

10/03/10 PM  
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## Back From the Fall

Introduction: Falling is a naturally scary thing (show pictures taken from atop a butte - 200 foot cliff). We do whatever we can to keep from falling down. Paul spoke about the spiritual problem of the Christians in Galatia, "You have fallen from Grace..." But is it possible to restore your life to God if you fall away from your faith?

### I. Legitimate concerns, or common misconceptions?

- A. "I can't turn back to God, He'll never forgive me." "I've past the point of no return."
- B. What about Bible texts that seem to indicate the impossibility of turning back to God for forgiveness?
  - a) Hebrews 6:4-6: Isn't it impossible to be renewed to repentance once you fall away? (Context)
  - b) Hebrews 10:26-29: Because of my sin there no longer remains a sacrifice for my sins, right? (Context)
  - c) Hebrews 12:12-17: I want repentance, but this text indicates I can't have it, right?
- C. The problem being addressed to these Jewish Christians is very similar to Paul's statement to the Galatians, "*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*" (1:6, 7). The reason Paul gives here for "deserting" (abandoning/leaving) Christ is only slightly different than in Hebrews.
- D. In Hebrews, the problem was that some Jews, who had become Christians were turning back to practices of the old law, like offering animal sacrifices. It was a challenge of covenants and what was "sufficient" to save, for which some were confiding in Old Covenant practices.
  1. But the point is, "which sacrifice will forgive you, Jesus' sacrifice under the New Covenant, or an animal sacrifice under the Old Covenant?" Heb. 10 addresses that. (10:1-18)
  2. The warning: The writer constantly compares the old law (covenant) under Moses with the new law (covenant) under Christ (Ch. 8, 9, 10), and WARNS that turning back to old covenant practices, like animal sacrifices, a priesthood, circumcision, and things like that, disregards the sacrifice of Christ and treats as if it were insignificant, pointless, not needed because those other things can do just as good a job of saving. turning back to old law practices and confiding in something else to save disregards Christ's sacrifice. (Ch. 8-10)

### II. If You've Turned Your Back on Christ, What Then?

- A. So, are the above 3 texts in Hebrews teaching that one cannot repent and return to God if he's fallen back into a life of sin?
- B. The contextual explanation:

1. IF you turn away from Christ to another, lesser source (i.e. the old law) for security of salvation and forgiveness, you can't and won't find salvation there. Salvation is only in Christ. (Acts 4:12)
2. If you abandon your faith in Him, there is no other source of salvation, no sacrifice is left that can do the trick for you.
3. That's the point. It's not that it's impossible to repent. But, if you walk all over the sacrifice of Christ, willfully sinning, unrepentant, you've abandoned the one and only thing God has established to save you.
4. What else is there that can bring you to repentance if you disregard the sacrifice of Christ? Nothing. The sacrifice of Christ is the whole reason for us to repent.
5. So, when Hebrews 6:6 says, "*It is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame,*" it's saying the impossible thing is this—Christ's sacrifice will not be able to cause someone to repent if that person has stopped caring about it's significance in their life to the point that they walk away from it.
6. In other words, if someone stops caring about the sacrifice of Christ in their life and go on to a sinful lifestyle, is there anything more, anything greater, anything beyond that sacrifice that can cause somebody to repent? Absolutely not!
7. But, if they'll open their heart once again to Christ's covenant, sacrifice and promise, they most certainly can and should repent, because that is the only thing that saves, not the old law and it's sacrifice (like these Jewish Christians assumed), not anything else will do the trick. That's the point of the Hebrews message.

### **III. With God, all things are possible! (Matt. 19.25, 26)**

- A. Was it possible for David to be restored to God and forgiven though having committed adultery and murder and remaining 9 months in his sin, unrepentant? (Psa. 51.6-17)
- B. What about the prodigal son? (cf. Luke 15.11-32) A big message of the prodigal son is that God is graciously willing to take back the genuinely repentant person to Himself.
- C. The blood of Christ is just as powerful in forgiving all sin today as it was when we were first baptized. If God forgives you, forgive yourself!
- D. Repentance is what God desires. (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Jn.1.9)

### **IV. It's possible to finish the race for the crown of life!**

- A. Paul ran the race. (2 Tim. 4.6-8)
- B. Run with certainty and discipline. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

Conclusion: It is possible to repent and change for the better and restore your relationship with God and regain hope of eternal life. (cf. Rev. 2:5)