

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 3, 2024— First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



SAVED, SURE AND SECURE
A Study on Assurance of Salvation and Eternal Security

No More Sacrifice
“Can the Sacrifice of Christ Run Out?”
Hebrews 10:26-31

We’ve been in a Bible study series now for several week called “Saved, Sure, and Secure,” looking at the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, and assurance of salvation. Granted, doctrinal studies can be a bit mind-numbing and monotonous for many people... even the title “the doctrine of eternal security of the believer” can sound a bit droning. And yet, many believers struggle with the issues surrounding this doctrine, and grapple with answers for their doubts, insecurities and seeking for peace and assurance of for their own soul...

Experiencing spiritual doubt can be lonely, but according to a new study from Barna Research Group, it’s much more common than you think. According to research and national polling surveys the vast majority of Christians have at some point experienced a time of spiritual doubt when they questioned what they believed about their religion or God and even their own salvation. But many make

it through stronger for having faced their honest questions, especially when they have a community to guide them through it. So how pervasive is doubt, and what is the most common response to it? Whom do people turn to along the way—and how many make it through with their faith intact?

THE PERVASIVENESS OF DOUBTING CHRISTIANS

- 65% of American adults who identify as Christians have doubted their salvation, questioned their salvation experience, even had doubts and questions about religion or God
- 26% of say they still experience spiritual doubts
- 40% say they have experienced doubts about their faith in the past but have worked through it.
- Only about one-third (35%) of professing Christians claim to have never experienced doubts about their faith at all.

**that means that actually those who never or have never doubted or questioned things in their spiritual life are the odd ones out*

And I found some of these statistics very interesting...

In this age of secular and pluralistic culture (anti-Christian bias)...

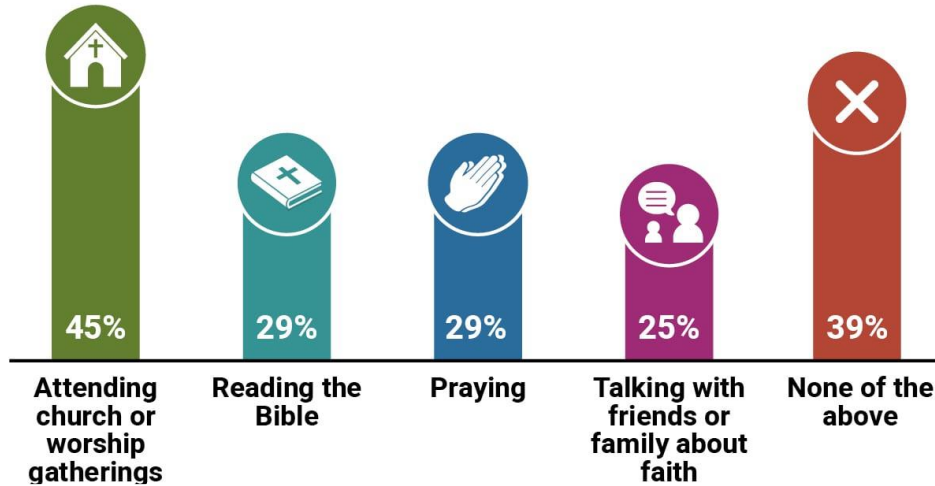
- 38% of millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996, 27-42 year olds) identifying as Christians experience about twice as much doubt about their salvation as any of the other generational groups
- 23% Gen-Xers (those born between 1965 and 1980, 43-58 year olds) identifying as Christians experience about doubt about their salvation
- 19% Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964, 59-77 year olds) identifying as Christians experience about doubt about their salvation
- 20% Elders (those born between 1928 and 1945, 78-95 year olds) identifying as Christians experience about doubt about their salvation
- Men are also more likely than women to actively experience doubt. 32% of men self-identifying as Christians experience doubts about their spiritual faith, compared to 20% of Christian women
- 37% of Christians who have been through college and encountered an array of ideas, philosophies and worldviews experience doubts about their faith.
- Interestingly only about 19% of Christians whose educational level is high school or less struggle with doubts about their faith... maybe because they haven't been as exposed to the very secular and humanistic ideals and philosophies, worldviews that seek to undermine Christian ideal and thought.

And I found this interesting in that Barna study... what are the most common response those doubts about faith and life in a believers life? In other words, what do those doubts about one's salvation and faith do and cause in a persons life? These may tell us why we need studies like this one and why being deeply grounded in the truth of Scripture is so key for our spiritual life...

