

## IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW THEM

**Request:** Would you please do a study on Heb.6:4-6? This passage is used by so many to teach Christians can lose their salvation. I would like to know if there is anything in the Greek language that could help us in explaining this passage to others?

Heb.6:4-6 has long been a battleground of theological controversy between grace and works salvation. The early church faced this same theological controversy in Acts 15. The doctrinal conclusion from this famous church conference is stated in Acts 15:11 – **“We believe that we (Jews) are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way as they (Gentiles) also are.”**

Unfortunately, the opponents of grace salvation and eternal life (works salvation) refused to accept this doctrinal ruling of the early church. Today there are three popular theological positions in the Christian church on salvation.

- One teaches gospel plus work like circumcision and water baptism in order to be saved (Acts 15:5-11; Gal.5:1-8; Eph.2:8-9).
- A second teaches gospel and grace salvation but the believer can lose salvation by committing certain sins (Gal.5:16-25; 1 Cor.5; 1 John 5:16; John 10:28).
- A third teaches that if a person professes a gospel grace salvation but then lives in sin that proves that he has never been saved (Matt.7:15-20; Heb.12:5-11).

**This lesson will study the Greek of Heb.6: 4-6 “It was impossible to renew them again to repentance.”**

### **1. The Book of Hebrews gives six warning to Christians about the danger of apostate reversion (believer back sliding; (Prov.14: 14).**

Our lesson comes from the sixth warning (Heb. 5:11-6:12).

It is obvious that the intention of the writer was to get these Jewish believer beyond milk doctrines (spiritual immaturity) to meat doctrines (spiritual maturity) in the CWL (Heb.5:11-14; 6:1-2).

He referred to milk doctrines as “elementary (arche) teachings (logos).” These milk doctrines are the foundational doctrines (themelios) of grace salvation (1 Pet.2: 2-5). These result in assurance of eternal life of grace salvation (John 3:16, 36; 10:28-30; Rom.5:21; 6:23; 1 John 5:11-13).

### **2. The Greek language will shed light on Heb.6:4-6. The hermeneutic law of interpretation is important to this passage.**

For example there is a hermeneutic law of interpretation that says that the use of a word in context is determined by its first use. An example in our passage is the Greek word metanoia (change mind) translated repentance. It is listed first in Heb. 6:1 as one of the six elementary teachings (Heb. 6:1-2). When it is used again in Heb. 6:6, we understand that it referring to all six elementary teachings or milk doctrines of Christ. In fact, it doesn’t even require posting “repentance from dead works.” (Heb. 6:1)

“And then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to **repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.” (Heb. 6:6)

**3. Greek syntax is another important factor to this passage. Syntax is the way words are put together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. We will look at five of them.**

**First**, Heb.6: 4-6 is one Greek sentence with 8 participles working off one main verb.

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|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| • Enlightened | (photizo)        | (a.p.ptc aplm) |
| • Tasted      | (geuomai)        | (a.m.ptc aplm) |
| • Made        | (ginomai)        | (a.p.ptc aplm) |
| • Tasted      | (geuomai)        | (a.m.ptc aplm) |
| • Come        |                  | (p.a.ptc gsm)  |
| • Fallen away | (parapipto)      | (a.a.ptc aplm) |
| • Crucify     | (anastauroo)     | (p.a.ptc aplm) |
| • Shame       | (paradeigmatizo) | (p.a.ptc aplm) |

**Second**, the main verb is translated as a phrase, “it is impossible (adunatos) to renew (anastauroo) (p.a.infin) [to restore or to renovate] them again to repentance.” (Heb. 6:6) It establishes what these Jewish believers were practicing (S/C) that made it impossible to renew them to spiritual growth maturity (meat doctrines).

**Third**, the word impossible is the first Greek word in the sentence of Heb.6: 4-6 and establishes what is impossible and why it is impossible. The word impossible (adunatos) also establishes a Greek parenthesis of the 5 aorist ptc. “It is impossible [enlightened, tasted, made, tasted, and fallen away] to renew them.” The parenthesis identifies “them” as apostate reversionistic believers. The first 4 aorist ptc are positive and emphasize blessings of grace salvation (enlightened, tasted, made, and tasted) and the last one is negative and emphasizes lost of the joy of grace salvation because of apostate reversionism (fallen away). This is 1 of 4 “impossibilities” in book of Hebrews (Heb. 6:6, 6:18, 10:4, and 11:6).

**Fourth**, the action of the 2 present.ptcs occurs at the same time as the main verb (“it is impossible to renew them again to repentance”). The 2 present ptcs explain why it is impossible to renew them to spiritual growth maturity so long as they are engaged in apostate reversionism (crucify and shame Him in world).

**Fifth**, the phrase, “while they crucify **to themselves (dplm)** the Son of God,” is dative of disadvantage. Apostate reversionism is dative of disadvantage because it hinders spiritual growth momentum. It causes believers to become “dull of hearing” and requires a need “for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God,” and produces a “need of milk and not solid food,” and reverts the believer to “babe” status (Heb. 5:11-13).

**By returning to Jewish temple and Old Covenant shadow Christology, these Jewish believers were engaging in apostate reversionism. They were saying in effect that the historical redemptive work of Jesus Christ was not efficacious. Modern day work salvation is saying the same thing (Acts 15:1, 5, and 24; Gal.5: 1-6).**

“And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” (Acts 15:1)