

Hebrews 6:4-9

Note: The footnotes contain information that supports and helps to explain things in the main text.

When I study any Bible passage, I always begin with the foundational premise that the Bible does not contain teachings that contradict other teachings within itself. When I come across a passage that seems to contradict teachings in other Bible passages, I always begin by assuming that I must not be understanding the passage perfectly. Because I have some knowledge of Greek and its grammar rules, I also do some analysis of the passage in Greek to see if there may be clues to help me gain a more complete understanding.

Hebrews 6:4-9 has been debated by theologians for hundreds of years because it **seems** to say things that contradict other teachings in the New Testament. Here is Hebrew 6:4-6 as it is rendered in the NKJV:

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. ⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

There are two aspects of this passage that seem to contradict teachings in other portions of the New Testament:

- a)** Verses 4-6 seem to be saying that a person who was born again at some point in his past can fall away and perish forever.
- b)** Verses 4-6 seem to be saying that if a person “falls away,” it is impossible for him to be restored. Therefore, anyone who “falls away” is going to spend eternity in hell. It is unavoidable.

(I will address both of these but in reverse order. In other words, I will start with issue **b** first.)

Perhaps you have wondered about this passage and looked for answers in various commentaries. If you have done so, I would venture to say that none of them fully clarified this passage to your satisfaction. This has been my experience. Before providing my understanding of this passage, let me recount the more common interpretations of verse 6 found in commentaries.

*if **they**¹ 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.*

Most commentaries seem to start with the premise that “to renew them again to repentance,” depicts a one-time event (which is impossible according to verse 4). Therefore, if any Christian could or does “fall away,” his destiny is sealed. (Hell is unavoidable.) Due to the apparent severity and finality of this warning, most commentators offer one of the following explanations:

Commentator explanation A: Some have suggested that this is a hypothetical scenario that cannot happen to true Christians, suggesting that the Hebrews 6:4-6 passage is a straw man argument. They point to verse 9 which says, “Beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” The famous commentator, F. F. Bruce, arguing against this interpretation, notes that the N.T. writers, including the author of Hebrews, “are not given to the setting up of men of **straw**.”²

¹ Note that the author does not mention whether these people described in 6:4-6 are Jews, Gentiles or combination of both. Therefore, their ethnic background of those described in 4-6 is not relevant to this passage.

² F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI 1964, p. 124.

Commentator explanation B: The most common explanation I have found insists the severity and finality of the warning is real. But then they qualify what is meant by the expression “fall away” and insist that this sin warrants the severity and finality of the judgment (that those who commit it are forever damned). These commentators claim that it is a sin that has no **remedy**,³ like the unpardonable sin spoken about in the gospels (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit). I suspect that such commentators are fully aware that the Greek word for “fall away” (παραπεσόντας) is not found in any form anywhere else in the entire New Testament. Yet, many of them come across as if they know for certain the full extent of its meaning. From the **Septuagint**⁴ and extrabiblical literature, we know that the translation “fall away” is reliable. But to assert that this Greek word means more than the basic idea “fall away” is going out on a limb, to say the least.

I disagree with both of the explanations (A and B) shown above. First, I agree with F.F. Bruce that the N.T. writers were not given to making straw man arguments. Their warnings were real. But I have difficulty agreeing with F.F. Bruce that this expression in the Greek for “fall away,” is a sin that once it is committed, seals the fate of a person in hell. I know people that at one time were fervent followers of Christ and have since renounced Him. If I accept the explanation of commentators like F.F. Bruce and John MacArthur, I might as well cross them off my prayer list and assume that their fate in hell is sealed. But I have no plans to stop praying for the friends who have turned away from following Jesus.

Without providing convincing evidence, many commentators insist that the expression “fallen away” is a sin for which there is no remedy. But what was the nature of Peter’s sin when he willfully and blatantly denied Jesus on multiple **occasions**.⁵ If that does not qualify as “falling away,” what does? Yet, Peter was not forever damned. Rather, he later returned and began to follow Jesus again.

