

(Hebrews 5:9 NKJV) And having been perfected, He became the **author** of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

Last week, we talked about this amazing verse. We learned that the word “perfected” perfectly describes our Messiah: Through His sufferings, as a Man, He became obedient to His Father by declaring “Not My will but Your Will be done!”. He did this while blood dripped from His pores and the CROSS mocked Him from “outside the camp”. In so doing, He completed, perfected, consummated, consecrated, fulfilled and finished the work given to Him by His Father.

In so doing, He became the cause of our GLORIOUS salvation!

“**To all who obey him**” – this is our privilege **after** we are saved, Else our salvation would be due to our works which we know is impossible.

(Hebrews 5:10 NKJV) called by God as High Priest "ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK,"

In so doing (having been perfected), He was ordained by God as THE High Priest, not according to the LAW, but according to another order of priesthood: the order of Melchizedek – this enigmatic person of Genesis 14.

As I indicated last week, I want to wait for Chapter 7 to speak on Melchizedek.

The last 4 verses of chapter 5 need to be read together. This is because the first word of Chapter 6 is ‘**therefore**’.

(Hebrews 5:11 NKJV) of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (12) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. (13) For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. (14) But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

If you are thinking that these words have a “ring of rebuke”, you are absolutely correct. This begins yet another warning of apostasy because they are followed by some very challenging verses in the next chapter!

But, let’s look at the author’s rebuke:

1. It is difficult to say for sure to whom the “of whom” refers. Is he speaking of Melchizedek, Messiah, a new High Priest? At this point, let’s keep it simple – it appears from a plain reading, it refers to Melchizedek.
2. He admits that it’s hard to explain (that is, **interpret**). But is it hard for the author? Or is it hard for the readers?
3. Clearly it is because of the readers/hearers who have “become dull of hearing”. The Greek for ‘dull’ means *sluggish*, (literally) *lazy*, or (figuratively) *stupid (although I don’t know how one can be figuratively ‘stupid’)*.
 - a. What specific reasons the author gives for this state of these readers is not given. Here’s some possibilities:

- i. Due to their afflictions and persecutions
 - ii. Due to their desire to return to the law of Moses;
 - iii. Due to their innate pride
 - iv. Due to their neglect of the Word of God
 - v. Due to deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this life. Worldliness has its way of drawing people away from eternity and into temporal pleasures.
 - b. Given the context of the book, I suspect that it was due to their persecutions, being exhausted from them and perhaps, like the wandering children of Israel, they began to long for the “safety” of Egypt.
 - c. Even Jesus had issues with people not understanding the spiritual vs the material:
 - i. **Matthew 13:14-15 NKJV** And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'HEARING YOU WILL HEAR AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND, AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE; (15) FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM.'
 - ii. It starts with the dulling of the heart!
4. The author rebukes them for having to go back to the “ABC’s” of the gospel because they still need to be taught “first principals” when, in his estimation, they should be teachers. Does this sound fair? Was the author suggesting that they should be like Paul, Timothy, Barnabas , Peter or the other Apostles? No, because I think the author understands that these other were gifted to teach publicly and preach the Gospel. No, I think it’s fair if one considers several ideas:
- a. Many Hebrew believers were there at the time when the church was first formed. It’s been about 25+ years since Pentecost. They should have received deeper meaning and revelation based on the words of Jesus as taught to them.
 - b. They should have been teaching others like their children, neighbors, friends and especially new believers. They should have been teaching the Scriptures, called here “the oracles of God. This may have included letters sent to the churches for their edification and exhortation (see Romans 3:2 and 1 Peter 4:11).
5. The author finishes his rebuke with a dietary illustration:
- a. You have come to need milk and not meat (solid food).
 - i. **“have come to need milk”** – does this **not** say that they were eating meat but came to need it again? That through the dulling of their hearts, they regressed back into infancy?
 - ii. The picture is of a baby who cannot eat solid food; The baby is “unskilled in the word of righteousness” that is, while these are Believers, they have not walked out into deeper waters, where there are many mysteries of the faith; and, perhaps, while being believers, they could not articulate the way of salvation to the unsaved.
 - iii. This is contrasted with those who are mature and have experience in the Way of the Believer’s life. They are able, by listening to the Holy Spirit and by knowing the Word, discern truth from lies and continually reject the lies.
 - iv. William Newell says that each of our senses (v14) has been used in our experiences with God (obviously figurative language is being used)
 - 1. **Psalm 119:103** How sweet are Your words to my **taste**, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth! **To this I would add:**

