

# Questions/answers on Forgiveness

by James Blaine Chapman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of holding out hope for restoration through faith in Christ, even for those who have backslidden.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:26

**Topics:** "Restoration", "Forgiveness"

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## Description

James Blaine Chapman addresses the questions surrounding backsliding and restoration in the Christian faith, emphasizing that anyone, including backsliders, can come back to God and be restored through faith in Christ. He challenges the misconception that a backslider remains a child of God while wandering away, clarifying that the spiritual change experienced when becoming a Christian is comparable to a birth. Chapman also highlights the importance of seeking forgiveness from both fellow Christians and sinners when wronging them, reflecting the gospel's emphasis on humility and reconciliation.

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## Transcript

**QUESTION #82** -- Hebrews 6:4-6 says, "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, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Does this mean that if one backslides it is impossible for him to be restored, and that he is hopelessly lost?

**ANSWER #82** -- This passage and the one in Hebrews 10:26-29 both refer to the Jew who after having been enlightened to the meaning of Christ's sacrifice for sins attempts to turn back again to the symbols which he formerly followed in his Jewish faith. Though such were once covered by their sincerity, they now find no such covering, and with them, as with us all, it is Christ or damnation. But any backslider, even a backsliding Jew, can come back to God and be restored, if he comes back through faith in Christ, which is the only way for anyone. I think immense harm has come from the careless habit of religious teachers of making a general application of this specialized scripture and so holding that a person who has drifted from fellowship and obedience is hopeless. I would rather hold out hope to one whom God has refused than to withhold it from one whom God encourages, and I am sure that our good God never makes a person's hell more intolerable by convicting one whom He is unwilling to save. Therefore, I do not believe these stories about desperate penitents who in spite of their genuine contrition are refused by the Lord. Undoubtedly people who "cross the dead line" are either physically dead or spiritually indifferent. Any

other view is inconsistent with the holy character of God.

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QUESTION #83 -- When a Christian backslides and goes clear back to the world, and comes to God again for restoration, is he "born again" upon this return or did he remain a child of God while he was wandering away? Some say one thing and some another.

ANSWER #83 -- I think this is just a play on words, and a too decided leaning toward literalism. The spiritual change which one passes through when he becomes a Christian is so radical and real that it is comparable to a birth. But to throw the figure down on its all-fours and try to make all the details apply is entirely unwarranted. In reality there is no particular difference in what takes place when an alien sinner comes to God the first time for pardon and regeneration and that which takes place when a wandering backslider comes back to God. But by way of distinguishing the history of the individual case the first coming is called conversion or the new birth, and the second and subsequent comings are called reclamation. No, a backslider is no more a child of God than an alien sinner of the same degree of doubt and indifference.

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QUESTION #84 -- In a recent discussion some. contended that we should ask other Christians to forgive us when they think we have done them wrong, but that there is no scripture requiring us to ask forgiveness of sinners. What do you think about this?

ANSWER #84 -- I think this is "cornering" on Christian morality in about the most reprehensible manner imaginable. Christianity is not such a legalistic system as that would indicate. If you injure anyone, be he ever so undeserving, scruple not to beg his forgiveness. This may not be the law, but it certainly is the gospel.

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