I believe that **Commentator Explanation B** (above) is not convincing mainly for two reasons. First, it is based on a definition of the expression “fall away” that I don’t think can be proven and which seems to contradict the testimony about Peter. Second, without even examining the verbal expression, “to renew” (νακαλινδίζειν), Explanation B asserts that, “*to renew them again to repentance*” is speaking about a one-time event. I believe that, perhaps due to longstanding tradition (rather than N.T. testimony), most English-speaking commentators, without examining this expression (“to renew”), are content to merely assume that this phrase “*to renew them again to repentance*” is speaking about a one-time event.

As I said already, most commentators start with the premise that the phrase “*to renew them again to repentance*,” depicts a one-time event (which is impossible according to verse 4). Therefore, according to these commentators, if any Christian could or does “fall away,” his destiny is sealed. (Hell is unavoidable.) I will now provide N.T. evidence to show that this assumption is unwarranted. I believe that any interpretation which starts with a faulty understanding of this expression (*to renew them again to repentance*) will unavoidably lead to an incorrect interpretation of **Hebrews 6:4-6**.⁶

³ One such commentator, F.F. Bruce says concerning this sin, “The writer of Hebrews himself distinguishes (as did the Old Testament law) between inadvertent sin and willful sin, and the context shows plainly that the willful sin which he has in mind is deliberate apostasy. People who commit this sin, the author of Hebrews says, cannot be brought back to repentance; by renouncing Christ, refusing His claim to be the Son of God, had Him crucified and exposed to public shame.” **F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI 1964, p. 124.**

⁴ The Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew O.T. into Greek produced about 200 years before Jesus was born. The Greek word for “fall away” in Hebrews 6:6 is found in some form in Ezekiel 14:13, 18:24 and 20:27.

⁵ “The Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” ³³ But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” ³⁴ Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me” (Luke 22:31-34).

⁶ I believe that most English-speaking commentators have a myopic view of soteriology (the study of salvation) that is shaped by longstanding traditions of men rather than careful study of the New Testament itself. As a result, they never even consider the possibility that their assumption (*to renew them again to repentance* depicts a one-time event) is invalid, even though they have not studied it carefully. For hundreds of years, English-speaking pastors and evangelists have tended to think of salvation mainly as something that occurs at conversion. So, when an unbeliever repents, he is “saved.” I suspect that because this idea dominates their understanding of soteriology, it affects their understanding of the expression, “*to renew them again to repentance*” in Hebrews 6:4-6. This one-time aspect associated with conversion is simply brought over and applied to this expression in Hebrews 6:4-6.

I believe that Greek syntax as well, as the context of Hebrews 6:4-6 and other N.T. passages, warrant a different interpretation of the expression “to renew them again to repentance” which I will now set forth. Before doing so, let me first provide what I believe may be a more accurate translation of the passage:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **and have fallen away**,⁷ **to be renewing**⁸ [them] **again** [repeatedly]⁹ unto repentance – they **are** [currently] **crucifying**¹⁰ again for themselves the Son of God, and **are** [currently] **putting**³ Him to an open shame. [Words in brackets are added by me to convey what the author may have intended.]*

It might help some if the word order is modified slightly as follows:

*For those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **and have fallen away**, it is impossible **to be renewing** [them] **again** [repeatedly] unto repentance, since **they are** [currently] **crucifying** again for themselves the Son of God, and **are** [currently] **putting** Him to an open shame.*

I believe that the expression, “to renew them again to repentance,” might be more accurately translated “**to be renewing** [them] **again** [repeatedly] unto repentance.” I believe this mainly for two reasons. First, the author purposely chose to use a present tense form of this infinitive that seems to tie in with the two present tense participles that occur later in the verse (crucifying Christ and putting Him to public shame). Second, and more importantly, the only other New Testament passages that use a form of this Greek word, depict this renewing as something that normally occurs continually in the

