



[Hebrews 6:4-8](#)

(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.

King James Version

Those who live their lives in union with [God](#) in this age will take part in the resurrection to eternal life. However, those who have tasted what God offers and rejected it—"those who have done evil" ([John 5:29](#))—will be resurrected to face their Judge, and then they will be cast into the Lake of Fire and die the [second death](#) (see [Revelation 20:12-15](#); [21:8](#)).

Verse 8 then relates that the fate of such people is to be burned. They will have died once already, yet that first death will not satisfy the penalty for [sin](#). Death by old age, disease, accident, or violence (including suicide) does not pay the death penalty for sin. Only a life taken in judgment for sin satisfies the debt.

Christ's sacrifice is one such payment. However, if an individual will not allow Christ's blood to pay that debt, the only recourse is for his life to be taken in payment for his sin. If he is determined to live in opposition to God, unconcerned about obeying God's commands, that person would be miserable living forever anyway. He will not be given the gift of eternal life in a state of mental or physical torment.

Instead, [John 5:29](#) speaks of a “resurrection of condemnation.” Paul says there will be “a [resurrection of the dead](#), both of the just and the unjust” ([Acts 24:15](#)). Similarly, [Daniel 12:2](#) mentions those who “shall awake . . . to shame and everlasting contempt.” Anyone remaining in such opposition to God will be resurrected to physical life, judgment will be passed, his body will be burned in payment of his debt, and he will cease to exist. If he is even remembered, the memory will be contemptible.

This is why the second death continues as a theme throughout Scripture, always in the background but rarely mentioned. It is the final event for those who choose to remain in opposition to God after being given the opportunity to know Him. Paul describes this in [Hebrews 10:26-27](#): “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”

We who are in [Christ](#) have eternal life. We will still undergo a physical death, but eternal life is ours—and ours to lose. When we survey the warnings given in the New Testament, they are largely not about a sudden, dramatic turn away from God. Rather, they are about smaller things—little decisions of death that require time to bear evil fruit.

So there are warnings about [false teachers](#), who will, over time, damage the [faith](#) on which we stand. The writers warn about deception, the cares of this life, and the enticements of [this world](#). They caution us about growing weary and apathetic and neglecting this great salvation. They admonish us against letting the wrong attitudes take root. The dangers are subtle and incremental, but each one has the potential to lead us slowly away from God.

While any one thing may not seem critical today, the problem is what is produced tomorrow—which we often cannot foresee. [Carelessness](#) takes us to where our hearts no longer care about overcoming, and we become hostile toward God and the things of God. It opens us to the same lie that Eve fell for: that we can do as we please and continue living. The fact is, though, the spiritually dead do not know they are dead—they believe they are alive.

It is unlikely that anyone sets out to choose the second death. Instead, it is chosen incrementally, with all the little choices over time creating a

character that is set and unchangeable. That character will either be intent on overcoming, on hearing Christ's voice, and on trusting in God, or set in opposition to God and His law ([Romans 8:7](#)) and thus rejecting life. The choice is ours.

— David C. Grabbe

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