

The Talmid



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 1, 2014

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDED NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



Dr. Eddie Ildefonso

*West Los Angeles Living Word Christian Center
Los Angeles, California*

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary
Honduras, Pakistan, Zimbabwe Extensions
International Dean, Covington Theological
Seminary*

DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY

The first three chapters of the **Book of Daniel** furnish a most seasonable and important lesson at a time like the present, in which the disciple is in such danger of yielding to surrounding influences, and of lowering his standard of testimony and his tone of discipleship, in order to meet the existing condition of things.

At the opening of **chapter 1 of the Book of Daniel** we have one of the most discouraging pictures of the state of things, in reference to the ostensible witness of God on the earth. “¹In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²The Lord gave

Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god” ([Daniel 1:1-2](#)).

Here then we have an aspect of things quite sufficient, if looked at from nature’s point of view, to discourage the heart, to damp the spirit, and paralyze the energies. Jerusalem in ruins, the temple trodden down, the Lord’s vessels in the house of a false god, and Judah carried away captive. Surely the heart would feel disposed to say, “**There is no use in seeking to hold up the standard of practical discipleship and personal devotedness any longer.**” The spirit must droop, the heart must faint, and the hands must hang down, when such is the condition of the people of God. It could be nothing but the greatest presumption for any of Judah’s sons to think of taking up true Nazarite’s position at such a time.

Such would be nature’s reasoning; but such was not the language of faith. Blessed be God! There is always a wide sphere in which the spirit of genuine devotedness can develop itself—there is always a path along which the true disciple can run, even though he should have to run in solitude. It matters not what the outward condition of things may be, it is faith’s privilege to hang as much on God, to feed as much on Christ, and to breathe as much of the air of heaven, as though all were in perfect order and harmony.

This is an unspeakable mercy to the faithful heart. All who desire to walk devotedly can always find a path to walk in; whereas, on the contrary, the man who draws a plea, from outward circumstances, for relaxing his energy, would not be energetic, even though he may be most favorably situated.

If ever there was a time in which one might be excused for taking a low ground, it was the time of the Babylonish captivity. The entire framework of Judaism was broken up; the kingly power had passed out of the hand of David's successor, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; the glory had departed from Israel; and, in one word, all seemed faded and gone, and nothing remained for the exiled children of Judah, save to hang their harps upon the willow trees, and sit down by the rivers of Babylon, there to weep over departed glory, faded light, and fallen greatness. Does this not sound like our present day?

Such would be the language of blind unbelief; but, blessed be God! It is when everything appears sunk to the lowest possible point, that then faith rises in holy triumph; **and faith, we know, is the only true basis of effective discipleship.** It asks for no props from the men and things around it; it finds "*all its life*" in God; and hence it is that faith never shines so brightly as when all around is dark. It is when nature's horizon is overcast with the blackest clouds that faith basks in the sunshine of the divine favor and faithfulness.

Such as it was that Daniel and his companions were enabled to overcome the peculiar difficulties of their time. They judged that there was nothing to hinder their enjoying as elevated a Nazariteship in Babylon as ever had been known in Jerusalem; and they judged rightly. Their judgment was the judgment of a pure and well-founded faith. It was the selfsame judgment on which the **Baraks**, the **Gideon**s, the **Jephthah**s, and the **Samson**s of old had acted.

It was the judgment to which Jonathan gave utterance, when he said, "**.....Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few**" ([1](#)

[Samuel 14:6 NASB](#))

It was the judgment of David, in the valley of Elah, when he called the poor trembling: host of Israel "**...the armies of the living God**" ([1 Samuel 17:36 NASB](#))

It was the judgment of Elijah, on Mount Carmel, when he built an altar with "**...twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob....**" ([1 Kings 18:31 NASB](#))

It was the judgment of Daniel himself when, at a further stage of his history, he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem, "**Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously**" ([Daniel 6:10 NASB](#))

It was the judgment of Paul when, in view of the overwhelming tide of apostasy and corruption which was about to set in, he exhorts his son Timothy to "**Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus**" ([2 Timothy 1:13 NASB](#)).