⁷ Most versions say “⁶ if they fall away” but this is likely not accurate. I will quote Wallace concerning the Greek grammar:

παραπεσόντας is often construed as conditional (a tradition found in the KJV and repeated in most modern translations and by many commentators). But this is unwarranted. The construction of vv4-6 approximates a Grandville Sharp plural construction (the only difference being that with the second participle in the construction, γευσσάμενους in verse 4, the conjunction τε is used instead of καὶ : τοὺς φωτισθέντας γευσσάμενους τε... καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας...καὶ...γευσσάμενους...καὶ παραπεσόντας. If this participle should be taken adverbially, then should we not take the preceding two or three participles the same way? The inconsistency has little basis. Instead, παραπεσόντας should be taken as adjectival, thus making further and essential qualification of the entire group. A better translation, then is, “It is impossible to restore to repentance those who have once been enlightened...and have fallen away.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics, An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 1996 p. 633 Zondervan

⁸ This is a present tense infinitive and the participles for **crucifying** and **putting** that follow are also present tense. Therefore, the author may have been purposely signifying a temporal idea since both the infinitive and the participles are present tense. A note in the American Revised Version suggests something of this nature because of the present tense participles. Like my translation, they suggest: “*they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt.*”

⁹ Most English-speaking Christians mainly think of **repent** and **renew** as things that occur mainly at conversion. The Greek word for **again** is an adverb. (Adverbs modify verbs.) When used with some present tense verbs that denote on-going action, this word for **again**, combined with the present tense verb it modifies, can convey ongoing, repeating action. For example, in Galatians 4:19 (*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you*), this same adverb for “again” modifies the present tense verb for laboring in birth pains. So, **again, right now and continually** until Christ is formed in them, Paul is laboring in birth pains for them. I suggest that similarly, Heb. 6:6, with its present tense infinitive, is speaking about continuous, repeated renewing that is impossible to be happening **again** while they are crucifying Jesus and putting Him to open shame.

¹⁰ Most versions say something like “*they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.*” These verb forms are present tense. Therefore, I translated them with “ing” to highlight the present tense aspect. Since these two verb forms, and the infinitive “to renew” (them back) are all present tense, the author may have been trying to communicate something about the current condition of the people he mentioned in verses 4-6. If so, my understanding of the passage presented in this article may be what the author intended.

genuine follower of Jesus. The only other two times this verb is used, an ongoing action is occurring rather than a one-time event.

“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed [present tense] day by day” (II Cor 4:16).

“and have put on the new self who is being renewed [present tense] to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Col 3:10).

Since the above verses are the only other two N.T. passages in which this verb form for “renew” is found, it would be negligent to ignore their significance as most Hebrews 6:6 commentators seem to do. Rather than assume a different meaning (which most commentaries on Hebrews 6:6 seem to do), we should conclude that “to renew” in Hebrews 6:6 is speaking about this sanctification process mentioned in II Cor. 4:16 and Col. 3:10. The commentaries I have read don’t even bring this up. Nor do they offer any explanation as to what “renew” means in Hebrews 6. They seem to imply that it is something akin to being born again (which cannot happen twice). (The author of Hebrews surely did not mean “born again,” otherwise, he would have used the Greek word that specifies “born again” which is ἀναγεννάω.)

Based upon the testimony of II Cor. 4:16 and Col. 3:10 that both utilize present tense verbs, and the fact that the verb form in Hebrews 6:6 is also present tense, we have strong reason to believe that the author of Hebrews was speaking about the same, ongoing sanctification process of being renewed.

