

# ***In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews Jesus, the Anchor of the Soul***

Lesson #7 for February 12, 2022

Scriptures: Hebrews 6:4-6,9-13,17-20; 10:26-29; Matthew 16:24; Romans 6:6.

1. In our lesson for this week, Paul had been talking about the high-priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. He had introduced the subject of Melchizedek; but, then, he took an interlude.

**Hebrews 5:11-6:3:** <sup>11</sup>There is much we have to say about this matter, but it is hard to explain to you, because you are so slow to understand. <sup>12</sup>There has been enough time for you to be teachers—yet you still need someone to teach you the first lessons of God’s message. **Instead of eating solid food, you still have to drink milk.** <sup>13</sup>Anyone who has to drink milk is still a child, without any experience in the matter of right and wrong. <sup>14</sup>**Solid food, on the other hand, is for adults, who through practice are able to distinguish between good and evil.**

<sup>6:1</sup> **Let us go forward, then, to mature teaching** and leave behind us the first lessons of the Christian message. We should not lay again the foundation of turning away from useless works and believing in God; <sup>2</sup>of the teaching about baptisms and the laying on of hands; of the resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgement. <sup>3</sup>Let us go forward! And this is what we will do, if God allows.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Hebrews 5:11-6:3). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].<sup>†</sup>

2. As we have discussed, Paul did not give a lot of information about his audience. However, he wrote that there was a lot more that he would like to say; but, he could not. And why not? **Those hearers had become dull of hearing.** They should have been bright and sharp and ready to teach others; however, **they still needed to go over the simple basic truths of Christianity.** Paul wished they were ready to deal with the high-priestly ministry of Christ and the subject of Melchizedek; but, apparently, they were not.
3. Then, Paul picked up an even more difficult problem. **Some of his hearers were apparently actually backsliding and apostatizing from their Christian beliefs.** There are two key passages which describe that unfortunate situation. Let us read them and later consider them in depth.

**Hebrews 6:4-6:** <sup>4</sup>For how can those who abandon their faith be brought back to repent again? They were once in God’s light; they tasted heaven’s gift and received their share of the Holy Spirit; <sup>5</sup>they knew from experience that God’s word is good, and they had felt the powers of the coming age. <sup>6</sup>And then they abandoned their faith! **It is impossible to bring them back to repent again, because they are again crucifying the Son of God and exposing him to public shame.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

Now, in the *King James Version*:

**Hebrews 6:4-6:** 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, <sup>5</sup> And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, <sup>6</sup> **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.—*The Holy Bible: King James Version*.<sup>\*</sup> (2009). (Electronic

**Hebrews 10:26-29:** <sup>26</sup> For there is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been made known to us. <sup>27</sup> Instead, all that is left is to wait in fear for the coming Judgement and the fierce fire which will destroy those who oppose God! <sup>28</sup> Anyone who disobeys the Law of Moses is put to death without any mercy when judged guilty on the evidence of two or more witnesses. <sup>29</sup> What, then, of those who despise the Son of God? who treat as a cheap thing the blood of God's covenant which purified them from sin? who insult the Spirit of grace? Just think how much worse is the punishment they will deserve!—*Good News Bible*.\*†

4. Read superficially in an older English version like the *King James Version*, these passages could be very troubling. Is it really true that if one accepts Christianity and then falls away, that there is no possibility for him/her to come back? Is his/her fate sealed? Is s/he certain to perish in the final fires at the third coming?
5. If we all understood *Koine* Greek and the careful wording that Paul used, we would not have this problem. Again, notice the description of these people.

**Hebrews 6:4-5:** They were once in God's light; they tasted heaven's gift and received their share of the Holy Spirit; they knew from experience that God's word is good, and they had felt the powers of the coming age.—*Good News Bible*.\*

6. In Hebrews 10:29 (*GNB*\*), Paul described these people in other terms as “those who despise the Son of God” and those “who treated us a cheap thing the blood of God's covenant which purified them from sin;” and Paul said they “insult the Spirit of grace.”
7. Could this be a danger for Christians, even Seventh-day Adventists, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is it easy for us to become discouraged because of trials and temptations and just the day-to-day challenges of living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What do we know about those people and the expressions which Paul used to describe them?

