

Here and later in Hebrews we have the subject of *apostasy*. Apostasy is when someone renounces a religious belief that they once held. It is discouragingly common. How often do you hear someone say, “I was raised as a Christian but don’t believe that any more”?

The really critical question is not how far apostates have fallen, but what point have they fallen *from*? If they started with full, trusting faith in Christ then how can I know that my full, trusting faith is not in danger of evaporating like theirs? This question troubles many believers. It is the question we will attempt to answer in our study.

But this passage is not all bleak. At all points the Spirit extends a shepherd’s crook like a lifeguard to rescue the faltering ones. He says to them, “Grab hold! Now! It’s not too late!” Does He also say it to you?

Questions:

1. The basic doctrines listed in vs. 1-2 are called “the word of the beginning of the Christ,” “the elementary doctrine of Christ,” or “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” in different translations. What is contained in these doctrines? What mature teachings do they lack?
2. Verse 4 describes those who have been *enlightened*, who have *tasted* the heavenly gift, who have *shared* in the Holy Spirit, and have *tasted* the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come. Can we say for certain that these are genuine born again believers? If they are not, how would you describe them?
3. Verses 4 and 6 give us the dreadful warning that those who slip away from the faith at this point may find future repentance impossible. How does this apply to the class of people above? Does it apply to:
 - those who have heard and rejected the gospel many times?
 - those who have lightly or ignorantly declared themselves Christians but later discarded their faith?
 - backsliders who still hold to Christian belief but behave in completely unChristian ways?
4. How is Christ crucified again by this turning away?

5. What makes repentance impossible? Does God harden the hearts of these people like He did Pharaoh?
6. Having warned his readers, in what passages does the writer hold out hope for them?
7. The warning was written to first century Christians of Jewish heritage. Who might need it today?
8. Read verse 10 along with Heb. 10:32-39. What is the point of reminding people of past good works?
9. In verses 17-19 we have words like unchangeable, sure, and steadfast applied to God. Why make that point now?
10. Write two verses that establish the eternal security of the believer; that is, once saved, always saved.