To further substantiate this ongoing nature of what I believe the author meant, I must also address the word *repentance* because most English-speaking Christians think of repentance mainly as a one-time event. They tend to associate it with something that takes place at conversion. But the ongoing process of sanctification involves the changing of how Christians think, feel and act. They are being transformed over time into the image of Jesus. This transforming is not completed at conversion. That is merely the beginning. As the process continues, the Christian “grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

I would like to point out that, in the gospels, whenever Jesus commanded people to repent, He was commanding an ongoing action rather than a one-time occurrence. The gospels specified the imperative (command) in present tense rather than aorist (which does not specify a continuation aspect). Linguistic experts have established that when authors used imperative verbs in the present tense (when they could have used aorist tense), **they were commanding ongoing action.**¹¹

In addition to the command of Jesus for ongoing repentance, we have an example of this occurring in the Christians living in Corinth.

For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (II Corinthians 7:8-10).

At this point, it may be good to step back and consider why God demands all people (including Christians) to repent continually. It is in the nature of human beings to live their lives autonomously, as if they are the ruler instead of God. Psalm 2 depicts this aspect of natural man very well. It would be unrighteous for God to allow rebels to rule their lives. Righteousness demands that people surrender the reigns of their lives over to God and live under His authority. This is why Paul beseeched the Roman believers to surrender their lives to God:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

¹¹ One of the most recognized Greek experts on this subject is K. L. McKay: You can read his writings on this subject in his article, ***Aspect in Imperatival Constructions in New Testament Greek***, KcKay, K. L., Novum Testamentum, Vol. 27, Fasc. 3 (July 1985), pp 201-226, published by Brill.

Only when a person is surrendered in this way will the process of sanctification **continue**.¹² As it does, repentance continues to occur repeatedly, producing real changes in the Christian's thoughts, feelings and desires (will). This causes a Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. If repentance is not continuing, it suggests that the growth process has come to a halt.

Soon, I will show how my understanding of Hebrews 6:4-6 fits perfectly with the overall message of Hebrews. But before I do, let me address the other apparent contradiction in the passage mentioned at the beginning of this article.

- a) Verses 4-6 seem to be saying that a person who was born again at some point in his past can fall away and perish forever.

Admittedly, none of the translations, (including mine), solve problems that might be apparent for some people. For example, some people are so fixated on doctrines such as "predestination" and "eternal security," they assume that the author is talking about a hypothetical situation that would never actually occur. They insist that anyone *"who was once enlightened, and has tasted the heavenly gift, and has become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and has tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,"* cannot fall away. Because of verses like Romans 8:30, I believe that all of the elect will eventually be glorified. Therefore, I conclude that even those who are not part of the elect can be described as *"those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come."* Therefore, even people that can be described as *"those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,"* can "fall away." For me to say otherwise would make me unfaithful to the Scriptures. Anyone suggesting that the author was describing a hypothetical situation that cannot actually occur is making this passage stand on its head. Instead of coming up with creative solutions that will help us feel more comfortable, I believe it is safest to simply let the Scriptures stand on their own.

If we take these words at face value, they will more likely impact us the way the author intended. When we do, we will not falsely assume as so many Christians do these days, that we cannot fall away. Serious, Bible-believing Christians consider themselves to be one of *"those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come."* And many of them assume that it is impossible for them to fall away. But Hebrews 6:6 says that some of *"those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,"* have fallen away. If a person falsely assumes that he cannot fall away, Hebrews 6:4-6 will not cause him concern. He will not remain on high alert and therefore, be vulnerable to a great fall some day. The entire book of Hebrews will only impact him intellectually. From all the warnings provided by the author, we know that he wanted his readers to be impacted not just in their minds, but also in their emotions and in their will. My advice is to interpret Hebrews 6 as it reads rather than negate its force by suggesting the author was merely stating a hypothetical case that cannot actually occur.

Tying it all together.

