

- I. Welcome
 - A. Good morning! Ohayogozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni.
 1. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*
 - B. Before we dismiss our kids we're going to take a minute to pray for the White family (Shane, Rachel, and their baby Oliver).
 1. Normally, we have say all these good-byes during the summer, during what is the typical PCS season, but this is our third week in a row we are praying for a family that will be departing us.
 2. While it is always hard to say good-bye to families who have been part of our church family, we trust that God is leading them and that He is going before them and that He will continue to work in and through them.
 3. The White family is going to be exiting active duty ranks and will be headed to AZ. So, let's pray for them and lift them to the Lord one final time as a church family, entrusting them into God's hands.
 4. If I can have some of the church leadership and those willing, to simply come lay hands upon our brother & sister that would be great. (*Pray*)
 - C. As people make their way back to their seats, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School classrooms as well.
 1. (*2nd Service; Remember to dismiss the Bible English class.*)
 - D. This morning we're going to continue in our study of the book of Hebrews, so if you have your Bible with you go ahead and open them up to Hebrews chapter 6.
 - E. Last week we finished off the last bit of chapter 5 by looking at verses 11-14 in a study I entitled "Spiritual Regression".
 1. Our study last week was just the opening part of an extended warning that continues into chapter 6. The author mixes in these warnings throughout his letter. This warning we'll be looking at is the third such warning thus far in the book of Hebrews.
 - a. You may recall the first warning was a warning against drifting away and neglecting their salvation in the opening verses of chapter 2.
 - b. The second warning was a warning against unbelief in chapter 3.
 - c. And last week we saw how this third warning was connected to the idea of Spiritual regression.
 2. But that was just the introduction really. The end of chapter 5 simply detailed an observation the author had regarding his audience. He merely identified a glaring problem. The fact that many of his audience members were spiritually immature.
 - a. They were dull of hearing, and they were unable to teach others. They barely understood the rudimentary principles of their faith, the basics, the ABC's. They couldn't go any deeper than that.

- b. In fact, the author stated that they needed someone to teach them again the ABCs of their faith.
 - c. Like babies they were only able to partake of milk and they were not mature enough or developed enough to partake of solid food; the meat of the Word if you will.
 - d. The author exhorted them to maturity. The goal is to grow, to become mature in our faith, to be able to build upon, and go beyond just the ABCs.
 - F. In our text today, the author is going to continue that exhortation to maturity. And then he is going to give a very stern warning, something we all need to pay very close attention to.
 1. Our text this morning is going to be Hebrews chapter 6 verses 1-12. And the title of our study is going to be "**Danger: Beware of Laziness**".
 2. Hopefully you've all made your way to Hebrews chapter 6. Once you are there, I'd like to invite you to rise to your feet in honor of God and His Holy Word.
 3. I'm going to read through our text from my bible, I'm reading from the NKJV of the Bible. Do your best to follow along in your Bible, as I read from mine. The author continues his warning with the following in chapter 6 verse 1... (*R & P*)
- II. Introduction;
 - A. Last week, the author simply identified a problem: the fact that many in his audience needed to be taught again about the basics of their faith.
 1. They had become dull of hearing and hadn't grown in their knowledge of God and His Word. Instead, they had regressed in their walk with the Lord and had to be retaught the basics; the first principles as stated in vs. 12 of our text last week. (**Heb. 5:12**)
 - B. In our text today, the author moves on from identifying the problem and lays out a solution.
 1. The solution, quite simply, is for them to mature in their faith, to grow in their understanding of the Lord and His Word, that they may move beyond just the basics and start to partake of solid food; the meat of the word, things that would take more than a kindergarten education to understand and apply to their own lives.
 - C. As he speaks of the goal of maturity, he will also bring up a portion of scripture that has caused all sorts of problems for Biblical scholars from all sorts of various backgrounds and upbringings.
 1. Men much smarter and more spiritual than I have expressed the difficulties that come with interpreting part of our text this morning and I don't assume to know more than they.
 2. But we'll do our best to understand what the text is saying, what it meant to it's original audience, and how it may apply to us as well.

