

Prospects For Apostates

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakes of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

There are at least two passages in Hebrews which should strike terror to the hearts of any apostate: the passage cited above and a similar one in Hebrew 10:26-31. These passages are cause for sober reflection to any believer in Christ Jesus.

The warning of the present text reads *"as touching those who were once enlightened."* To be enlightened is to have come to an understanding of Christ's teaching and by inference, to also become a disciple, a saved one. Peter, in his second letter, spoke of similar fallen believers: *"For if after they have escaped the defilement's of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse than the beginning"* (2 Pet. 2:20).

We have written, *"by inference ... a saved one"* which inference is borne out when the writer states the *"enlightened one"* has *"tasted of the heavenly gift."* To *"taste"* means to experience, to know first hand. The Psalmist urged, *"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good"* (Ps. 34:8). Jesus promised His apostles that some would not *"taste of death"* until the kingdom came (Mk. 9:1). Earlier the Hebrew letter states that Jesus *"tasted of death"* for every man (Heb. 2:9). To taste the heavenly gift is to experience it. What is this heavenly gift the Hebrews tasted of? Commentaries differ. Barnes acknowledges it can be a special favor bestowed on a sincere Christian. McKnight opines it is *"freedom from the yoke of the Law."* Another suggests it is to partake of the Lord's supper; another concludes it is the Holy Spirit. It seems evident that the next phrase *"and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit"* implies that the heavenly gift was something aside from the gift of the Holy Spirit. The *"heavenly gift"* is a gift which comes from heaven. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, *"If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"* (Jn. 4:10). The Bible's golden text declares, *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son"* (Jn. 3:16). Paul wrote, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life"* (Rom. 6:23). Whatever else this heavenly gift involved; remission of

sins, salvation was obviously part of it. Calvinists are reluctant to acknowledge this: such flaws their doctrine of "once saved, always saved."

"And were made partakers of the Holy Spirit." To partake is a synonym for *"taste;"* both indicate one experiences or shares in the thing tasted or partaken of. In this instance those of whom the Hebrew writer wrote had been *"partakers of the Holy Spirit."* Is this *"the gift of the Holy Spirit"* of Acts 2:38 or one of the spiritual gifts of 1 Cor. 12? Certainly either is possible. It seems the writer indicates these of whom he wrote shared to the fullest extent all the blessings of first century Christians and which would include the supernatural gifts bestowed by the laying on of apostolic hands. It would brand "unretrievable" anyone who had received and exercised one of the nine gifts who, by his apostasy, denied the power he had experienced.

"And tasted the good word of God." This could refer to the goodness of the thing taught or to experience the blessings the taught word conferred. Such ones knew first hand *"the good word of God:"* knew first hand God's assurances and promises were true. He had seen unfolded that God's word is quick and powerful. It was no "hearsay" with him. *"And of the powers of the age to come."* This phrase is joined to the preceding one, thus it is clear that the writer means these *"tasted"* the powers of the age to come, just as they had *"tasted"* the good word of God, the Holy Spirit and the heavenly gift. The expression *"the last days"* refers to the Messianic age -- our present time; but *"the world (age) to come"* refers to heaven. Those who sacrifice for His kingdom shall receive eternal life *"in the age to come"* (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:3). Men marry in our present age, but in that world are as the angels (Lk. 20:34f). Thus, those who tasted of the powers of the age to come had a foretaste of what awaits the faithful child of God. NEXT: "And Then Fell Away."

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