THE RESPONSE TO DOUBT

When you experienced spiritual doubt did you STOP doing any of the following?
(% of Self-ID Christian or past Christian, experienced spiritual doubt)

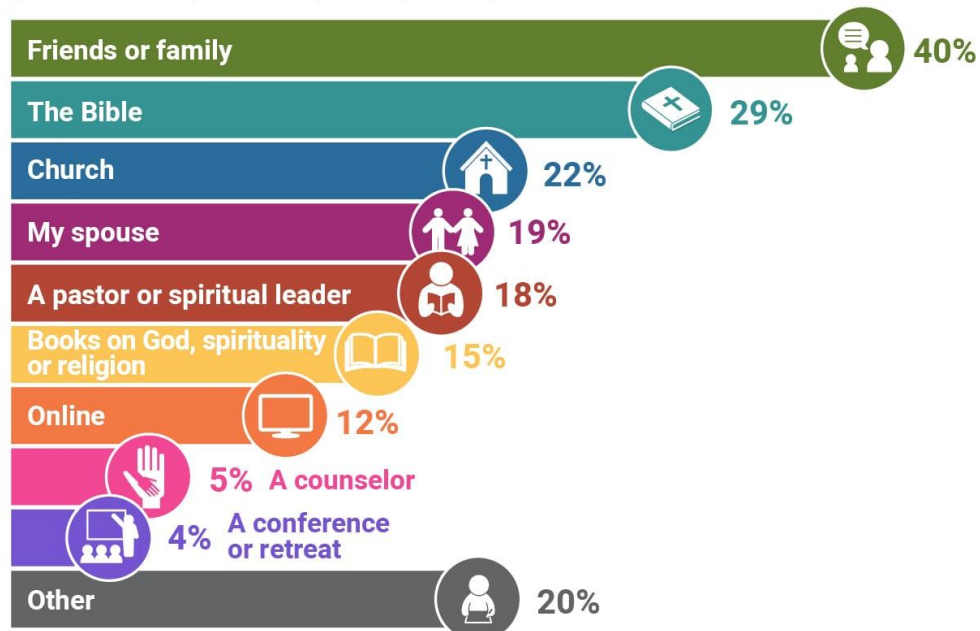
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THE RESPONSE TO DOUBT

When you experienced spiritual doubt, where did you go to find help or answers?
Please select all that apply.
(% of Self-ID Christian or past Christian, experienced spiritual doubt)

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Now at this point in our study we have been looking at three of the more controversial passages, and the ones most often used to promote or teach the idea that one can lose his or her salvation. Here are those three passages and the questions each one seems to be raising...

3 Key Controversial Passage for Study and the Questions They are Asking:

- (1) **Galatians 5:1-6** = **“Is it possible to fall from grace?”** a phrase used only here in scripture. Someone in this passage is falling from grace... again the phrase is used here. It is a biblical term/phrase. The question is “who” is falling from grace? **Remember this passage (especially vs.4) is not talking about believers at all, but unbelievers who are trying to be saved by works (religion, keeping the law, etc.), therefore they are falling further and further away from the means of salvation, Jesus Christ. This passage is not dealing with eternal security or losing ones salvation at all. They never had it to lose it. It’s about how to be saved... Jesus verses the Law (words)*
- (2) **Hebrews 6:1-6** – **“Is it possible to fall away from the faith?”** a phrase that is used only here in the Bible. This passage also raises the question, in my mind, **“If you could lose your salvation, would it be possible to get it back (be resaved)?”**. Clearly in this passage the possibility is raised. Someone here in this passage is “falling away,” but who? These are some issues that must be raised and answered biblically. **Remember this passage is the only place in scripture where the phrase “fall away” is used, and again it is (I believe) not talking about believers at all, but those who are actually apostates... they have come in among us but are not of us. In other words, these are those who look like believers, act like believer, give some semblance of believers, but they have never actually been saved. And when persecution and difficulty comes they dessert, abandon the faithful and prove they were never His. A difficulty of this passage is that if it is teaching (which it is not) that one could lose his or her salvation, it would also have to be teaching that you could never get it back.*
- (3) **Hebrews 10:26-29** – **“Is it possible for a Christian to sin so much that the sacrifice of Christ runs out and you lose your salvation?** This passage addresses the subject of one losing his or her salvation by raising the question, **“Is it possible that a Christian can sin so much that no more sacrifice remains to cover that sin and therefore he or she becomes re-lost?”** In other words the sacrifice of Christ runs out. If this passage is dealing with losing one’s salvation it does seem on the surface to indicate one can sin so much that the at some point the sacrifice runs out. **This is the passage we are going to be digging into this evening to see what it is actually teaching.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON HEBREWS

Before we get into our passage, let's remind ourselves of some of the background information for the book of Hebrews

Timeline for Hebrews



Key Background Information for Hebrews:

(1) **Authorship: Unknown** – The author of Hebrews is unknown. He knew Timothy (according to Hebrews 13:23). He was not an eyewitness of Jesus (see Hebrews 2:1&3). This has led many to speculate that Paul may have written the letter. Other candidates suggested for authorship are Peter, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla and Clement of Rome.

