

Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Two Difficult Passages in Hebrews

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First difficult passage.

Hebrews 6:1-6.

¹Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²and of instruction about washings, ^a the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits. ⁴For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ESV

In Hebrews 6:1-6, the true believer is urged to pursue maturity. If a believer could lose his salvation, he would have to be regenerated again and again. This passage is hypothetical. It is an oddity that one can undergo the process of salvation and then “fall away.”

If we got really technical, we would look up the meaning of some Greek participles (G5461, G1089, G1096, G1089 middle voice, and G340.) The key is “having been..., having..., having been..., having ...” G340 refers to a repentance which is qualitatively new and different. The point is that if a different form of repentance were needed, Christ would also have to die on the cross again. Is this so? (Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:11, 12)

The writer uses a form of reasoning known as *reduction ad absurdum* (a reduction to an absurdity). Is there any security in Christ, or does He need to die again? On what would security in Christ be based? Who does the work of salvation, the Holy Spirit or the believer? Think carefully about this; it has critical importance as to how we live our lives as Christians.

Next we might ask: Does the Holy Spirit work in people who are not elect (saved)? Matthew 7:22, 23; Isaiah 45:1-6, e.g. There is such a thing we call “restraining grace.” It differs from “saving grace.” With some effort in looking up Scripture, we could identify 4 operations of the Holy Spirit in the non-elect (general and inferior operations as distinguished from special and superior operations). Here are the four groups: 1) Genesis 6:3, 4, 5, 12; Psalm 14:1-5; John 19:11 ... 2) 1 Samuel 10:26; 1 Samuel 24:16; Exodus 12:35, 36... 3) John 3:19; Genesis 6:3; Acts 7:51 ... and finally, 4) Hebrews 6:4.

Second difficult passage.

²⁶For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:26-31 ESV

In Hebrews 10:26-31, focusing on 10:29, the writer warns believers.

This passage 1) relates to the OT teaching on sins of presumption and willful disobedience (Numbers 15:29-31). What is it to do despite to the Spirit of grace? How might one be indicted for treading underfoot the Son of God and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy/common thing?

It is possible to insult the “one of a granting” referring to the Spirit of Grace (see G1796) This passage 2) relates to the importance of understanding the gospel in its fullness and of seeking genuine assurance of salvation and its basis.

The writer to the Hebrews has shown how much better it is that Christ died once for all time, an offering of Himself that never needs to be repeated. (Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 8:7-13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 6:10)

The warning to believers in Hebrews 10:29 takes us back to Numbers 15:29-31 and the warning concerning sins of presumption and willful disobedience. Remember, there was no provision of atonement by blood under the Law for sins of a high hand. This category of sins included: knowing and deliberate sin, defiant sin, presumptuous sin, rejecting and despising Moses’ Law, willful and persistent sin, and open rebellion. Instead, the punishment was by death after the witness of two or more others, without mercy. Forgiveness and reinstatement into the covenant community was available through the Law of Moses for sins of ignorance and “weakness.”

Paraphrasing George Smeaton: There was no atonement under the Law for sins of a high hand, intentional and willful sin. (Leviticus 4; Numbers 15:30; Ezekiel 18:1-18; Revelation 5:1-14) Acts 3:17, 1 Timothy 1:13. Many were kept in the dark and did what they did through ignorance. God safeguarded them in this way that their sins could be forgiven. Had they rejected Jesus the Messiah and the Son of God with full knowledge of His deity and a full consciousness of their act, there would have been no atonement for their guilt and no salvation. “In the infinite wisdom of God the Lord’s death was brought about by the nation whose Messiah he was, but whom they did not know.” (George Smeaton)

Three broad categories:

1. those done unintentionally
 2. those done intentionally but out of weakness of soul
 3. those done intentionally (high hand)
- (TorahResource.com)

“The sins done out of weakness are done out of intention but the heart is not fully given over to rebellion. Sins of a high hand are done intentionally with full recognition that they are clearly wrong yet the person continues to commit these sins, turning their back upon God without remorse or guilt. Sins in the first two categories may be atoned for, but not category 3. Sins of overt rebellion have no atonement, like apostasy, Acts 21:21 and 2 Thess. 2:3. One may repent of the sin of rebellion, but must understand that repentance is the gift of God, Acts 5:31, 2 Timothy 2:25. Persistent rebellion runs the risk that God may no longer grant repentance.

Ignorance is no excuse, but it is still distinguished from outright rebellion. Immaturity and careless sin might fall into this category. Failure to know God’s Word will inevitably lead to sin, even if unintentional.” (Craig, Mary. *The Testimony of Jesus: What He Taught on the Atonement*. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. 2013, page 28)

To do despite to the Spirit of Grace is to tread underfoot the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith one was sanctified, an unholy or common thing. [*“enubrizo”* (G1796)] It is to insult the “one of a granting” referring to the Holy Spirit as gracious. It is important to understand the gospel in its fullness and seek genuine assurance of salvation and its basis.

