

# THE TWO IMPOSSIBLES

Hebrews—Chapter 6

Study 7

## Better Promises

There are two impossibilities presented to us in Hebrews 6. The first is the impossibility of being saved from sin by anything else but the full revelation of God's goodness as it is seen and experienced in the gospel. If we turn from this, it is impossible for anything else to bring us to God. The second impossibility is that God would lie to us about His promises to bless all those who flee to Him for refuge and hope. These two impossibilities tell us that God is our only hope, and that He will not disappoint any who look to Him. But before Paul takes us there, he has some unfinished business from chapter 5.

## Back to Basics

If you are backsliding in your walk with God, or if you feel a strong aversion to spiritual truth, Hebrews has a plan of action. Start with the milk of the Word, God's goodness and love. Behold it. Then allow the goodness of God to lead you to repentance. Get into His Word and allow Him to lead you step-by-step into a passionate love relationship. This is the basic instruction found in the last few verses of Hebrews 5, and now in these first few verses of Hebrews 6:

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits” (Hebrews 6:1-3).

Perhaps you have been a Christian for many years, but you've backslidden. The best thing to do now is start with the milk. Go back to basics. Don't try to run a marathon when you haven't exercised since grade school. The body just can't take it. Even if you have been in a regular exercise program, if you lay off for a long period of time, you need to build back up slowly. You can't just jump in and pick up where you left off. You have to begin again slowly, and as you do, you will find a steady increase in endurance and strength.

It is the same way with the Christian walk. If we have neglected spiritual exercise we need to go back to basics. Or as Paul puts it, to the “principles of the doctrine of Christ” (Hebrews 6:1). With this as our foundation, we then go on to perfection or maturity. From babes needing milk we mature to adults ready for the solid food of the Word.

## The First Impossibility

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Let's pause here for a few minutes so that we can understand what the apostle is saying to us in these last verses. They are not saying that if you turn away from God and go back into the world that it will be impossible for you to be saved, or that you will not be able to repent again. We know this is not Paul's message here because this would not be in harmony with the rest of the Bible. In the Bible time and again, we read stories of men and women who have turned from God, went into the world, but eventually responded to God and returned to Him. Among some of the most amazing testimonies of God's saving grace are Mannasseh and Solomon in the Old Testament as well as Mary Magdalene and Christ's story of the prodigal in the New Testament.

NOTES

*“God having provided something better for us.”* —Hebrews 11:40

All Scripture references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

In the context of what we have been studying in Hebrews, especially in this chapter, what is Paul saying? He is simply stating if we turn away from the goodness of God, what else can He do to reach us? It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). A key phrase for us to hone in on here is, “have tasted of the good Word of God.” In other words, you may go out into the world, but don’t ever forget that God loves you. Don’t doubt His ability and desire to rescue you. Always know that God is there for you—that it is your own choice to be lost, not His. If you turn away from the goodness of God and deny His undying love for you, what else can God do to reach you?

There are many of us who know a lot of truth intellectually but fail to follow it or to live it out in our lives. We may have given up on ourselves, but in our hearts we know the fault is with us and not with God. It is when we make that final transition—when we turn from the Word of God, from believing that God’s Word is powerful, and through it He is there for us whenever we need Him—that we close the door for God to reach us. It is important that we understand He does not close that door. We do.

### Choosing the Blessing

“For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:7-8).

God pours out His blessings upon the earth. They come to all, whether good or evil, believer or unbeliever (Matthew 5:43-47). God loves the world and showers His blessings upon everyone (John 3:16). And like the natural rain, God’s showers of goodness will produce fruit. To those who accept His goodness, it will produce healing herbs, but to those who reject it, thorns of bitterness. We choose by accepting or rejecting the blessings that God pours out upon us, and God honors our free choice.

“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:9-12).

This last verse builds on what Paul said earlier about being mature in the Word rather than babes. Don’t become slothful or lazy. Get in the Word, be workmen who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). God has made promises to us, and He wants us to inherit those promises. He wants us to lay claim to them. We are connected to the family of God. We are joint heirs with Christ through His love to us. Let us keep that love alive by continuing to labor in love for others.

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you’” (Hebrews 6:13-14). This is the everlasting covenant made with Abraham to be believed by us. This is the essence of the new covenant—God making promises to us. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. God has promised to bless us, and we are to agree with His promise by believing. The issue of the new covenant is not that God promises to do something for us and we in turn promise to do something for Him. We are not promise keepers. The issue is—are we promise believers? Will we believe and, therefore, accept what God has promised us He will do?

### The Second Impossibility

“And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as

an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:15-20).

Now notice the second impossibility presented in Hebrews 6. First was the impossibility of being led to repentance by anything other than the goodness of God. The second is two immutable things—one is God’s oath, the other His Word, in which it is impossible for God to lie. He said it in His Word and He swore it by an oath. It is impossible that God has lied to us. His oath and His Word back up everything He has promised us. This is not to be taken lightly. The Bible says no one should even swear by an oath (Matthew 5:33). So why would God do it?

### God Can—You Cannot

The reason why God can make an oath and we cannot is because God will always deliver on His oath while we cannot. Look for this underlying idea as we consider these verses in Matthew 5 concerning taking an oath:

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33-37).

Jesus said, referring back to the Old Testament, “You have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt not forswear thyself (KJV),” that is make an oath and then fail to keep it. But Jesus continues on, “I say unto you, do not swear at all.”

In other words, don’t make an oath in the first place. Jesus is taking us from the Old Testament practice of making sure we stick by our oath, to the New Testament understanding of not making an oath in the first place. Why? The answer is clear. We shouldn’t make an oath because we simply cannot keep it. We cannot “make one hair black or white.” Yes, we can color our hair on the outside, but it’s just color. Underneath it’s still white, or whatever the natural color is. And as it grows out, the true color emerges. It’s the same with our promises. We may make what looks like changes on the outside, but without God, nothing has really changed. In time, what is inside us will eventually be revealed.

It may be a little challenging to our pride, but Jesus is basically saying that, on a spiritual level, we should not make promises to God because we cannot keep them. We can make promises to people, and we ought to. We can take an oath in a court of law to tell the whole truth. I promise my kids a lot of things, and I usually follow through. But on a spiritual level we are bankrupt of any ability to follow through. In plain language Jesus says, You’ve heard that you should carry through on your promises to God, but I’m telling you don’t make promises to Him because you aren’t promises keepers. On the other hand, God can make an oath. Why? Because God is the Promise Keeper! He has promised us that He is the Author and He is the Finisher. We can trust His Word, which is an immutable promise. We can take His oath, which is an immutable promise. These are two things in which it is impossible for God to lie. Today we can know that God will indeed finish the work He has begun in us. We don’t promise God what we will do, but rather we accept the promise of what He will do for us.

### Summary

Hebrews 6 presents two impossibilities found in the Word of God. The first is our repentance apart from God’s goodness. If we have backslidden from God, we, like new believers, need to focus on the goodness of God and the milk of the Word so that we can renew our spiritual strength. It is impossible for us to repent if we turn away from the goodness of God, for it is the renewing power of God. The second impossibility is for God to lie about His promises to us. Based on two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, His promises will be fulfilled. When we view God as the Promise Keeper we have a strong consolation, a refuge, an anchor of hope in Jesus Christ.