

Hebrews 6:4-8 “A Warning Against Falling Away”**

Main Idea: Hebrews 6:4-8 offers a sober warning about the danger of falling away. Our warning text includes two considerations.

Key: When studying a *verse* keep in mind the purpose of the *book*.

1. The immediate purpose of Hebrews is to teach the truth about Christ.
2. The ultimate purpose is to show that following Christ is worth the cost.

I. Our text presents an impossibility (4-6).

A. The writer describes a group of people (4-5).

1. They were once enlightened.
2. They tasted the heavenly gift.
3. They have shared in the Holy Spirit.
4. They tasted the goodness of God's Word.
5. They tasted the powers of the coming age.

B. The writer confronts a problem (6).

1. Suppose they fall away.
2. If they do, they cannot be restored.
3. They would be re-crucifying Christ.
4. They would bring public shame to Christ.

II. Our text presents an illustration (7-8).

A. Land that soaks up rain and produces a good crop has God's blessing (7).

B. Land that soaks up rain and produces thorns is facing a curse (8).

Implications: What's the point of our text?

1. People who truly know Christ won't fall away and lose their salvation.
2. People who truly know Christ will take inventory of their spiritual condition.
3. People who truly know Christ must take steps to grow.
4. People who truly know Christ will follow Christ because He is worth it.

Warning messages are a big part of our lives. We read them when we get in our cars and look in the mirror: “Warning: Objects in the mirror may be larger than they appear.” They're on coffee cups from McDonalds: “Warning: The contents of this drink may burn you!” We see them on the tags of our clothing: “Don't wash this in hot water!”

We hear lots of warnings, too. I can still remember some of the warnings my parents gave me. Never put a plastic bag over your head. Always look both ways before crossing a street. Make sure you brush your teeth twice a day or you'll get a cavity.

What's the purpose of a warning? It gets your attention. It prompts you to think twice about a danger or a problem to avoid.

The Bible is full of *warning texts*. Here's a warning from Jesus in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." That's a warning against presuming you're right with God just because you can talk the religious talk. Here's another warning from Jesus in John 15:6, a warning against being a Sunday Christian, "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers."

Paul had this to say about warnings in Acts 20:31, "So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." The fact is, just like the believers living in Ephesus, we need warnings, and we're in trouble when we surround ourselves with preachers who refuse to give them to us.

This morning we come to a *warning text*, indeed to one of the most challenging warning texts in all of God's Word. Whenever I'm training church leaders in Eastern Europe, I can count on this question during the Q & A sessions, "What about Hebrews 6?" They're talking about Hebrews 6:4-8, a text that offers a sobering warning about the danger of falling away: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened...if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance."

William Barclay says, "This is one of the most terrible passages in Scripture."¹¹ It certainly is troubling. In fact, this warning-text raises several tough questions.

There's the question about the *people*—who does the writer have in mind here, Christians, non-Christians, perhaps professing Christians? Then there's the question about the *problem*—What does "fall away" mean in verse 6? Does it mean that a Christian can fall away and lose his salvation? And that leads to the question about the *consequence*—Why is it impossible for those who have 'fallen away' (whoever *they* are and whatever *that* means) to be "brought back to repentance," as verse 6 states? What's more, there's the question about the *purpose* of the text—Is it intended to warn real Christians to persevere, or perhaps to warn pretend Christians to admit the truth, or what?

Here's an important principle to keep in mind when studying the Bible...

Key: When studying a *verse* keep in mind the purpose of the *book*.

You can use the Bible to "prove" just about anything if you rip verses out of context. Whenever we open God's Word we need to keep in mind the purpose that the human writer had in mind when the Spirit of God guided him to write that inspired text.

So what's the purpose of Hebrews? Actually, there are two related purposes, one immediate and the other ultimate.

1. *The immediate purpose of Hebrews is to teach the truth about Christ.* And so, when you read through this epistle you discover many things about the person and work of Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God and the creator of the universe (1:2), the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being (1:3), that He became a man so that He might suffer and taste death in behalf of sinners (2:9), set them free from death (2:15), provide an atonement for their sins (2:17), and more! The first ten chapters of Hebrews tell us that Christ is superior to angels, superior to Moses, and superior to the priesthood of Aaron, indeed that He is the High Priest who can reconcile sinners like us to God.