However, the most likely candidate is Paul. Remember he was martyred about A.D. 67 which would fit the timeline for Hebrews. He possibly would have written this just prior to his death. There is still much evidence that Paul wrote the letter. The most compelling comes from Scripture itself. Remember that Peter wrote to the Hebrews (that is, the Jews; see Galatians 2:7, 9 and 1 Peter 1:1). Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:15, *“Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.”* In that last verse, Peter is confirming that Paul had also written a letter to the Hebrews! The theology presented in Hebrews is consistent with Paul's. Paul was a proponent of salvation by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9), and that message is strongly communicated in this epistle (Hebrews 4:2, 6:12, 10:19-22, 10:37-39, and 11:1-40), indicating that either Paul wrote the epistle or the writer was trained by Paul. Although it is a small detail, this epistle makes mention of Timothy (Hebrews 13:23), and Paul is the only apostle known to have ever done that in any letter. Church tradition teaches that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, and until the 1800s that issue was closed. However, though a vast majority of Christians scholar still believe Paul wrote the book, there are some tempting reasons to think otherwise. This is all just speculative because the book itself bears no inscription just an inside trail to follow and it isn't really necessary to name an author, although it was likely Paul. We'll just say the author is “unknown.”

(2) **Date: A.D. 60-67** – The letter was probably written before A.D. 67. This is significant as mentioned already because it raises the possibility of

authorship by Paul, who was martyred just after this. This certainly was a active and difficult period of time in the world. Nero, a brutal and irrational dictator of the Roman Empire that held control of ancient world at the time was reeking havoc across the New Testament world from Rome to Jerusalem with ruthless persecution of both Jews and Christians. The Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and Paul was martyred in about A.D. 67. It fits with the purpose and message of Hebrews

- (3) **Recipients: There are three: (1) Jewish Christians, (2) Gentile Christians drawn to the Jewish religion, and (3) Unbelieving Jews and Gentiles attracted to Christianity but ultimately rejected Christ** – Early manuscripts bear the title “To the Hebrews,” which reflects the ancient assumption that it was perhaps primarily written to Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians who previously had been drawn to the Jewish religion. The author knew his readers and wanted to see them again (Hebrews 13:19). The late **Dr. Walter Martin**, founder of the Christian Research Institute and writer of the best-selling book *Kingdom of the Cults*, quipped in his usual tongue-in-cheek manner that **“The Book of Hebrews was written by a Hebrew to other Hebrews telling the Hebrews to stop acting like Hebrews.”** In truth, many of the early Jewish believers were slipping back into the rites and rituals of Judaism in order to escape the mounting persecution. This letter, then, is an exhortation for those persecuted believers to continue in the grace of Jesus Christ.

- ★ The Book of Hebrews actually addresses three separate groups: believers in Christ, unbelievers who had knowledge of and an intellectual acceptance of the facts of Christ, and unbelievers who were attracted to Christ, but who rejected Him ultimately. **It’s important to understand which group is being addressed in which passage. To fail to do so can cause us to draw conclusions inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.** The writer of Hebrews continually makes mention of the superiority of Christ in both His personage and in His ministering work. In the writings of the Old Testament, we understand the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism symbolically pointed to the coming of Messiah. In other words, the rites of Judaism were but shadows of things to come. Hebrews tells us that Christ Jesus is better than anything mere religion has to offer. All the pomp and circumstance of religion pales in comparison to the person, work, and ministry of Christ Jesus. It is the superiority of our Lord Jesus, then, that remains the theme of this eloquently written letter.

- (4) **Literary Type: A Circular Letter (of sorts) –**

- (5) **Purpose: Two primary purposes for Hebrews: (1) To encourage Christians to endure, and (2) To warn them not to abandon their faith in Christ. The**

message of Hebrews is that Jesus is better, Christianity is superior, and Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation. The author encourages faithfulness, love, and sound doctrine. He does so by carefully teaching the OT in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

(6) Theme: The superiority of Christ for salvation – Jesus Christ is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant practice. Christians must not forsake the great salvation that Jesus has brought about. They must hold on by faith to the true rest found in Christ, and they must encourage others in the church to do the same. The author shows the superiority of Christ and his new covenant over angels, Moses, the OT priesthood, and the OT sacrificial system. These are so inferior to Christ that it is futile to return to them—or to go anywhere else. Rather, believers should hold fast to their faith, because that faith is grounded in the most superior revelation. The background of such exhortations must have been the readers' need to continue enduring amid persecution and the trials of life (e.g., ch. 12). They appear to have grown less attentive to Christian instruction (5:11–14), and some apparently have ceased regular attendance at their meetings (10:25). The author reminds them of their past faithfulness and love despite persecution (10:32–34). Ultimately, the author's words of encouragement and exhortation are rooted in his teaching about Jesus Christ. The Son of God became the heavenly high priest, who offered himself as a sacrifice once for all. Christ obtained salvation for all who approach him in faith (6:1; 11:6; compare 4:2), and such faith perseveres until it receives the promised eternal reward (6:12; 10:22, 38–39).

