

APOSTASY AND ITS AWFUL CONSEQUENCES! PART 3

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Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:38 &39

“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, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 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.” “38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

We return to our study on the subject of apostasy. The title to my series is, “**Apostasy and Its Awful Consequences!**” This is part 3. We remind you again that this is not an easy message to preach because of its contents and consequences, nonetheless, we must preach on what I believe God has put in my heart. We emphasize again that preaching on apostasy is a solemn and sobering warning to nominal Christianity that permeates many churches in our day. Many church pews are filled with mere professors who are lost and dead in their trespasses and sins. The Word of God deals with this subject in careful detail with such clarity and with firmness in such a fearful warning, so that no one is without excuse. Thus, this is a fearful and sobering message to which I hope you take heed to its warning. Remember we have labored also to convey to you the importance of taking heed to the things which you have heard lest at any time they slip away, both to the lost and saved.

I want to remind you again that we came to this fearful and terrifying topic, again, because of the news we heard regarding ex-Baptist preacher Bruce Gerencer, posted on the internet site, Debunking Christianity. I must emphasize again that my attack is not against Bruce Gerencer, which I personally know and preached at his church in Ohio, years ago, I can even tell you what I preached at his church about 17 years ago, it was from Proverbs 28:13, *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”* Yes, that’s right the same message I preached last week on ‘Covering or Confession of Sin.’

Bruce Gerencer in his own words attacks the Word of God and Christianity, yea, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Of his own volition he has renounced the Bible and Christianity. Listen to his own words again, *“All told I was a preacher for 33 years. I pastored churches for 25 of those 33 years...I entered the ministry as a fundamentalist independent Baptist. I believed the King James Bible was the inerrant, inspired, infallible, perfect Word of God. I believed my calling in life was to win as many souls as possible and build a church up for the glory of God...I left the ministry as a tired, worn out, abused preacher. I’ve come to the conclusion that the Bible, as great of a book as it is, is not the inerrant, inspired word of God. At best, the Bible is a spiritual guide and a book of mythical stories written by men thousands of years ago. It is not a book that is overly relevant to the world that we live in today. The stories make for great reading but they offer little real practical wisdom for moderns in a 21st-century. Since I do not believe the Bible to be the Word of*

God, and I no longer embrace the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith, I am no longer a Christian...My deconversion came at the moment where I finally admitted to myself that I no longer believed the Bible to be the word of God...These days I call myself an agnostic. I do not know if a god exists or not." By his own testimony he willingly and knowingly renounces God, the Bible, and the Christian Faith which makes him an apostate!

What I am about to share with you this morning, I share in love by warning every one of you who professes to be a Christian of the importance of persevering unto the end, because I don't want anyone to make shipwreck of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Bruce Gerencer, by his own testimony willingly and knowingly renounced, yea departed from God, departed from the Bible, and the Christian Faith which makes him an apostate! This is the definition of an apostate which the Bible so clearly identifies: I John 2:19, "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*"

Any student of the book of Hebrews realizes that this book deals specifically with this subject. The book of Hebrews is written with 5 serious warnings against apostasy. Remember many Jews had made professions of faith in believing on Jesus Christ, but when persecution arose many were reverting or going back to Judaism. The book of Hebrews has stern warnings against those who would renounce their faith in Jesus Christ, one is found in Heb.3:12 "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*"

Now, it is the third warning in the book of Hebrews we are considering which begins in chapter 5:11 all the way to chapter 6:8. In this text Paul sets forth two heart wrenching phrases: In verse 4, "***For it is impossible...***" and in verse 6, "***...to renew them again unto repentance...***" It's the damning dagger of dreadful condemnation without any hope of salvation: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW AGAIN!!!!!!

We must all understand very clearly that apostasy is a conscious or cognizant willful falling away or departing from Christ and His gospel. Apostasy is an intentional and deliberate denial and abandonment, a complete renunciation of Jesus Christ, God and the Bible to which it is an unforgivable sin, perhaps the unpardonable sin. This is what Bruce Gerencer has consciously done. There 5 specific things Paul mentions regarding those who apostatized:

1. They were once enlightened.
2. They tasted of the heavenly gift.
3. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.
4. They tasted the good word of God.
5. They tasted the powers of the world to come.

