

# Third Warning: Do Not Reject Christ, part 1

**D**uring counseling sessions, it is common for someone to say, “I am not sure I am a Christian.” When I ask why they feel this way, they usually start talking about habits of sin in their lives. They feel this way because they know that Christians are supposed to become spiritually mature. Most are not sure how, but they see their sin and are doubting their salvation. The apostle Peter reveals that this is a spiritual law or truth. When we are growing spiritually, we are confident that we are Christians (2 Peter 1:5-8). When we do not see spiritual growth, there are reasons to doubt. These Hebrews were going backward spiritually and so there was real reason to doubt they were Christians. It is a warning to us. Patterns of sin are warning signs.

**THE SYMPTOM.** The author of Hebrews told his readers that they would have a difficult time understanding what he was going to say about Melchizedek. That was their symptom. Their “disease” was that they were “dull of hearing” or lazy when it came to in-depth study of the Word. They were not interested in the meaty things of scripture, but wanted warm, simple, comfortable, encouragement from scripture. They did not want to seriously study the Word. They but preferred to have someone summarize the message of Scripture. They were on a diet of milk and not solid spiritual food. Therefore, the Spirit called them spiritual babes. The Greek means spiritual toddlers. They should have been able to teach others; but instead, they had gone backwards spiritually. Now they needed someone to teach them the basics all over again. It is a sad picture. The Holy Spirit makes it clear that a knowledge of the Word is one necessary mark of mature Christians (1 John 2:12-14). So the author of Hebrews is concerned about them - very concerned.

**THIRD WARNING.** Their problem was revealed for all to see and for us to learn. They had no desire to grow beyond the basics of the faith. As a result, they did not even know the basic truths (Hebrews 5:12). Here are the basic truths Hebrews is talking about.



Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do, if God permits. (NASB) Heb. 6:1-3

They needed to be taught these again. This is the major reason to doubt they were for real. Why did they go backward spiritually? The author of Hebrews gives them another warning - the third. Each warning (Hebrews 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13) has been stronger and darker. This warning is the strongest and darkest. The heart of the warning occurs in Hebrews 6:4-6.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come . . . (NASB) Hebrews 6:4-5

**FOUR KEY GREEK WORDS.** There are four important Greek words that we must understand if we hope to unscramble the meaning of Hebrews 6:4-6.

*Once Been Enlightened.* Our first Greek word, *pho-tizo*, is translated “enlightened.” Our English word “photo” is closely related to it. It means “to bring to light, to give light, and to make plain.” It is used in Ephesians 1:18,

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling . . . (NASB) Eph. 1:18

It also occurs in Eph. 3:9 and 2 Tim. 1:10 for example. The ancient writer Erasmus makes the meaning of the word clear in the following quote.

Who once for all have left the darkness of their former life, having been enlightened by the gospel teaching . . .

It means to give light or understanding.

So when Hebrews 6:4 says, “In the case of those who have once been enlightened,” it is simply saying that these folks have been given light or understanding. Hebrews 10:32 says they understood the gospel, but it does not say they became

Christians. That conclusion is a guess.

*Tasted Of The Heavenly Gift.* The second Greek word, *geuomai*, simply means “to taste, to get a taste, or to experience.” In Matthew 16:28 the Greek word is used to refer to experiencing death. In 1 Peter 2:3 it is used figuratively of tasting of “the kindness of the Lord” - an experience. In Matthew 27:34 it refers to Jesus tasting the “drink mingled

with gall.” This implies that the meaning of the phrase “tasted of the heavenly gift” means to experience something. That is they “experienced the heavenly gift.”

If we assume that *geuomai* means they received faith (Ephesians 2:8) or the Holy Spirit, we have changed the meaning of the word to the idea of “possessing” as opposed to “experiencing.” We must not forget that in Hebrews 2:9 we were told that Jesus tasted, *geuomai*, death for everyone. Notice that Jesus’ body was dead only briefly. In Hebrews 6:5 we are told that the readers had tasted of the good word of God. That is, they experienced the word of God. They heard it read

## Perseverance

Two frogs fell into a can of cream,  
The sides of the can were shiny and steep,  
The cream was deep and cold.  
"Oh, what's the use?" croaked number one.  
"Tis fate, no help's around. This was a mistake.  
Good-bye, my friend!  
Good-bye, my friend!"  
And weeping still, he drowned.