**To have been “enlightened” means to have experienced conversion (*Heb. 10:32*).** It refers to those who have turned from the “darkness” of the power of Satan to the “light” of God (*Acts 26:17, 18*). It implies deliverance from sin (*Eph. 5:11*) and ignorance (*1 Thess. 5:4, 5*). The verbal form here suggests that this enlightening is an act of God achieved through Jesus, “the brightness of His glory” (*Heb. 1:3, NKJV*).

**To “have tasted the heavenly gift” and “have become partakers of the Holy Spirit” (*NKJV*) are synonymous expressions.** The “gift” of God may refer to His grace (*Rom. 5:15*) or to the Holy Spirit, through whom God imparts that grace (*Acts 2:38*). Those who have “tasted” the Holy Spirit (*John 7:37–39, 1 Cor. 12:13*) have experienced the “grace” of God, which includes the power to fulfill His will (*Gal. 5:22, 23*).

**To taste “the goodness of the word of God” (*Heb. 6:5, ESV*) is to experience personally the truth of the gospel (*1 Pet. 2:2, 3*).** “The powers of the age to come” refers to the miracles God will perform for believers in the future: resurrection (*John 5:28, 29*), transformation of our bodies, and eternal life. Believers, however, are beginning to “taste” them in the present. They have experienced a spiritual resurrection (*Col. 2:12*,

13), a renewed mind (*Rom. 12:2*), and eternal life in Christ (*John 5:24*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sunday, February 6.<sup>†§</sup>

8. Paul was probably thinking about the Israelites, having come out of Egypt; he called them *the wilderness generation*. They had experienced many things from God's hand. For light by night and a shadow by day, they had the pillar of cloud and fire. (*Nehemiah 9:12,19*; *Psalm 105:39*) They certainly had enjoyed heaven's gift of water from the rock and manna every morning. (*Exodus 16:15*) They had been guided by God Himself; with the help of the Holy Spirit, (*Nehemiah 9:20*) they had tasted the "good word of God." (*Joshua 21:45*) Think of all the miracles from God they had witnessed in Egypt, when they were delivered from Egyptian slavery, and in the wilderness. However, despite all that, as we know, that older generation from age 20 and older repeatedly rebelled against God in the wilderness and ended up dying there. **Paul was certainly hoping that something similar would not be the experience of the friends to whom he was writing.**

9. In *Romans 6:6*, Paul suggested:

**Romans 6:6:** And we know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin.—*Good News Bible*.\*

10. How does that actually happen? We were not there 2000 years ago. None of us have experienced actual crucifixion. Paul expressed a similar idea in *Galatians 5:24*.

**Galatians 5:24:** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires.—*Good News Bible*.\*<sup>†</sup>

The original text in Greek emphasizes the word "impossible." It is impossible for God to restore those who have "fallen away" because "they are crucifying once again the Son of God" (*Heb. 6:6, ESV*). Paul wants to stress that *there is no other way of salvation except through Christ* (*Acts 4:12*). Salvation by any other means is as impossible as it is "for God to lie" (*Heb. 6:18*) or to please God "without faith" (*Heb. 11:6*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Monday, February 7.<sup>†§</sup>

11. What do these images bring up in your mind? What does it mean to "crucify again the Son of God"? Think of what the religious leaders did to Jesus. He posed a threat to their supremacy and their autonomy. By getting Him condemned and crucifying Him, they believed they would get Him out of the way. He was regarded as a powerful and dangerous enemy. And what about us? Does the gospel challenge our sovereignty and self-determination? What did Jesus mean when He said that we should "take up the cross"? And what about denying ourselves? What does it mean to "carry a cross" today?

12. If we have been following the Christian way for some time, how can we be sure that we have experienced this death to self?

