

## X.5. Lambs to Rams: Falling Away

Heb 6:4 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, <sup>5</sup> And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, <sup>6</sup> 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. (*Emp. added*)

Speaking to Jewish converts, who were once practitioners of the Mosaic Law, this impossibility of restoration has a condition attached (*v. 6*). Were they being so persecuted by their Jewish brethren that they would return to a system that could not save them (*9:12*)?

- “enlightened”- Thayer- “*to enlighten spiritually, imbue with saving knowledge*; with a saving knowledge of the Gospel: hence of those who have been made Christians”. The context refers to Jewish Christian converts, the initial receivers of this missive. The writer is using an incident that his audience must have been familiar with, i.e., there must have been some of their number that left **the** faith and returned to Judaism. Whether then or now, to leave “the faith once delivered to the saints” (*Jud 3*) is to be a heretic of the Gospel.
- “tasted”- Gk.1089- *to experience*. As it refers to Christ, they have experienced the hope of eternal life through His sacrifice and resurrection (*Titus 1:2; 3:7*).

1Pe 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: <sup>3</sup> If so be ye have tasted (*Gk.1089*) that the Lord *is* gracious.

- “heavenly gift”- This must refer to God’s gift of “His only begotten Son” (*Jn 3:16*).

- “shared (*Gk.3353- participant*) in the Holy Spirit”- This began at Pentecost when Peter answered the Jews’ question “what shall we do?” He told them to “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name (*authority*) of Jesus Christ for (*Gk.1519-εἰς- [purpose]*) the forgiveness of your sins (*outcome*), and you will **receive the gift** (*Gk.1431-gratuity*) of the **Holy Spirit**” (*Act 2:37-38; Rom 8:9; Eph 1:14*). (*Emp. added*)

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself **beareth witness with our spirit**, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *Him*, that we may be also glorified together. (*Emp. added*)

These have *experienced* the *virtuous use* of “the word of God” which proclaims “liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (*Lk 4:18*). They found it “sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb” (*Ps 19:10*).

They had also *experienced* “the kingdom of God (*church*) after it [came] with power” (*Mk 9:1*). This was post Pentecost during the age of miracles (*2:2-4*) because of the “powers” (*Gk.1411-specifically miraculous power*) that were yet still being performed and that had already introduced the kingdom (*Act 2:1-4*). Temple worship was still being observed by the Jews in Jerusalem (*pre-70 AD*) where these converts were living, and the sacrificial system was still being practiced. The Christian dispensation was in its infancy but the Mosaic was soon “to vanish away” (*8:13*), which was reason for this warning. “The age” (*Gk.165- by extension perpetuity; specifically, a Messianic period [present or future]*) “to come” (*Gk.3195- [through the idea of expectation]*) had to do with the expectation of the old sacrificial system being completely done away with and the promise of the N.T. in Christ’s blood (*1 Cor 11:25*) finally being understood (*11:40*) once “the partial [passed] away” (*i.e., the miraculous ended*) and “the perfect (*complete written word*) [came]” (*1 Cor 13:10; Rev 21:1*). The writer here had the same

goal John did while on Patmos; his was to warn the seven churches of Asia (*Rev 1:14*) whereas the writer here was to warn the church that was in Jerusalem. In the Revelation John was told to “Write therefore... the things which shall come to pass hereafter” (*Rev 1:19*). He wrote, in prophetic perfect form (*as though it had already occurred*), of the destruction of Jerusalem (*Rev 7-10*) and the end of the sacrificial system which was yet future to him (*AD 70*). The writer of Hebrews, in penning his letter, was warning the saints living in Jerusalem of that, same yet future (“*to come*”) event that was on the horizon.

And the doctrine of “perseverance of the saints”, that teaches “once saved always saved”, is contradicted here by the truth. “Have fallen (*past tense*) away”- Gk.3895- to *fall aside*, that is, (figuratively) to *apostatize*. They had to be a part of something in order to fall away from it. You can’t fall from something you have no part in. The only religious system that can save is Christianity, and Judaism (*evidently there were Judaizers among them as were at Galatia- Gal 1:7*) can/could not do it (*10:4*).

The impossibility of verse 4 is further explained here. To “restore” anyone “again to repentance”, while presently (“*they are crucifying*”) denying the Savior (*Mat 10:33*) without *compunction* (guilt), would be absolutely impossible, during that state of mind, to *renew* their conviction. This is not to be considered the unpardonable sin of *Mat 12:32* where they blasphemously gave credit to Satan for a miracle that was performed by Jesus via the Holy Spirit. Jesus said of that sin that it “will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come”. Here, “repentance” would have been possible, but not in the state of mind where “they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt”.

### Counting the Cost

Jesus said that anyone who “forsakes not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (*Lk 14:33*). In many ways we are to be

prepared for the task of being a disciple of the Lord. It's not to be prepared for the task of being a disciple of the Lord. It's not to be taken lightly. It truly is being a "living sacrifice" (*Rom 12:1*) but the rewards definitely outweigh the costs. We are not to think of it in terms that we deserve His grace because we can never do anything without it in order to obtain a home in Heaven (*Lk 17:10*).

