Take Heed or Perish

Hebrews, A Book of Better Things

Introduction:

It is important for us to understand that salvation is a free gift but can be lost. Some believe that once you are saved, you cannot loose your salvation. Paul as well as other writers of the Bible do not teach this concept. If we understand that the foundation of God's government is love and that the foundation of love is liberty, it necessarily follows that we will always be at liberty to change our minds, reject that gift and thus loose our salvation.

The Scriptures portray the path of the just, that they shall live by faith, which involves choices. Salvation is therefore conditional:

1. On acceptance of the free gift provided
2. On believing and living by faith in Christ who provided the free gift
3. On revealing the fruits of faith, the works produced by love
4. On continuing in faith unto the end

The Study:

The Hebrews text on which that we are building our study is found in chapter two.

> Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2) For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3) How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;

What do the words, "let them slip" mean? Shall we explore the book of Hebrews and find out if Paul can answer our question?

In the following verse, it appears that Paul understands that there is a condition of our continuing to be considered Christ's house, His dwelling place. It is the word "if" that suggests conditionality. It is clear that the conditionality refers to us and not Christ. Paul affirms that we must "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

> Hebrews 3:6 But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Paul instructs us "harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" referring to the experience of Israel in the wilderness.

> Hebrews 3:8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

The spiritual condition of Israel in the wilderness was one of unbelief.

> Hebrews 3:17 But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? 18) And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? 19) So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

What does unbelief translate?

> Unbelief G570. apaistia, ap-is-tee´-ah; from 571; **faithlessness**, i.e. (negatively) **disbelief** (lack of Christian faith), or (positively) **unfaithfulness** (**disobedience**): — unbelief.

We are not saved by our works but our works reveal our faith as James states in the following verse.

> James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18) Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Paul declares below that Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

> Hebrews 5:8 Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; 9) And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him;

Paul records that Israel continued not in the covenant made with their fathers.

> Hebrews 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah's also records the account of the unfaithfulness of Israel. It was Israel who was unfaithful, not God.

> Jeremiah 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Israel's keeping the covenant was based on obeying God's voice as is found in the verse below.

> Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

In the verse below, Paul admonishes us not to do as Israel did who were unfaithful and because of their lack of faith could not produce obedience.

> Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2) For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Paul warns us to "take heed," lest we depart from the living God. In order to depart, one must have been connected at some point. Paul again refers to the conditionality on our part in holding "the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

> Hebrews 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13) But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14) For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

Christ Himself stated that in order to be saved, one must endure unto the end.

> Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

John records those that have endured unto the end as those who have kept the commandments and the faith of Jesus. As we have observed in James 2:17, 18, true faith produces obedience. One must keep the faith of Jesus in order to obey as He obeyed. It is true, we cannot keep the commandments in our own strength, but Christ in us can!

> Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience (endurance) of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:22 instructs us to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Is it because we have faith in what we can do, or is it because we have faith in what He promises to do? He alone can save "them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." It is "by Him" that we can come unto God and be saved.

> Hebrews 10:22 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 profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;)
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> Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.
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> Hebrews 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12) That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hebrews records the faithful who endured unto the end and embraced the promises of God who cannot lie, who promised eternal life to those who "lay hold upon the hope set before us."

> Hebrews 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself, 14) Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15) And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16) For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18) That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Paul speaks of Abraham who "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," but was "fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

> Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21) And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

Paul warns that our assurance must be found in Christ not in ourselves.

> 1Corinthians 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Below Paul again refers to the conditionality of the promised reward of salvation on our part. We must do the will of God if we are to receive the promise. Only the just who live by faith, doing the will of God and enduring unto the end will be saved. But if one draws back and continues to live therein, the end result will be perdition.

> Hebrews 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36) For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37) For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38) Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no

pleasure in him. 39) But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Peter, agreeing with Paul, warns against falling away:

2 Peter 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

The passage below plainly states that it is possible to fall away, and that it is impossible to be renewed and made partakers of the Holy Ghost. The end for them is to be burned.

Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5) And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6) If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. 7) For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8) But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

In the passage below it speaks of sinning wilfully, resulting in judgment and fiery indignation because there is no more sacrifice for our sin.

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27) But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Christ taught us that sin begins in the mind because we will to sin. Matthew 5 records many examples. Below is just one example of Christ's revealing that sin begins in the mind. "*Wilfully*" translates "*voluntarily,"* which would include ***all*** but unknown sin. How can it be, that "there remaineth no more sacrifice" for ***willful*** sins," if all known sins come from a will to sin? Christ came to save us from sin by substituting His life for us, revealing such love that it would cause us to hate the sin that hurts Him and forsake them. Therefore, "wilfully" must mean something more than just a "voluntary" act of sin.

Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28) But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Christ has promised that should we sin, if we repent He will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Repentance is a requirement for salvation. But there is a repentance that is not heartfelt and can't be forgiven.

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16) Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17) For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

2Corinthians 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by

us in nothing. 10) For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

The repentance referred to in the above verses is also known as the hardening of the heart, a spiritual condition of one who does not have the "godly sorrow," which Esau and Judas lacked. To sin "*wilfully*" then is to continue in sin without true repentance which leads to "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5) But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

We read another passage where Paul again speaks of the conditionality of salvation on our part. Christ can present us "holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight" if we "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

Colossians 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled 22) In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight: 23) If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

The message from Christ in the Revelation for us is to "hold fast."

Revelation 2:25 But that which ye have already <u>hold fast till I come</u>.

Revelation 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and <u>hold fast</u>, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: <u>hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown</u>.

Christ emphasizes that it is only those who overcome that will be saved.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; <u>To him that overcometh</u> will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; <u>He that overcometh</u> shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; <u>To him that overcometh</u> will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Revelation 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Revelation 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Revelation 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Revelation 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

May we with Paul, share the wonderful blessing of our privilege to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" to help us overcome.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3) For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4) Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Let's finish with Peter's assurance that if we "hold fast" and "endure to the end," we will receive "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

1 Peter 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Summary:

Salvation is a free gift of grace, yet it remains conditional because God's government rests on love and liberty. Believers are always free to accept or reject that gift. Scripture portrays the path of the just as acceptance of the free gift, living by faith in Christ, producing the fruits of faith (works of love), and continuing unto the end.

The study centers on Hebrews, which repeatedly warns against letting the message slip, hardening the heart like Israel in the wilderness, or departing through unbelief. Israel failed to enter God's rest because of unbelief (faithlessness and disobedience). We are Christ's house only "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Christ is the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him. Works do not save, but they reveal genuine faith (James).

Multiple passages underscore the same conditionality: take heed lest an evil heart of unbelief cause departure; hold the beginning of confidence steadfast to the end; endure to the end to be saved; do the will of God and not draw back to perdition; continue in the faith grounded and settled. Falling away after tasting the heavenly gift, or sinning willfully (continuing without true, godly repentance), leaves no further sacrifice and ends in judgment. Examples such as Esau and the warnings of Peter and Revelation reinforce that perseverance is required.

Assurance rests not in ourselves but in Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him and who supplies grace at the throne of mercy. Those who hold fast, overcome, and endure to the end receive the promised salvation of their souls.