We need to be reminded again this morning that a person can experience all of these 5 things and yet apostatized from the faith. If this does not bring fear to your heart, you are more than likely dead in trespasses and sins. This is not some subject you put under a carpet or a subject that you disregard as being unimportant. It is very real and relevant to our everyday life. If Judas apostatized what makes you so self-assured? Judas walked with Christ for 3 years, saw all His miracles and even performed miracles himself, heard the prayers of Christ, His yearnings and compassion for sinners and at the end sells Him for 30 pieces of silver. What will you sell Christ for, family, friends, job security or you fill in the blank? May God stir up your heart, yea, even your conscience to see where you stand before God this morning?

We have already dealt with the first one, that is, those who were once enlightened. Go listen to that message on sermonaudio.com and you can even download my notes with that message; we need to get to the other four things that Paul mentions in our text this morning.

In verse 4 he says, *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift...”* The second thing Paul uses in describing these apostates is that they have tasted of the heavenly gift, thus, not only were these apostates enlightened but they also tasted of the heavenly gift. The writer changes from light to food, that is, to taste. They have tasted of the heavenly gift. To taste gives the idea of a personal experience, they tasted the heavenly gift. By tasting means that they did not digest, but merely tasted of the heavenly gift. What is the meaning of the heavenly gift? There are two basic interpretations: (1) It's speaking of Jesus Christ. (2) It's speaking of the Holy Spirit. I don't have time to deal with all the intricacies of this; but I take the position that is referring to Jesus Christ, with heavenly referring to faith or believing and gift speaking of Christ. John 3:16, and to the woman at the well Christ told her in John 4:10, *“Jesus answered and said unto her, 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.”* Thus, Jesus Christ is considered a heavenly gift, He came from heaven and the Father gave His only begotten Son for the salvation of His people. Now, by no means can we be dogmatic about this interpretation because the Holy Spirit is also a gift and from heaven also. We must also understand that a person can taste of Christ without digesting Him. The word tasted here in Hebrews 6:4 means to taste literally with the mouth. Salvation is not just a tasting of Jesus Christ, but of a complete digesting of HIM! There are many this morning in the churches throughout America that only taste of Christ. They need more than a tasting, they need to eat and digest Christ in the fullness of His person. There is no doubt in my mind that the writer had a contrast in mind, that is, a tasting in contrast to eating of Christ. Turn with to John chapter 6, before we read in John 6, listen to what is said in John 4:31-33. Here we see that Christ uses the word, eat, in a symbolic way, the disciples taught He was speaking of physical food, but Christ is speaking of doing the will of the Father, *“But he said unto them, **I have meat to eat** that ye know not of.”* John 6:24-37, 49-58, 63; 41 & 66, they apostatized.

Therefore in John 6 Jesus Christ makes it very clear that a person must spiritually eat and drink of Christ to have life, not just a tasting of Christ. We must have all of Christ, most want just to taste Jesus, they enjoy and love the element of religion, because there is no real commitment to Christ, just taste Him here and there. No, no, no the true child of God enjoys to fellowship and partake of the wholeness of Christ, they want to digest Christ to the fullest not just taste Him. This was the problem of those who just tasted of Christ; they never did close with Christ in the grace of salvation, by eating and drinking all of Christ, Christ is our ALL and ALL! These who were on the verge of apostasy had been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, they had knowledge of Christ and had tasted of Christ, but did not have Christ in their hearts, it was all an outward show. It was a spiritual sham.

The third thing Paul says about those on brink of apostasy was, “...and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.” Here we clearly see that reference is made regarding the Holy Spirit, this is why I believe the prior one on the heavenly gift is speaking of Christ. I don’t think it makes sense to speak about the Holy Spirit back to back. It says they were made partakers of the Holy Spirit. The word partakers in the Greek is, ‘**metochos**’ (me-ta-khos). It basically means, sharing in, partaking or a partner, that is, it describes one who shares with an associate, those who participate in something together, like a business partner. This word is used in Luke 5:7, partners. It is a different word than in Col.1:12, “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be **partakers** of the inheritance of the saints in light.*” The word partakers in the Greek is, ‘**meres**’ which means to partake of, to have an assigned portion, to obtain a share in something. In this verse in Colossians it speaks of the portion for the lot, that is, having or obtaining that portion which is, possessing that particular portion. I share this because the word partakers in Hebrews 6:4 does not mean possessors, that is, in the sense that these Hebrews possessed the Holy Spirit as being indwelt. The word means to just share or participate, companions, that is, they were only associated in a common task with the Holy Spirit not indwellers of the person of the Holy Spirit, it refers to the external and not the internal. Remember in Romans 8 and verse 9, “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that **the Spirit of God dwell in you.** Now **if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,** he is none of his.*” This was not the case of these apostates in Hebrews 6. In simple terms these Hebrews were only participators in the Holy Spirit as much as an unsaved person can do so, that is, they shared in the supernatural operations of the Spirit. They were enlightened; they had tasted of the heavenly gift and were mere participators, that is, partakers of the Holy Ghost. I’ve read where Greek scholars say, that the aorist participle is used here to refer to a mere fact, not the perfect tense which would have shown a finished act with present results, because the aorist participle is used it points to the incomplete work of the Spirit in these Hebrews. I don’t know Greek, but I have Greek books that help me and I thought this was very important and vital in understanding the aspect of this text.