But teaching the truth about Christ is a *means* to something, not an end. Truth isn't taught here merely for academic reasons (just to give us facts). This truth is intended to *do* something, to *accomplish* something. What's that? In Hebrews...

2. *The ultimate purpose is to show that following Christ is worth the cost.* Who first received this book we call

Hebrews? The *Hebrews* did, an assembly of Jewish Christians. And something was happening to these folks? They were facing intense opposition and pressure from their Jewish family members and neighbors to turn from Christ and return to the old ways of Judaism.

That's why Hebrews was written. The book actually functions like a sermon, a forty-five minute sermon (that's how long it takes to read it) that probably was delivered initially in a church worship service to encourage these Jewish Christians. In 10:32-34 the writer reminds them that in the early days when they first converted to Christ they stood their ground in the face of great suffering. They were "publicly exposed to insult and persecution" and they "stood side by side with those who were so treated." They visited their brothers in prison and "joyfully accepted the confiscation of property." And what kept them going? He reminds them in Hebrews 10:34, "You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because *you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.*" That's what kept them going. That's why they responded with joy even when they lost their houses, because they had better possessions. Where? Not in this life, but in the life to come.

That's the purpose of Hebrews, to put a shot of adrenaline in the veins of these first century believers and ours. Is it hard to live for Jesus? Yes, but it's worth it! Following Jesus is worth the cost.

But apparently, some folks in this first century church weren't quite so sure. They were getting weary, and it seems that some were looking for the exit sign. Consequently, the writer gave them, not just a reminder that following Christ is worth it, but also a series of five warnings throughout the book that address what happens when a professing believer chooses *not* to follow Christ to the end.^[2]

Which brings us to our text. Hebrews 6:4-8 offers a sobering warning about the danger of falling away. Our warning text invites us to ponder two considerations.

I. Our text presents an impossibility (4-6).

Verse 4 begins, "It is *impossible.*" Elsewhere in Hebrews we're told that three other things are impossible. Hebrews 6:18 says, "It is impossible for God to lie." Hebrews 10:4 says, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." And Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God..."

What does Hebrews 6:4 say is impossible? It doesn't say. The writer doesn't state the impossibility until verse 6. But to understand what it is, we must back up. The flow of the text begins with a command in verse 1, "Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity." Status quo is unacceptable for Christians. We're supposed to be growing. We're supposed to be building on the basic doctrines we learned when we first came to know Christ.

"What if I don't want to go on to maturity?" someone might ask. "What if I just want to stay where I'm at spiritually? What would you say to that?" What I would say isn't the issue. What God's Word says is, and beginning in verse 4 the writer addresses that kind of thinking head-on.

In the Greek text the first word of verse 4 is "for." "For it is impossible," says the writer. *For* indicates that what follows is the reason for the command in verse 1, and the reason comes in the form of a warning.

Allow me to make an initial observation about this warning. Notice that the writer shifts from first person pronouns ("we" and "us") in verses 1-3 to third person pronouns ("they" and "them") in verses 4-8 and then back to first person pronouns in verse 9 and following. Why the switch? Some say it indicates he's talking about another group of people. I think a better explanation is that he's placing a warning before this group of people and doing so in the most objective and least offensive way he can.

Let's take a careful look, first at the *people*, and then at the *problem*.

A. The writer describes a group of people (4-5). "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened,

who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age...”

The writer identifies five characteristics of the people he has in mind.^[3]

1. *They were once enlightened.* The Greek word *photizo* means “to give light” and “to bring to light.” In Hebrews 10:32 the writer states, “Remember those earlier days after you had *received the light*...” That’s the same word *photizo*. In 10:32 he says it’s what happened to his readers (they “received the light” and “were enlightened”). In 6:4 he says it happened to the group of people he had in mind. And don’t miss the little word “once.” They were *once* enlightened. To borrow from Paul’s explanation in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

2. *They tasted the heavenly gift.* That raises two questions. One, what is the “heavenly gift”? And two, what does it mean to “taste” it?

