

Hebrews 6:1-12

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. 7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

9 Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. 11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Ever since I first read through the Scriptures, I've always found the statement in verses four through six to be one of the most frightening in all of God's Word. "*It is impossible*" doesn't leave any wiggle room. The writer to the Hebrews could have said "it is hard," but instead he wrote that "*it is impossible.*" What is impossible?

It is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

So have you? Have you tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the Holy Spirit and then fallen away? How many of us with any time under our belts as Christians could say that we have not fallen away at some point, in some way, for some reason? So is there hope? Or is it impossible?

Sometimes as a pastor I've had people come to me deeply troubled, wondering if they've committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, if this last sin was the straw that breaks the camel's back, if there was any more forgiveness for them in God's heart of kindness. I know the feeling. As we age and mature, when we look back and earnestly examine and scrutinize some of the things that we've said and done about and to others in our days on this planet, how can any of us with a healthy conscience not be grief stricken? How, we might wonder, can God still love someone like me? We might find it especially difficult to understand because at those times we might find it nigh impossible to love ourselves. The thorns and thistles we've produced sting bitterly. How much they must have stung others as well, and how greatly they must have grieved our God!

But have you read the whole Bible, the whole thing? Look at God's saints you find in it. Look closely. Would you have picked them? Would you have put up with them? They were imperfect men and women, as fallen as any of us. That is not an excuse for disobedience, but that is a consolation for those cut to the heart by an awareness of their own disobedience. Have you committed the sin against the Holy Spirit? If you had, you wouldn't be concerned about it. No,

you still love God. Otherwise you wouldn't be so troubled by the sorrow you have caused Him, and otherwise you would not be concerned with His receiving you back. The father did not turn away the prodigal son, though he had surely in some sense fallen away. The Father will not turn you away when you approach Him repentance as well.

Paul certainly knew the effect his words would have on some of the Hebrews, the soul searching and trembling his statement would work in them. And so he continued to make sure that they would not despair, even as they were deeply contrite. He wrote:

Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things— things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Remember how easily you have fallen, and how prone you are to do so, and let that make you all the more sober and vigilant, determined to stand in the grace in which the Savior has placed you, keenly aware of the dangers of spiritual sluggishness. Cling to the Christ crowned with your thorns all the more firmly in light of your proclivity to stray. But also do not forget that your God is merciful, and that His love for you has been put on full display in our Lord's passion. Imitate those saints of old, who surely stumbled, but nonetheless by God's Spirit and His benevolence pressed on through faith and patience to inherit the promises made to them in our Lord Jesus.