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Part One. (:4a) It's impossible for those... (:6) if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance...

There are some people who, after having a certain experience of God (reality, power), if they then turn away from God, forfeit the opportunity to return to God.

Harsh? - "impossible" - what a wake up call!

Talking about me? You?

Part Two: Who is he talking about? Mentions 5 things that identify who we're talking about.

1. ...once enlightened...

- enlightened - root = *phos* (phosphorous) = illuminated, brought to light

- aorist tense = occurred in the past / done deal

- at some point in time these people saw the truth about Jesus

- (Stedman) "...to have their eyes opened to their own desperate personal need, to realize they are in a lost world & need a Savior."

2. ...tasted the heavenly gift...

- tasted = experienced

- (Stedman) "What is the heavenly gift? Obviously, it is the gift God gave from heaven. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." These are those who have known a personal encounter w/Christ, they have "tasted of the heavenly gift."

3. ...partakers of the Holy Spirit...

- partaker = sharer (NIV, NLT = shared in)

- e.g. They've been there when the Spirit moved.

The most hard hearted person they knew opened their life to Jesus...

The worst marriage they ever saw was restored...

The drunkest drunk was set free from the nightmare of addiction...

- They were there; They shared the experience.

- (Stedman) "That is more than to be influenced by the Holy Spirit, it is to become companions of him, fellow travelers."

4. ...tasted the good Word of God...

- Experienced (tasted) the Word of God coming alive, taking root & bearing fruit

- God's truth makes sense to the mind, appeals to the mind, resonates w/the soul

- (Stedman) "...to enter into the joy of the promises of God."

5. ...and (tasted) the powers of the age to come...

- They've had a taste of the born again, abundant, victorious life God has for His people

- (Stedman) "...they have already experienced the miracle of release & deliverance in their life."

• That's who he's talking about when he says, "It's impossible... if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance."

Here's the question: Is he talking about Christians or near-Christians? Saved or almost saved?

• That's another doctrinal can of worms about which there is much debate & difference of opinion.

- If you read that 5 point description & assume he's talking about saved people, you have to deal w/ the issue of security. It looks like they've lost their salvation.

- But if you look at the text closely, & don't assume anything, you'll see that it's possible to fit this description w/o ever being saved.

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- In fact, the more closely & carefully you look, you come to realize that what's being described here is a person who is;
  - among believers / in the company of believers,
  - experiencing the conviction of the Spirit & witnessing the power of the Spirit,
  - but has yet to cross the line into fellowship w/Jesus & become a follower/disciple of Jesus.
- If a person has experienced all of this, & still walks away w/o crossing the line, it is impossible "to renew them again to repentance.
  - (NLT) *For it is impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened--those who have experienced the good things of heaven & shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God & the power of the age to come-- & who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people to repentance again...*

So here's the key: The line each of us all must cross is REPENTANCE. (Luke 9:23-25)

- If someone is led to the brink of salvation, yet refuses to let go of the world, there's nothing left to bring them to that point again.
  - After you've seen your life in the light of God's truth, had a personal encounter w/Jesus Himself, experienced the Word of God & the Spirit of God yet still reject God - refuse to repent of life w/o God - still won't cross the line, it's impossible be brought to that point again.
- Why? 'Cuz you can't crucify Jesus a second time (:6c)
  - (re. :4-5) If you've been there done that & still not surrendered your life to God, there's nothing left to bring you to that point again. What's it gonna take? To crucify Jesus again? You can't do that. (If, after experience the good things of God for a season, you still refuse to turn from life w/o God, there comes a point when nothing will bring you back to that point again. That's the principle.)

Here's the parable / illustration: (:7-8)

- The ground that soaks up the rain & bears fruit is blessed. The ground that soaks up the rain & bears weeds is burned.
  - The rain represents those experiences in :4-5: The fruit represents repentance.
  - The weeds represent no fruit / repentance. The curse is a life & an eternity apart from God.