Thus, we can understand that the phrase, ‘partakers of the Holy Ghost’ in this context does not indicate or imply that these Hebrews had been born of the Spirit, sealed with

the Spirit or be indwelt with the Spirit. They were just associated with the Spirit; perhaps some of them share in the miracles by the Spirit. We will just look at a few instances in Scripture which show that some were and are only associated with the Spirit:

- I Samuel 10:6-11. Here we see the Spirit of God come upon Saul. Most would interpret this to mean, he was a saved man. This was given to Saul to govern the people because they wanted a king. Saul was lost and never was regenerated; notice verse 9, that another heart was given him, not a new heart, but another heart. God can fashion the hearts any man to do His will. Saul was associated with the Spirit of God, not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- Balaam in Numbers 22, 23 and 24. If God can cause a donkey to speak, He can cause a man to speak or prophesy for Him. Barak hires Balaam to curse Israel, but God causes him to bless Israel. Balaam is used as an example of apostates in the book of Jude.
- Judas, turn to Mark 6:7-13. (Verse 7, 'the twelve' which includes Judas)
- Matthew 7:21-23. They did these miracles in His name.

To work a miracle does not make a person regenerate. In the days of the apostles there abounded many with miraculous gifts. Turn to Acts 8:5-24. (Verse 13 shows that Simon CONTINUED with Phillip, he was glued to Phillip and I'm sure he used the Christian lingo, he was a partaker, an associate, he shared in those miracles, he was with them. But he was finally exposed for what he really was and unbeliever. What shall we say of Demas, I'm sure he partook of many things in regards to the ministry, but at the end he apostatized! People then can be partakers of the Holy Spirit, without being indwelt or born of the Holy Spirit. Thus, those in Hebrews 6 were mere partakers and not possessors of the Holy Spirit and were ripe for apostasy. This is a good description of those who apostatized from the faith, they willingly and knowingly depart from the living God amidst all the warnings in the Bible not to do so. It is a complete renouncing of the faith in Christ, a forsaking of Christ and returning back to the world. We are not talking about a believer who doubts or falls into sin, or one who is in a heavy trial and wonders if God has forsaken him. We are not talking about a believer who backslides for a while or one who feels like a hypocrite because of wrong decisions in their life. Again, we are not talking about someone who goes through unfaithfulness; that is spiritual infidelity in their service of Christ or a Christian with apathy or antipathy, or like Peter who denied Christ, no we all at some time or point in our Christian life can experience these things; no, we are talking about one who knowingly and willingly gives up the faith in renouncing Christ. Apostasy is not by some accident or by some mistake or misunderstanding but from a willful, intentional and

deliberate denial and abandonment by a complete renunciation of Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

Paul in verses 4 – 6 of Hebrews 6 in his 3rd warning on the Danger of Departing gives us a sobering and terrible fact to which we would be wise to lay it to our hearts. It is so frightening to consider that it is possible for a person to have such an undisturbed peace and an unshaken assurance in their carnal security in regards to their eternal destiny and yet at the same time have no interest in Christ or His Word. This ought to be alarming to our souls. We forget at times that Satan is a very crafty and subtle foe and likes to give sinners a soothing religious experience or feeling that everything is ok. But the word of God warns us, "*Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion!*" Even Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" In other words, DON'T BE DECEIVED!

Look to Christ this morning; come to God in repentance and in faith to Christ! Don't walk out the door this morning without settling that you have eaten of Christ in the fullness of His person!