13. In *Romans 6:1-11*, Paul attempted to describe that experience in some detail.

**Romans 6:4:** By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life.—*Good News Bible*.\*

[Reading again] **Romans 6:6:** And we know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin.—*Good News Bible*.\*<sup>†</sup>

14. What kind of change did you experience when you were baptized? Do you remember that event in any detail? It is something which may have happened many years ago. Did you feel any different? However, what is happening in your life as a Christian today? Do we honestly recognize that following Christ is a hand-to-hand struggle to the death? (Romans 8:7-8; Galatians 5:17)

**Matthew 16:24:** Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

15. What did the words “carry his cross” or “take up the cross” mean to the disciples when Jesus first spoke them? They certainly had no idea what was coming! Remember that even during the last supper, they were arguing among themselves about who would be in the highest position in the new kingdom they believed Jesus was going to set up! In our day, people re-enact the carrying of the cross up the *via Dolorosa* all the way to Calvary every Easter season. Do they do that in an attempt to impress God?

16. In order to emphasize his absolute conviction that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, Paul contrasted that salvation with the offering of sacrifices in the Old Testament.

**Hebrews 10:1-14:** <sup>1</sup>The Jewish Law is not a full and faithful model of the real things; it is only a faint outline of the good things to come. The same sacrifices are offered for ever, [*sic*] year after year. How can the Law, then, by means of these sacrifices make perfect the people who come to God? <sup>2</sup>**If the people worshipping God had really been purified from their sins, they would not feel guilty of sin any more, and all sacrifices would stop.** [Did any of them actually stop sinning?] <sup>3</sup>As it is, however, **the sacrifices serve year after year to remind people of their sins.** <sup>4</sup>**For the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins.**

<sup>5</sup>For this reason, when Christ was about to come into the world, he said to God:

“You do not want sacrifices and offerings,  
but you have prepared a body for me.

<sup>6</sup>**You are not pleased with animals burnt whole on the altar  
or with sacrifices to take away sins.**

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, ‘Here I am,  
to do your will, O God,  
just as it is written of me in the book of the Law.’ ”

<sup>8</sup>First he said, “You neither want nor are you pleased with sacrifices and offerings or with animals burnt on the altar and the sacrifices to take away sins.” He said this even though all these sacrifices are offered according to the Law. [And those laws were given by God!] <sup>9</sup>Then he said, “Here I am, O God, to do your will.” So God does away with all the old sacrifices and puts the sacrifice of Christ in their place. <sup>10</sup>**Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, we are all purified from sin by the offering that he made of his own body once and for all.**

<sup>11</sup>Every Jewish priest performs his services every day and offers the same sacrifices many times; but **these sacrifices can never take away sins.** [How should we explain Leviticus 17:11?] <sup>12</sup>Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective for ever, [*sic*] and then he sat down at the right-hand side of God. <sup>13</sup>There he now waits until God puts his enemies as a footstool under his feet. <sup>14</sup>With one sacrifice, then, he has

made perfect for ever [*sic*] those who are purified from sin.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*††</sup>

17. He then followed that passage with the words recorded in Hebrews 10:26-29 which we read earlier.

**Hebrews 10:26-29:** <sup>26</sup>For there is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins **if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been made known to us.** <sup>27</sup>Instead, all that is left is to wait in fear for the coming Judgement and the fierce fire which will destroy those who oppose God! <sup>28</sup>**Anyone who disobeys the Law of Moses is put to death without any mercy** when judged guilty on the evidence of two or more witnesses. <sup>29</sup>What, then, of **those who despise the Son of God? who treat as a cheap thing the blood of God's covenant which purified them from sin? who insult the Spirit of grace?** Just think how much worse is the punishment they will deserve!—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup> [Was Paul trying to scare them?]<sup>‡</sup>

18. Notice that it does not say that there is no way for sin to be forgiven. It says that those who are described as trampling underfoot the Son of God, profaning the blood of the covenant, and outraging the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:29) cannot expect to be accepted by God into heaven. Once again, let us notice these expressions:

**The expression “trampled the Son of God underfoot” (*Heb. 10:29, NKJV*) describes the rejection of Jesus’ rule.** The title “Son of God” reminded the audience that God has installed Jesus at His right hand and promised to make His enemies “a footstool” for His feet (*Heb. 1:13; see also Heb. 1:5-12, 14, ESV*). **The trampling of Jesus underfoot implies that the apostate has treated Jesus as an enemy.** In the context of the argument of the epistle (*Heb. 1:13*), it could be implied that, **as far as the life of the apostate is concerned, Jesus has been taken off the throne (which is occupied now by the apostate himself) and set as the footstool instead.** This is what Lucifer wanted to do in heaven (*Isa. 14:12-14*) and what the “lawless one” would attempt to do in the future (*2 Thess. 2:3, 4, NRSV*).

