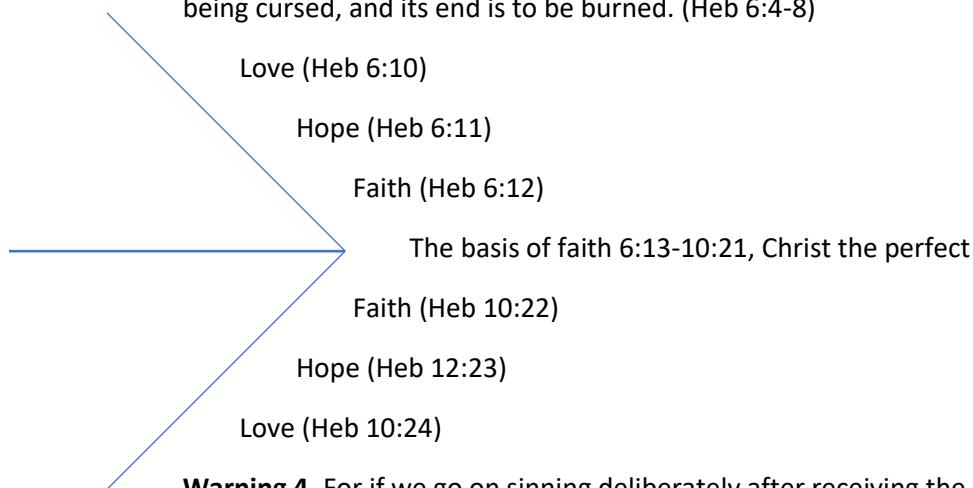


Hebrews – the Warning Passages

Warning 1. Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (Heb 2:1)

Warning 2. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:12-13)

Warning 3. For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. (Heb 6:4-8)



Warning 4. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:26-31)

Warning 5. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (Heb 12:15-17)

Warning 6. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings (Heb 13:9)

Calvinism: once saved, always saved, therefore the description of Heb 6:4-5 is not of someone with saving faith

Arminianism: salvation can be lost, you've got to be kidding, how can that not be a description of someone who's saved

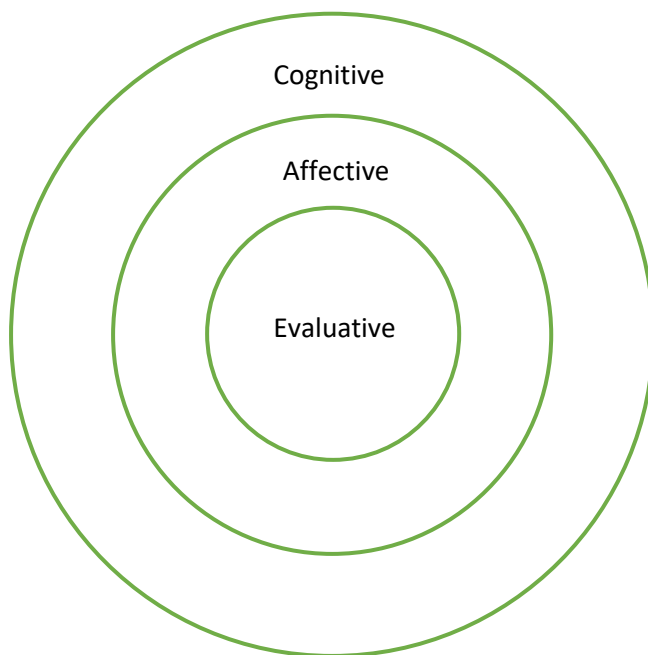
My proposal: both Calvinists and Arminians share a common flaw in their worldview that's distorting their interpretation of scripture

What is Worldview

The central assumptions, allegiances, values, concepts, premises more or less widely shared by the members of a culture or subculture which underly a person's perception of reality and their responses to it.

Three levels of worldview

- Cognitive: provides basics of time and space, categories of thinking and types of logic
- Affective: basic ideas of what is beautiful and good
- Evaluative: provides standards for making judgements about right and wrong, likes and dislikes



The problem of assumptions – we assume them!

How our assumptions can distort our reading of scripture – You, as a 21st century westerner, are worldview dominated by an individualistic worldview assumption.

A flaw in the modern English language – “you”.

An example from 1 Cor 6

1Co 6:15-20 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! (16) Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." (17) But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1Co 6:19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; (20) you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

1Co 6:15-20 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! (16) Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." (17) But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Corporate sin – a foreign concept to an individualistic worldview

My thesis: the writer of Hebrews is not concerned with the question of whether or not individuals can lose their faith, he is concerned about the individual in the church without faith that can destroy the entire church

Can we read the warnings with a corporate worldview rather than an individualistic one?

