

Hebrews 6:1-8

All through his sermon, the author of Hebrews has been encouraging his readers to press on in the Christian life and to endure to the end.

There are two main issues in this text: **First**, who or what kind of person is described as falling away. **Secondly**, why the situation of apostasy is so serious and dreadful.

Summary

In Hebrews 6:4-8, the author of Hebrews gives the most urgent reason for the believer's growth in the faith: the real and dreadful danger of apostasy.

1. Once Enlightened Revisited vv. 4-6a

The author began with his basic assertion (**Heb. 6:4-6a**). He is not describing his readers themselves. Nevertheless, this is not a merely hypothetical situation.

Whether this points to the means of grace in the church or to the exodus generation of Israel in the desert, this passage describes professors of faith who are within the community of the people of God who experience the benefits of God's blessing in the community without ever personally committing themselves to faith in Christ.

About such people, the author states: "Concerning those who have fallen away ... It is impossible ... to restore them again to repentance" (**Heb. 6:4, 6**).

2. Dreadful Reality vv. 4, 6-8

Heb 6:4-6 are sober words. The statement "it is impossible" is unavoidable.

This means for those who profess faith but then "fall away" by repudiating Christ, "it is impossible to restore them again to repentance" (**Heb. 6:4, 6**).

People fall away by not trusting in the Lord, repudiating His authority and the salvation He offers, and denying Him the worship that He alone deserves.

Why it is impossible to restore such a person? "They are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt" (**Heb. 6:6**).

As long as the gospel goes forth, believers should never despair of its power to save. We do not deny apostasy as a real and terrible matter, nevertheless we should never stop reaching out to others with the gospel, even if they seem to have fallen away in the manner described by this passage.

It is a very serious matter to think of a professing Christian repudiating the Lord but we have the example of Peter as one who did deny Jesus and yet came back to faith and was made the leading apostle. By contrast we have the example of Judas Iscariot who came to the apostasy that resulted in his great betrayal.

Peter failed in his fidelity to Christ, as Christians will and often do, whilst Judas decisively repudiated Christ.

One biblical way to identify positively those who belong to Christ is set out in **Heb 6:7–8** using an illustration. What matters is not whether or not rain falls upon the ground, for God sends rain on the good and the evil (**Matt. 5:45**), just as He does his saving Word. It is the presence of fruit that ultimately reveals things (**Matt. 7:18–20**). True believers can do terrible things (E.g. Peter’s denial) but a good tree that is truly connected to Christ and has the Holy Spirit at work within, will necessarily go on to bear good fruit. The bad tree simply lacks the power to bear lasting fruit unto God, however well watered it may be, whatever its second-hand experience of salvation by virtue of affiliation with the church. Under trial or hardship, it produces only thorns and thistles, and thus it is “worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned” (**Heb. 6:8**).

3. Important Implications

The first important implication is to do with the nature of true and saving faith in Jesus Christ. As important as knowledge of and assent to the Truth is, in the end, it is a personal, hearty, trust in that Truth, who is Christ, that constitutes saving faith. The second important implication is that the test of our faith is the fruit that we bear. The author has been exhorting his readers to press on to maturity, and now he warns them that a failure to do so calls into question the reality of their conversion. How do we know someone is truly converted? Not because he has merely made a profession of faith but because the power of the gospel bears fruit under trial. Thirdly, this text ought to cause us to reflect upon what passes for evangelism today. This passage tells us that evangelism and discipleship can never be separated, just as conversion is manifested and proved only by the bearing of spiritual fruit.

4. Real Assurance

Where should believers look for assurance of salvation?

To the unchanging character of God and the certainty of his promises. To the once-for-all work of Christ which is sufficient to save completely and forever.

It is not yourself or anything you do that assures your salvation, but God, who said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear” (**Heb 13:5-6**).

Assurance is something that comes from the knowledge of God and of his promises, and is thus the result of the exercise of faith. The same is true of security; it is through faith alone that we are ever secure. Therefore, press on in faith, which is the way of perseverance and the route to hope and joy in the Lord.

If you stumble or fall, call out to the Lord who is rich in mercy; he will lift you up.

This is the best way to bring glory to God, to give thanks to the Lord for his great gift of salvation, the way to honor him before the eyes of this world and to make your life worthwhile as you bear fruit; real fruit that will last forever and be a blessing to many.