It was the judgment of Peter when, in prospect of the dissolution of the entire framework of creation, he encourages believers to "**.....be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless**" ([2 Peter 3:14 NASB](#)).

It was the judgment of John when, amid the actual breaking up of everything ecclesiastical, he exhorts his well-beloved Gaius to "**...do not imitate what is evil, but what is good...**" ([3 John 1:11 NASB](#)).

And it was the judgment of Jude when, in the presence of the most appalling wickedness, he encourages a beloved remnant to "**...building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life**" ([Jude 1:20-21 NASB](#)). In one word, it was the judgment of the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, it was the judgment of faith.

Now, all this attaches immense value and interest to

Daniel's determination, as expressed in the first chapter of the book of Daniel. **"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself"** ([Daniel 1:8 NASB](#)).

He might, very naturally, have said to himself, "There is no use in one poor feeble captive seeking to maintain a place of separation. Everything is broken up. It is impossible to carry out the true spirit of a Nazarite amid such hopeless ruin and degradation. I may as well accommodate myself to the condition of things around me."

But no; Daniel was on higher ground than this. He knew it was his privilege to live as close to God in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, as within the gates of Jerusalem. He knew that, let the outward condition of the people of God be what it might, there was a path of purity and devotedness opened to the individual saint, which he could pursue independently of everything.

And may we not say that the Nazariteship of Babylon possesses charms and attractions fully as powerful as the Nazariteship of Canaan? Unquestionably. It is unspeakably precious and beautiful; to find one of the captives in Babylon breathing after, and attaining unto, so elevated a standard of separation. It teaches a powerful lesson for every age. It holds up to the view of believers, under every dispensation, a most encouraging and soul-stirring example. It proves that, amid the darkest shades, a devoted heart can enjoy a path of cloudless sunshine.

But how is this? Because **"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"** ([Hebrews 13:8 NASB](#)). Dispensations change and pass away. Ecclesiastical institutions crumble and molder into ashes. Human systems totter and fall; but the name of Jehovah endures forever, and His memorial unto all generations. It is upon this holy elevation that faith plants its foot. It rises above all changes, and enjoys sweet relationship with the unchangeable and eternal Source of all real good.

Thus it was that, in the days of the judges, individual faith was manifested and achieved more glo-

rious triumphs than ever were known in the days of Joshua. Thus it was that Elijah's altar on Mount Carmel was surrounded by a halo fully as bright as that which crowned the altar of Solomon.

This is truly encouraging. The poor heart is so apt to sink, and be discouraged, by looking at the failure and unfaithfulness of man, instead of at the infallible faithfulness of God. **"Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness"** ([2 Timothy 2:19 NASB](#)). What can ever touch this enduring truth? Nothing! And, therefore, nothing can touch the faith which lays hold of it, or the superstructure of practical devotedness which is erected on the foundation of that faith.

And then look at the glorious results of Daniel's devotedness and separation. In the three opening chapters we observe three distinct things, resulting from the position assumed by Daniel and his companions, in reference to **"the king's meat."**

1. **They were let into the secret of "*the king's dream.*"**
2. **They withstood the seductions of "*the king's image.*" And,**
3. **They were brought unscathed through "*the king's furnace.*"**

I. **"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."** This is beautifully exemplified in the case before us. **"The magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans,"** who were breathing the atmosphere of the royal presence, were all in the dark as to the royal dream. **"The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king..."** ([Daniel 2:10 NASB](#)). Very likely; but there was a God in heaven who knew all about it; and who, moreover, could unfold it to those who had faith enough, and devotedness enough, and self-denial enough, to separate themselves from Babylonish pollutions, though involved in the Babylonish captivity. The mazes, the labyrinths, and the enigmas of human things are all plain to God; and He can and does make them plain to those who walk with Him, in the sanctity of His holy presence. God's Nazarites can see farther into human affairs than the most profound philosophers of this world. And how is this? How can they so readily unravel the world's mysteries?