WHEN NO MORE SACRIFICE REMAINS (Hebrews 10:26-31)

With that bit of background information for the book of Hebrews, let's take a look at our text. If you have your Bible there go to the 10th chapter of Hebrews. Our focus this evening is **Hebrews 10:26-31**, but I want to back up to get our passage in its context, so look with me at Hebrews 10, beginning in verse 19 (Hebrews 10:19-39). Look at it with me **(READ: Hebrews 10:19-39) *verses 26-31**

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and having a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one

another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. ³² But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: ³³ partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; ³⁴ for you had compassion on ^[i]me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. ³⁵ Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ³⁷ "For yet a little while, And He ^[i] who is coming will come and will not tarry. ³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." ³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." -Hebrews 11:19-39 (focus vv.26-31)

There is no doubt that this passage, especially Hebrews 10:26, is a challenging, difficult to interpret, and maybe even scary passage for many. Hebrews 10:26 is in one of the warning passages found within the book of Hebrews and specifically deals with the issue of sinning willfully.

As a matter of facts Hebrews is often outlined based on the five warning passages it contains...

5 Warning Passage Found in Hebrews: (this would be a worthy Bible study or even a sermon series sometime to explore these passages more deeply)

(1) **Hebrews 2:1-4** – ¹Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. ²For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who

heard Him, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

- (2) **Hebrews 4:12-13** – ¹² *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*"
- (3) **Hebrews 6:4-8** – ⁴ *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. ⁷ 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; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*"
- (4) **Hebrews 10:26-31** – ²⁶ *For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
- (5) **Hebrews 12:25-29** – ²⁵ *See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." ²⁷ Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire."*

Each of these "warning passages" speaks about one who apostatizes or turns from the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is key in understanding this passage. But many

take this passage as a frightening indication that salvation can be lost, that one who has been saved can lose his or her salvation due to sin, that a Christian who sins faces the possibility that that sin can or will disqualify him or her from faith. These may also lump in the following more difficult, misinterpreted and frightening verse...

Complicated Passages on Sin: *(often lumped in with verses like Hebrews 10:26)*
**it is difficult to talk about the warning of Hebrews 10:26 without at least alluding to these verses*

- (1) **The sin unto death = 1 John 5:16-17** – *“¹⁶If anyone, sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray that. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.”* – One of the most difficult verses in the New Testament to interpret. The best interpretation may be found by comparing this verse to what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–10 (see also 1 Corinthians 11:30). The “sin unto death” is willful, continuous, unrepentant sin. God has called His children to holiness (1 Peter 1:16), and God corrects them when they sin. We are not “punished” for our sin in the sense of losing salvation or being eternally separated from God, yet we are disciplined. “The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son” (Hebrews 12:6). First John 5:16-17 says there comes a point when God can no longer allow a believer to continue in unrepentant sin. When that point is reached, God may decide to take the life of the stubbornly sinful believer. The “death” is physical death. God at times purifies His church by removing those who deliberately disobey Him. The apostle John makes a distinction between the “sin that leads to death” and the “sin that does not lead to death.” Not all sin in the church is dealt with the same way because not all sin rises to the level of the “sin that leads to death.” **NOTE:** *“The sin unto death” is a believers sin, willful, continuous, unrepentant sin that rises to the level of God’s discipline where he calls the believer home.*
- (2) **The unpardonable sin = Matthew 12:31-32 & Mark 3:28-29** – *“³¹Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”* – Matthew 12:31-32 / *“²⁸Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; ²⁹but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation—”* – Mark 3:28-29 –

According to Jesus, the unpardonable or unforgivable sin is unique. It is the one iniquity that will never be forgiven (“never” is the meaning of “either in this age or in the age to come” in Matthew 12:32). This may sound like the sin for which *“no more sacrifice remains”* in Hebrews 10:26, but it is really quite distinct and yet some what related perhaps. *The unforgivable sin is blasphemy (“defiant irreverence”) of the Holy Spirit in the context of the Spirit’s work in the world through Christ.* In other words, the particular case of blasphemy seen in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 is unique. The guilty party, a group of Pharisees, had witnessed irrefutable evidence that Jesus was working miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, yet they claimed that He was possessed by the prince of demons, Beelzebul (Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:30). The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day committed the unpardonable sin by accusing Jesus Christ (in person, on earth) of being demon-possessed. They had no excuse for such an action. They were not speaking out of ignorance or misunderstanding. The Pharisees knew that Jesus was the Messiah sent by God to save Israel. They knew the prophecies were being fulfilled. They saw Jesus’ wonderful works, and they heard His clear presentation of truth. Yet they deliberately chose to deny the truth and slander the Holy Spirit. Standing before the Light of the World, bathed in His glory, they defiantly closed their eyes and became willfully blind. Jesus pronounced that sin to be unforgivable.

