

## An Irretrievable Fall - Hebrews 6:4-8

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Before reading the verses that we are to study this week, do not fail to read the closing verses of the fifth chapter of Hebrews, and the opening verses of the sixth chapter. Observe that the key-note is progress, and pay particular attention to the connection. To see how the statement beginning with the fourth verse grows out of and depends on the preceding verses, puts one well in the way of understanding that much discussed statement. We are exhorted to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again [while they continue to crucify] for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned” (Heb. 6:4-8).

### Questions Calling Special Attention to the Text

1. What experience does the apostle say that those of whom he speaks have once had? -“once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come”
2. What have they tasted? - “the heavenly gift”
3. Of what has this made them partakers? -“partakers of the Holy Spirit”
4. Having been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, of what also have they tasted? -“the good word of God”
5. Through the good Word of God, what do they taste? -“the powers of the age to come”
6. If such fall away from all this, what is impossible? -“to renew them again to repentance”

7. Why is it impossible to renew them to repentance? -“since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame”
8. When does the earth receive blessing from God? -“now”
9. What does God do to the earth, that it may bring forth fruit? -“He brings it the rain.”
10. What is the just fate of that which remains impervious to all those efforts to bring forth fruit from it? - “it is to be burned, like the man who continues crucify’s Christ.”

### **Either Forward or Backward**

The point of the apostle’s exhortation is obvious. It is practically this: “Let us go on, or else we shall fall back into a condition of hopeless indifference, from which it will be impossible to rouse us.” There is no such thing as standing still and holding the ground already gained. *The battle is continually on, and we in ourselves are weaker than the enemy. As long so we advance in the name of the Lord Jesus, nothing can stand against us; but being in Christ means constant and everlasting growth, and standing still means letting go of Him; therefore it is that as soon as we rest content with any position we have gained, and think to hold it, we are beaten back by the enemy.*

### **What is Impossible?**

*There is a great deal of carelessness in reading the Scriptures.* One person takes a half glance as he runs past, and from his confused ideas of what he sees, he presumes to tell others what it means. Many who hear accept this faulty presentation as correct, without troubling themselves to verify it; and so error becomes established and perpetuated. Now let us note well that this text does not say that people who sin after having received the light cannot be forgiven if they repent. What it does say, and everybody can read it for himself, is that certain persons under certain conditions cannot be moved to repentance. This is quite different. It does not even say that they cannot repent if they would, but that it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. They will not repent, however much they are urged thereto. They are in the position of the Scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus said: “you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:40).

**From Highest to Lowest**

*Do not fail to note that these of whom these things are said have occupied the very highest position possible to man. They have not merely heard the Word of God, and felt the influence of the Holy Spirit, but they have actually fed upon the good Word, and received it into their very being; the heavenly gift—the Holy Spirit—of which they have been partakers, has unfolded the Word to them and in them, to the extent they have been lighted up with its glory, and have tasted, experienced, the powers of the world to come. In short, they have been raised with Christ, and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places. They have really “had the light,” not in the sense in which this expression is commonly used, meaning that they have had light presented to them; but they have both seen it and been persuaded by it. They have had the heavenly gift—all that heaven had to bestow—in their possession, and have known it and rejoiced in it. And now they fall from this high state, and their fall is like that of Lucifer, to the lowest depths. The higher the place from which one falls, the greater the fall. One who falls, from the highest place, falls to the lowest. This is what is involved in the “falling away” spoken of in the text. Why can they not now be moved to repentance?—Because God has no greater light and power to bring to bear upon them, to move them to repentance, than that which they have had and rejected. The case is exactly the same as that presented in the second chapter. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”*

**Sinning Willfully in the Knowledge of the Truth**

Hebrews 10:26 says that “if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” This text will of course be taken up again when we come to it in our study of this Epistle, but the thought that it presents coincides so exactly with the one we are now studying that it should be noted here. These texts are often wrested to the destruction of the unlearned and unstable. It is assumed that if the truth has once been preached to a man, and he does not accept it, or, worse still, if he has accepted what he has heard, and afterward gives it up, he is thereby condemned to hopeless ruin. That is a terrible error. Even the brother in the church, who has trespassed, and, who repeatedly rejects admonition, is to be only “like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17); that is, his conversion is to be prayed and hoped for, the same as that of any other heathen man.

