

A passage that is usually misunderstood is Heb. 6:4-8.

CHAPTER 6

- 1. On account of which (Therefore), leaving (or: sending away) the word of Christ's beginning (or: the word of the beginning of the Christ; or: the first, beginning word of the Christ) we should be continuously bearing ourselves upon The Goal (perfection; maturity; Completion), not again conceiving (laying; casting down) a foundation of a change of mind away from dead works, and of faith upon God,**
- 2. of teachings of baptisms, and of placing-on of hands, and resurrection of dead ones -- even of judgment (separations and decisions) pertaining to or having the quality of the ages!**
- 3. And this we shall do! -- if it be that God may be permitting.**
- 4. For those once enlightened and tasting the heavenly gift, and being born (coming to be) partakers (participants; partners; associates) of set-apart spirit (of [the] Holy Spirit),**
- 5. and tasting a beautiful (good; ideal; excellent; profitable) declaration of God (or: God's fine speech) and abilities (powers) of an impending age,**
- 6. and falling by the side (falling aside) [are] powerless (unable) to be renewing again into a change of mind: [they are] continuously crucifying again in themselves (to, for, by themselves) the Son of God, and [are] constantly exposing [Him] to public disgrace.**
- 7. For a piece of land drinking the rain often coming upon it, and producing vegetation (pasture; produce) fit and useful to them through whom it is habitually being cultivated, [is] also continuously sharing in (partaking of) a blessing from God;**
- 8. but bearing forth thorns and thistles [is] disqualified (worthless; unable to stand the test [for planting a new crop]), the end (the resultant situation) of which [the thorn, briars, thistles and the field is] into [a time of] burning.**

Reformation theologians try to escape what appears to them to be a contradiction to their "eternal security" doctrine by saying that those of which this passage speak (vs. 4-8) were never really saved. Arminian doctrine uses this passage to reinforce the idea that one must keep "pressing in," or you will fall to the side and be lost without hope of repentance, and end up in the lake of fire (vs. 8, the burning). But what is really being said here?

This is a stern warning, and one that should be heeded. It describes the antithesis of vs. 1-3. I think that it is perfectly clear that vs. 4-6 describe a believer who has really experienced God and the blessings of the kingdom. Most of us who have been followers of Christ have known some, perhaps many, who would seem to fall into this description. Some have been leaders within a church, but, due to abuse and wounding, they left the church and rejected all the Christian doctrines to embrace either a "new age" philosophy (where people seemed to really love, as compared to the church which often attacks its wounded), or else to go into "the world" and live for themselves. I have personally endeavored to bring such to "a change of mind," but to no avail. They know from first-hand experience, and they no longer want any part of "the church." I came to see the reality of the last part of vs. 6.

Well, to most evangelicals, that is the end for them: they are doomed to hell by vs. 6 & vs. 8. So is there a different understanding of these verses?

I think that vs. 4-6 are quite clear. This is a straight-forward description of the potential falling-aside of any

Christian. We are not given the reason for their crucifying the Son of God in themselves (or: for themselves) nor the reason for their fall from the Way of Christ. But it happens.

But what does it mean that they are now "powerless (unable) to be renewing again into a change of mind"? It means that they are beyond the influence of reasoning by the brothers, for God has determined that what they need is judgment. Because of the crucifying again of the Son, they are not granted grace or forgiveness, but instead are given judgment. I believe that this is a parallel case to that of Rom. 1:18-32. This sounds terminal, especially because of the "burning" that is to come to them, described in vs. 8, above, but it is not.

The writer of Heb. now moves from direct description to figurative language in vs. 7-8. Here we have a restatement of the same situation by way of analogy. This is given so that the reader will understand from normal farming (as Jesus used the parables) just what the judgment would be, and what its purpose and outcome would be.

To understand vs. 7-8, you must see what is the subject of this analogy. The subject is "a piece of land," or, "a field." It is the field that corresponds to the fallen believer of vs. 4-6. This field once produced useful fruit (crops; grapes; etc.). It was cultivated and tended -- it had to be, in order to produce a harvest. But what happens to good soil that is left untended? First the weeds take over. Then thorns and thistles, so that if someone wants to grow a useful crop something must be done to the land. To go out and scatter wheat seeds in this field would be to waste the seed. The weeds and thorns would choke them out. So what is the Husbandman (the Farmer) to do? Does he abandon the field or "throw it away"? No, it is rich soil: look at all the weeds and thorns it is producing, and recall the crops of the past!

It has been a time-honored practice (still in use) to burn off land that has become choked with weeds, wild grasses or thorn bushes. The fire burn the plants and the seeds, and the ash enriches the soil even more. What then? Now a new crop of useful seeds can be planted.

What is the lesson here? Sometimes judgment is the best and only recourse. As with the farmer, God does this with an expectation in mind: a purified and enriched soil, prime for seeding with the Word of life.

A parallel passage using fire for God's dealings with men, is found in 1 Cor. 3:12-17.

Here the figure is a building -- God's temple. In vs. 9, Paul has said that we are God's fellow workers on this building. Then he goes on in vs. 12 to describe different materials that could be used in building on the foundation of Jesus Christ: gold, silver, precious stones -- wood, hay, stubble (straw -- building God's temple with straw??).

Now vs. 13 says that every man's WORK will become manifest, for the day will make it evident, because "it is being unveiled (revealed) within FIRE. And the FIRE will be testing each one's WORK."

Here it is "work" that is produced by a worker; in Heb. 6 it is "a crop" that is produced by a field. Can you see the parallel?

Vs. 15 says that if any man's work is burned down, "he will suffer loss, YET, HE HIMSELF will be saved, yet, thus, as through means of fire." This is like the field being recovered for use through means of the burning. The message should be clear.

Now in vs. 17, Paul goes on to relate that the wood, hay and stubble ruins (spoils; makes corruptible) God's temple, and to do this will result in God ruining (spoil; making corruptible) such a person. But keep vs. 15 in mind: this ruining in the fire of God's dealing will cause him loss, yet he, himself will be saved by this process of burning.

A---, you made reference to John 15 as an "if-then" situation. I presume that you refer to vs. 6, "If anyone should not be remaining within Me, he is thrown outside as [a] branch, and he is dried up (withered), and they are leading them together, even into the fire." Once again, the dried, burned branch -- cut off from the life of Christ -- ends up in God's fire. Is this the end? In the natural it would be. But let's consider another group of branches that are broken out of the life of Christ. Rom. 11:19-20, 23. Here it is the unbelieving Jews that are branches that are "broken out." Vs. 23 ends saying, "God is able (capable; is continuously powerful) to graft them back in AGAIN."

And then, Paul makes a simple statement -- disputed and explained away by ET proponents -- in Rom. 11:26, "And thus, ALL ISRAEL will be saved..." Can you see a picture being developed here? Note vs. 15 of this chapter: "For if their casting away [means] THE RECONCILIATION OF THE WORLD, what [will be] the receiving [of them] if not life forth from out of the midst of dead ones?" Look at the PURPOSE of God's judgments!

And then vs. 32, "For God encloses, shuts up and locks all men (everyone) into uncompliance [oh, but I forgot their free will!], to the end that He may MAKE ALL MEN RECIPIENTS OF MERCY!" You say all this is illogical? Yes, to our way of thinking. But this is God's Word!

Then, Paul bursts into worship -- "O, the depth of God's riches.... How unsearchable His judgments, and untrackable His ways..." This, leading to the before-quoted vs. 36, showing a glimpse of the grand plan of the ages.