This is key: The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, specific as it was to the Pharisees’ situation, cannot be duplicated today. Jesus Christ is not on earth, and no one can personally see Jesus perform a miracle and then attribute that power to Satan instead of the Spirit. *The only unpardonable sin today is that of continued unbelief. There is no pardon for a person who dies in his rejection of Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work in the world, convicting the unsaved of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). If a person resists that conviction and remains unrepentant, then he is choosing hell over heaven. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), and the object of faith is Jesus (Acts 16:31). There is no forgiveness for someone who dies without faith in Christ. God has provided for our salvation in His Son (John 3:16). Forgiveness is found exclusively in Jesus (John 14:6). To reject the only Savior is to be left with no means of salvation; to reject the only pardon is, obviously, unpardonable.*

NOTE: Many people fear they have committed some sin that God cannot or will not forgive, and they feel there is no hope for them, no matter what they do. Satan would like nothing more than to keep people laboring under that misconception. God gives encouragement to the sinner who is convicted of his

sin: “Come near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8). “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Romans 5:20). And the testimony of Paul is proof positive that God can and will save anyone who comes to Him in faith (1 Timothy 1:12–17). If you are suffering under a load of guilt today, rest assured that you have not committed the unpardonable sin. God is waiting with open arms. Jesus’ promise is that “he is able to save completely those who come to God through him” (Hebrews 7:25). Our Lord will never fail. “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation” (Isaiah 12:2).

While the “unpardonable sin” in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 deals with “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” especially that of the religious leaders of Jesus day (and the unbelievers continued rejecting of the drawing/wooing of the Holy Spirit today), Hebrews 10:26 (and the surrounding passage) deals with “apostasy” Many believe Hebrews 10:26 is speaking of a continuation of sin, and it would seem, in the context of Hebrews, the author has in mind a specific sin; namely, turning away from Jesus in apostasy.

Again, the warning is this: “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God” (Hebrew 10:26–27).

Just before Hebrews 10:26, the author is admonishing the audience in a positive light. He is giving them commands of encouraging one another, holding fast to the Christian hope, and stimulating each other to good deeds. Hebrews 10:26–31 seems to be an interjected warning, as the author picks back up with positive assertions in verse 32.

Within this interjection, the author warns that willful sinning will result in terrifying judgment. Those who sin in this way are “enemies of God.” **Some have made the argument that this passage warns against a loss of salvation.** ★

WHEN NO MORE SACRIFICE REMAINS CASE STUDY

The following case study reflects a common problem many professed believers struggle with that may cause them to have doubts about their salvation, to question if they are truly saved, or to perhaps at least consider the possibility that they have lost their salvation. Listen as each of these case studies are read and consider the how you the questions and discussion that follows:

Case Study: Struggling With Sin

I believe that there was a time in my life that I asked Jesus Christ to come in and be my Lord and Savior. I have been a professing and practicing Christian for a lot of years. I would call myself a faithful church goer, active in my church, I read the Bible somewhat regularly, I do pray, and I think others would say by all outward appearances I am a Christian. But the problems is, others don't know what goes on inside of me, nor the struggles and questions... even the doubt that I sometimes have. I try so hard to live by God's Words, His principles and standards found in His Word, but I find myself failing and falling short at ever turn. I struggle with my thought life, with temptation, and giving into reoccurring sin in my life. I have prayed and prayed, sought God forgiveness, asked Him to change me, and yet I still struggle. I confess and repent only to find myself confessing and repenting again and again for the same sin(s) that seem to continually trip me up. I always hear the accusing voice in my mind, 'If you were really a Christian, you wouldn't still be struggling with this sin!' 'If you were truly saved you wouldn't sin like that!' I'm starting to believe that voice. Maybe I'm not truly saved at all. Or maybe I was at one time, but perhaps I've lost it. I don't know! I feel confused. If I was truly a Christian, wouldn't I have more victory over sin! I just don't know anymore! Can you help me?