Moreover, not everyone who has heard preaching has heard the truth, much less the whole truth. All preachers do not, like Paul, declare "the whole counsel of God." Many, also, receive only the form of the truth, and not the spirit of it. They have truths, but not 'THE TRUTH.' They have taken hold of certain obvious truths; but truth itself has not taken hold of them, and possessed them. They do not have the truth which holds them, and keeps them satisfied; but they for a time merely hold on to the truth. Accordingly, when they let go of it, not very much difference is seen in their lives, even as professing it did not make any marked change in their character. This is the condition of most "professors of religion." But it is far different with one who has entered into the secret place of the Most High, and seen its riches for himself. The Gospel that he holds he did not receive on the testimony of any man, but from the Lord Himself. He has seen the Lord face to face, and knows whom he has believed. His soul has been warmed and lighted by "the heavenly vision." For such an one there is no middle ground. He cannot give up this truth, and still be "a good, moral man." If, after such experience, he turns back, there is no stopping place for him except among the mockers and blasphemers. The "sin willfully" of the text, therefore, refers not to sin that a person commits knowing it to be sin; for everybody has done that, and if it were unpardonable, nobody could be saved; but *it refers to the willful abandonment of Christ Himself, even while, like Lucifer, occupying a place on the very throne of God.* That is a glorious position, but a man's only safety is to abide there.

### **Crucifying the Son of God**

It is said of those in this hopeless condition that "they crucify again for themselves the Son of God," and that they make a public exhibition of Him, even as, when He was crucified on Calvary, He was exposed to ridicule, and made to suffer every indignity. But could none of those men who crucified Christ be forgiven? Certainly they could; for Christ prayed for them, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 11:34). And they might have known. The third chapter of Acts informs us that many of those who had taken part in condemning and crucifying Christ were converted. But note this: *they had to cease their work of crucifying Christ, and repent of it, in order to be converted.* It does not outrage our sense of justice, *nor is it difficult for us to see that repentance and conversion are incompatible with continued crucifixion of Christ.* Who would believe it possible for a man to be in a state of repentance while he still proceeded to drive nails into the hands and feet of

Jesus, and to mock Him? **Now our text does not say that certain ones cannot be saved because they have crucified the Son of God, but while they do it.** There is no word in the Greek of this text that corresponds to "seeing that;" but the word meaning crucify again is the principal form of the verb, indicating present action. The margin of the Revised Version has "while." **These men cannot be renewed again to repentance, not because they have crucified the Lord, but because they persist in doing it.**

There is not a man on earth, who has not had a share in crucifying the Lord. It was sin that nailed Him to the tree; and everyone who has ever sinned has helped to drive the spikes into His hands and feet. Every day Christ still suffers the agony of crucifixion. **The cross is not a thing of a day, but of eternity; but it is sin alone that makes it a thing of torture and anguish.** As long as there is sin in the universe, so long will the Lord suffer all the pain indicated by the cross of Calvary. Only when sin ceases, and is blotted out of the universe, will the shame and suffering of the cross cease, and the cross shine forth in all its glory, to be the song of all creation.

### **Showers of Blessing Received and Rejected**

The rain and the snow that come down from heaven and water the earth do return until they cause it to bring forth and bud, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Isa. 55:10, strictly rendered, says that it returns not to heaven except it cause the earth to bring forth and bud. So with the word of life: it returns to heaven only in works of faith and love and deeds of righteousness. The Spirit of God is the water of life that falls in refreshing showers on the world of mankind. (Isa. 44:3). Received and retained,—it will be manifested in "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:11). But if those upon whom it falls bring forth only thorns,—the product of the curse,—both they and their works will be consumed; for "the strong shall be as tinder, and the work of it as a spark; both will burn together, and no one shall quench them" (Isa. 1:31).

And this again shows how men "crucify again for themselves the Son of God." The free gift—"the heavenly gift"—has come upon all men to justification of life. (Rom. 5:18). Now although "all have sinned," and it is sin that crucifies Jesus, if we accept and confess His life in us, we are not counted as having crucified Him, since we give unmistakable evidence that "He lives." It is we who have died, and He lives. **But if we receive Him and yet do not reveal Him in**

our lives,—that is, if He is known to have entered our house, but is never afterward seen there alive, we are justly accounted to be His murderers, and “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Thank God, that “better things” may be our lot; “for the Lord will not cast off for ever” (Lam. 3:31); but He loves us with “an everlasting love,” and no matter how deeply we have sinned, He still stretches out His hands to us, saying, “Return unto Me, and I will heal all your backsliding.”

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