Because they are above the world's mists. They are apart from the world's defilements. They are in the place of separation, the place of dependence, the place of communion.

“Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:17-18 NASB). Here we have their place of strength and intelligence. They had only to look up to heaven, in order to be endowed with a clear understanding as to all the destinies of earth.

How real and simple is all this? **“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;”** and, hence, if we want light, we can find it only in His presence; and we can only know the power of His presence as we are practically taking the place of separation from all the moral pollutions of earth.

And, observe, a further result of Daniel's holy separation. **“Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense” (Daniel 2:46 NASB).** Here we have earth's proudest and most powerful monarch at the feet of the captive exile. Magnificent fruit of faithfulness! Precious evidence of the truth that God will always honor the faith that can, in any measure, rise to the height of His thoughts! He will not, He cannot, dishonor the draft which confidence presents at His exhaustless treasury. Daniel, on this memorable occasion, realized, in his own person, as fully as ever it was realized, God's ancient promise: **“¹⁰ So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.” ¹³ The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath....”(Deuteronomy 28:10, 13 NASB).**

Assuredly Daniel was, in the above scene, **“the head,”** and Nebuchadnezzar **“the tail,”** as looked at from the divine point of view. Witness, also, the bearing of this holy Nazarite, in the presence of the impious Belshazzar. **“¹⁷ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Keep your gifts for yourself**

or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. ¹⁸ O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. ¹⁹ Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and *his* glory was taken away from him. ²¹ He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like *that of* beasts, and his dwelling place *was* with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and *that* He sets over it whomever He wishes. ²² Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, ²³ but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified. ²⁴ Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out. ²⁵ Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE'—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. ²⁷ 'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. ²⁸ 'PERES'—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians. ²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and *put* a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he *now* had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom”(Daniel 5:17-29 NASB).

Have we not, here, as magnificent a testimony to the destined pre-eminence of the seed of Abraham, as when Joshua's victorious captains placed their feet on the necks of the kings of Canaan, **“When they brought**

these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came near and put their feet on their necks" ([Joshua 10:24 NASB](#)) or, when "all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart" ([1 Kings 10:24 NASB](#)). Unquestionably; and, in a certain sense, it is a more magnificent testimony. It is natural to expect such a scene in the history of Joshua, or of Solomon; but to find the haughty king of Babylon prostrate at the feet of one of his captives is something far beyond the utmost stretch of nature's expectation.

There it is, however, as a most striking and soul-stirring proof of the power of faith to triumph over all manner of difficulties, and to produce the most extraordinary results. Faith is the same mighty principle, whether it acts on the plains of Palestine, on the top of Carmel, by the rivers of Babylon, or amid the ruins of the professing Church. No confusion can bind it, no difficulties deter it, no pressure can damp it, no changes affect it. It ever rises to its proper object, and that object is God Himself, and His eternal revelation.

Dispensations may change, ages may run their course, the wheels of time may roll on, and crush beneath their ponderous weight the fondest hopes of the poor human heart; but there stands faith, that immortal, divine, eternal reality, drinking at the fountain of pure truth, and finding all its springs in Him, who is "**the way, the truth, and the life**"([John 14:6](#)).

By this "**precious faith**" it was that Daniel acted, when he "**resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food**" ([Daniel 1:8 NASB](#)). True, he could no longer ascend to that holy and beautiful house, where his fathers had worshipped. The rude foot of a foreign foe had trodden down the holy city. The fire no longer burned on the altar of the God of Israel. The golden candlestick no longer enlightened, with its seven lamps, the holy place. But there was faith in Daniel's heart, and that faith carried him beyond every surrounding influence, and enabled him to appropriate, and act in the power of, "**all the promises of God,**" which are "**Yea,**

and Amen in Christ Jesus." Faith is not affected by ruined temples, fallen cities, faded lights, or departed glories. **Why not? Because God is not affected by them. God is always to be found; and faith is always sure to find Him.**

CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)

That something is radically wrong with the world of mankind requires no labored argument to demonstrate. That such has been the case in all generations is plain from the annals of history. This is only another way of saying that something is radically wrong with man himself, for the world is but the aggregate of all the individual members of our race. Since the whole of anything cannot be superior to the parts comprising it, it necessarily follows that the course of the world will be determined by the characters of those who comprise it. But when we come to inquire exactly what is wrong with man, and how he came to be in such a condition, unless we turn to God's inspired Word no convincing answers are forthcoming. Apart from that divine revelation no sure and satisfactory reply can be made to such questions as these: What is the source of the unmistakable imperfections of human nature? What will furnish an adequate explanation of all the evils which infest man's present state? Why is it that none is able to keep God's law perfectly or do anything which is acceptable to Him while in a state of nature?





Pastor Gary C. Fleetwood
Chime Bell Baptist Church
Windsor, South Carolina

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary
Aiken, South Carolina Extension
Dean, Covington Theological Seminary
Country of Romania*

Hebrews 6 – Part 3

Author's Note: The overview study for each chapter of Hebrews is intended to simply provide a basic understanding of some of the various key elements of each chapter and is not written as an in-depth theological treatise. However, because of the critical importance of properly understanding Hebrews 6, additional time will be given to the overview of this chapter.

In [Hebrews 6:6a](#) some of the translators use the phrase “**if they fall away**”. This one little phrase has divided many segments of the church for years, and to this day it remains divided. However, there is no word “**if**” in the Greek text. The Greek text simply uses the participle “*parapesontas*” at this point – “**And having fallen**”. That is how it reads in the Greek Interlinear. A participle is what is known as a verbal adjective. The RSV and the NEB translate it like this – “**They fell away**”. The NAS says “**having fallen away**”. Those are much better translations simply because there is no “**if**” in the

Greek text. The KJV, the NKJV, the NIV and the AV add the word “**if**”. However, the tense of the verb is in the orist tense and active voice which simply means that this falling away is something that had happened in the past at a definite point in time. The point is that the literal rendering of the Greek verb “*parapesontas*” simply means that something had already happened. What the author is explaining is not a hypothesis, a theory, a proposition, or an assumption. He is speaking specifically about some Christians who had actually fallen away. The meaning of the verb for “**fall away**” or “**having fallen away**” literally means to fall aside, or fall alongside, or fall beside. Unfortunately, it is the connotation and implication of the words “**fall away**” that creates the havoc. The root verb is “*pipto*” or “**fall**” and is used several times in Hebrews.

[Hebrews 3:17,](#)

¹⁷Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

[Hebrews 4:11,](#)

¹¹Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

[Hebrews 11:30,](#)

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

[I Corinthians 10:12,](#)

¹²Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

So the Greek verb “*pipto*” means to fall and come to a full stop. However, when the prefix “*para*” is added to the Greek verb it becomes “*parapipto*” and is a weaker term – to fall alongside or to fall beside. What the author is talking about is a deviation from what is right. These are Christians and some have turned away from what they know is right. They are deviating from the faith and they are no longer willing to adhere to the full realities of what it means to be a Christian. For whatever reason which is not identified here, some of these He-

brew Christians had lost the will to remain true to what they knew was right. They had reached a point in their life where they were willing to forfeit the truth and adherence to the truth for whatever it was that they wanted to do. We know from v6 that it was something in their life that spiritually was a very serious violation of the Christian faith simply because it “**put Christ to an open shame**”.

In v6 the author uses the word “**again**” – “**if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance**”. The implication is that these people had been repeatedly warned and they had actually repented. Then they fell away “**again**” and were brought back, and then they fell away and they were warned, they were renewed – until something happened. That is why the writer brings in the word “**again**”. The clear implication is that they had been renewed before. I.e., this process of falling away and being renewed had apparently been going on for some time. We might say that it had become a “pattern” of their life.