3. Hopefully, we will leave this place this morning with more answers than questions, but I don't make any guarantees.
- D. The first part of our text this morning is pretty straight forward as the author exhorts his audience to go beyond the basics and to move towards maturity in Christ. Take a look at verses 1-3.
- III. Hebrews 6:1-3; Exhortation to Maturity
- A. In chapter 5, the author rebuked his audience for needing to have someone teach them again the first principles. But interestingly enough, the author isn't going to waste his time doing so.
1. Instead, he says that it is time to leave the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ. It's time to move on from those things. These people needed to grow and so he challenges them here to do just that.
 2. Now the word "leaving" here carries the idea of passing by something. It isn't that the author is saying the elementary principles aren't necessary or that they aren't important. They are.
 - a. We made this point last week. We all need the milk of the Word. We all need to learn the basics of our faith; the ABC's if you will.
 - b. But just like when we learned the ABCs, once we learned them, the idea was that we would move well beyond them.
 - i. We learn our ABCs so that we can start to learn how to read basic words; how to sound out letters and decipher the words they create when they are combined with one another.
 - ii. Then we begin to learn how to read short, basic, two and three word sentences. Then we move on and start learning to read picture books with a few more descriptive words added into those sentences. Then we move on to small chapter books.
 - iii. And we continue to grow and grow; to build upon our understanding of the language, that we may increase in our knowledge and comprehension.
 - iv. We don't ever need to go back to the ABC's and relearn them. They are engrained in us. We've moved well beyond the idea of sounding out letters and deciphering simple words.
 - c. And this is how it ought to be in our spiritual lives as well. We shouldn't have to relearn the basics. They should be engrained in us, they should be part of us; the basics are what make us who we are in Christ.
 3. While the elementary principles are part of our foundation, the expectation is that we would move beyond these things, that we wouldn't have to continue to study these things over and over again.
 4. That we should be able to leave these things not because they are unimportant, but because they've become so engrained in us, we don't need to spend a lot of time on them. We can move on to bigger and weightier things.
5. We are to leave the discussion of these elementary things and go on to perfection.
- a. The word perfection here carries the idea of maturity. If you are reading from the NKJV your Bible may even have a small superscript next to the word "perfection", a reference note of some kind, indicating that this word means "maturity".
 - b. Most the other modern English translations use the word "maturity" instead of perfection in order to clear up any ambiguity there may be.
6. Now I want to point out something that I find very interesting about the author's call to go on to maturity.
- a. The verb "let us go" is actually written in the passive voice. Which means this moving on, or going on to maturity is a work that is done to us, not by us. We are the recipients of the action.
 - b. When this particular verb is used in the passive voice it carries the idea of being borne along, as in a ship before the wind; of being driven by the wind. So, our maturity in Christ isn't something that we make happen on our own. It is a work of the Lord in our lives.
 - c. But the interesting thing is that the verb "leaving" is written in the active voice when the author calls his audience to leave the discussion of elementary principles. We are responsible for that action. And we can't go on to perfection, to maturity, unless we first decide to leave the elementary principles.
 - d. Using the boating reference of a sail ship and continuing the analogy, what we see when it comes to our maturing in Christ is that God will be faithful to send the winds needed to push us along, but we must determine to set up our sails in the first place. If we don't bother to set up our sails and purpose to move on from where we are, well then, we'll be stuck on the shoreline forever.
 - e. These verses together remind us that progress in the Christian faith, maturing in the Lord, is not just simply "let go and let God" as some teach, but it requires personal initiative and responsibility on our part.
 - f. As I said last week, nobody ever drifts into maturity. You have to purpose in your hearts to want to grow. To want to move on from the basics and develop a growing relationship with the Lord.
 - g. And as we determine to leave the elementary principles, to lift our sails so to say, God will be faithful to grow us, to move us along to perfection, in essence, to send the wind of His Holy Spirit to lead and guide us in our maturing process.
7. This leads to the first point I want to make today in our study. Our maturing in the Lord is **a process that involves the power of God working through us as willing vessels.** We have to be open to and desiring of that work in our hearts and our lives. God will be faithful. He'll work in us and through us, if we are willing to let Him do so.