- a. **John 4:10-14 NKJV** Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." **AND THEN IN VERSE 13** Jesus tells her:, "Whoever **drinks** of this water will thirst again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of **water springing up into everlasting life.**"
2. Psalm_119:18 Open my **eyes**, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.
3. Psalm_54:2 **Hear** my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.
4. 2Corinthians_2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the **fragrance** of His knowledge in every place.
5. Romans_12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. **Cling** to what is good.

Obviously, this rebuke is difficult to hear. But the truth of the matter is, Jesus' children are expected to grow and mature in their walks. I cannot imagine any teacher, pastor or theologian who would not desire growth in the Body of Christ. Growth, however, doesn't happen overnight. It's part of the process of "working out your salvation with fear and trembling (**Philippians 2:12**). It does happen with a steady diet of the Bread of Life and drinking from the stream of Living Waters.

AND, just as importantly, we must help each other! Paul said

*One of the greatest pleasures I have in teaching here is the fact that you are eager to hear the word of God. You know its power, how it can penetrate into the deep recesses of your hearts, how it can illuminate those dark thoughts so that they can be brought to the Light of Christ; how it can pierce through years of denial; how it can cut away years of thick scarring that come from the inevitable pain, hurts, sufferings, trials and even those self-inflicted wounds. And still, you seek after the deeper things of the Word of God **and** the God of the Word! The end result, whether wrought in pain or made in joy, is the revelation of knowing that you are being transformed and conformed into the image of His Son, who is the God the Word made flesh who came to save.*

THEREFORE, beloved, we need to go on to Chapter 6.

(Hebrews 6:1 NKJV) **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, (2) of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

The love of the author towards his readers is evident. He truly wants them to "go on to

perfection”; The word “perfection” in the Greek in this verse means “maturity”.

But his readers were stuck in a rut and they were NOT going on to perfection. They were still considering “elementary principles “ which are:

1. Repentance from dead works
2. Faith towards God
3. Doctrines of Baptisms
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal Judgement

These things are not necessarily just “Christian”. Within each of these 6 things, there lurks the “religious, i.e., Jewish” principles of which the Hebrew Christians seemed reluctant deepen their understanding – perhaps clinging to the old forms of religion instead of the Person of Christ. By clinging to the old, they might not be persecuted so much, or so they perhaps thought.

(Hebrews 6:3 NKJV) And this we **will** do if God permits.

Not that he is saying that he will get to this if God permits him. But rather, and more importantly, it is a declaration of the confidence he has in God!

And this WE WILL DO, this is, going on to perfection! If we remain as a branch to the True Vine whom apart from, we can do nothing! For why would God NOT permit us to grow? He is always willing that we do grow IN HIM, BY HIM and FOR HIM!

And now for the heart-burn verses.

(Hebrews 6:4 NKJV) For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) **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.

Before we dive into the verse, one word of caution:

We all have a tendency to interpret scripture based on our pre-conceived ideas of how things should be. In other words, if you are a “Mid-Tribulation rapture” person, you will see the rapture thru that lens of understanding. Same goes with “pre-tribbers”. But even more importantly than that is the presumptions associated with what we know of as “Calvinism” and “Arminianism”.

One of the keys to interpretation is to first seek the plain meaning of what you are reading. Another is context: how does the verse fit in with others in the passage, chapter and even the book. And while we should allow the Bible to interpret itself, we must be careful in choosing supporting verses of our interpretation.

These are very different views on **salvation**. On the Calvinistic side there is the complete sovereignty of God Alone and on the Arminianistic side is the free will of Man who may or may not respond to God’s call. And note, both sides seem to pick and choose or give greater weight to the verses that will support their proposition.