So, why does the author say here that they cannot be renewed again unto repentance? Just the use of the term “**renew**” means that there had been a falling of some kind or there would have been no point in phrasing it this way. Apparently the writer had some specific Christians in mind that had brought some form of disgrace on the Christian church and on the name of Christ. Once again that appears to be verified in the last phrase of v6 where it says “**and put Him to an open shame**”. The NIV translates it as “**subjecting Him to public disgrace**”. That translation seems to best capture the intent of what the author is saying. These Christians that he has in mind have actually disgraced the name of Christ in some kind of public setting.

In [Hebrews 6:6\(b\)](#), the word for “**crucify**” is a Greek word that has the prefix “*ana*” before it – “*anastaurountas*”. Any time that you have the prefix “*ana*” it always means again – and that is why it is translated – “**crucify again**”. So, what does it mean to re-crucify, or to “**crucify again**”? This is very important. **IT IS TO WILLFULLY PERSIST IN THE SAME SIN OR SINS FOR**

WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN. The assumption with salvation is that when a person is converted that their past is washed away, their sins forgiven, and because of that, they are now going to serve the Lord and walk in the light. They are going to now “**put off the old man**”, put away their former life – and “**put on the new man**”. [Ephesians 4:22-24](#) says,

²²that you **put off**, concerning your former conduct, **the old man** which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you **put on the new man** which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

That is every believer’s true spiritual calling. [Colossians 3:8-10](#) says,

⁸But now you yourselves are to **put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.** ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you have **put off the old man** with his deeds, ¹⁰and have **put on the new man** who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

We were the children of darkness, but now we are the children of light. [Ephesians 5:8](#) says,

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

The author is talking here about people who are saved, who know Jesus Christ personally, and who acknowledge that He is the Son of God, BUT THEY GO BACK INTO THEIR FORMER SINS, THEIR FORMER LIFESTYLE. They were delivered, set free from those things, but they go back and keep going back. In the terms the writer is using here, they are “**crucifying again**” the Lord Jesus. He died for those sins, delivered them from those sins, but they keep going back. They re-crucify Him, “**crucify Him again**” for their sins. These people have persisted in their former sins and refused to repent of them.

Obviously this passage has to be referring to Christians simply because lost people cannot put Christ to an “open shame”. Lost people can curse God, they can

blaspheme God, but they do not put the Son of God to an “**open shame**” - but Christians can! It is the person who has been saved and forgiven that can do this. The actual term “**open shame**” has the idea of making an example of someone or treating someone with contempt. It is doing something to embarrass someone publicly. Parents can do this to their children when they talk down to them in public or when they speak to them in derision in front of other people. However, when a Christian turns away from the things of God and from the things that they were saved from and begin to live again as they had before salvation, then the name of Christ is brought to an “**open shame**”. It is as if they cannot write “**Hallowed be Your name**” over how they are living. The worst thing, however, is when the world sees it take place. They have a way of taking notice of all of those things that believers do that they know are dishonoring to Christ. They know, and they notice, and we can be assured that they will use it as a reproach against the church and against Christ.

Unfortunately, there are many people who have brought open shame to the name of Christ. This is different from the person who claims to be a Christian, but has no real active involvement in the things of God or the local church. Rather, this is referring to someone who has outwardly done something of such a magnitude that it has brought open shame and dishonor to the name of Christ – an embarrassment to all Christians and to the name of Christ. Some televangelists\ participating in open prostitution, not just once, but multiple times – that is what brings open shame and dishonor to the name of Christ. A Christian pastor having an affair with some woman in his church – that is what brings open shame and dishonor to the name of Christ.