Compared to the conventional views on Hebrews 6:6, I am convinced that my understanding of it harmonizes better with the overall message of Hebrews. Consider some important points about the people to whom it is addressed. The recipients of the epistle to the Hebrews had progressed much further than most Christians living in 21st century U.S.A. Their faith had remained in spite of severe persecution that included the confiscation of their property. But now, they faced real threat of harm and even death if they continued to follow Jesus. The author, sensing potential wavering on their part, wrote to teach, warn and encourage his readers so that they would not turn away from faith in Jesus.

Using positive arguments, he extolled the majesty of Jesus by contrasting Him with Levitical priests, animal sacrifices and even angels. Throughout the book, he also warns that unless they continue to follow Jesus, they will not inherit the promised salvation that will take place when Jesus comes back. (See Hebrews 9:28.) This salvation is promised only to those who eagerly and patiently wait for Him. If anyone draws back, God's soul has no pleasure in him. (See Hebrews 10:38.) He admonished them that they must "give the more earnest heed lest they drift away." (Hebrews 2:1.) He taught that they are of Jesus' house, but only **IF** they hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. (See

¹² "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Hebrews 3:6.) He taught that they are partakers of Christ **IF** they hold the beginning of their confidence to the end. (See Hebrews 3:14.) So, he warned them lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (See Hebrews 3:13.) Though their spiritual lives were much more vibrant than typical Christians living in 21st century U.S.A., he warned them that if they turn away, they should expect judgment and fiery indignation from God and reminded them that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (See Hebrews 10:26-31.)

Because they have been neglecting the practice of doing the word, they have become dull of hearing and their senses are therefore no longer sharp at discerning both good and evil. (5:11-14) He then admonishes them to go on to maturity. (6:1) From Paul's writings, we know what Christians must do in order to go on to maturity. The maturing of believers is a continual process of renewal that involves truth and trials that grow our dependence/trust in that truth.

*"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being **renewed** [present tense] day by day" (II Cor 4:16).*

*"and have put on the new self who is being **renewed** [present tense] to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10).*

To further spur them toward maturity, the author of Hebrews instills fear in them by talking about those who have turned away from the faith. (See 6:4-8.) Such people are in an extremely perilous situation, "near to being cursed." (See 6:8.) But based upon 6:9, he says that he is confident that his readers are not in such a perilous situation at this moment. But they must watch out lest they find themselves one day in that situation.

These Christians had become dull of hearing. (5:11) Because they have been neglecting the practice of doing the word, their senses are therefore no longer sharp at discerning both good and evil. (5:11-14) He then admonishes them to go on to maturity (grow). From II Corinthians 4:16 and Colossians 3:10, we know what Christians must do in order to go on to maturity. The maturing of believers is a continual process of renewal that involves truth and trials that grow our dependence/trust in that truth. While this process continues, the following words describe the life of the believer:

"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" (Hebrews 6:7). (This verse immediately follows 6:6.)

But for those who have fallen away, the process of renewal has come to a halt. They are no longer experiencing repentance. They are no longer growing. They have ceased to produce fruit. In this current condition, the following words describe their lives:

"but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned" (Hebrews 6:8) (This verse also immediately follows 6:6.)

From all these things, I suggest that, in Hebrews 6:4-8, the author is instilling fear into his readers using the example of anyone who turns away. In that condition, fruit bearing comes to a halt. It is replaced with a barren life void of hope. Instead of expecting glory, a person in this condition should anticipate judgment. *"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away...I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit...If anyone does not remain in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire and he is burned" (John 15:2, 5, 6).*

If the renewing process has come to a halt, fruit production ceases. The author is warning them about the realities of such a life and the hopelessness that accompanies it. If they don't take heed, they will experience it. But as of the time he wrote the letter, the author was happy that they were **not in that condition**.¹³ If they took his warnings and instruction seriously, they could avoid it. They simply must not fall away!

¹³ *"But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner" (Hebrews 6:9).*

These Hebrew Christians were not progressing in their sanctification. They needed to grow to maturity. The message of Hebrews 6 is similar to the warnings of Peter to his readers.

