

To the Very Brink of Salvation but Lost Forever

Esau is an interesting character in the Bible. Mentioned in some 85 verses, the last time in Hebrews 12 where his fate is mentioned as eternally finalized. How many people have come to this place before a holy God would be a shocking to know. The Canaanite and Amorite were especially disgusting to the Lord and He wanted them exterminated. Nothing has changed and many who subscribe to evil are still lined up to eventually cross the line and go out into eternal darkness to be plunged into a lost eternity. As in the days of Noah and as recorded in Genesis 6:3 the Word declares that God had enough of the evil on earth and the hammer blow was about to fall. Though God is not willing that any should perish, he cannot abide stubborn rebellion against right and good; He offers help to obtain it and people self destruct when the snub Him and His offer of grace.

Hebrews 6 has a portion of scripture in it that shows how the sinner can come to the very brink of receiving Christ and yet be lost forever. So many wonderful realizations come over the sinner in this realized circumstance, yet he walks away forever exiled from the God of Salvation. There is no certainty that the individual in Hebrews 6 had ever been a believer. As you look carefully at the details you realize who is being talked about is not a born again believer, but his heart was being spoken to about the things of God. Esau and Judas Iscariot are prime examples of the Hebrews 6 case. Let's take a look at the passage.

Read Hebrews 6:1-8. The people seen in verses one and two are Jews. You can understand this as the writer is speaking of six features of the Old Covenant. The second word of verse one, *leaving* is a Greek word that means "a total departure from" and is the same word used for divorce in I Cor. 7. To be saved a Jew had to be essentially divorced from enslavement and dedication to the Law of Moses, an elementary teaching about Christ. Thus the writer of Hebrews is saying by the Holy Spirit that there is something better in store for Jews since the cross work of Christ was completed. This is true for everyone in the world. The Law of Moses is not the guiding rule of God anymore, Christ Himself is. The reader is strongly encouraged to leave the Old Economy and "press on" or carry on into a new spiritual maturity, (meaning true salvation) a Greek word that means complete perfection (salvation). This is the state and standing of a person who is in Christ because Christ is in him (the cause of salvation, Christ is our salvation). Those bound by the Old Covenant found it difficult to completely accept the claims of the New Covenant designed in the grace of God. Salvation is the deliverance of the soul from the plague and penalty of sin, a thing the Law of Moses could never do.

Read verse 3. This verse is interesting and not the only place where a statement like this is made. Those who are truly saved are only those who are permitted of the Father to be saved. This Bible truth is elaborated on more pointedly in Colossians 1 and is especially clear in the NAS Bible. The KJV has some archaic words in the passage that one must look up to find what they really mean. These kinds of words are not often studied and important meaning is missed or overlooked if only using the KJV Bible. The NAS Bible uses the modern vernacular for better clarity and presents a good take on the Greek text in Colossians 1:12-14. You are encouraged to take a closer look at these Scriptures, they are extremely important.

Noticed two warnings in the passage under consideration. The first is in verses 1-4 and the second is in verses 7-19. We shall only look at the verses 1-8 for now. There is a case in point mentioned about a person who has come to the brink of salvation. He has had privileged opportunity and insight and could have been saved but rejected God's offer to do life his way.

This person is informed by the Lord: Let's look at the key words that describes how God informs each sinner.

Enlightened: Vs. 4: Each sinner is enlightened about the heavenly gift (salvation). This is understood to be an intellectual ascent to spiritual cognizance of salvation itself, a primary stage for personal reception of the heavenly gift (salvation) by a sinner. God sees to it that each person is informed and everyone must understand God's truth before salvation. This word may be a summary of all that is to follow here.

Tasted: Each person needing salvation first gets a taste of the heavenly gift (salvation). Tasting implies a sampling. To taste here is what a person does when finding if he likes the flavor. Food may be tasted but not necessarily swallowed. This taste of Salvation is perhaps a thrill of joy when impacted with the sense of a possibility of really knowing Christ as Savior. Sinners are bated to bite the presentation and offer of the Holy Spirit in the moments that He comes in power and glory to the sinner.

Partaking: The sinner hears the Holy Spirit; he partakes of the Holy Spirit's input to his life. The Greek word for partaker here means to partner or associate with as in a counsel session about salvation. This partaking is a means for intellectual association with the Holy Spirit as he informs the sinner of his spiritual need.

God's Word: Vs. 5: The Spirit gives the sinner a taste of the good in God's Word. When you think about this you understand that every sinner recognizes and feels the influence of the Divine Book at some point in his life. (No wonder the liberals of America want to be rid of the Bible.) God's Word is the number one most influential thing on earth for sinners, Romans 10:16-18. Hearing, believing and acting upon the Word is a must in every case of personal salvation. We also read in John 6:35 and 51 that having eternal life comes by eating not merely tasting God's Word. When you as it were ingest the Word by faith you receive the benefit, "eternal life" or salvation.

James 1:18 is a verse where we see this process. The same truths are mentioned a little differently in John 6:44 and 45. In the Gospel of John the work being done is by the Father not the Holy Spirit. James seems to write about the whole godhead as being involved in the salvation process. In Hebrews it is the Holy Spirit who speaks to the sinner with divine truth and influence.

Powers to Come: The sinner can even taste the powers to come; that is, he senses the supernatural possibilities (which is leaving the life of sin and finding protected from its penalty) for the future including eternity. This is given and allowed by the Lord and yet the sinner turns back, rejecting God's free offer and thereby insulting God and His free gift of grace which cost the Father the life of His Son.

W.E. Vine makes a distinction that Strong's does not in the Greek word used for *tasting* in the English language. W.E. Vine splits the hair realized in the difference between tasting and swallowing. Tasting has the idea of sampling flavor. Surely the Lord does come in close to reveal all to the sinner about Him and His wonderful Kingdom. He does this for every one that he has created. He who receives Christ has eternal life and he who rejects Christ has God's wrath abiding on Him, John 3:36. Got Salvation? If it is no banana then there is never a possible arousal or assent to repentance for the rejecting soul again, according to Hebrews 6:6-8. Hebrews says that it is impossible to renew them to repentance (a necessity for salvation). The sinner has come to the very brink of Salvation but will be lost in outer darkness forever.

The Great Impossibility: God's work is ever perfect and extensive. We see here in this passage of scripture that the sinner has been brought to the very brink of Salvation. Rejection of God's offer finalizes the sinner's choice and God works no more in the behalf of the sinner's need. It is a fearful place to go and the eternal sorrows for this no one will ever know. And yet at God's right hand are pleasures forever more. Salvation is a work of God, Jn. 6:29. The sinner must receive Christ, he knows.

Can we criticize God for cutting the sinner off and leaving him to be forsaken when He rejects God's offer and effort to bring him to Himself? God's first offer is always clear and significant and if refused the outcome can't be good. This word "tasting" is the same word that is in Hebrews 2:9 that regards Christ "tasting" death for everyone. The pangs of death could not hold him... He ever lives and makes intercession for us! Christ spoke of his death as a baptism, dipped and He was brought forth again in resurrection, a tasting of death for us. The Christ rejecting person as it were becomes like a swine, polluted and filthy and God never casts His Pearls into that sinner's way again. Esau is a classic case and though he sought what he could have had with tears he became profane when he sold the birthright for a bowl of soup. He lived for the here and now and made the cheap shot at God's offer.

By Doug Crabb

Coming next is the final consideration of this three part series. Our text will be in Hebrews ten.