begins the fourth argument of the writer that Christ is superior to anything else, in this case, he has begun to explain that Christ is superior to the old priesthood of Aaron.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. He teaches Jesus is not like any other priest, He is better in every way.

The writer then shows Christ is far superior to the Jewish High priest of Aaron, showing it to be of a spiritual order (Melchizedek). This section goes from 5:1 to 5:10. **Now, read Hebrews 5:8-9.**

What kind of salvation does he say Jesus became to all who obey?

Therefore, for the writer of Hebrews to teach a believer who has been saved and obeyed Jesus has eternal life in 5:8-9, then to teach that believer can fall from grace in 6:4-6, is to cause the writer to contradict himself.

Now let's read Hebrews 6:4-8.

I believe this section of scripture is speaking of those who are in the church, but have not come to true belief:

1. Verses 7- 8 parallel the teaching of Christ in the Parable of the Soils, where He teaches that only those who receive the seed and produce fruit are the ones who belong to Him.
2. Verse 8 specifically says they bring forth thistles and thorns. This is bad fruit from bad soil.
3. I believe the next two verses offer an even more plain contrast. **Read 6:9-10. Notice the phrase “But, beloved we are convinced of better things concerning you”**

CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

When you look at the book of Hebrews (for example in the outline found in the ESV study Bible), notice the purpose of the book is to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over any other thing:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. 1:1-4 | Christ is Superior to Old Testament Prophets |
| 2. 1:5-2:18 | Christ is Superior to Angels |
| 3. 3:1-4:13 | Christ is Superior to Moses |
| 4. 4:14-7:28 | Christ is Superior to Aaron |
| 5. 8:1-10:18 | Christ is Superior to the Old Covenant |

Throughout the book the writer includes warnings:

1. 2:1-4
2. 3:6b-4:13
3. 5:11-6:8
4. 10:26-31

We notice our section of controversial scripture does not come in a section where he is making one of his main points, but is in the third warning passage. I believe what he is saying in this passage is that there are those in the church who have seen the truth, heard the truth, participated in the general fellowship of the Spirit, yet are not truly saved. What hope is there for them?

CONTEXT OF OTHER SCRIPTURES

To understand this use of context, we are asking in other passages dealing with salvation, does the Bible teach security?

Read these passages:

1. Philippians 1:6
2. John 10:28
3. I John 5:11-12
4. Romans 8:1-2
5. Ephesians 1:13-14
6. II Corinthians 1:21-22
7. I Thessalonians 5:23-24

All of these scriptures teach us that God's work is always done completely, the Holy Spirit is guarding us and perfecting us, and we will never be condemned.

Therefore, to have Hebrews 6:4-6 mean a believer can lose their salvation is to make the Bible contradict itself in its teaching.