

Hebrews

Chapter 6:4-8

⁴For it is *impossible*, 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*, ⁵ and *have tasted the good word of God* and *the powers of the age to come*,

Utley > all of **these** are in the aorist tense (*a single and complete action in the past*)

Utley > This author alerts us to the presence of three groups identified by their pronouns:

- "Us" > verses 1-3
- "Those" verses 4-8 (See the "□"s)
- "You" verses 9-12

Pink > In considering the persons spoken of it is of first importance to note that the apostle does not say, "us who were once enlightened", nor even "you", instead, he says "those". In sharp contrast from them, he says to the Hebrews, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you".

Impossible > Strong's > *adunatos* > *unable, powerless* (From *a* > *a negative* + *dunatos* > *strong, mighty, powerful*)

Precept Austin > Note that *adunatos* is first in the Greek sentence for emphasis. It's as if the author wants to make it blazingly, blatantly clear... "**Impossible it is...**" The Greek word occurs 10 times in the New Testament. In every case but one the concept of impossibility comes into play.

Guthrie > The various ways in which this writer uses the word *impossible* are instructive. Here he uses it of the impossibility of repentance in certain circumstances;

- in 6:18 of the impossibility for God to prove false;
- in 10:4 of the inability of the blood of animals to remove sin;
- and in 11:6 of the impossibility of pleasing God without faith.

In each case there is no provision for compromise. The statements are all absolutes.

Enlightened > Strong's > *to shine, give light*

Tasted > Strong's > *to taste, to eat*

Gift > HELPS > *dōreá* (a feminine noun, derived from *dídōmi*) – a gift, *freely given* and hence *not* acquired by *merit* or "entitlement."

Guthrie > Nowhere else in the New Testament is the 'heavenly gift' mentioned, although the idea of a gift from God occurs several times, mainly in relation to the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 10:45; 11:17). In other cases it is linked with God's grace (Rom. 5:15; Eph. 3:7; 4:7), where it embraces the whole gift of salvation. In the present statement the content of the gift is undefined, but its origin is left in no doubt.

Although it has been maintained that 'heavenly' describes, not the origin, but the sphere in which the gift is exercised, it would still show that the gift is not one of human making.

It should be noted that the word used here for 'gift' (dōrea) is exclusively used of spiritual gifts in the New Testament.

Partakers > Strong's > *sharing in*. Usage > a sharer, partner, associate

Wiersbe > Others claim that the people addressed were not true believers. They had cooperated with the Holy Spirit up to a point but were not actually born again. Well, let's examine the description of these people and see if they possessed true salvation.

1. They were "enlightened" (Heb. 6:4). The "once" means "enlightened once and for all." The way this same verb is used in Hebrews 10:32 indicates an experience of true salvation (see 2 Cor. 4:4–6).
2. They "tasted of the heavenly gift" (Heb. 6:4b), and "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world [age] to come" (Heb. 6:5). To claim that these people "tasted but did not eat" is to base interpretation on one meaning of an English word. God permitted His Son to "taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Surely Jesus Christ did not simply sample death on the cross! "Taste" carries the idea of "experience." These Hebrew believers had experienced the gift of salvation, the Word of God, and the power of God. Doesn't this describe authentic salvation?
3. They "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. 6:4c). To suggest that they only went along with the Holy Spirit to a certain extent is to ignore the simple meaning of the verb. It means "to become sharers."
4. These same people were not only "sharers of the Holy Spirit," but also "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1) and "partakers of Christ" (Heb. 3:14).

Wiersbe > In view of these facts, I have concluded that the people addressed were true believers, not mere professors.

Barnes > The kind of exhortation appropriate to those who were awakened and convicted, but who were not truly converted, would be "to become converted;" not to warn them of the danger of "falling away."

⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Swindoll > (Describing one possible position >) *The people referred to in the passage were once saved, but have lost their salvation. If the first position is correct, then after abandoning their faith, there would be no way the person could ever be saved again. Hebrews 6:6 says it's impossible—not difficult, not rare—impossible to be renewed to repentance.*

Yet this position would contradict the many passages of Scripture that teach the security of the believer's salvation (see, for example, **John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:1, 27-29; 1 Jn. 5:11-13**).

Rom. 8:1 > *Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

John 10:27-30 > ²⁷ *My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."*

Rom. 8:27-39 > ²⁸ *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring charges against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of ^[1]Christ? Will tribulation, or trouble, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We were regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Jn. 5:11-13 > ¹¹ *And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* ¹² *The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.* ¹³ *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

John 5:24 > ²⁴ *Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

Swindoll > (Describing a second possible position >) *The people referred to in the passage appear to be saved but actually are not.* If the second position is correct, then the author has made the assurance of salvation difficult to affirm. Yet he uses terms that present the picture of truly born-again believers. He says they have been “enlightened” (Heb. 6:4), and in 10:32, he will use the same term for his readers’ genuine conversion.

He says they have “tasted of the heavenly gift” . . . the “good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (6:4-5); and in 2:9, he used the same term, “taste,” to refer to Christ’s real experience of death—not a feigned or fake experience. How could someone “know” they have eternal life if the experience of a true believer is the same as that of the false believer (1 Jn. 5:13)?