Obviously, the possibility of repentance after falling away is not the author’s intent and purpose in writing here simply because that scenario is identified many times in the Bible. The Scriptures are replete with examples of individuals who had fallen into sin, but eventually repented of that sin. The issue in

[Hebrews 6](#) is not one of someone sinning, but of an individual cycling in and out of sin so often that they eventually reach a point where repentance is no longer possible for them. [Hebrews 6:4](#) says that when someone reaches that point (and only God knows where that point is) that it is “**impossible**” for them to be renewed again. Where is that point? Well, we just do not know and we never will until it actually happens. It is a God thing, something God decides. Just look at David. He committed both murder and adultery. If that is not falling away I do not know what is. However, David was restored, brought to a place of repentance where he responded fully to God’s reproving work in his life. As far as we know, he never again committed those two sins. What the author is talking about here is a frightening thing – the possibility that a believer could reach a point over time of not being willing to respond to God’s promptings and conviction so that they become so “**dull of hearing**” that God makes a decision that they will not be renewed again to repentance.

Now, what I am about to say is extremely important and is generally misunderstood by many Christians. **GOD IS THE ONLY ONE WHO GRANTS REPENTANCE TO A PERSON.** Repentance is a God thing. It is not something that someone can just turn on and turn off like a light bulb. Unfortunately, some Christians think that they can just live as they please and casually ignore God and His warnings to them, and then just come back to Him at their will and choosing. However, that is a very false and dangerous assumption on their part. Speaking of repentance, [Acts 11:18](#) says,

“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”

[Romans 2:4](#) says,

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

[Hebrews 6](#) is a very clear description of people being restored to repentance and responding, but unfortunately that pattern kept going on and on and they never went

on into maturity. A Christian willfully living in sin is undeniable evidence of their not going on into maturity, and in many cases is an evidence that someone has never been truly regenerated. It was a cycle, a bad habit of doing wrong, repenting, doing wrong, repenting, doing wrong, repenting - and after a time, God simply said "Enough!"

When reading [Hebrews 6:4-6](#), the question might be that of how bad does a person have to be to reach this point of it being "impossible" to "renew them again to repentance"? How bad does someone have to become? Most believers have done this to some extent at different times in their lives. We have all sinned and certainly sometimes worse than others. So, the issue is not so much how bad is my sin, but how do I respond to God when I do sin.

It is important to keep in mind that once a person has fallen away that **God is NOT obligated to grant them repentance.** We would like to think that He is, but He is not. If He, for whatever divine reason, chooses not to grant repentance, then repentance will not happen. It is just like it is in salvation. If God does not grant grace and the faith to believe to an individual, then salvation will not happen. We cannot just play with God on our terms – just live how we want to live and then say a little prayer asking for forgiveness. Many do that, but it has nothing to do with repentance. It is just a spiritual charade. We cannot be flippant, superficial, and glib with God and think that all is well. Rather, WE MUST COME TO HIM HUMBLY AND ON HIS TERMS. There is no other way to approach Him. If for any reason a believer thinks there is, then they have been sadly deceived. We can be assured that whatever we sow, that is what we will reap, and if we choose to leave God out of our life, we will reap the consequences of that choice. The consequences of sowing and reaping are rarely ever immediate.

It is important to understand the use of the term "falling away" in [Hebrews 6](#) as simply **sinning without any repentance.** When a believer sins against God, they always lose something. It is very difficult to quantify what and how much, but some-

thing in their life is always forfeited and something is always lost. How much? We do not know. When? We do not know? To what degree? We do not know. From a spiritual perspective, **we lose a certain vital dependence on God.** This dependence on God is something that is very valuable to every believer's life and spiritual healthy – and they just forfeit it. [Romans 12:2](#) seems to clarify this when it says,

²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may PROVE what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

It is the idea of continually approving what is good and right. When a person realizes right away that they have sinned, and waste no time in saying, "God, I am sorry, please cleanse me and restore me", there is virtually no loss in that person's ability to have fellowship with God. [Hebrews 6](#), however, is the warning to the person who sins, but who does **NOT** repent when they know that they should. Before long it has become a very bad habit. The non-repenting believer loses something vital for their spiritual life, **and God may or may not grant them repentance.** God may let that individual just continue in that broken state. What the author is addressing here is the sin of presumption – of presuming on God's goodness and of presuming on God's patience. For some strange reason, many seem to think that God's forbearance has no limits and that for the most part His forgiveness always trumps His discipline. Just because of His grace, at times it may. However, to be presumptuous about God's patience and longsuffering in the light of a believer's outward and knowledgeable sin is very demeaning to every member of the Godhead and something that eventually will most likely serve as a basis for God's disciplinary intervention, and ultimately His not granting repentance to a sinner who refuses to respond to God's goodness.

