

Church Hurt
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James wanted to help, but no amount of encouragement seemed to help this sister come back. She had not been with the brethren in worship for some time, and he could not remember the last time she made it to a Bible study. James missed his sister in Christ. He missed her so much that his eyes would swell with tears as he remembered the sweet conversations they would have while sharing a pew. What was the cause? Did Covid frighten her away? No, this time, it was something more painful. She described to James an incident within the church which caused her to stumble. She was church hurt. James remembers one old man telling him, “There ain’t no hurt like church hurt!”

On several occasions, I have visited with erring members of the church and have tried my best to encourage them to return to the faith. In all these visits and interactions, I rarely succeeded. After nearly every visit, I think to myself that this is impossible, and I think about Hebrews 6:4, where it seems that the Holy Spirit agrees that it is impossible to restore a fallen member. Is it impossible for us to restore an erring member of the church?

For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance**, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame (Heb 6:4-6 NKJV emp. added).

This Scripture details the existence of fallen-away Christians, the difficulty we face when restoring the lost, and how restoring the lost child of God mostly lies with the fallen.

The impossibility is upon the part of the would-be restorer and not on the one who falls away. It does not say he cannot repent, but it is impossible for anyone else to i(n)duce him to. The reason is that the apostate already knows as much about the subject as the one who wants to renew him, and hence the exhorter cannot offer any new arguments or reasons.¹

James was placing too much pressure on himself, and he realized, “I am not the one who restores the erring; they do it for themselves with God.” James cannot repent for them. However, this doesn’t mean that we are not to get involved. The Scriptures encourage us to work like James did so that we may encourage them one day to repent (Gal 6:1; Jas 5:19-20; Jude 23). God has given us the tools in His word to help us with this difficult task of restoring the fallen if we have the faith to put them into practice. Hopefully, one day, James will help this sister realize her love for Jesus is more robust than any discouragement she has faced and will be reunited again in fellowship with his dear sister.

¹ E. M. Zerr, Matthew – Hebrews, vol. 6, *Bible Commentary*, (Marion, IN: Cogdill Foundation, 1952), 219.