



# Possible and Impossible

*"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, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 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."*

*Hebrews 6:4-6*

## **Possible and Impossible**

For years many have taught this passage of Scripture as being the unpardonable sin. Because of this theory being advocated the way it has in the past, many precious souls wander on in a lost condition, thinking that all hope has been destroyed. A great number of them desire to serve God, but because of some situation that arose at an unguarded moment (a weakness in their life or a lack of understanding of the devil's devices), they slipped and fell. The enemy was right there, ready to take advantage of them through false teachings, and convinced them that it is now impossible to be restored. What mental anguish it must bring to that individual who has lost step!

I once knew of a brother who felt this way; thus he groped on in sin for years, tormented with the thought that it was impossible to ever get back to God and again enjoy the rich fellowship of His Spirit. Along with this thought also comes the torturing knowledge of having to face death and eternal doom. One day, however, God allowed the light to break through to him, showing the love, compassion, and mercy that He has for those who have slipped away. When the brother recognized this, he returned to God in old-time repentance, was regenerated from above, and today is living a consistent Christian life.

Careful consideration of this text will let us see that our past ideas have not always been. One vitally important point that we need to understand is that most Scripture subjects lie in the light of other Scriptures. When we lift one portion of the Word of God out of its proper setting and endeavor to teach it a certain way, not considering other verses pertaining to the same topic, it can prove to be harmful, and in some cases even make the Bible seem to contradict itself.

For instance, if we say as a rule of thumb that when a Christian falls away, there is no hope for his being renewed again to salvation, then we are, in fact, refuting Christ's own teaching found in the parable of the prodigal son. The Word of God lets us know that the son was a partaker of all the benefits, the riches, and the pleasures of a godly heritage. One day, however, the thought came to his mind that it might be better to be out on his own and away from the influence and restrictions of Father's house.

Therefore, he took his portion of the goods and left; and while he reveled on in sin and rebellion against the father's will, he was unable to be renewed or reconciled. Why? He was enjoying sin, so he thought. Little did he realize it at the time but he was wasting his substance on riotous living and daily crucifying afresh his only hope of reconciliation. As long as he stayed in sin, he was unable to be renewed. Crucifying the Son afresh is refusing to repent of known wrong or sin; and without repentance and faith, God cannot save.

However, when the prodigal son ended up in the hog pen, thank God, he was awakened to his miserable condition, and he saw the awfulness of sin and the only avenue for help. He said, "I will arise and go to my father ..." (Luke 15:18). Here we see that the prodigal was a little more intelligent than some are today. When he was made aware of what had happened to him, he did not try to cover it up or put on a false front, but he simply owned his condition, arose, and then did something about it for the good of his soul. He remembered where he could find peace and joy, and he recalled where there was an abundance of good things to be had; thus he turned and humbled himself.

Next, notice the attitude of the father's heart toward him in verse 20. "But when he was yet a great way off,

his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." In verse 22 we see how quick and willing the father was to forgive the son and then reinstate him as an heir again. This is such a beautiful picture of a great and loving God! All He needs to see working in an individual is a really broken spirit and a repentant heart. Matthew 12:20 tells us, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench."

A long as the son refused to repent and turn back, there was no hope of his restoration. But because he chose to crucify self, mortify the deeds of sin, forsake his own selfish will, and turn back wholeheartedly to God, not only was there hope, but also mercy and pardon were awaiting him. (The same thing awaits you, dear friend, if you are away from God.)

Now let us look at another class of people that fell away, mentioned in Romans 1:18-32. The contrast here is quite different from that of the prodigal son. Even though both classes of people knew God at one time and then fell away, one was renewed to salvation, but the other was not. The reason being the attitude each one held toward the enlightenment that was given their fallen condition. That still plays a very important role in man's salvation yet today.

The Scripture lets us know that the people in Romans went on to commit greater and greater abominations in God's sight. We see a society who, when they knew God, did not want to glorify Him as God. No doubt, these individuals went right on holding a profession of godliness, saying, "We are God's people too," but, in reality, the fruit and the power of His Spirit had gone out of their lives, thus bringing a reproach on the cause of Christ to an on-looker world. Romans 1:32 tells the latter end of these apostates and the deplorable depth to which they fell, saying, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

These men and women not only refused God and His commandments, but worse than that, they found pleasure in their disobedience. Therefore, it would be impossible to renew this type of individual to repentance, seeing he daily crucifies the Son of God afresh, putting Him to an open shame, and doing it with joy. This is what can stir the wrath of God to the place of completely cutting off people for time and eternity.

God's plan for mankind has always been that he might be saved. We find in 2 Peter 3:9 that He "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." In Ezekiel 18:23 we read of God's attitude toward the lost when He said, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? ... and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" Along with God's desire for men and women to be saved, He also desires to have people be victorious in their daily living, always abounding in the love of God and the work of the kingdom.

We understand that although God's program calls for triumphant, holy living, it is not impossible for an individual to fall from grace. If a heavy trial invades his life, causing him to fall, and he, through discouragement, gives the battle over to the enemy, this does not necessarily mean the end. It is very possible for him to be renewed to salvation. You see, God takes into consideration the circumstances and the conditions that caused the fall. In other words, the Lord looks on the heart, and He can also see the potential of the individual. Therefore, He has made a way whereby the backslider can be restored if he so desires. Because God has made a way for the fallen individual to be reclaimed, He by no means intends for men and women to perpetually fall away, presuming that the grace of God will always be there to forgive. God wants people to be strong and also useful in winning others to Christ.

The Apostle Paul exhorted us with these words found in Colossians 1:10-11: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Man's restoration then depends greatly on his attitude toward his sin and toward God. If the attitude of his heart is sorrow and remorse for the committed wrong, if he is willing to humble himself and ask forgiveness, God will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7 speaks these words, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

God is ready to save the man and woman who have slipped away if they will only turn back to Him. God, however, leaves the choice up to each individual whether or not he wants to serve Him. In Deuteronomy 30:19 we read, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against a you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." The thought of apostasy or backsliding should be greatly feared. The danger in falling away may result in those ones never being awakened and getting back. Thus they die lost, forever.

Our earnest prayer is that if you are away from God, you will be awakened today and turn back to Him before it is too late.

F.W.B.

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