Questions:

- (1) What would you say is at the heart this persons real problem or struggle that they are dealing with (on the deepest level)?**
- (2) How common do you think this struggle is with professing Christians? Why?**
- (3) What causes this issue to be such an pressing and real struggle for so many Christians?**
- (4) What effects might this persons struggle(s) create for their spiritual live and walk with the Lord?**
- (5) How would you help with this person's struggle? What words, scripture, encouragements would you speak to this person?**

Remember These: Some Reasons Why People Lack Assurance:

- 1. Doubting the reality of one's commitment to Christ –** Some doubt the reality of their commitment to Christ. Sometimes when a person cannot see visible or tangible evidence of their commitment to Christ and Christian ideals/practices/behavior it causes them to doubt and lack assurance. They may question, "Did I really mean it when I prayed?" Maybe my heart wasn't sincere enough?"

2. **Questioning the correctness of the salvation process** – Some question the correctness of the procedure they went through when they were saved... can't sinners prayer, didn't do it right the first time, wasn't at a church, wasn't with a minister, etc.
3. **Lack of Biblical teaching and grounding** – Often when one is struggling with doubts and a lack of assurance is may simply be a learning/grounding problem. A lack of Scriptural grounding and learning on the foundational and doctrinal understanding of “salvation” and particularly “the eternal security of the believer” Those who don't believe in eternal security will naturally lack assurance... how can they ever know. Those who attach works to salvation will naturally doubt. Why? Because a lack of grounding on the basic Biblical teaching on such things as salvation, and doctrines such as “the eternal security of the believer” cause us to just not “know” for sure. We've never studies it and been convinced of it.
4. **Unconfessed or unrepentant sin** – Sin in a believer-s life will always lead to doubt if it remains unconfessed and unrepented of. You can be sure that Satan, the enemy, will jump on our failings to point the finger and cause us to question the validity of our salvation.
5. **Lack of salvation or lostness** – For that one who is having doubts or lack of assurance of their salvation they should always check it out and be sure that they are indeed saved. Some have reason to doubt because they are lost. Sometimes it is not a lack of assurance or doubting your salvation, but the conviction of the Holy Spirit that they were never saved, and are in fact lost.

WHEN NO MORE SACRIFICE REMAINS – EXPLANATION OF THE PASSAGE (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Again, a part of the controversy surrounding our passage of Scripture in Hebrews 10:26-31 is that some have made the argument that this passage warns against a loss of salvation.

I contend that this cannot be the proper interpretation because other passages in the Bible straightforwardly show the inability for one to lose salvation (Romans 8:31–39; 1 Peter 1:3–5; John 6:47). Others have argued that this passage is meant to warn a false convert. That is likely the more viable interpretation.

Like Hebrews 6, this is a difficult warning passage. It is difficult not only because of the subject, but also because some of it is difficult to interpret. Before we work through the text, I want to give you the major options or views of interpretation for this passage, beginning with the least likely to the most likely...

4 Primary Interpretative Views of Hebrews 6:26-31:

- (1) **The Loss of Salvation View** - The least likely view is the Arminian view, that our text describes true believers who sin and lose their salvation. **The problem with this view is that they have to explain away the many passages that clearly teach that salvation is God's free gift, not based on anything in us, but only on the shed blood of Jesus Christ.** Even this very chapter (10:1-18) strongly makes the point that Christ's sacrifice once for all perfected us and took away all of our guilt. Some early church fathers, however, mistakenly inferred from this and other passages in Hebrews that there was no forgiveness for sins committed after baptism. This judgment was usually reserved for "big" sins, such as denial of the faith under persecution, murder, idolatry, and sexual sins. But, the problem was, baptized Christians did sometimes commit such sins and later repent. Could they not be forgiven? Some, following *The Shepherd of Hermas* (ca., A.D. 140), argued that forgiveness could be obtained once after baptism, but no more. Tertullian, who was more strict, condemned Hermas for this concession, which he saw as the thin edge of a dangerous wedge. Others who were more tolerant extended Hermas' concession indefinitely, but demanded penance. F. F. Bruce, who discusses this (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Eerdmans], pp. 260-262), points out the irony, that this strong warning in Hebrews could give rise to a system that was quite similar to the Jewish sacrificial system that Hebrews dismisses as forever superseded! **Any system that teaches the loss of salvation or penance to restore it is contrary to God's free grace in Christ.**
- (2) **The Renouncing the Faith View** - A second view is that the author is talking about genuine believers who renounce the faith, but the punishment he describes is not hell, but some awful temporal judgment (Zane Hodges, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. by John Walvoord & Roy Zuck [Victor Books], 2:805). This view is in line with Mr. Hodges' non-lordship salvation view, that a person can believe in Christ, subsequently deny and strongly oppose the faith, and yet he will be saved, although he will lose his rewards (1 Cor. 3:15). Apart from the many problems with non-lordship salvation, in our text the judgment is described as "the fury of a fire that will consume the adversaries" (10:27). Limiting this to temporal judgment, no matter how severe, does not do justice to the severity of the warnings.
- (3) **The Hypothetical Loss of Salvation View** - A third view is that the author is warning true believers, who possibly lose their salvation, about what would happen to them if they did apostatize (which true believers cannot do). So, it is

