

GROW UP! PART 2 OF 2



Hebrews 6:4-8

Today we will look at, to me, one of the most frightening passages in the Bible. Our text, Heb. 6:4-8, describes a condition that is terrifying.

This passage says that there is a spiritual condition that we can get into from which it is impossible to repent and therefore makes salvation impossible. Can you think of such a condition? And it says that this condition may look in many ways like salvation, but it isn't.

Let's look at the flow of thought. NOTE: In the Greek, vv. 4-8 are one, long sentence. And the word "Impossible" is out of place in the flow of thought. It is purposely taken out of normal word order and placed first – a method of EMPHASIS in Greek language. In the flow of thought, it goes *after* "if they fall away". (I will come back to that later)

When Repentance is Impossible

The situation is this: first, someone receives great blessings and has high religious experiences (verses 4-5). And then second, that same person falls away and, in doing so, re-crucifies the Son of God and puts him to an open shame. And then third, it is impossible to be able to repent. Note: At no time do I say or mean to say that God will not forgive a repentant person. What I am saying is "there comes a point where people *can no longer repent*".

Let's look at these three steps in the situation.

STEP 1. THEY EXPERIENCED GREAT BLESSINGS AND HIGH RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES. (VV. 4-5)

Here's a situation where a person or group of people in the church has great religious experiences and blessings. He mentions four.

First, a person may be "*enlightened*" (verse 4). (Light, truth has come into their minds. Some of it has taken a foothold.)

Second, a person may have *tasted the heavenly gift* and *Shared in the Holy Spirit* (verse 4). The heavenly gift probably is the Holy Spirit. At some level the Holy Spirit has come into their lives and has done something so they participate in His work. Maybe it's conviction of sin.

Let me show my cards here – because I want you to get it. Conviction of sin is a work of the Holy Spirit, and is not salvation. It is possible to share in the work of the Holy Spirit and be lost. God can come into your life, move around in your heart. Restructure some of your values, and not be saved, yet.

Third, a person may have *tasted the goodness of the word of God* (verse 5). You can set and this are another good church and hear the word of God, or in a Sunday school class, or grow up in a family where you pray and read the Bible, and then fall away.

And fourth, the person may have *tasted the powers of the age to come* (v5).

What is that? **Hebrews 2:4**, where it says signs and wonders moved in around them. And they saw miracles happen! And you remember what Jesus said about such things. **Matthew 7:22–23** (NIV) *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'* ²³ **Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'**

You can be a miracle worker and be lost. Not born again.

STEP 2. IN SPITE OF ALL THESE BLESSINGS AND EXPERIENCES, THIS PERSON THEN FALLS AWAY (VERSE 6).

Not that he/she falls into sin, but that is, they fall away from Christ.

So here they are, they've been in church. Maybe they grew up in a Christian home and they know things. Light has come in. Spirit has worked. Word has come. Power has a worked in and around them.

And the say, "Forget it".

And in doing that, it says The effect of this is to re-crucify Jesus (v 6b). How is that?

Why is that called re-crucifixion? There are at least two reasons why this kind of apostasy is re-crucifixion of Christ.

Jesus died to make his people pure and holy. That's why he shed his blood. **Hebrews 13:12** says, "*Jesus also suffered outside the gate that He might sanctify the people through His own blood.*" He died to

sanctify us. He died to make us pure and holy and devoted to him.

Therefore if you have been under the influences of the "Holy" Spirit for a number of years, and then you say "I'm out of here" and you choose impurity, unholiness, lack of devotion in the world, what you in effect are saying is, "I vote for those things that nailed Jesus to the cross." And that's a re-crucifying of Jesus.

There is another reason this kind of falling away is a re-crucifying of Christ. When a person chooses against Christ and turns back to the way of the world and the sovereignty of his own will and the fleeting pleasures of earth, he says in effect that these are worth more than Christ is worth. They are worth more than the love of Christ and the wisdom of Christ and the power of Christ and all that God promises to be for us in Christ. That puts him to a public shame.

STEP 3. WHICH LEADS, TO THE CONCLUSION THAT "(IT IS IMPOSSIBLE) FOR SUCH A PERSON TO BE BROUGHT BACK AGAIN TO REPENTANCE" (VERSE 6).