The problem with the believers in [Hebrews 6](#) is that **they had spurned the opportunity to truly repent way too many times.** They had reached that place that I would personally call "terminal chastening". It is a last resort – and I have no idea of where that point in a person's walk is, or when it may occur, but it is there. I

cannot tell you why these people in [Hebrews 6:4-6](#) could not be renewed. We do not have that answer. God is patient and He has been very patient with all of us in our life. [Hebrews 6:4-6](#) is describing that person who has gone so far that God just washes His hands of them. A good example is the spies who outvoted Caleb and Joshua in [Numbers 13:31-33](#). They had seen the glory of God, the Passover, the pillar of fire, the crossing of the Red Sea, but they insulted God and refused to enter the land He had promised them. So **God swore in His wrath** that they would **NOT** enter into the Promised Land and they wandered in the wilderness for forty years – and died. What could have been for them never materialized. What both they and their families lost was enormous. Can a parallel type event happen in the New Testament? Certainly it can!

Now, it is important to keep in mind that there is always the possibility that what happened to these Hebrews who were enlightened and had tasted of the heavenly gift, can just as easily happen to the modern day believer. We are surrounded with all of the distractions possible to cause us to casually wander and drift away from a whole hearted commitment to Jesus Christ. Just think for a moment of how many believers that you know that you would truly consider fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. How many would it be? In most churches it may only be a handful at best. This warning is a reminder that each believer is dependent on God's sovereign mercy. If [Hebrews 6](#) does not describe our life, then we should be grateful that we have been spared and that hopefully our heart is still warm and receptive to God's work in it. The Christian life is all about choosing – about choosing God and His ways, about choosing to be faithful to His ways, and about choosing to walk in obedience to His commands. There is nothing more precious than knowing that the Holy Spirit is dealing with an individual, and that they are convicted, and that they can hear His voice, and that their heart is not hardened, and that they can be changed. That is an in-

credible place to be in your life – continually responsive to God's work in your life.

So, what do these verses imply that an unrepentant Christian can lose? Well, obviously they lose the opportunity to be renewed to repentance again. From the verses, that goes without saying. It means that they will most likely continue to live in some kind of Christ dishonoring sin and rebellion for the rest of their Christian life, and their loss is not something that can be clearly quantified. They lose God's anointing and blessing on their life. They lose their will to choose to do the right thing in their life. They are confronted with doing what God wants them to do or doing what they want to do, and invariably they will always seem to choose to do what they want to do. They have no will power to make godly choices. They come into bondage to sin and there is nothing they seem to be able to do about it. They lose their assurance. They become confused and have no presence of the mind of Christ in them. We could just go on and on. The point is simple. Reaching this place in the Christian life is very costly. The years just roll on by, life's meaningful and purposeful opportunities are lost, and rather than living a life of usefulness, the unrepentant believer lives a life of utter uselessness. They have taken the talents, the gifts, the reproofs, the corrections, and the opportunities that God has divinely given them to be used for His glory and they bury them in their self-indulgence and personal priorities. And in so doing, they eventually forfeit being useful in God's kingdom. At best their Christian life becomes stale and mediocre and nothing of any lasting value is brought forth.