Let’s take the first question. What’s the heavenly gift? John 3:16 indicates that God so loved the world that He gave His Son. Christ, then, is the heavenly gift. James 1:17 says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.” So in the ultimate sense, every good gift is from God in heaven and is thus a heavenly gift. More specifically, the greatest heavenly gift is the work that God does to bring sinners into His family, as James 1:18 explains, “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth.” Acts 10:45 refers to the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” for the Spirit is the agent who births a sinner into God’s family. Ephesians 2:8-9 likewise indicates that *salvation* is the gift of God. So the heavenly gift is God’s salvation offered through Christ administered by the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to say that some have *tasted* this gift? Some say that “tasted” implies they just *sampled* Christ and His salvation. For instance, if I said I just *tasted* the peach pie you made for me, you might assume that I didn’t actually eat it. Our English word “taste” can carry the thought of putting the fork to my tongue to check out the flavor but not actually ingesting the food. But this Greek word is stronger. In Hebrews 2:9 we’re told that Jesus became a man in order to “taste” death. Our Savior didn’t merely *sample* death on the cross, but experienced it fully.

No, the writer is describing a group of people who have been enlightened and have tasted the gift of salvation in Christ. In fact, some early church fathers suggested the enlightening referred to the believer’s baptism and that the tasting was a reference to their participation in the eucharist or communion. That would indicate these are people who have joined the church and participate regularly in its worship services.

3. *They have shared in the Holy Spirit.* We’ve seen this word before in Hebrews. In 3:1 we read, “Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling.” In 3:14, “We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end.” Our text indicates the writer has in mind folks who share in the Holy Spirit.

4. *They tasted the goodness of God’s Word.* It’s the same word for tasted we saw in the previous verse. Here, in addition to tasting the heavenly gift, the writer describes folks who have tasted the goodness of the word of God. God’s Word is good. It does so many good things for us. It brings joy to our families, meaning to our friendships, peace to our anxious hearts, and more! And these readers had tasted that. What’s more...

5. *They tasted the powers of the coming age.* In the coming age there will be no sickness, no pain, no death, no sin, no hindrances to joy. Yet those who are in Christ experience a sampling of that *now*. Let that sink in. As Christians we’ve tasted something our non-Christian friends haven’t. We’ve had a foretaste of the sweetness of the age to come. As the poet put it:

“Heaven above is softer blue,

Earth around is sweeter green;

Something lives in every hue,

Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am his, and he is mine.”^[4]

Now take another look at the group of people the writer has in mind—people who have been enlightened, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted salvation, tasted the goodness of God’s Word, and tasted the powers of the coming age. That’s who the writer has in mind. And he’s telling us that there’s something that is *impossible* for these people. Which brings us to the *problem*...

B. The writer confronts a problem (6). “It is impossible for those [who have experienced the above privileges] ...if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

Some folks point to these verses and say, “See! Those words ‘fall away’ in verse 6 prove a person can lose their salvation!” But wait. If you use these verses to prove that salvation can be lost you must also use them to conclude that a person who loses his salvation cannot regain it. No, this isn’t a proof-text for the insecurity of the believer.

The writer is wanting his readers to think about something very serious, namely...

1. *Suppose they fall away.* The NIV says, “If they fall away.” The KJV says, “If they shall fall away.” In the original Greek it’s simply one word, a participle, *parapesontas*. The “if” isn’t in the text. It may be implied, but it’s not stated.

This term comes from the Greek verb *parapipto* which is comprised of the root *pipto*, meaning “to fall.” *Pipto* is a rather common word in the New Testament, used to depict that houses fall (Matt 7:25), cities fall (Rev. 16:19), stones fall (Luke 20:18), bread crumbs fall (Matt 15:27), seeds fall (Matt. 13:4), and birds fall (Matt. 10:29).

