"I Stopped Believing After Visiting an Atheist Webpage; Can God Forgive Me?"

I accepted Christ but then I went to the atheistic page that convinced me and I stopped completely believing for a few days. Later, I realized it was a mistake and repented. Can God forgive me? Am I apostate? Hebrews 6:4-6 is why I'm afraid.

Thanks for your letter. Hebrews 6:4-6 is a highly disputed passage with a variety of interpretations on offer. Fortunately, however, I do not think that we really need to delve into any of these in your case. The sort of sin that is in view in Hebrews 6:4-6 appears to be a very willful and determined apostasy from Christ. It appears to picture someone who, in spite of numerous spiritual benefits experienced, nonetheless turns his back on Christ and utterly rejects Him forever. In other words, the passage seems to suggest that anyone who has committed this sin will never turn to God again in repentance. Their heart has been (or is) irrevocably hardened against God and they will not repent.

But this is clearly not you! As you say in your letter, you realized that you had made a mistake and you thus repented and turned back to God. Sometimes atheist websites can seem convincing and a believer might be temporarily fooled by them, so to speak. But for a true believer, this will be very temporary indeed (as again, your own case shows). For the true believer has the witness of the Holy Spirit within him (or her) self—and this witness testifies to the truth of Christ with all of the authority of God himself!

The bottom line, I think, is this: anyone who is willing to repent of their sin and turn to Christ for forgiveness and salvation cannot have committed this sin. For the person who has committed this sin is irrevocably hardened against God and will never again be brought to repentance.

One final note. As believers it is important for us to grow in our understanding of the riches of our faith. Although some believers are called by God to engage with the material on atheist websites, the Lord always prepares such believers exceedingly well beforehand. Personally, I would encourage you as a brother in Christ to stay away from the atheist websites. The fact is, these sites are utterly wrong in their denial and rejection of God. They will not encourage nor build you up in your faith. Instead, I would recommend daily reading (and actually studying) your Bible, getting involved with a good Bible-believing and Bible-teaching church (and small group), and reading good works of theology and Christian apologetics. Take the time to carefully read something like John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, for example. And for apologetics, read the articles on the Probe website (www.probe.org) — and check out the material as well on William Lane Craig's site, Reasonable Faith (www.reasonablefaith.org). Don't waste your time—I say this in all seriousness—with atheist websites. Rather, go deep in your study of the Bible, Christian theology, and Christian apologetics. You won't regret it!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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