If there was ever a person who suffered for the sake of truth (*Besides Christ*), it was the apostle Paul. He agonized over his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (*Rom 9:1-3*) and how they had "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (*Rom 10:2*). They were once the chosen of God but had since denied Him by denying Jesus as the Christ. In a sense they fell away. But truth has no agenda and if ignorance was bliss the truth would state otherwise.

Jas 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

2Co 5:10 For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by Him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life. 11 We know what it means to fear the Lord, and so we try to persuade others. God knows us completely, and I hope that in your hearts you know me as well. (*Good News Bible*)

One might think how often godly Christians have been berated for even mentioning the word "sin", as though we are claiming to be "holier than thou". How do we impress in the minds of those who have fallen away where any transgression against God is sin? And since God holds the very keys to His eternal home in Heaven, He is the One that we should **never** commit even one unlawful act against.

Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *His* face from you,

that He will not hear.

Eph 2:1 And you *hath he quickened*, who **were** dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein **in time past** ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all **had** our **conversation in times past** in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were** by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (*Emp. added*)

But for those who fell away and gave up their inheritance for “the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life” (1 Jn 2:16) their fate is even harsher than the fate of those who didn’t know to begin with.

Luk 12:47 And that servant, **which knew** his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with **many stripes**. 48 But he that **knew not**, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with **few stripes**. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. (*Emp. added*)

Jesus said of the Jews who rejected Him that “it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you” (*Mat 11:22*). He also said “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (*Mat 12:42*). Other passages that give similar ideas on such ignorance are as the following.

2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that **know not God**, and that **obey not the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ (*covering both Testaments*): 9 Who shall

be punished with **everlasting** (*Gk.166- perpetual*) **destruction** (*Gk.3639- ruin*) from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (*Gk.4100- to entrust [especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ]*) (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (*Emp. added*)

Jesus said of Judas Iscariot that it would be better for him if he never had been born (*Mark 14:21*).

“If that traitor had no existence prior to his commencement as a human being, and if he was to go out of existence at death, why would it have been better had he never been born? The Lord’s statement indicates that Judas’ soul, in a state of torment, would survive the death of his body.

“Christ indicated that there were varying levels of responsibility when he said to Pilate: ‘he who delivered Me over to you has the greater sin.’ (*John 19:11*) The writer of Hebrews spoke of those who would receive ‘sorer punishment’ (*10:29*), and James admonished: ‘Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.’ (*3:1*). Of one thing we may be certain: even in the punishment of those who are evil, the Judge of all the earth will do what is right (*Genesis 18:25*).

When the prophet declared that our ‘iniquity’ was laid upon the Son of God, he employed a figure of speech known as metonymy (one thing is put for another)—in this case, the cause being put for the effect.

In other words, God did not put our **sins** upon Christ, but the **penalty** of our wrongs. Christ bore our ‘hell’ twenty centuries ago. In spite of the fact, therefore, that all sinners deserve to be lost, the Lord has provided a way to ‘escape the judgment of hell’ (*cf. Matthew 23:33*). No man can argue against the love of God in light of His unspeakable gift at the cross!” (*Emp. added*)

## Wayne Jackson: The Christian Courier

Of all the suffering we might endure in this life, probably the most difficult to bear would be to witness the falling away of a close loved one. What a terror to even contemplate for a moment the eternal torment of the lost let alone of those we are closest to who were once harbored by the protection of Christ in His church. Jesus' purpose in coming the first time was to save man and not condemn him. When He returns He will pass sentence on the lost; especially on those who have "once been enlightened" but fell away (*Jn 12:48*). God will never send anyone to Hell; He will only honor their decisions to not obey Him.

## X.5. Questions

1. Who was the Hebrews letter addressed to? a) Jewish converts; b) Gentile converts; c) Pagan converts.
2. How do we understand the timeframe of the writing of the Revelation as it relates to the letter to the Hebrews? a) both spoke of it after it had happened; b) both spoke of the same, then future event; c) the text does not say.
3. How does Heb 6:6 refute the doctrine of "once saved always saved"? a) it doesn't; b) you can't fall from something you have no part in; c) repentance guarantees salvation.
4. Could these Hebrew Christians be restored even though it states it was impossible? a) no; b) maybe, if they were re-baptized; c) yes, but not in their present state of rebellion.

5. What did Jesus say that His followers were to give up in order to follow Him? a) their families; b) all they have; c) their jobs.
6. How does Judas' example express the "once saved always saved" doctrine to be false? a) there will be more torment for those who knew the truth and weren't prepared; b) even though Judas denied Christ, as did Peter, he was still an apostle and was thus saved; c) if Judas hadn't been born he wouldn't have denied Christ.
7. What group among Christians will be judged with greater strictness? a) elders; b) teachers; c) preachers.
8. True or false: Our sins were laid on Jesus at the cross. a) true; b) false; c) the text does not say.