The coming of the Holy Spirit is the extension of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of promise, wisdom, access, revelation, power, unity, and fullness. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit, who ratifies the covenant in Christ’s blood. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ indwells every believer.

Now I want us to look specifically at grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit. This implies that those who treat the Holy Spirit so as to grieve and quench Him have received the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of adoption. So the ones sealed, the ones who are saved, safe, and kept by the power of the Holy Spirit, are the ones who can cause the Holy Spirit deep sorrow. Ephesians 4:30.

Grieving the Holy Spirit does not drive the Holy Spirit out of our hearts; that is impossible. But when we grieve the Spirit we lose the joy, power, and assurance of our salvation; we lose our confidence. What grieves the Holy Spirit likewise grieves the Father and the Son. Paul cautions believers, and it is the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul’s writings, to be sensitive regarding the feelings of the Holy Spirit. Remember, He is the one who applies what Jesus Christ accomplished as to salvation.

Again, the Holy Spirit is a Person. To be grieved is to have feelings. The Holy Spirit is not an influence or a power or a force or an “it.” As a Distinct Person, the Holy Spirit feels sorrow and grief as well as joy and rejoicing. What we do or say or think will either please or give pain to the Holy Spirit.

Grief is a feeling of the heart. The Holy Spirit loves those for whom Christ died, those given to Christ by the Father. Romans 5:5. The deeper the love, the greater the grief. This is why the gentle dove is a fitting symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Also, when we grieve the Holy Spirit, we also trouble ourselves. The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer, so His sadness will be felt in our own feelings.

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? Jesus was acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). So, too, the Holy Spirit: Psalm 78:40; 95:10. In Isaiah 63:10 we find the Holy Spirit vexed,

and in Micah 2:7 the Spirit of the Lord was straitened (restricted in freedom or scope; limited; hampered). We grieve the Holy Spirit through:

1. Ignorance of His presence (John 1:26). Christ is God's gift and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as a gift awarded to Christ and given to His own. When we take for granted this precious gift, the Promise of the Father, purchased by the Blood of Christ, we wound not only the heart of Jesus but also the Holy Spirit. We have disregarded this blood-bought gift of infinite worth.

2. Partial possession. We are not just to possess the Spirit but to be infilled by Him. (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit is grieved when we deny Him full, absolute control of every part of our being. **The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is liberty. 2 Cor. 3:17.**

3. Disobedience to His commands and promptings. (Acts 5:32) Christ was grieved by the hardness of heart of some who heard Him (Mark 3:5). Doubting or neglecting the power of the Holy Spirit and disobeying Him causes us to lose the sense of His presence. The Holy Spirit was given that we might obey through faith which works by love. He is the Spirit of Grace. Test the spirits, okay. But when you are sure, obey. And when in doubt, don't. Do not forget His Presence. Ask, "Is this worth losing the anointing?"

4. Allowing things the Holy Spirit hates. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we willfully pollute His temple, the place of His habitation. I am talking about body, mind, soul, spirit, and life. I am talking about habits, companions, environments, words of Belial we've swallowed, etc. I'm talking about putting cell phones ahead of the sermon, putting work ahead of the Word. I'm talking about pride, sloth, selfishness, etc. We are not to be blind to the teaching of the Spirit through the Word and through Providence. We are warned against wounding His love, deadening His Voice, and corrupting ourselves.

5. How we treat others in the Body of Christ. What happens to one member of the Body of Christ affects the rest of the Body. Treat others as you would have others treat you. Treat the Holy Spirit the same, seeking not to hurt Him. Bitterness, wrath, anger, quarrels, unworthy passions, clamor, strife, evil speaking, unkindness, malice, spitefulness, all grieve the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 4:17-32) These obscure the seal of the Spirit just like dirt hides what lies under. Let the devil eat dust; do not join him at his dinner table.

So how can we please the Holy Spirit?

Every believer can be helped by the Holy Spirit dwelling within to please Him. Some of the ways in which He can be pleased include: mutual kindness, being full of pity or mercy or kindheartedness, forgiving others as God in Christ has forgiven us. Ephesians 4:22-32; Galatians 5:13-26; Colossians 3:12-17.

So basically, how we treat God personally and how we treat one another affect the joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the Living God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

Infinite love has the capacity of infinite sorrow, and the Spirit of God loves His own with an infinite love. It is for us to recognize this and be cognizant of what pleases the Lord.

There are many ways in which the Holy Spirit can be offended, and over the weeks these have been referred to in this study. We do not want to work against the one great source of power in service to God.

Campbell Morgan says, "To resist presupposes the Holy Spirit coming to storm the citadel of the soul. To grieve presupposes the presence of the Spirit as comforter. To quench presupposes the presence of the Spirit as a fire."

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