What do you notice about these two warning passages?

Warning 1 2:1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

Warning 4 10:26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Rhetorical device, or corporate worldview? Let's look at the parallel "rungs" of the chiasm in the 2nd and 5th warnings.

Warning 2. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:12-13)

Warning 5. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (Heb 12:15-17)

The root of bitterness:

Deu 29:18-27

Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

(19) When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way," they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. (20) The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven.

(21) The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

(22) Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. (23) The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger.

Ellingworth on 3:12-13: The warning is addressed to the community as a whole. The references to individual members express, not so much the author's concern that not even a single member should go astray, as his conviction, expressly stated in 12:15, that one unbelieving member could corrupt the whole community.¹

A similar warning in 1 Corinthians

1Co 5:1-7 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. (2) And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? (3) For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. (4) So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, (5) hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. (6) Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? (7) Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Unpacking the longer warning passages

Warning 3. For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding

¹ Paul Ellingworth. The Epistle to the Hebrews (New International Greek Testament Com (Eerdmans)) (Kindle Locations 4464-4466). Kindle Edition.

him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. (Heb 6:4-8)

Impossible... to restore them again: “Our author uses this word in three other places in his discourse, stating that it is ‘impossible for God to lie’ (6:18), ‘impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins’ (10:4), and ‘impossible to please God apart from faith’ (11:6). The expression clearly means that something cannot happen.”²

Who are those

1. who have once been enlightened,
2. who have tasted the heavenly gift,
3. and have shared in the Holy Spirit,
4. and have tasted the goodness of the word of God
5. and the powers of the age to come”?

Can it be read corporately? Can this describe your church?

A number of recent scholars suggest that the background to this description of believers is to be found in the story of the exodus.

Fits the context of Hebrews:

Heb 2:1-2 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,

The message spoken through angels refers to the OT law, which according to Jewish tradition was mediated to Moses through angels (cf. Deu_33:2; Psa_68:17-18; Act_7:38; Act_7:53; Gal_3:19; (NET study notes)

Heb 3:1-6 comparison of Jesus with Moses

Heb 3:7-19 The wilderness generation

Hebrews	Christian meaning	Origin of the image
enlightened	Revelation of truth, exposure of sin, reveals the “way”	a pillar of fire to give them light (Exo 13:21)
tasted the heavenly gift	Jesus himself (John 3:16, 6:48ff)	Manna (Exo 16:4) described as gift in Neh 9:15, Psa 78:24 & Psa 105:40
shared in the Holy Spirit	Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), equips	The Holy Spirit coming on the 70 elders (Num 11:16-30)
tasted the goodness of the word of God	Gospel of grace and forgiveness	Deut 8:3 man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

² O'Brien, Peter T.. The Letter to the Hebrews (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)) . Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

tasted the powers of the age to come	'the signs, wonders and miracles' that accompanied the initial announcement of the gospel and by which the saving message was verified (2:4).	the signs, wonders and miracles' that accompanied the Israelites in the Exodus
--------------------------------------	---	--

If an individual, then hard to see how this could refer to someone who is not genuinely Christian, but can also describe the church corporately

crucifying once again the Son of God

Committing the same crime as the nations, just as Israel engaged in idolatry after being rescued from Egypt

The land... its end is to be burned.

Image from Deut 29, as we saw in the 5th warning. The writer of Hebrews is concerned with the individual with an evil, unbelieving heart, who participates in the life of the church and experiences all of the blessings, and can lead the whole church astray (Israel and the Golden Calf) bringing judgement on the whole church.

final judgement or cleansing judgement, 1 Cor 3:10-17

How can an individual with an evil, unbelieving hard bring about the destruction of an entire church, even if it's filled with believers?

Warning 4. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:26-31)

If we go on sinning deliberately... The writer of Hebrews is once again thinking corporately

there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins – if the church rejects the grace of God in Christ there is no other means of forgiveness

fury of fire –using the same imagery from Deut 29, final judgement or cleansing judgement, 1 Cor 3:10-17

trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified – parallels the "crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt" from the 3rd warning.

Threshold covenant image - Zep 1:7-9 Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. (8) And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice— "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in

foreign attire. (9) On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.

Who is the "one who has trampled"? The one with the evil, unbelieving heart? Or the church?