

# **What Does it Mean in Hebrews 6 Where it Says, “If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance?”**

***By Rev. D. Earl Cripe, Ph.D.***

## ***Those Who Fall Away Cannot Be Renewed Again Unto Repentance***

The first part of Hebrews 6 rehearses the fundamentals of the Gospel. The people being addressed in chapter five have already resolved these fundamentals in their minds. They knew these doctrines. But now, in their weak and defeated condition, they had gone back and had begun to re-examine them, thinking that maybe they were part of their problem.

“Maybe I should go back and re-examine whether I was really saved or not. Maybe I should pray, ‘Lord, if I was never saved before, save me now,’ maybe that will solve my problem.”

“That is not going to help,” the writer says. “That is unbelief and nothing else.” To try to grasp the meaning of his words, I will use an illustration. Let us say that a child is not functioning properly. One day he goes to his mother and says, “Mom, maybe if you stuffed me back in the womb and let me come out all over again, things would be different with me.”

You may say that is a disgusting and repulsive thought. Yes it is, and that is what the writer says about examining the new birth and trying to be renewed to repentance. It is disgraceful and humiliating to Christ and His cross. Like the boy and his mother it is distasteful talk that does not conjure up good images. That is the kind of disreputable stuff we engage in when we talk about the possibility of someone who was once-and-for-all born into the

family of God maybe needing to re-examine the foundations, and maybe needing to be born again, *again*. Discussion about being born again is wonderful talk. But talking about being born again, *again*, that is mockery, it is sacrilege, it is blasphemy and it does not fit the context. In the effort to solve spiritual problems, we are not going to get anywhere going back and re-examining the foundations.

### ***What to Do?***

These were people of God but they were not doing what they should and they had reverted back to the infancy stage. We have established that fact, for our discussions at least, and they cannot lay again the foundation. They have fallen away and they cannot go back and start over again. It is impossible:

**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,**

**Heb 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,**

**Heb 6:6 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.**

These are children of God, they are in a barren and desolate and immature condition, and they cannot be renewed to repentance.. So, what are they going to do now? If these are really children of God and if it is really impossible to renew them again to repentance, is there any solution to the problem?

### ***The Parable of the Field***

There is a solution, and you will see it clearly once you come out of the darkness of legalism and into the light of the new day. The solution is just as simple, the writer says, as looking out the window. There is a field out

there. It is a farmer's field and it should produce something because that is what a field is for.

If that field is plowed and worked up, if it is planted, if it is weeded, if it is watered, it will produce something.

But if a field is not plowed, not seeded, not dressed, and not watered, what will happen? What are you going to find in that field in the harvest season? You are going to find some thistles, some wild water grass, and some other useless stuff. And then someone says, "We've got to get out there and cut those weeds, we've got to have a bonfire around here and get rid of that stuff." Well, of course, that is what happens to a field if it is left unattended.

This illustrates the condition of, and the problem with, a neglected Christian life. Leave it unattended and what will it produce? It will grow some briars, and thistles, and tares. There is nothing to do but to gather those things up and throw them in the fire. They are useless. Nobody wants them. God does not want them. We do not want them.

But to the owner of the field, we have a word of wisdom and knowledge. It is kind of silly sitting around hungry and then having to go out and cut those thistles. It would be less work to go out and water that field, plow it and plant something in it. Then in exchange for your efforts you would get something to eat. Instead of being embarrassed about that field, you could point to it with pride. "Hey, neighbor, look at my beans. They look pretty good, don't they?" Then you could feel good about doing something worthwhile with your field.

### ***Those of Chapter Five Who Had Fallen Away***

That is what one ought to do about a life that has gone to seed because it has been left unattended. Water it, plant something in it, cultivate it, and it will produce fruit. You can count on it. It will do it every time.

So here were these people of chapter five who had fallen away from God. They had lost the confidence of their salvation. They were saying, "Maybe I'm not even born."

The writer of Hebrews replies, "I don't know where you think that's going to get you. I'll tell you what you do. Start doing something with your life. Start watering it, start plowing it, planting something in it, cultivating your Christian character and you will see fruit begin to appear. But you will never get anywhere going back and trying to lay a foundation which has been once and for all laid. It cannot be relayed."

### ***How Many Times Can One Man Be Born Into This World?***

When a child is born into this world, whatever he is and does, he will never be born into this world again. He cannot be; that is all. In spite of strange mystic and eastern concoctions about coming around and around until we finally get it right, you will never be born into this world again and every sensible person knows it.

### ***How Many Times Can One Man Be Born Into the Kingdom Of God?***

The same is true of the family of the Last Adam. One birth is all you get but fortunately one is all you need. The need is not to be renewed again to repentance, it is to get up from where you have fallen and go on. You cannot be renewed again to repentance but fortunately you do not have to be. There common error is in supposing that these people need to be renewed again to repentance. In fact, they do not, even as they cannot be. That is exactly the point of this passage in dealing with the needs of those who have fallen away. This is true on several bases.

### ***What This Passage Does Not Teach***

If, for example, it were talking about people (as some think and teach) that were never Christians, are we going to tell them, "One chance to accept the Lord is all you get. If you pass up that chance the opportunity cannot come to you again, it is impossible?" Does that make any sense? Does anybody believe that? Did you ever hear anybody seriously argue that? You tell somebody the Gospel once and they don't receive it forget them, they had their chance. There is a principle of hardening involved there that we may warn people about but we do not believe that is a conclusive thing. We would never tell unbeliever,

“You had your chance and it is impossible that you can ever have it again.” The warning of this passage does not fit people who are not Children of God

If this passage is talking about derelict Christian (and it is) will you tell them: “If you ever walked with God and then you fell back and your heart was hardened, there is nothing that can be done for you”? And if this is the message, then why bother? If there is nothing that can be done for them what is the point of telling them anything. It is impossible to renew them again. Why give people a lecture about something they cannot do? If these are people who have fallen away and renewing them again to repentance means they cannot get on track and get back with God then this is not only a contradiction to the rest of the Bible but it is an exercise in futility. We are wasting our time. We are spinning our wheels. We are encouraging people to do something and then telling them, “But you cannot do it; you cannot be brought back — but you ought to be. You should get up and go on, but I must to tell you that you cannot because it's impossible.” Do you see how really foolish that approach to this passage is?

### ***What It Does Teach***

So, what is the answer then? The answer is that there is something that the child of God, who has fallen away, cannot do. But it is equally obvious that there is something he can do. He cannot be born into the family of God again. That is impossible. But what he can do is get up from where he has fallen and go on. That is the doctrine and the message of this Scripture.