But in Hebrews 6:6, a prefix is attached to *pipto*. It’s the only place in the New Testament this word *parapipto* appears, with the prefix *para* (which can be translated a variety of ways depending on the context: “from,” “by,” “besides,” etc). The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* offers this definition: “to abandon a former relationship or association, or to dissociate (a type of reversal of beginning to associate)—‘to fall away, to forsake, to turn away.’”

In my estimation, this is not referring to sins in general but to a very specific *state* of sin. John Calvin says this refers not to sins like theft, or murder, or adultery, or drunkenness, but to apostasy, “*a complete falling away from the Gospel*, not one in which the sinner has offended God in some one part only, but in which he has utterly renounced His grace... This is complete renunciation of God.”^[5]

Keep in mind that this was no moot issue for the first readers of this book who were facing significant persecution. “In any such age apostasy is the supreme sin,” as Barclay puts it. When the authorities tell you, “It’s either renounce Christ or go to prison,” you’re faced with the temptation to deny Christ and save your neck. In your response, you are making a loud and clear statement, for if you give in to the pressure, you are saying, “My life and my comfort and my safety are more important to me than Christ. Following Christ is not worth the cost.”

So suppose that happens. Suppose people who have tasted the heavenly gift *fall away*. They renounce Christ and abandon their former association with Christ and His people. Then what? The writer of Hebrews says...

2. *If they do, they cannot be restored.* Listen again to his argument, “It is impossible for those [who have experienced the privileges listed in verses 4-5]...if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance.”

The question is, would true believers ever do that? The answer is, no they wouldn't. For starters, as we'll see in the next passage the writer doesn't expect that to happen with his readers, for he states in verse 9, "Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation." That's because true believers respond by God's grace by doing "things that accompany salvation." And denying Christ isn't one of those things.

So true believers won't do this. So if they won't, what's the point? Why would the writer of Hebrews give this warning to a group of professing Christians if true Christians won't (indeed *can't*) fall away? The answer is...*I'm not sure*. The commentators offer a variety of answers, and momentarily I'll offer mine.

But first, let's notice the textual reasons the writer gives, as indicated by the next word in verse 6, "*because...*" They cannot be restored *because...*

3. *They would be re-crucifying Christ.* "Crucifying the Son of God all over again," says the writer. That's what folks who profess to know Christ would be doing if they fell away and renounced Christ.

Barclay tells of what he calls "the great *Quo vadis* legend." He writes, "In the Neronian persecution Peter was caught in Rome and his courage failed. Down the Appian Way he fled for his life. Suddenly there was a figure standing in his path. It was Jesus himself. '*Domine,*' said Peter, '*quo vadis?* Lord, where are you going?' 'I am going back to Rome to be crucified again, this time in your stead.' And Peter, shamed into heroism, turned back to Rome and died a martyr's death."^[6]

True believers do not deny Christ because to do so would be to re-crucify Christ, and that's unthinkable for those who love the Savior. Something else makes it unthinkable...

4. *They would bring public shame to Christ.* "Subjecting him to public disgrace," the writer states at the end of verse 6.

Now back to the question, *why?* Why is the writer of Hebrews sending this warning to a group of professing Christians? I think it boils down to a very tragic reality, namely that in a group of people who *profess* Christ it's possible there are those who do not *possess* Christ. Jesus had this to say in his parable of the four soils in Luke 8:13, "Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away."

Has that ever happened? Do you remember **Simon Magus**? We meet him in Acts 8. He was a powerful sorcerer in Samaria until Philip came and preached the gospel, and people turned to Christ. Acts 8:13 records, "Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw."

In time, however, Simon showed his true colors and offered the apostles money if they would give him the Holy Spirit power they demonstrated in doing miracles. In response Peter rebuked Simon in Acts 8:20-23, "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

What happened to Simon Magus? Here's a man who professed Christ, was baptized, who experienced the wonderful benefits of belonging to the Christian community. But, as F. F. Bruce points out, in the following decades Simon showed himself "to be the most determined opponent of apostolic Christianity."^[7] Here's a man who tasted the heavenly gift and the goodness of God's Word, but Christ wasn't enough for him.