Fallen away > Strong’s > *parapipto* > to fall in, into or away, to fail

HELPS > (from *pará*, "from close-beside" and *píptō*, "to fall") – properly, *fall* away, after being *close-beside*; to *defect* (abandon)

Vincent > Lit. and having fallen away

Barnes > The word rendered "fall away" means properly "to fall near-by anyone;" "to fall in with or meet;" and thus to fall aside from, to swerve or deviate from; and here means undoubtedly to "apostatize from," and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity, or a going back to a state of Judaism, paganism, or sin. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

Barnes goes on to state > The passage "proves" that if true Christians should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew and save them. If then it should be asked whether I believe that any true Christian ever did, or ever will fall from grace, and wholly lose his religion, I would answer unhesitatingly, no! (compare the John 10:27-28 notes; Romans 8:38-39 notes; Galatians 6:4 note.) If then it be asked what was the use of a warning like this, I answer:

(1) it would show the great sin of apostasy from God if it were to occur. It is proper to state the greatness of an act of sin, though it might never occur, in order to show how it would be regarded by God.

(2) such a statement might be one of the most effectual means of preserving from apostasy.

MacArthur > This term occurs only here in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, it was used to translate terms for severe unfaithfulness and apostasy (see Ezek. 14:13; 18:24; 20:27). It is equivalent to the apostasy of 3:12.

Guthrie > The idea of apostasy is expressed by a verb which occurs here only in the New Testament. Its root meaning is falling aside, i.e. a falling away from an accepted standard or path. The subsequent statement in this case makes clear the irretrievable nature of the apostasy. It is said that they crucify the Son of God, and the compound verb used (*anastaurountas*) shows that the writer is thinking of a repetition of the crucifixion. He could not have expressed the seriousness of the apostasy in stronger or more tragic terms. As he thinks of what the enemies of Jesus Christ did to him, he actually sees those who turn away from him as equally responsible.

Repentance > Strong's > from a word meaning > to change one's mind or purpose

HELPS > from *metá*, "changed after being with" and *noiéō*, "think" – properly, "think differently after," "after a change of mind"; to *repent* (literally, "think differently afterwards").

Impossible ... to restore them to repentance > Constable > Not only did the 10 spies fail to enter the Promised Land through unbelief, but so did the whole adult generation of Israelites who left Egypt with Moses (Num. 14). It was impossible for them to repent in the sense that, even though they confessed their sin of unbelief (Num. 14:40), God would not permit them to enter the land (Num. 14:41-45)

Since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame >

Guthrie > Moreover, the writer explains that the effect of this action is to hold him [Christ] up to contempt (*paradeigmatizontas*, another word found only here in the New Testament). In no more vivid way could the position of the apostatizers be identified with those whose hatred of Christ led them to exhibit him as an object of contempt on a hated Roman gibbet

⁷For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and produces vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; ⁸*but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

But if it yields thorns and thistles > Guthrie > No-one complains of thorns and thistles which are due to neglect, but every farmer expects that, given the right conditions of moisture, cultivated land will produce vegetation ... As all agriculturalists know, a crop of weeds is good only to be burned.

It is important to note that the words near to being cursed are less forceful than they would have been without the word 'near' (engys), but they nevertheless draw attention to the constant imminence of the end. The burning of the weeds would not be long delayed if the weeds persist.

Worthless > Strong's > not standing the test, rejected

Constable > "Worthless" literally means disapproved (Gr. adokimos). It does not mean totally rejected but rather failing to gain God's approval (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). It is in danger of (close to) being cursed, but it is not cursed like unbelievers are. Burned does not mean burned in hell (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15). In ancient times, as well as today, farmers often burned their fields in order to removed unwanted vegetation, not to destroy the field itself.

Guthrie > The word translated 'worthless' (adokimos) occurs in 1 Corinthians 9:27 in the sense of disqualified and in 2 Corinthians 13:5 of failure to meet the test. It is no arbitrary rejection, but only as a result of due examination. In this case the land is proved to be worthless by the absence of effective fruit.

Close > Strong's > at hand, near, nigh, ready

Cursed > HELPS > from *katá*, "according to, down" and *ará*, "a curse") – properly, what has "to go down" (penalties received) *due to condemnation*

Ends up > Precept Austin > *telos* from *tello* = to set out for a definite point or goal

Burned > Zuck > Naturally the reference to "burned" has caused many to think of hell, but there is nothing in the text to suggest this. God's anger against His failing people in the Old Testament is often likened to the burning of fire (cf., e.g., Isa. 9:18-19; 10:17). Even this writer could say, with intense metaphorical effect, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

In fact, to think of hell here is to betray inattention to the imagery employed by the author. The burning of a field to destroy the rank growth it had produced was a practice known in ancient times.

Its aim was not the destruction of the field itself (which, of course, the fire could not effect), but the destruction of the unwanted produce of the field. Thereafter the field might be serviceable for cultivation.

Barnes > The allusion here is to the common practice among the Oriental and Roman agriculturists of burning bad and barren lands. An illustration of this is afforded by Pliny. "There are some who burn the stubble on the field, chiefly upon the authority of Virgil; the principal reason for which is, that they may burn the seeds of weeds

Gromacki > "Although this might appear to be a reference to hades or to the lake of fire, it really points to the judgment seat of Christ where a fruitless, wasted life will be examined by fire (John 15:6; I Cor. 3:13)."

Swindoll > We see this sobering teaching confirmed in **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** in reference to a person's labor for the body of Christ, the church, during this life: Now if any man builds on the foundation [of the ... In my opinion, the issue in Hebrews 6, then, as in 1 Corinthians 3, is not related to losing one's eternal salvation, which has been irreversibly bought and paid for by the precious blood of Christ. The issue is related to losing one's heavenly reward.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 > ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³ each one's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test ^[e] the quality of each one's work. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet only so as through fire.

Wuest translation of the last part of verse 8 > *it is rejected and almost cursed, and its end is burning*