Let me say it again. If you CAN repent this morning you are so fortunate! Because you're not "here" yet. This text is describing a gradual movement away from God, and we know it's a gradual moving, because he's been talking to people who were in fact doing that at some level and he's warning them. Against drifting. Against losing their confidence in Christ. Against not holding fast. Against becoming dull in hearing (last week).

But there comes a point after which you will not be able to repent.

That is really the main point that we are learning here. In fact, step one and step two, we have already seen several times in this book. The author has already said that the evidence of true Christianity is that we "remain in Christ". Remember **Hebrews 3:14** *¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

But now he adds, "There can come a point in a persons' rejection of Christ where it becomes impossible to repent!"

There is an illustration from **Hebrews 12:16-17**. There it speaks a similar kind of warning as here:

[Let] there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, (He could bring about no change of mind - NIV) though he sought for it with tears.

Will Genuine Repentance be Rejected by God? God does not reject genuine repentance. The text says plainly that he *found no place for repentance*. In other words, he couldn't repent. He was so hardened (see Hebrews 3:8,15; 4:7) that he cried out for things to go better in his life, but inside he would not submit to God's terms. He was, as verse 16 says, "immoral and godless."

This is an illustration of what the writer has in mind in **Hebrews 6:6** when he says *it is impossible to renew this person again to repentance*. This is the terrifying prospect behind all the warnings of this book not to drift away, because there comes a point, beyond which it is impossible to repent.

This is what Jesus called the "Unforgivable Sin." It isn't adultery, lust, stealing, divorce, killing – God can handle that. It's the persistent resistance of the Holy Spirit, that God has been pouring out into your life, week after week, year after year, AND you resist and you resist, and you get colder and colder, harder and harder, at some point God simply says, "The book is closed on that one."

I've heard so many people say, "I'll wait and someday I'll get right with God." That's suicidal. That why this book says over and over, *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart!"*

If you can repent today, do it today, because you may not be able to tomorrow. There is not guarantee that God will be at work in your life, later – and he is today!

Can One be "Enlightened..." and not be Justified?

Now the question we all ask here is whether the person who falls away like this was ever truly "saved" or "justified" and loses his/her salvation? Or is it teaching, as I have stated, something just a shocking, that you can have these experiences in verses 4 and 5 (enlightenment, taste of the things of Holy Spirit, the Word of God and his power) and never have been saved? Which is true?

TWO REASONS

1. Consider verses 7-8.

Here the situation with those who fall away is put in a picture. After verse 6 says that repentance is impossible for the apostates, **verses 7-8** say, **Hebrews 6:7-8** (NIV)⁷ *Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.* ⁸ *But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.*

So the picture is not of a field that had life and vegetation and then lost it. The picture is of two different kinds of fields—one is fruitful and blessed; the other is barren and cursed. I think the point is: if we have sat in church with the light and the Spirit and the word and the work of God coming to us and blessing us and even shaping us in some degree, but then turn our back on it, we are like a field without vegetation and will come into judgment. The rain we have drunk (light, Spirit, word, powers) produced no life in the field.

2. Consider verse 9. After holding out the real possibility that some in the church might commit apostasy, he says,

Hebrews 6:9 (NIV)⁹ *Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.*

The key phrase is *"things that accompany salvation."* The "better things" that he is confident about are things that always go with salvation (literally, are possessed by salvation). They belong to salvation.

So what he is saying is that he believes they really are "saved" and that therefore they will not commit apostasy and be a barren field. They will bear fruit. They will not fall away.

CONCLUSION

If this possibility does not make me serious and vigilant in the pursuit of everlasting joy, what will?

The practical conclusion of this awesome truth is given in next week's text. *To make your hope sure*

And so this text is a warning to us not to assume that we are secure when our lives have some religious experiences but no growing fruit. And the reason for showing us this serious situation is so that we will flee from it, and move to solid ground and lasting joy.

In the meantime, I pray that you will not be glib, but serious, about whether Christ is your highest joy. If you really bank your hope on him and in him, he will not let you go.