

Hebrews Chapter Six (vv.4-8)

Hebrews 6.4-8: Warning to the Wicked

The company in view in this section is primarily the 'evil' generation (Matthew 12.39) that rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. They had refused to believe the testimony of God's Son, and later, the Apostles. They had rejected the testimony of Peter and John (Acts 3-4, 12), stoned Stephen (Acts 7), delighted in the death of James (Acts 12), refused Paul and Barnabus (Acts 13, 22) culminating in Paul stating (AD60): *Romans 11.7: What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election (remnant) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.* See John 12.40 where this is attributed to Satan. The book of Acts closes with the fearful condemnation of the same generation (AD62): *Acts 28.27-28: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.* This generation had clearly demonstrated themselves to be marked by unbelief (Hebrews 3.12) and were facing the awful judgment of God (AD70). They are typified in the equally wicked generation who all perished in the wilderness (Hebrews 3.7-4.13). This warning was important for the Hebrews. Although the writer was persuaded better things of his readers (see v.9), there were no doubt some professors amongst them who would demonstrate by their actions that they belonged, not to Christ, but rather to this same evil generation that had, and were, rejecting Him.

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, **5** And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, The readers have been encouraged to be 'carried on to perfection' (v.1), but the use of the word 'for' introduces the perils of 'going back'. If they did not 'go on' there were terrible implications for those who 'go back'. All of the following privileges (vv.4-5), **five** in number (*grace* pertaining to the Christian dispensation), relate to the outward privileges of Christianity to which the whole nation had been introduced. *Ridout: None of the things listed speak of life in the soul. They all speak of the outward privileges of Christianity.* Although they refer particularly to that which the generation of the Lord's day enjoyed, it can also be seen that the Wilderness generation knew the same privileges.

<i>Outward Privilege</i>	<i>This Generation (Lord's Day)</i>	<i>That Generation (Wilderness)</i>
<i>Once enlightened (v.4)</i>	This is once for all, mental illumination or receiving knowledge of the truth (10.26, 32, John 1.9). This is the enlightenment which comes by hearing the gospel, but it does not always result in salvation. This generation had received the illumination of John the Baptist and the Great Light Himself (Matthew 4.14-16, John 1.5-9, 5.35, 8.12, 12.35).	That generation had been enlightened by the Law (Romans 2.19, 3.2) and prophecies of the OT. They even knew the literal light of the cloud and fire: <i>Nehemiah 9.12: Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.</i>
<i>Tasted of the heavenly gift (v.4)</i>	The Heavenly Gift is Christ (John 3.13, 6.51, 58, 2 Corinthians 9.15). This generation had tasted of the ministry and presence of Christ Himself. Tasting does not include eating, drinking, imbibing or digesting (cf. Matthew 27.34). They tasted of Christ (see John 7.46) but a vital work in the soul involves 'eating and drinking' (John 6.53).	God rained bread from heaven for the Wilderness generation (Exodus 16.5, Nehemiah 9.15). They initially delighted in its taste (Exodus 16.31, Numbers 11.8), before they eventually abhorred it (Numbers 21.5). <i>Nehemiah 9.15: And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst.</i>
<i>Made partakers of the Holy Ghost (v.4)</i>	They were not sealed or indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but 'partners' or 'associates' with Him. They participated or shared in the external privileges connected with the Holy Spirit and His working on earth through the ministry of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 12.28) and Apostles (Acts 2, 4.8). The nation had been convicted and enlightened by His ministry, but it did not result in vital life as they 'resisted' Him (Acts 7.51).	<i>Isaiah 63.10-11: But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit... then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying... Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within (among) them?</i> <i>Nehemiah 9.20: Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them.</i>

<i>Outward Privilege</i>	<i>This Generation (Lord's Day)</i>	<i>That Generation (Wilderness)</i>
<i>Tasted of the good word of God (v.5)</i>	They had heard the gospel preached by the Lord Jesus Himself. <i>Hebrews 2.3: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.</i> Again, they tasted, listened and received the word, but there was no understanding it or mixing it with faith (Matthew 13.20-21, Hebrews 4.2).	<i>Nehemiah 9.13-14: Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant.</i>
<i>Powers of the world to come (v.5)</i>	The ministry of the Lord Jesus and Apostles was accompanied by signs, wonders and miracles (Acts 2.22, Hebrews 2.4). These works of power were characteristic of a future millennial age when the King would come to reign (Isaiah 35.4-6). They had seen this same power demonstrated by the King in the days of His flesh.	<i>Nehemiah 9.10-11: And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh... and thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.</i>

4 For it is impossible... **6** ~~If they shall~~ Seeing they have fall(en) away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify ~~to~~ (for) themselves the Son of God ~~afresh~~, and put him to an open shame.

Both of these generations had experienced unparalleled blessing and privilege at the hand of God and yet they were marked by unbelief. *Nehemiah 9.16-17: But they, our fathers, dealt proudly, and hardened their neck, and hearkened not to thy commandments, and refused to obey, neither were they mindful of thy wonders which thou hadst done among them; but hardened their neck, and in their rebellion made a captain to return to their bondage.* Nehemiah sadly recounts that it was the 'children' who went in to possess the land. The former rebellious and wicked generation died in the Wilderness without inheriting the promises of God. The generation of the Hebrews' day was no different. They had already 'fallen away' or 'fallen back to an original position'. After being presented with the Substance, they fell back to the shadow. They chose Judaism, rejected Christ and would not repent. As a result, it was impossible to bring them to repentance again. They had, in the past, repented from dead works and turned to God under Judaism (v.1), but they were not willing to exercise the same faith in Christ, the Son of God. They demonstrated a continued attitude of hatred, hostility and rejection towards Him. In taking such a position they were 'crucifying (present tense) for themselves the Son of God' and 'lifting Him up to public shame and humiliation'. Almost 40 years on (cf. Luke 13.6-9) the nation was repeating the sin of Calvary and identifying with those who had crucified Him. They were declaring that the work of Calvary was not sufficient and of no value. Their condemnation of Christ continued to publically dishonour and humiliate Him. The present tense indicates that this was the character of the nation and would remain so until the end. They would not change their minds and as such could not be brought to repentance. *The apostate crucifies Christ on his own account by virtually confirming the judgment of the actual crucifiers, declaring that he too has made trial of Jesus and found Him to be no true Messiah but a deceiver and worthy of death.*

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: **8** But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

The final verses of this section provide an illustration of the warning (vv.4-6). Two plots of land receive exactly the same rain (symbol of divine blessing, Deuteronomy 32.2, Isaiah 44.3, 55.10), but one brings forth fruit and the other 'thorns and briers'. Fruit results in **blessing** (v.7). Thorns and briers result in **burning** (v.8). Considering Isaiah 5.1-7 the picture is clear. The whole nation had received the same blessings from God as listed in vv.4-6. Some chose to believe (good ground). Most chose not to believe (useless ground). The herbs picture the believing heart; the thorns picture the unbelieving. As a result the believers would receive the blessing of inheriting the promises of God (v.12). Those who did not believe would face eternal judgment (v.2).