But number two, of sterner stuff,  
Dog-paddled in surprise.  
The all the while he wiped his creamy face,  
And dried his creamy eyes.  
"I'll swim awhile at least," he said,  
It really wouldn't help the world,  
If one more frog were dead."  
An hour or two he kicked and swam,  
A breast stroke or a back stroke he did.  
Not once he stopped to mutter,  
But kicked and kicked and swam and kicked,  
Then he hopped out, via butter."

*Anonymous*

and taught. The “tasted of the heavenly gift” means they experienced the heavenly gift. “Taste” does not mean a permanent condition. Note that Scripture explains the meaning of the phrase the “heavenly gift.”

*Partakers Of The Holy Spirit.* The English word “partakers” is our third Greek word, *metochos*. It means “companions, share in, or partners.” But in Hebrews 1:9 it is used to say that Jesus and the angels are companions. Therefore,

the emphasis of this Greek word is “sharing.” Hebrews 6:4 means these folks had an experienced the Holy Spirit or witnessed the power of the Spirit such as Simon Magus in Acts 8:9-24. It does not say they were sealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) or baptized into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). This will be explained more in the next study.

*Have Fallen Away.* Maybe the readers of Hebrews were Christians, but there were serious reasons to doubt their salvation. They were struggling. They needed to continue rather than quit. Hebrews 6:4-5 describes the experience of a non-Christian - one who was in church with other Christians, a person who was friends with Christians, and experienced the life of the church. They had heard the Word of God taught, witnessed the power of the Spirit and had seen the display of the Spirit, but they were not possessors. They were not true Christians. These people are described as being enlightened, tasting, and sharing. They are not described as believing, accepting, and being sealed or even baptized.

So when we come to Hebrews 6:6, we are told that if a person falls away after receiving full knowledge and having experienced all that they can experience, but without becoming a Christian, he/she cannot be renewed or restored.

... and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. (NASB) Hebrews 6:6

The Greek word for “fall away” is *parapipto*. It means “to commit an error, to offend, to go astray, to abandon a former relationship or association.” The Holy Spirit is saying that if a non-Christian, after being taught the truth, after experiencing the life of the church and seeing the power of the Spirit then abandons the faith, it is all over.

*Impossible To Renew Them Again To Repentance.* If we believe this passage teaches that a Christian can lose his/her salvation, we must also believe it when it says he/she cannot be restored. Some say that “impossible” really means that it is *difficult* for them to come back. But that ignores the meaning of the word “impossible.” It is the same Greek word used in Hebrews 6:18 to say that is impossible for God to lie. Is it impossible or is it just difficult for God to lie? The Greek

word for impossible is *adunatos*. It literally means “no power.”

*Summary of Hebrews 6:4-6.* The meaning of these verses is that it is impossible to bring them back to the point of repentance since they have received full knowledge and had these great experiences and then reject Jesus Christ. What more can be done? The answer is nothing! They will never come back!

**ILLUSTRATION.** The Holy Spirit uses an illustration to explain Heb. 6:4-6.

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (NASB) Heb. 6:7-8

It is a picture of rain falling on the ground. The ground produces either good plants or thistles. This is not a picture of ground that is either good or bad. It is a picture of a person who believes, accepts Jesus, and receives the Holy Spirit, or a person who has experienced everything a non-Christian can experience short of becoming a Christian and then turns away (abandons or falls away) from the faith. A person who ultimately abandons the faith will not return.

**CONCLUSION.** This has been part one of this passage. In the next study we will complete the study of this important passage. The Holy Spirit will challenge these Hebrew readers to be diligent in the faith. We who call ourselves Christians need to be faithful.