“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever” (II Peter 3:17-18). (Notice the contrast between falling away vs. growing.)

He also warned and admonished his readers that they needed to apply all diligence so that they grow:

“giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and are increasing, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:5-11).

If these characteristics were increasing, they had reason to expect that an entrance to the everlasting kingdom of Jesus would be supplied to them abundantly. If they fell away, they would cease to grow and these fruits would stop being produced. (This is what I am suggesting was the concern of the author of Hebrews.) A barren, fruitless life is reason to think that there will be no entrance to the everlasting kingdom. So, don't fall away. Rather, grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ!

So, what should we do about those who have renounced Jesus?

Based upon the information provided here, how should we counsel someone who has publicly renounced Jesus? As Hebrews 6:6 says, we can tell them that ***“they are [currently] crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and are [currently] putting Him to an open shame.*”** You can tell them that if they were to die tonight, they should expect everlasting punishment (Hebrews 10:26-31) But by all means, DON'T tell them that from the moment they renounced Christ they are forever damned! (You really cannot know such a thing.) By all means, DON'T stop asking God to restore them as He restored Peter.* It is true that in their current condition, the renewing process has come to a halt. But God is able to restore anyone and turn them back to Jesus. Then, that which is impossible right now (the renewing process) can begin again.

*Paul did not cease being concerned for such people. I know of at least two occasions in which he “handed them over to Satan” that they would eventually learn and be restored. (See I Timothy 1:18-20, I Corinthians 5:4-5 & II Corinthians 2:6-8) In the case of the man at Corinth, the Scriptures record the fact that Paul's concern and praying played a role in his restoration.

Note: If you happen to understand Greek, I have provided [a sentence diagram of Hebrews 6:4-6 that you can view by clicking this link.](#)

Appendix A: *Imperative present tense verbs (commands) in the New Testament.*

The New Testament contains many commands that have soteriological significance. (In other words, they relate directly to the salvation that will take place when Jesus comes back to judge the world.) Probably due to ignorance of basic Greek grammar rules, many Christians and pastors falsely assume that most of these commands relate mainly to or strictly to conversion rather than the salvation that will take place in the future when Jesus comes back to judge the world. But when Greek grammar rules are considered, it is clear that these commands relate solely to the salvation that will take place in the future when Jesus comes back to judge the world. Most of these commands relating to salvation are present tense imperative verbs. Here are a few examples that are familiar to most Christians:

- "Repent and believe in the gospel" (See Mark 1:15, spoken by Jesus.)
- "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden" (See Matthew 11:28, spoken by Jesus.)
- "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." (See John 7:37, spoken by Jesus.)
- "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." (See Luke 13:24, spoken by Jesus.)
- "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me." (See Mark 10:21, spoken by Jesus.)

All of these examples are present tense commands. The New Testament writers had other options open to them but they chose present tense commands. Koine Greek present tense commands are NOT commands to do something once! They are always commanding something that is to be done continually or repeatedly without **stopping**.¹⁴ You can affirm this by consulting any decent Greek grammar book under imperative verbs and volitional clauses. One example is **Wallace, Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics, An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament, 1996 p. 721- 722, Zondervan**. Also, on page 485, "With the present, the force is generally to command the action as an ongoing process. This is in keeping with the present's aspect."

Therefore, in the case of the present tense commands mentioned above, they must be interpreted as follows:

- Repent and keep repenting, and believe and continue to believe in the gospel.
- Come and continue to come to me.
- If anyone thirsts, he must come and continue to come to Me and drink.
- Strive and never stop striving to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."
- Come follow Me and continue to follow Me."

¹⁴ One of the most recognized Greek experts on this subject is K. L. McKay: You can read his writings on this subject in his article, **Aspect in Imperativial Constructions in New Testament Greek**, KcKay, K. L., Novum Testamentum, Vol. 27, Fasc. 3 (July 1985), pp 201-226, published by Brill.