Let's look at the two opposing camps that try to define just how salvation comes to us.

ACCORDING TO CALVINISM

Salvation is accomplished by the sovereign will and almighty power of the Triune God. **The Father chose a people**, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

T - Total Inability or Total Depravity – no person can choose salvation

U - Unconditional Election – there are no conditions for salvation, just the sovereign choice of God, by His grace alone.

L- Limited Atonement/ Particular Redemption – atonement is for the elect/chosen from before the foundations of the world.

I - Irresistible Grace or the Efficacious Call of the Spirit – no one can resist the Holy Spirit.

P - Perseverance of the Saints – once saved, always saved because God's purposes can not be trumped.

While Calvinists says that everyone can hear the **outward call** of the gospel, it is only by sovereign choice of God who by the Holy Spirit will cause the inner man to believe. Faith is not a part of the cause, it is a gift of God after salvation.

Buried in here is the disturbing idea that having chosen some for salvation, He has also chosen some for eternal damnation.

ACCORDING TO ARMINIANISM

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - **man's response being the determining factor**. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation.

- **Free-Will or Human Ability** (every man has some ability to decide)
- **Conditional Election** - the condition is whether a man chooses Christ or not
- **Universal Redemption or General Atonement** - God offers salvation to all
- **The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted** - Man's free will can be used to resist the Holy Spirit
- **Falling from Grace** - If you chose to be saved, you can, at a later time, choose not to be saved

Clear as mud and I have issues with both sides. Both sides made a single decision at the start which is "Is salvation a God-only thing or is it up to the free-will choice of a person"

From there, all the other points are logically determined and are consistent with the base idea:

I once heard a Calvary Pastor say that all Calvinists are monsters because believe that God chooses who goes to heaven and who goes to hell right from the start and there's no bleed-over (a saved person cannot reject his salvation and a sinner cannot repent on his own and be saved.

I once heard a Calvinist say that the "God so loved the world" folks are monsters because God saved the whole world but then didn't ensure that everyone comes to Christ to receive the salvation He caused.

We needed to hear this because it will affect how you view the heart-burn verses. Let me repeat them:

(Hebrews 6:4 NKJV) For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) **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.

Let's put aside our preconceived notions of how salvation works and let's just see what these verses say:

For *it is impossible*: the word "impossible" is the same word used in verses such as

Matthew 19:25-26 NKJV When His disciples heard *it*, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" (26) But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, "**With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**"

Hebrews 6:17-18 NKJV Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, (18) 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*.

Hebrews 11:6 NKJV But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Then he describes the attributes of a believer:

1. Were once enlightened
2. Tasted the heavenly gift (which is salvation) Romans 6:23 NKJV For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
3. Are partakers of the Holy Spirit
4. Tasted the goodness of God's word
5. Tasted the powers of the age to come

Many debate whether or not these constitute true attributes of a believer.

Some say that "tasting" is not the same as "eating" but the word in the Greek can mean either but eating is implied. And it's the same word used in Hebrews 2:9 where it is said:

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”. Obviously, Jesus didn’t merely taste death...He experienced it in full.

But, for the sake of argument, let’s look at the attributes at face value. I think we could easily say that these describe a believer.

So, IF THEY FALL AWAY

The writer is not even suggesting that it’s impossible for them to fall away, he’s simply stating the possibility of it happening.

And, IF THEY FALL AWAY, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.

THAT IS, they are doomed.

You either already have thought of these issues and made up your mind or these things are confusing and have been for years. Let’s face it, the following types of questions come to mind:

1. Can I fall away? What does that actually mean? Is it some grave/deadly sin? Is it a season of backsliding? Is it turning my back on God and walking away?
2. If I was falling away, would Jesus rescue me?
3. How do I resolve the tension between verses like this and the one where Jesus said,
 - a. **John 10:28-29 NKJV** And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.
 - b. Is this verse even related to this?

While I hate raising these issues like this and then stopping, I must. I would like it if you took some time this week and gave thought to the issue: “Can a Christian lose his/her salvation” as it appears from these 3 verses.

And, I will also tell you where I stand and why!