a hypothetical warning used to frighten believers away from leaving the faith (Homer Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Baker], pp. 206-207). But, as I argued when we studied Hebrews 6, a hypothetical warning is really pointless. If these people were truly regenerate, how could God hypothetically cast them into hell if they hypothetically apostatized, none of which is possible? This entire line of thinking makes no sense to me.

- (4) **The Apostate to Salvation View** - The correct explanation, as I understand it, is that the passage is warning those who have made a profession of faith and have associated themselves with the church, of the danger of God's eternal judgment if they turn back to Judaism. These people outwardly seem to be regenerate, but they are not truly so. To abandon Christ's sacrifice and to return to Judaism would show that they had never truly trusted Christ in the first place. The main difficulty for this view is the phrase "by which he was sanctified" (10:29). There are several ways that those who take this view explain the phrase. John Owen (*An Exposition of Hebrews* [The National Foundation for Christian Education], 4:545) argues that it does not refer to the apostate, but to Christ Himself, "who was sanctified and dedicated unto God to be an eternal high priest, by the blood of the covenant which he offered unto God...." This is possible grammatically, although it seems to force into the context something that is specifically taught in John 17:19, but only alluded to in Hebrews (2:10; 5:7, 9; 9:11, 12).

WHY HEBREWS 10:26 IS ABOUT APOSTASY AND NOT LOSING ONE'S SALVATION?

Some Important Summary Conclusions Concerning Hebrews 10:26-31:

- (1) **If this passage is about losing one's salvation then salvation must be based on our works** - *"²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."* -Hebrews 10:26 (NKJV) Notice the works being spoken of in verse 26. "We" must keep ourselves from willfully sinning and we must obtain knowledge. This implies works that we do... keep ourselves from sinning, and work at gaining knowledge. We are not saved by what we know or by our moral behavior. We are saved only by the work of Christ on the cross.
- (2) **If this passage is about apostasy it can't be about loss of salvation** – You can't lose what you never had. An apostate has never been truly saved, therefore, they can't lost what they never had. Although he or she may look like it a believer in many ways, they are false believers, and have never truly been saved. Dr. John MacArthur says, "Apostates are those who move toward Christ,

hear and understand His gospel, and are maybe even on the verge of saving belief, but then rebel and turn away.” He also adds that “This warning (in Hebrews 10:26) against apostasy one of the most serious warnings in all of Scripture.” An apostate is someone who abandons his religious faith. It is clear from the Bible that apostates are people who made *professions* of faith in Jesus Christ but never genuinely received Him as Savior and Lord of their life. They were pretend believers. Those who turn away from Christ never really trusted Him to begin with, as 1 John 2:19 says, “*They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*” Those who apostatize are simply demonstrating that they are not true believers, and they never were.

(3) If this passage is about losing one’s salvation is it raises the very tragic outcome that salvation can’t be reclaimed (no more sacrifice remains) – If this passage is teaching that one could lose his or her salvation then, like Hebrews 6, it must also be teaching by context that salvation can never be reclaimed. One lost always lost! The Bible teaches that everyone who is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit is saved forever. We receive the gift of eternal life (John 10:28), not temporary life. Someone who is born again (John 3:3) cannot be “unborn.” After being adopted into God’s family (Romans 8:15), we will not be kicked out. When God starts a work, He finishes it (Philippians 1:6). So, the child of God—the believer in Jesus Christ—is eternally secure in his salvation.

“²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” -Hebrews 10:26 (NKJV)

“²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace.”

Hebrews 10:26-29 warns against the sin of apostasy...

What is apostasy?

(1) Apostasy is an intentional falling away or defection.

- (2) Apostates are those who move toward Christ, right up to the edge of saving belief
- (3) Apostates are those who hear and understand the Gospel, and are on the verge of saving faith, but then reject what they have learned and turn away.
- (4) These are people who are perhaps even aware of their sin and even make a profession of faith.
- (5) But rather than going on to spiritual maturity, their interest in Christ begins to diminish, the things of the world have more attraction to them rather than less, and eventually they lose all desire for the things of God and they turn away.
- (6) Apostate are illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the soils, in the second and third soils of Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.
- (7) These are those who “receive with joy” the things of the Lord, but who are drawn away by the cares of the world or turned off by difficulties they encounter because of Christ

Two terms that often get linked together and sometimes confused are the terms “backsliding” or “backslider” and the term(s) “apostasy” or “apostate.” These two are very distinct terms that mean totally different things. A clear understanding of the difference actually help to clarify the meaning of both.