The expression “has profaned the blood of the covenant” refers to the rejection of Jesus’ sacrifice (*Heb. 9:15-22*). It implies that the blood of Jesus is devoid of cleansing power.

The expression “insulted the Spirit of grace” is very powerful. The Greek term *enybrisas* (“insult, outrage”) involves the manifestation of hubris, which refers to “insolence” or “arrogance.” This term stands in stark contrast to the description of the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of grace.” It implies that the apostate has responded to God’s offer of grace with an insult.

**The apostate is in an untenable position. He rejects Jesus, His sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Tuesday, February 8.<sup>†§</sup>

19. But, after all those stern words, Paul talked about better things. He used the illustration of barren land that receives rain and sunshine and then bears good fruit.

20. Hebrews 6:9-12 describes what Paul meant.

**Hebrews 6:9-12:** <sup>9</sup>But even if we speak like this, dear friends, we feel sure about you. We know that you have the better blessings that belong to your salvation. <sup>10</sup>God is not unfair. He will not forget **the work you did or the love you showed for him in the help you gave and are still giving to your fellow-Christians.** <sup>11</sup>Our great desire is that each of you keep up your eagerness to the end, so that the things you hope for will come true. <sup>12</sup>We do not want you to become lazy, but to be like those who believe and are patient, and so receive what God has promised.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

21. Paul was not talking about one-time events in someone's life.

Believers show their love toward God's "name," that is, toward God Himself, by their service to the saints. **These were not isolated actions in the past, but sustained actions that have extended into the present.** Exceptional acts do not reveal the true character of a person. **The weightiest evidence of love toward God is not "religious" acts per say, [sic] but acts of love toward fellow human beings, especially those who are disadvantaged** (*Matt. 10:42, Matt. 25:31-46*). Thus, Paul exhorts believers not to "forget" to do good (*Heb. 13:2, 16*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Wednesday, February 9.†‡§

22. Faith, as James and Paul said, is alive and active when it is exercised toward others. **Faith in God will be expressed by love toward our fellow human beings.**

23. Paul had already described what he believed was the lack of faith by the Israelites traveling in the wilderness as recorded in the book of Numbers. (Note that the book of Numbers has been called the book of "Rebellion.") By contrast, he turned to talk about Abraham (*Hebrews 6:13-15*) as the great example of faith in the Old Testament. He went on to describe in *Hebrews 11* a very interesting list of those who exercised faith and climaxed with *Hebrews 12:1-4*, the example of Jesus Himself.

**Hebrews 12:1-4:** <sup>1</sup>As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses round us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and **let us run with determination the race that lies before us.** <sup>2</sup>**Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus,** on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne. [Didn't Satan recognize that if Jesus died without sinning or giving up in any way, the great controversy was over for him? That was a life and death moment for Satan! Jesus also knew what was involved. What do you think was going through His mind during those final minutes?]

<sup>3</sup>Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up. <sup>4</sup>For in your struggle against sin **you have not yet had to resist to the point of being killed.**—*Good News Bible*.\*††

24. The apostle John reminded us in *Revelation 14:12* that this calls for endurance on the part of God's people, those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to Jesus.

25. Are there times when it is necessary for us to speak out against our fellow believers when they are having a lack of faith or misrepresenting God?

26. In Hebrews 6:17-20, Paul talked about how God makes sure that we accept His offers.

**Hebrews 6:17-20:** <sup>17</sup>To those who were to receive what he promised, God wanted to make it very clear that he would never change his purpose; so he added his vow to the promise. <sup>18</sup>There are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie. So we who have found safety with him are greatly encouraged to hold firmly to the hope placed before us. <sup>19</sup>**We have this hope as an anchor for our lives. It is safe and sure, and goes through the curtain of the heavenly temple into the inner sanctuary.** <sup>20</sup>**On our behalf Jesus has gone in there before us, and has become a high priest for ever, [sic] in the priestly order of Melchizedek.—Good News Bible.\*††**

27. Notice especially that the final passage says Jesus has “gone in there before us,” implying that we are to follow. That is what we learn from John 16:25-27.