Isn't that likewise what happened to **Judas Iscariot**? He spent three years with Jesus and experienced spiritual blessings and privileges we can hardly imagine. He talked with Jesus, ate with Jesus, laughed with Jesus, listened to Jesus' sermons, carried Jesus' money (he was the treasurer for the group (John 13:29), received power from Jesus to do miracles, heard gospel invitations and gave them, but in the end he sold his heart to Satan and betrayed the Savior

he pretended to love.^[8]

It's a tragic reality that one's heart may be far from the One he professes to serve.^[9] I think that's the writer of Hebrews concern, as Philip Hughes explains, "What he has reason to fear is that some among them who have professed Christian faith, enjoyed Christian fellowship, and engaged in Christian witness may prove to be hypocrites and enemies of Christ and, by turning away from the light they have known, show that they do not belong to God's people at all."^[10]

Let me say this clearly. This text isn't saying that we should ever give up on people, including those who are presently mocking our Savior. Our responsibility is clear according to 2 Timothy 2:25, "Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth."

Nor is this text saying that some people are too far gone for God to save. God's grace is greater than all our sin, as Romans 5:20 declares, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." If you desire God's forgiveness today, you can receive it through Christ.

But that is something this person being described in Hebrews 6 will *not* do. He's already "tried Jesus." But like Judas, he sold out for the best this world can offer.

F. F. Bruce sums it up, "God has pledged Himself to pardon all who truly repent, but Scripture and experience alike suggest that it is possible for human beings to arrive at a state of heart and life where they can no longer repent."^[11]

Leon Morris puts it this way, "The writer is saying that when people have entered into the Christian experience far enough to know what it is all about and have then turned away, then, as far as they themselves are concerned, they are crucifying Christ. In that state, they cannot repent."^[12]

Remember the Hebrew spies who searched out the promised land? What did they bring with them after their survey trip? They carried home samples of the produce of the land. Yet ten of these men, after getting a taste of God's goodness, perished in the wilderness. Why? Because of the sin of unbelief.^[13]

So our text invites us to ponder this impossibility. That brings us to a second consideration...

II. Our text presents an illustration (7-8).

It's an illustration which sheds valuable light on the meaning of verses 4-6. It's very simple and straightforward. I'll read it and make two observations about it.

Verses 7-8—"Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned."

Here are the two observations...

A. Land that soaks up rain and produces a good crop has God's blessing (7). On the other hand...

B. Land that soaks up rain and produces thorns is facing a curse (8). Notice the similarities. Both pieces of land receive the rain, and both pieces of land soak up the rain. But only the land in verse 7 produces a useful crop. The land in verse 8 produces thorns and thistles which are worthless and consequently are heading for the fire.

Implications: What's the point of our text? Consider four implications...

1. *People who truly know Christ won't fall away and lose their salvation.*

The Bible is full of promises like this one from Jesus' lips in John 10:27-28, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." Christ won't let go of His people. Those who truly know Christ will never fall away and lose their salvation.

The security of Christ's people is not in question by the writer of Hebrews. But this is, as F. F. Bruce observes, "In these verses he is not questioning the perseverance of the saints; we might say that rather he is insisting that those who persevere are the true saints."^[14] Which brings us to the second implication...

2. *People who truly know Christ will take inventory of their spiritual condition.* Back to our earlier question. Why would the writer give this warning about apostasy if he is writing to believers? Calvin offers this helpful response, "My answer is that he is giving them early warning of the danger, so that they may be on their guard against it." Then Calvin offers this practical word of caution, "When we turn aside from the straight way, we not only make excuses for our vices to others, but also impose them on ourselves. Satan creeps up on us stealthily, and allures us gradually by subtly hidden devices, so that when we go astray we are not conscious of so straying. We slip down gradually, until at last we fall headlong."^[15]

Oh dear friend, I urge you to take inventory this morning. Do you truly know Christ, and is He so precious to you that you would lay down your life for Him?

3. *People who truly know Christ must take steps to grow.* That's the charge of Hebrews 6. Let's leave the ABCs and go on to maturity!