What is the difference between “backsliding” and “apostasy”?

- (1) One of the terms often used of believers who have fallen away from Christ is **backslider** -
- (2) Though the word backslider is not found in the **New Testament**, the concept is taught in scripture - Note that the word is found in the Old Testament in Hosea 11:7, “*And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none all would exalt Him.*” Jeremiah 3:22, “*Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding...*”, Hosea 14:4, “*I will heal their backsliding, I love them freely: for mine anger is turned away.*”
- (3) A backslider is a **Christian**, who has fallen into sin and out of **fellowship with God** – Usually because of sin, or rebellion again God (disobedience) It is important to note that the backslider is still a Christian
- (4) A backslider is not a believer who has **lost his salvation** - Salvation is a free gift from God and cannot be lost once the gift has been received
- (5) A **Biblical example of the condition is the prodigal son in Luke 15** – The prodigal son has fallen out of fellowship with God and gone to the world to find fulfillment. Any pleasures enjoyed are only temporary. When a person

backslides or falls away from the Lord they will lose their fellowship with God, not their salvation

- (6) **The New Testament provides us with an account of the backsliding of some members of the Corinthian church -** Their sins were of such a nature that God sent sickness and death to some of them. They were backslidden and had died while in that state. And yet they went to heaven... **1 Corinthians 11:30-32**, *“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”*
- (7) **The word apostasy means falling away -**
- (8) **The Bible uses the term apostate to describe one who has turned their back on Christ and the gospel -**
- (9) **It is not the same as backsliding -**
- (10) **A backslider is a believer who falls into sin and out of fellowship with God, an apostate was never a true believer -**
- (11) **Though an apostate may sound like a believer for a time, they eventually will depart from other believers -** The Apostle John wrote in **1 John 2:18-19**, *“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that this is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”*
- (12) **The apostate denies the fundamentals of the faith –** Again, the apostate does not lose their salvation, they were never saved in the first place
- (13) **A Biblical example of an apostate is Judas Iscariot -** Although he was one of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples he was never a true believer. This was demonstrated by his betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver
- (14) **An apostate is not the same as a backslider -** An apostate is one who has departed from the faith. A backslider will eventually return to the Lord because he cannot live happily in sin.
- (15) **We are told to have no dealings with apostates –** **2 John 9-11** says, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. The one who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive them into your house.”*

Remember, though a person may profess faith in Christ their actions will determine if they truly know Him. Unbelievers who mingle with Christians for a time will eventually be found out.

“Willful sinning” in this passage carries the idea of consciously and deliberately rejecting Christ. To know God’s way, to hear it preached, to study it, to count oneself among the faithful, and then to turn away is to become apostate.

CONCLUSION

These three fundamental truths will keep a believer grounded in Scripture and the truth concerning what God’s Word says/teaches about salvation and it’s enduring nature, namely that a believer once saved, is eternally secure and can’t be lost. These fundamental truths may be applied as principles of interpretation when delving into problem passages like Galatians 5, Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10...

3 Fundamental Truths Concerning Salvation:

- (1) **Salvation is unconditional in nature and not based on anything we do to save ourselves -**
- (2) **Our salvation is not maintained or kept in tact by us, but by the enduring and final redemption of Jesus on the cross -**
- (3) **Salvation is never based on works, the law, or religious duty, but solely on God’s work through Christ on the cross -**

3 Claims That Have To Be Made For a Believer to Lose Salvation:

1. **Salvation has to be conditional** – That is based on something that we do or have done. **Rebuttal:** Scripture teaches that salvation is “**unconditional**” in nature and indeed doesn’t depend on anything that we do or have done.
 - (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”*
 - (2) **John 3:16** - *“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*
 - (3) **Romans 6:23** - *“²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
2. **Man has to maintain salvation** - Since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God’s standards. If we fall to match up at any point we lose our salvation **Rebuttal:** **Man could never match-up to God’s standard** according to Scripture. Man could never be good enough to match up to God’s standard.

- (1) **Isaiah 64:6** – *“⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*
- (2) **Romans 3:10, 23** – *“¹⁰ As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’ ... ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
- (3) **Matthew 7:21-23** - *²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

3. Salvation has to be based on a works - The teaching that one can fall from grace must always insist that salvation should be seen from a works-righteousness perspective. **Rebuttal: Scripture clearly teaches that we are “not” saved by works.** This claim would be in direct violation of Scripture.

- (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”*
- (2) **Titus 3:5-7** – *“⁵ He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*