**John 16:25-27:** <sup>25</sup> [Jesus said:] “I have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will **not** use figures of speech, but **will speak to you plainly about the Father.** <sup>26</sup>**When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and I do not say [Notice the word not which many leave out as they read this passage since the word *not* does not match their paradigm!] that I will ask him on your behalf,** <sup>27</sup>**for the Father himself loves you.** He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.”—*Good News Bible.\*††* [Does that nullify all the work of priests in the Old Testament? What about priests today?]<sup>‡</sup>

28. Do you have any trouble accepting God’s guarantee of His promises? Are you inclined to doubt? In Hebrews 6:17, God guaranteed His promise with an oath, and He illustrated from experiences in the Old Testament. In Exodus 32:11-14, Moses reminded God of the promise He had made to the descendants of Abraham recorded in Genesis 22:16-18.

**Genesis 22:16-18:** <sup>16</sup>“**I make a vow by my own name—the LORD is speaking—that I will richly bless you. Because you did this and did not keep back your only son from me,** <sup>17</sup>**I promise that I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the seashore. Your descendants will conquer their enemies.** <sup>18</sup>**All the nations will ask me to bless them as I have blessed your descendants—all because you obeyed my command.**”—*Good News Bible.\*†*

29. In his discussion of the gospel as addressed to the churches of Galatia, Paul said:

**Galatians 3:13-16:** <sup>13</sup>But by becoming a curse for us Christ has redeemed us from the curse that the Law brings; for the scripture says, “Anyone who is hanged on a tree is under God’s curse.” <sup>14</sup>**Christ did this in order that the blessing which God promised to Abraham might be given to the Gentiles by means of Christ Jesus, so that through faith we might receive the Spirit promised by God.**

<sup>15</sup>My brothers and sisters, I am going to use an everyday example: when two people agree on a matter and sign an agreement, no one can break it or add anything to it. <sup>16</sup>**Now, God made his promises to Abraham and to his descendant. The scripture does not use the plural “descendants”, [sic] meaning many people, but the singular “descendant”, [sic]**

**meaning one person only, namely, Christ.—Good News Bible.\*††**

30. Paul wanted us to understand very clearly that the gospel is not only for Jews or descendants of Abraham but also for anyone who has faith. (Galatians 3:28-29) As Paul described, that promise is to be fulfilled through Jesus Christ Himself.
31. God has also guaranteed His promises to us by accepting Jesus back into heaven and seating Him on the right hand of power. The fact that Jesus was able to ascend to heaven after living as a human being proves that the offering of salvation is open to all of us.
32. **Jesus accomplished what Satan said was impossible.** Furthermore, as we have noted previously, He answered the questions and refuted the accusations Satan has made against God from the very beginning. God's honor has been called into question; but, God's reputation has been upheld by the resurrection of Christ and His seating at the right hand of the Father.
33. Do these promises with oaths encourage you? How do you feel about the fact that God has made a promise to you?
34. We should never underestimate the issues and challenges in the great controversy. Even on a personal level, sacrificing self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus Christ is never going to be easy. Satan will do everything he possibly can to defeat anyone who tries to do that.

**The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*\* 43.3.†**

**John desired to become like Jesus, and under the transforming influence of the love of Christ he did become meek and lowly. Self was hid in Jesus. Above all his companions, John yielded himself to the power of that wondrous life....**

**It was John's deep love for Christ which led him always to desire to be close by His side. The Saviour loved all the Twelve, but John's was the most receptive spirit. He was younger than the others, and with more of the child's confiding trust he opened his heart to Jesus. Thus he came more into sympathy with Christ, and through him the Saviour's deepest spiritual teaching was communicated to the people....**

**The beauty of holiness which had transformed him [John] shone with a Christlike radiance from his countenance. In adoration and love he beheld the Saviour until likeness to Christ and fellowship with Him became his one desire, and in his character was reflected the character of his Master.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*\* 544.2-545.2.††**

35. For a challenging comparison of the experience of John, the beloved, with the experience of Judas, the traitor, read *Acts of the Apostles* 539-545 and *Desire of Ages* 716-722.
36. John was not always a faithful, obedient, humble follower of Jesus. Remember that he was one of the sons of thunder.
37. **Judas had some important traits that could have been helpful to the cause of God;** however, he allowed his greed and his envy of Jesus to overwhelm all his good intentions. Why do you think it is necessary for such a total surrender in order to serve God?