This past week I read a comment by Al Mohler who stated, "The release this week of the video game *Grand Theft Auto IV* is predicted to be the biggest event in the entertainment industry this year, with some authorities predicting more than \$400 million in sales over the next few weeks. While other sectors of the entertainment industry are struggling, video games have seen a 57 percent jump in sales since last March, according to *The Washington Post*. *Forbes* reports that the video game market in the U.S. alone is worth \$18.8 billion a year. Even in the midst of economic pressures, fans of the *Grand Theft Auto* series say they will sacrifice other purchases in order to buy the new game."^[16]

That last line is revealing. *They will sacrifice other purchases in order to buy the new game.* We make sacrifices for what we value. If we truly value Christ, we will make sacrifices, doing so gladly, so we may please Him. So be honest. What kind of sacrifices do you need to make to grow in Christ, and are you willing to make them?

The readers of this letter faced a very real test, one that many believers in the world face today and that we ourselves may soon face. "If you deny Christ," says the judge, "I will let you go. Be a fool and refuse to do so, and pay the price. Which will it be?"

Polycarp, born in A.D. 69, faced such a decision. He was in his nineties when persecution broke out in Smyrna where he served as pastor of the church. His flock persuaded him to leave the city and go to a village farm to avoid the impending danger, which he did. Raymond Brown tells what happened next:

"Christians in Smyrna were arrested and brought before the Roman Pro-Consul, who sought to persuade them to take the oath of allegiance to the emperor, acknowledging Caesar as Lord, and to offer pagan sacrifice. A man named Quintus was remembered because 'he played the coward' and complied, but most of the Christians from Smyrna remained true to Christ. They were scourged, burned alive, tortured on the rack, and torn by wild beasts. After a few days of this public spectacle, the crowd in the arena became restless and called for a search to be made for Polycarp..."

A young slave revealed under torture where he could be found, and the police captain, with a detachment of cavalry, was dispatched to bring him to the arena. When Polycarp entered the arena there was a deafening roar from the spectators, but it could not drown out the heavenly voice which the aged-pastor heard: 'Be strong Polycarp, and play the man.'

The Pro-Consul...urged the old pastor to respect his age, and pressed him to take the oath, swearing by the genius of Caesar: 'Take the oath and I will let you go. Revile Christ.' Polycarp replied without hesitation: 'For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has never wronged me. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'... It was decreed that Polycarp should be burned alive. He was bound and consigned to the flames."^[17]

What gave Polycarp the courage to stand even unto death? Why didn't he deny Christ and save his neck? Raymond Brown says it well, "It would have been like crucifying the Son of God again, because it would mean consenting with those who nailed him to the cross. It would have signified a willingness to hold Christ up to public contempt. Polycarp refused such an unacceptable release."^[18]

It all boils down to this...

4. People who truly know Christ will follow Christ because He is worth it.

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

^[1] William Barclay, p. 56.

^[2] In the book there are five warning texts (in 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29).

^[3] The writer uses a string of eight participles in verses 6-8, the first five are aorist tense and the final three are present tense.

^[4] Taken from William Barclay, p. 57.

^[5] John Calvin, pp. 74-5.

^[6] William Barclay, p. 58.

^[7] F. F. Bruce, p. 122.

^[8] Another example might be Demas who loved the present world and deserted Paul (2 Tim. 4:10).

^[9] To borrow a thought from Philip Hughes, p. 218.

^[10] Philip Hughes, p. 222.

^[11] Quote taken from Raymond Brown, p. 110. F. F. Bruce also offers this insight, "He [the writer of Hebrews] is stating a practical truth that has verified itself repeatedly in the experience of the visible Church. Those who have shared the covenant privileges of the people of God, and then deliberately renounce them, are the most difficult persons to reclaim for the faith."^[11]

^[12] Leon Morris, p. 56.

^[13] Observation by F. F. Bruce, p. 119.

^[14] F. F. Bruce, p. 118.

^[15] John Calvin, p. 75.

^[16] Taken from *Al Mohler Blog 5-1-08 "Grand Theft Decency"*

[\[17\]](#) Raymond Brown, p. 92.

[\[18\]](#) Raymond Brown, p. 93.