The opportunities that believers have to be faithful are just that – opportunities. They come and go. There are many Christians who have forfeited the occasions that God has given to them to be faithful and productive. They have chosen to minimize the spiritual and maximize the earthly. They have chosen not to seek that which is of God's kingdom, but they pursue the things of the world instead. They have placed their priorities above God's priorities for their life, and in the process have quietly forfeited their divinely ordained opportunities. The tragedy of this scenario is more than just a

casual observance, but in many cases is the unfortunate reality of many Christian's lives. The church age in which we live seems to be much more focused on being culturally relevant than biblically relevant, and in that subtle process of weaning ourselves off of the things of God the personal spiritual loss to one's Christian life is compounded with alarming frequency.

Some are going to ask the question *"Well, isn't God a loving and forgiving God? Isn't God patient and long-suffering? Isn't the Holy Spirit continually doing a sanctifying work in a believer's life?"* The obvious answer to each of those questions is an emphatic and resounding *"Yes"*. However, none of those positive statements can simply trump what the author of Hebrews has declared and described. The negative part of God's Word is just as much a part as is the positive. There are those demeaning activities, attitudes, and actions that a believer can repeatedly and stubbornly continue to live in, and when they do there is the distinct possibility that they may reach a place where they find it impossible to repent of what they are continuing to do. It may be something like simple spiritual lethargy and indifference to the meaningful things of God in their life. It may be an ongoing refusal to spend any time in God's Word or in prayer. It may be a lack of genuine reverence for that which is sacred before God. It can be many things in a believer's life which they are not willing to spiritually rectify. Will the Holy Spirit work in that believer's life? Absolutely. That is what He does in His sanctifying work. However, it is crystal clear that each believer will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and rewards will be given and rewards will be removed. Why will some things be burned as worthless? It is because they were. Some things will have been no more than wood, hay, and stubble before God and their eternal value will have been forever lost. Once today has been lived, it can never be re-lived. Once divine opportunities for Christ have been forfeited and ignored, they can never be re-gained. To not give full attention to what [Hebrews 6](#) is stating and to just

surmise that it is not even talking about believers can have very unfortunate and spiritually numbing results. For the most part, the testimony of a God fearing and Christ honoring believer should be that their very life is a testimony that they are not the ones to whom [Hebrews 6](#) is referring. To the contrary, their life clearly testifies to the fact that they are fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. That is the place of spiritual safety and refuge for every believer and one for which they should continually strive.

Continued in next edition...

NOTES

The Talmid is published by:



***West Los Angeles
Living Word Christian Center***

6520 Arizona Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90045 USA
(310) 645-2522 or (310) 665-0137

Email: admin@wlalwcc.org
Web Site: www.wlalwcc.org

Covington

Dr. Steve Sullivan, President

Theological Seminary

Conservative in Theology : Liberal in Love and Service

Quality education through home study for those who cannot attend a campus setting.

Associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctorate Degrees offered

Areas of study Available:

- Theology
- Bible
- Pastoral
- Christian Education
- Counseling
- Music
- Ethnic Studies

Accredited by ACI

Training Leaders Impacting Eternity

For more information contact us today: P.O. Box 176, Rossville, GA, 30741
 Located at 1168 Cross St, Fort Oglethorpe, GA, 30742
 Ph: 706-866-5626 Fax 706-861-3550 Email: registrat@covingtonseminary.org
 To request a catalogue give us a call or email: info@covingtonseminary.org

International Extension Schools

The North Andros Bible Institute

Barbados, Bahamas

The Covington Theological Seminary of Chile

Talagante Santiago, Chile

The Ghana Baptist Institute & Bible College

Accra, Ghana

The Covington Theological Seminary of Honduras

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The Covington Theological Seminary of Gudiwada

Krishna-Andhrapradesh, India

The International Extension of Indonesia

Jakarta, Indonesia

Blue Mountain Baptist Bible College

Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria

The Covington Theological Seminary of Pakistan

Lahore, Pakistan

The Covington Theological Seminary of Romania

Lugoj Timas, Romania

The Covington Theological Seminary of South Africa

Johannesburg, South Africa

The Covington Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe