

# ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN LIGHT OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

## IX. God's Warning Against Spiritual Hardness

(Hebrews 6:1-8)

### I. Introduction

- A. A number of the members of our Church have come from Roman Catholic backgrounds, and they often seek support in Biblical truth to counter the strong, errant indoctrination they experienced in their past.
- B. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to counter the errant traditionalism of first century Judaism that was similar in theological thrust to much of Catholicism, so we study Hebrews for edification in this matter.
- C. We thus view Hebrews 6:1-8 on God's warning against the spiritual hardness of reverting back to errant beliefs, a warning that serves our needs for insight, application and edification (as follows):

### II. God's Warning Against Spiritual Hardness, Hebrews 6:1-8.

- A. Having warned his readers in Hebrews 5:11-14 to mature in spiritual discernment, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews admonished them "to go beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity" (Hebrews 6:1a; *Bible Know. Com., N. T.*, p. 793). Though the readers needed one to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God (cf. Hebrews 5:12), the author "preferred 'radical surgery' and decided to pull them forward as rapidly as he could," Ibid.
- B. The author's reason for pressing his readers to go on into deeper doctrines was that trying to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of doctrines of baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection and eternal judgment was actually "impossible" for his readers (Hebrews 6:1b-3, 4a), what is explained in Hebrews 6:4b-6 (as follows):
  1. This passage of Hebrews 6:4b-6 has been long misunderstood in three major ways (Ibid., p. 794):
    - a. Some hold that the passage warns of a loss of one's salvation status in Christ, but many passages like John 5:24 assure us believers that our salvation is unconditionally eternally secure in Christ.
    - b. Others believe "the warning is against mere profession of faith short of salvation, or tasting but not really partaking of salvation (*The New Schofield Reference Bible*, p. 1315), but the author had truly saved people in mind: those discussed had been enlightened (v. 4b), they had tasted of the heavenly gift of salvation (v. 4c) and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit (v. 4d) as occurs only to sons of God (Romans 8:9), and they had tasted the good word of God (v. 5a) and the powers of the world to come (v. 5b).
    - c. Still others teach that the author was claiming that "if a Christian could lose his salvation, there is no provision for repentance (*The Ryrie Study Bible, KJV*, p. 1736)," but this idea is countered by Christ's claim in John 6:37 ESV that "whoever comes to me I will never cast out."
  2. Only one interpretation that fits the context is credible, the view that Hebrews 6:4b-6 warned **Hebrew believers** that they could become so **hardened** against a life of true faith that they could be **irreversibly disqualified** for further service and blessing. The phrase "if they fall away" (Heb. 6:6a) in this view refers to a defection from Christianity back into errant Judaism, a step that for **Hebrew** believers meant joining their countrymen in crucifying the Son of God again and subjecting Him to a public disgrace. "(B)y renouncing" the Christian faith, "they" as **Hebrews** "reaffirmed the view of Jesus' enemies that He deserved to die on a cross," thus "crucifying the Son of God all over again" (Ibid., p. 795).
  3. Thus, **Hebrew** believers hardened this way could not possibly lay a foundation of new repentance, for they would not trust in Jesus Whom they had repudiated as deserving the cross when they returned to Judaism!
- C. The author of Hebrews used an illustration from nature to explain his warning, Hebrews 6:7-8:
  1. A productive, maturing Hebrew believer in Christ is like a plot of ground that absorbs the rain that comes upon it and produces a crop useful to God and thereby enjoys divine blessings (Ibid.).
  2. However, a Hebrew believer who renounces Christ is like the soil that absorbs the rain that comes on it only to produce "thorns and thistles" so that it "is worthless (*adokimos*, "disapproved"; cf. 1 Cor. 9:27) and . . . in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned," suggesting "an unproductive Christian life ultimately" that "falls under severe condemnation of God" (Ibid.).

***Lesson:*** God warned Hebrew believers in Christ not to revert to past errant Judaism, but to go on into deeper spiritual truths in the Christian faith or suffer irreversible spiritual hardening and severe divine discipline.

***Application:*** May we heed God's warning not to revert to former errant beliefs we may have held but go on into deeper truths of the Biblical faith that we not suffer irreversible spiritual hardening and severe divine discipline.