

"If They Shall Fall Away ..."

God, in His infinite wisdom, provided the scriptures for mankind written in a language perfectly suited for the message of redemption. It is certainly worth the Bible student's time to carefully investigate key Greek phrases in the scriptures, and this article will examine the phrase found in Hebrews 6:4-6. Its structure used in the Greek helps us to combat error surrounding it.

The word for "enlightened" is *photisthentas*; "have tasted" is *geusamenous*; "made partakers" is *metochous*; "tasted" is *geusamenous*; and "fall away" is *parapesontas*. All five of these words express simple action, as opposed to continuous action. It does not in itself indicate the time of the action. The International Critical Commentary says that the first three expressions are "rhetorical expressions for the initial experience described in *hapax photisthentas* or 'once being enlightened'" (p. 78).

A point of significance in the verse is the use of voice. In the five aorist participles, the passive voice represents action that was performed on the subject, namely, salvation; while the active voice with "crucify" indicates action that is performed by the subject. Christians receive their salvation, but they can also be the ones who are responsible for falling away.

Concerning the construction of these verses, Earle says, "In verses 4-6 there are five aorist participles in parallel construction. The fifth one is *parapesontas*, 'and have fallen away.' The NASB has the correct translation here: 'and then have fallen away.' The 'if' is not justifiable. The Greek clearly indicates that one may become a partaker of the Holy Spirit -- obviously a Christian -- and yet fall away and be lost" (p. 423).

Vine states that *anastaurountas* is "used in Hebrews 6:6 of Hebrew apostates, who as merely nominal Christians, in turning back to Judaism, were thereby virtually guilty of crucifying Christ again" (p. 259). *Anastaurountas* is derived from the *stauroo* which signifies "the act of crucifixion; and metaphorically, the putting off of the flesh with its passions and lusts, a condition fulfilled in the case of those who are 'of Christ Jesus;' and of the relationship between the believer and the world" (p. 259).

The International Critical Commentary says, "The meaning of the vivid phrase is that they put Jesus out of their life, they break off all connection with Him; He is dead to them. This is the decisive force of *stauroouthai* in Galatians 6:14. The writer adds an equally vivid touch in *kai paradeigmatizontas* ("open shame") -- as if He is not worth their loyalty! Their repudia-

tion of Him proclaims to the world that they consider Him useless, and that the best thing they can do for themselves is to put Him out of their life" (p. 80).

A lot of religious people believe that it is impossible for the believer to fall away. However, this verse teaches that not only can a Christian fall away, but the impossibility is not with God, but with those who commit apostasy.

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