38. From our study this week, we can conclude that, at one time, the members of this group that Paul was addressing had a good experience with God. They had apparently been enlightened; they had tasted the heavenly gift; they had shared in the Holy Spirit; they had tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come. (NRSV) But, then, the reaction set in. Some of them were apostatizing.
39. Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29 have been misunderstood for centuries. Many people have thought that once one turns away from being a Christian, s/he can never go back.
40. Interestingly enough, as a result of that idea, some people have delayed their baptism until just before they think they will die so there is not the possibility of apostasy!
41. The experience of Peter in the upper room and at the trial of Jesus gives us a good example of how God chooses to work with His faithful children.

**Matthew 26:69-75:** <sup>69</sup> Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when one of the High Priest's servant women came to him and said, "You, too, were with Jesus of Galilee."

<sup>70</sup> But he denied it in front of them all. "I don't know what you are talking about," he answered, <sup>71</sup>and went on out to the entrance of the courtyard. Another servant woman saw him and said to the men there, "He was with Jesus of Nazareth."

<sup>72</sup> Again Peter denied it and answered, "I swear that I don't know that man!"

<sup>73</sup> After a little while the men standing there came to Peter. "Of course you are one of them," they said. "After all, the way you speak gives you away!"

<sup>74</sup> Then Peter said, "I swear that I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I do not know that man!"

Just then a cock crowed, <sup>75</sup>and Peter remembered what Jesus had told him: "Before the cock crows, you will say three times that you do not know me."

**He [Peter] went out and wept bitterly.**—*Good News Bible* ††

42. After Paul described the initial Christian experiences of those addressees, some of them had fallen away. What does *fallen away* mean? Do you know of anyone who has fallen away? How can we avoid that from happening to us?
43. Let us take a moment to try to describe some details in Greek that can lead us to better understand these passages in these two chapters in Hebrews.

Now that we understand what the audience of Hebrews experienced, let us now turn to examining the notion of the impossibility of repentance in Hebrews 6:4-6. **We need to be somewhat technical in our approach. All five metaphors mentioned above are verbal adjectives (participles) in Greek. They are all in the past tense (aorist), a tense describing an action in the past. The actions are intrinsically terminal. The chain of participles describes one and the same group of people. Thus, this part of the audience has gone from being "enlightened" to "apostatizing," thereby encountering the whole range of religious experiences some time ago.**

The last part of Hebrews 6:6 employs a second block of participles ("again crucify" and "put Him to open shame" in Hebrews 6:6, NASB). [sic] This time Paul uses the **present tense** participles. **He suddenly switches from the past (aorist) tense to the present tense, which expresses action as being in process. What does that denote? The present tense**

represents action as it develops, which is happening at the time of speaking. Both of these participles describe apostasy in the present tense. Thus, the action is seen as a crime that prevents the renewal unto repentance because it makes the apostate an enemy of Christ. He or she crucifies the Son of God again and puts Him to open shame in an ongoing manner. What does that suggest? To shame Christ is to reenact the crucifixion. This reenactment shows the devastating and continuing impact of apostasy in those who once were enlightened. They cannot be restored to repentance because of the present, ongoing attitude they have toward Christ. Their actions describe both the cause of apostasy and the ongoing attitude of the apostate. By rejecting Christ, the apostate embraces the impossibility of repentance....

In summary, **Hebrews 6:4-6** makes clear that the audience encountered **the whole range of religious experiences from conversion to apostasy**. What made it impossible for some of them to be renewed to repentance was their attitude of shaming Christ and thus reenacting the crucifixion process. Basically, this attitude amounted to declaring Christ as their enemy. However, with an attitude of humble repentance, such as Peter's, forgiveness is always possible. The Advocate Christ Jesus is willing to renew us to repentance.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 95-96.††

44. How would you respond to someone who approached you and read one of these passages and claimed that it was impossible for someone who had left the church to come back? What can we do as individuals and as a corporate church body to encourage those who have been tempted to slip away? And what can we do to convince those who have left to come back?

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