- B. So the author is calling his audience to leave the discussion of the elementary principles and move on to maturity.
1. And the author lists here some of these elementary principles they are to move on from. He lists out six different principles that can easily be grouped together into three couplets.
 2. The first two things he mentions have to do with basic teachings pertaining to our salvation. He mentions repentance from dead works and the need for faith toward God.
 - a. As Jews the idea of turning from dead works would pertain to the dead works of trying to follow the law. All the law does is show us our need for a savior. It doesn't save us, it condemns us.
 - b. For us today, turning from dead works may involved any sort of idea of us earning our salvation. Of us trying to be saved through good works. Good works don't save us. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
 3. The next pairing of principles have to do with religious acts that are performed after salvation. These are things that we do to help identify with Christ and to acknowledge our part in the body of Christ.
 - a. When it refers to baptisms, to the Jew this could have varying significance and meaning. This could refer to the ceremonial washings that many would do as part of their Jewish upbringing.
 - b. But it also could easily allude to the different baptisms we read about in the NT.
 - i. There is the baptism *into* the body of Christ. This is actually something that occurs at salvation. When you come to faith in Christ, you become part of the body of Christ.
 - ii. This is the baptism Paul spoke of when he wrote in Ephesians 4 "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; on God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." This is a one-time baptism that places us in Christ. (**Eph. 4:4-6**)
 - iii. Then there is water baptism which is something done as an outward demonstration of our faith in Christ. We identify with his death, burial, and resurrection to new life when we are in essence buried in the waters of baptism and raised back up in representation of the newness of life we have in Christ.
 - iv. Then there is the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the power to witness. This is spoken of in Acts 1:8 where Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the empowering of the Holy Spirit which He said, "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (**Acts 1:8**)
 - v. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an empowering of God's Holy Spirit that occurred multiple times in the lives of the disciples.
 - vi. It happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, it happened again in Acts 4 when the disciples were gathered together in prayer; it reads "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." (**Acts 4:31**)
- c. The author also brought up the practice of the laying on of hands.
 - i. This was something that was done in agreement with prayer.
 - ii. It was something done when praying for the sick. It was done as a way to recognize gifts and positions of leadership in the church.
4. The final pairing the author mentioned had to do with teachings regarding the end times; the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.
 - a. The scriptures speak of two resurrections. One resurrection for the saved and a separate resurrection for the lost.
 - b. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for the hours is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (**Jn. 5:28-29**)
 - c. We will all face judgment. For the believer who is resurrected to eternal life they won't be judged for their sins, since Jesus already paid the penalty for those upon the cross of Calvary. Instead, they will have all of their works judged to see what sort they were; whether they were of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is." (**1 Co. 3:12-13**)
 - d. For those who are resurrected to condemnation, they will be judged before the Great White throne of God. And all of them will have to give an account for all of their sins. And they will be judged according to their works and cast into the lake of fire according to Revelation chapter 20 verse 15 (**Rev. 20:15**)
 5. So these were the elementary principles, the basics, the ABCs if you will. Things pertaining to our salvation, things pertaining to our identification with the body of Christ and our position in Christ, things pertaining to end times.
 6. It's interesting to me that according to the author of Hebrews these are the simple things, and yet so many in the church are divided over these simple things pertaining to our salvation, the work of the Spirit in the church, the end times. These are the things the church today can't seem to agree upon. Kind of scary to think what the author of Hebrews might have to say about the church today.

C. Verse 3 reiterates the idea that our maturity in Christ is a work of the Lord in us. In reference to moving on towards perfection he states, "And this we will do if God permits."

1. It isn't a matter of whether God wants us to grow or mature. We know that He does. But it is more the idea of waiting upon and trusting in the Lord and His timing. Waiting upon Him and not trying to move ahead of Him. God wants to work in us, but we need to actively wait upon Him to do the work He so desires to do in us.
2. Don't rush it. Don't get ahead of the Lord. We need Him to do the work for us, not the other way around.

D. Well, this brings us to the next section in our text, probably one of the most challenging portions of Scripture I've wrestled with. Hebrews chapter 6 verses 4-6 are verses that have been interpreted in a number of different ways, by a number of different people from different denominations and backgrounds. It is challenging. But we're going to do our best to figure out what God is wanting to say to us through this. Let's read vs. 4-6.

IV. Hebrews 6:4-6; A Difficult Warning

A. Now, as I mentioned, this text has been interpreted in a number of different ways. And, to be honest with you, even after spending a good amount of time in prayer and study, I'm still not 100% sure what this text is saying.

1. Each interpretation that I studied had issues with it. I couldn't come up with anything that was 100% bullet proof and ironclad.
2. What I want to do is try and explain some of the major interpretations that are out there and explain where I landed in regards to which interpretation I believe best fits the plain simple reading of the text, the immediate context, and still fits within the greater context of the Bible.

B. Verses 4-6 is one long sentence in both the English and the original Greek. It has a lot of descriptive words within it that I want to set aside for now to get to the meat of the actual sentence.

1. What this sentence is basically saying is that "it is impossible for a certain group of people to be renewed again to repentance".
2. Repentance speaks of having a change in mind and usually denotes a changed mind in regard to sin. When someone repents of their sin, they have a change of mind regarding that sin, they see sin for how God sees it and it leads to a change of action. Because we've changed our mind about sin, the sin we once enjoyed we no longer do because we see it as the Lord sees it.
3. More often than not, this word is used in reference to someone coming to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Just as we mentioned in the first couplet of elementary principles, faith and repentance go together. Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders reminding them how he testified to both Jews and Greeks "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." They go hand in hand. (**Acts 20:21**)

4. So this text seems to be telling us there is a certain group of people for whom it is impossible for them to be renewed again to a saving faith.
5. That is a pretty serious statement, one we should not take lightly. Now, let's consider some of the interpretations out there.

C. The first interpretation that is put forth is the idea that the author is merely suggesting a hypothetical situation that really isn't possible.

1. Much of the support for this interpretation is based upon the word "if" found at the beginning of verse 6 in the KJV, the NKJV, and an older NIV translation.
 2. This interpretation supposes that the people in question are genuine Christian believers and that "if" it were possible for them to fall away, then it would be impossible for them to be renewed again to repentance. But the author is only using a hypothetical situation because he doesn't believe it is possible for a believer to fall away.
 3. So, that's one interpretation. The author is just speaking of a hypothetical situation that isn't even a possibility.
 4. The problem with this interpretation is that the word "if" found in those translations isn't actually in the original Greek language. In fact, if you have a NKJV bible you should see another superscript or notation that leads you to a reference note stating how instead of it reading "if they fall away" it could read "have fallen away". That is the actual normal flow of the Greek grammar. The falling away is not meant to be a conditional statement but a further description of this particular group of people. These people were enlightened, have tasted the heavenly gift, have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come and have fallen away. That is the way it reads when considering the original Greek grammar and words used.
 5. Another problem with this interpretation is that it would make this warning completely unnecessary. Why would the author even use a hypothetical situation to try and challenge his audience to grow in maturity? This is a very real topic he is speaking about and it just seems too odd to suggest that he was merely speaking of the hypothetical. So I don't agree with that interpretation.
- D. Another interpretation somewhat close to the first interpretation is not that the author was using a hypothetical situation but that he was simply using hyperbole. That he was simply exaggerating his claims when he spoke of the impossibility of someone being renewed again to repentance after falling away.
1. This interpretation supposes that the word impossible is not meant to refer to an absolute impossibility, that could never ever happen. But simply that it would be next to impossible. The author is merely using hyperbole to get across the extreme difficulty it would be for someone to be able to be renewed again to repentance after falling away.

2. The person who holds to this interpretation will sometimes also speculate that while with man these things seem next to impossible, that nothing is impossible for God. And that God could still work in this particular situation.
3. The problem I have with this interpretation is the use of the word impossible every other time it is used in this book. The author uses this exact same word for impossible three other times in the book of Hebrews.
 - a. Later in this chapter he writes how "it is impossible for God to lie". (**Heb. 6:18**). Does this mean that it is only really hard for God to lie, but if He tried hard enough He could do it? No, absolutely not. It goes completely against the character and nature of God. God cannot lie, to do so would be a sin, and He isn't capable of sin.
 - b. In chapter 10 he writes, how it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." (**Heb. 10:4**). Again, does this mean that it really is possible? You know, if you got just the right amount of blood from certain perfect spotless bulls and goats that it could be possible, but just really really hard? No, it means impossible.
 - c. In chapter 11 he writes how without faith it is impossible to please God. (**Heb. 11:6**) Can we please God without faith, can we please Him through our works apart from faith? You know if we tried really, really hard? No, it means it is impossible to please Him without faith.
4. Every other time the author uses this word, it means impossible. It means something that can't take place. So, it is hard for me to believe that every other time he uses this word impossible that it means impossible, but here and only here it means only really challenging, or extra difficult.
- E. Another interpretation is one that leads to the idea of a Christian falling away from the faith and not being able to be renewed again to salvation while they are crucifying and putting to shame the Son of God.
 1. This interpretation is based upon the fact that the words crucify and put in verse 6 are written as present active participles. Implying that they are continually actively crucifying and putting Christ to shame while in their state of being fallen away. But if they were to stop crucifying and putting Christ to shame that the impossibility would then become a possibility.
 2. That basically the scenario presented here is based upon someone continually doing something and that while they are doing that, they would not be able to be renewed again to repentance, but as soon as they stopped doing that, they could come back to the Lord.
 3. This interpretation is pretty weak and seems to ignore the overall context of the passage.
- F. Another interpretation is that this is speaking of true born-again believers who do fall away, they apostatize, completely rejecting Christ and their faith

in Him and that for such a person it is impossible for them to ever come back to a saving faith in Christ.

1. This leads to the idea that you can be saved, but the moment you fall away, there is no hope for you of ever returning. Instead of a "once saved always saved" mindset, it is a "once out always out" mindset.
2. Now this is a very sticky topic because it brings into question the eternal security of the believer. Can someone truly lose their salvation?
 - a. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." (**Jn. 10:27-29**)
 - b. Paul writes, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (**Rom. 8:38-39**)
 - c. He writes in Ephesians about our salvation experience stating, "In Him [referring to Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (**Eph. 1:13-14**)
 - d. I do not believe that it is possible for a believer to lose their salvation. If you are saved, you are sealed, you have been purchased by the blood of Christ and you are no longer your own. You are God's. You have been adopted into His family and that isn't undone.
3. Now, I know there are some churches that do teach that people can lose their salvation, or that someone could forfeit or reject their salvation.
 - a. But usually, these same churches also believe that salvation can be regained. They believe in the idea that someone can be "saved", then reject their faith and become "unsaved", and then subsequently repent and come back to the Lord and be "saved" again.
 - b. Most churches that believe this teach that they could come back to the Lord as long as they didn't commit the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
4. But this text doesn't support such a notion. This text seems to suggest that if you take these people to be true believers that really do fall away and reject Christ than there is no way for them to come back to the Lord. They are lost forever, no matter how sorrowful they feel about it later on, and no matter how bad they want to come back to the Lord, God has shut the door upon them and will never take them back.

G. Another possibility is that this is not talking about believers at all. That this is talking about people who merely look the part, or play the part, but really aren't believers.

1. This interpretation doesn't seem to fit the plain reading of the text, but when you consider the immediate context and the context of the letter it does seem to fit.
2. Let me explain. First of all, it is worth noting that the author all of a sudden changes his use of personal pronouns in verses 4-6.
 - a. Throughout this letter the author has been referring to his audience in the second person singular or in the first person plural. It's been "you", and "we" and "us" and "our". But in verses 4-6 the author deploys the personal pronouns "those", "they", and "themselves".
 - b. Then in verse 9 & 10 it goes right back to "we", and "you", and "your".
 - c. It seems from the context that the author has a distinctly different group in mind here when he writes verses 4-6.
3. And let's look at the description of these people. There are six descriptions used in describing these people.
 - a. They are those who were once enlightened. Now, people who believe that this is speaking of those who are believers have a solid case.
 - i. In Hebrews 10:32 this same word is used to describe the audience of this letter. There the author states, "But recall the former days in which, after you were *illuminated*, you endured a great struggle with sufferings". That word illuminated is the same Greek word. The context of Hebrews 10 is speaking about how these believers endured suffering because they knew they had something better awaiting them in heaven. (**Heb. 10:32**)
 - ii. But there are other examples of this word being used when it clearly does not refer to salvation, but simply that people have been exposed to the light.
 - iii. In fact, in John 1 this word is used to describe how Jesus came as the Light and gave light to every man coming into the world and how He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world *did not know Him*. He came to His own, and His own *did not receive Him*. (**Jn. 1:9-11**)
 - iv. So it is possible to be exposed to the light of the Lord and not receive Him.
 - v. As we consider the greater context of this letter, the author has already alluded to the forefathers and how there was a generation that did not enter into their rest. He was speaking of the Israelites who were led out of bondage from Egypt. They had the light of the Lord, a pillar of fire to lead them by night to be exact. And yet not all of them believed. In fact, many of them did not believe and it was because of their unbelief that they failed to enter into the

Promised Land. Something the author has already brought up in the context of this letter.

- vi. And so it is possible to be described as enlightened, as having the light of the Lord shined upon you and to still not believe.
- b. Moving on, they are described as having tasted of the heavenly gift. The heavenly gift seems to be speaking of the gift of salvation, or the gift of God's Son sent for our salvation.
 - i. Again, those who believe this is speaking about believers have good reason to think so, the plain simple reading of this text seems to speak of someone who had tasted salvation, who had experienced what it was like to be saved.
 - ii. But could it mean something else? The word tasted can mean to experience but it can also mean to sample without partaking of.
 - iii. When Jesus hung upon the cross, He was offered sour wine. The Bible says, "they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink." (**Mt. 27:34**)
 - iv. This clearly speaks of the idea of this word meaning to sample without fully partaking.
 - v. While at the same time, earlier in this very book the author uses this word in describing Jesus tasting death for us. It says in Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (**Heb. 2:9**)
 - vi. Clearly the author was describing a full partaking of death when he referred to Christ tasting death for us.
 - vii. So, the word "taste" is used in both ways. And leaves a possibility that this could be referring to someone who merely sampled a bit of Christianity, but never fully placed their faith in Christ. They were in the church and sampled a bit of what was offered, but never fully committed. They came, they sang songs, they hung out, perhaps even participated in the sacraments and tasted of Christ through communion, but never surrendered their lives to the Lord.
 - viii. It reminds me of the parable of the soil and the seed that fell upon rocky ground. Jesus described the situation stating "other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away." (**Mk. 4:5-6; NASB**)
 - ix. Jesus gave us the interpretation of this and what it meant for seed to fall on the rocky ground. After describing how the seed falling on the wayside represented God's Word falling upon a hard heart the Lord said concerning the seed on the rocky ground the following: "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was

sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are *only temporary*; then, when affliction or *persecution arises* because of the word, immediately *they fall away*.” (Mk. 4:16-17)

- x. Clearly this could apply to some of the people of the first century who may have been hanging out with Jewish converts to Christianity. They could have tasted without fully partaking. Or they could have tasted of faith without ever being grounded in the faith and when the first bit of persecution started coming, they quickly made their exit.
 - c. How else are they described? They are those who have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. This one is a hard one. For every other time the author has used this word partaker in this letter it has referred to someone who is a believer.
 - “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,” (Heb. 3:1)
 - “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,” (Heb. 3:14)
 - ii. The word “partaker” speaks of someone who is a partner or companion. In this case a partner or companion of the Holy Spirit. But it also can mean a sharer and describe someone who is sharer of the Holy Spirit. If you take this word to mean someone who fellowshiped alongside true believers and witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit in and through those other people, they could be said to be partakers of the Holy Spirit in that essence.
 - iii. I’ll admit this seems to be a more challenging stretch, in comparison to the natural reading, but it isn’t something beyond reason and clearly not something that isn’t portrayed in the gospels. Jesus and the apostle Paul spoke of the idea of their being false believers or false converts mixed in with the church on numerous occasions.
 - d. These people were those who tasted the good word of God.
 - i. Again this word tasted can mean to fully take in or to merely sample. Plenty of people heard the word of God spoken by Jesus, Paul, and other disciples and did not come to the faith.
 - e. They were those who tasted of the powers of the age to come.
 - i. This most likely refers to supernatural miracles. Again, they sampled it, they experienced it, they perhaps saw miracles or were even the recipients of miracles, but seeing miracles and experiencing miracles does not equate to salvation.
 - ii. Consider the person of Judas Iscariot. By all accounts he was one who tasted of the heavenly gift, partook of the Holy Spirit, tasted of the good word of God, and tasted of the powers of the age to come. He was sent out by the Lord and given power to cast out demons and heal the sick, and every indication is that he was able to partake in those works. But He never surrendered his life to the Lord.
 - iii. Consider Jesus’ own words when He said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Mt. 7:21-23)
 - f. The final description is that these people have fallen away. Is that possible for an unbeliever. Absolutely.
 - i. That is how they knew that they weren’t true believers, because they did fall away. They did depart from the fellowship.
 - ii. John writes in 1 John, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” (1 Jn. 2:19)
4. But you may ask, how could an unbeliever be renewed again to repentance as described in verse 6?
- a. They can’t. But that is actually what the text is saying. It is impossible for an unbeliever to be renewed again to repentance. In fact, the whole idea is made clear when we consider the words “renew them *again* to repentance.”
 - b. A lot of people just read that as “renew them to repentance”, but that isn’t what it says. It says it is impossible to renew someone again to repentance. Why is it impossible?
 - c. Because once something is made new by repentance, by coming to faith in Christ, it is impossible to be made new again.
 - i. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we are a new creation. The Scriptures attest, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Co. 5:17)
 - d. Jesus Christ died once and for all. If you are renewed to repentance, it’s a one-time thing. I can’t be done *again*.
 - e. You are either saved, or you aren’t saved. You can’t get saved over and over again. It would be like crucifying Jesus over and over again. He died once and for all.

- f. So whether a believer or an unbeliever it is impossible to be renewed again to repentance. You are either renewed to repentance because you are a believer, or you not renewed at all.
- H. Of all the possible interpretations, and there are still others I didn't share, this one seems to me, to be the one that best fits the immediate context, the context of the book, and the entirety of Scripture.
 - 1. Does it fit perfectly? No. But it has the least amount of problems in my opinion.
 - 2. So, if that is what the interpretation is pointing to, what then would be the application for the audience the author is writing to?
 - 3. I think it is a warning. He's saying there are those probably in your midst who aren't truly saved.
 - a. He differentiates between them and the true believers by referring to them in the third person, rather than the first or second person.
 - 4. And maybe some of them are going back to the ways of Judaism, they don't like the persecution they have been experiencing for being lumped together with Christ, and they are headed back to their old ways, they are falling away.
 - 5. The warning is to be mindful of those people and not to allow their actions to lead them astray.
 - 6. But also, I believe it could be used as a good gut check for those who have become dull of hearing, those who have had to have the ABCs of the faith explained to them over and over again.
 - 7. Perhaps it was a way for the author to get them to make a self-assessment of whether or not they had truly surrendered their lives to the Lord. Are they really a true believer? Have they really been made anew? Have they truly surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior of their life.
 - 8. Or, are they just playing church? Are they just going through the motions? Are they enjoying the social aspects of the church, partaking of the fellowship, the love feasts, the comradery and sharing that was happening in the first century church; but not really putting their faith in God and in His word and promises?
 - 9. The author was confident of better things to come for his audience, as we'll see when we come back to this text for part 2, but for now we're going to have to push pause on our study.
- I. What application can we make in wrapping up this first part of our study? I think we need to take this warning to heart. I think we need to **search our own hearts and make sure we truly have surrendered our hearts** and lives to the Lord.
 - 1. I don't want to cause any of you do doubt your salvation. But I also don't want to give anyone a false sense of security if they haven't surrendered their life to the Lord.

- 2. The Scriptures exhort us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. (**Phil. 2:12b**)
- 3. That we are to be diligent to make our call and election sure, for if we do these things we will never stumble. (**2 Pt. 1:10**)
- 4. Paul put it very pointedly, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified." (**2 Co. 13:5**)
- 5. My hope is that none of us stand disqualified. But that we all have been qualified through our faith in Christ.
- 6. Are you wanting to grow in your faith? Are you desiring to go beyond the ABC's of your faith and to move towards maturity in your walk with the Lord? That's great, that's awesome. Set your sails and wait for the Lord to send His wind. He'll be faithful to do so.
- 7. But if you are here today and you have no desire to grow in the Lord, you have no desire to learn of the Lord, I would question why you are here in the first place and I would question whether or not you are sincere in your faith.
- 8. If you are a believer in the Lord, you'll want to live for the Lord, you'll want to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. It is a natural byproduct of someone who is genuinely saved.
- 9. My hope is that everyone here today has surrendered their hearts to the Lord and desires to grow in their walk with Him. Let's pray.
- V. Hebrews 5:7-8; A Natural Illustration re: fruitfulness
 - A. .
- VI. Hebrews 5:9-10; A Word of Encouragement re: works
 - A. .
- VII. Hebrews 5:11-12; A Choice between diligence or sluggishness
 - A. .