

Sunday September 25<sup>th</sup> 2011  
The Letter to the Hebrews  
Part Eighteen

1). Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 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.*

a). We have seen in our previous weeks of study that our writer is speaking directly to a group of eternally saved Christians who, for unspecified reasons, had chosen to harden their hearts so as to be unable to hear His voice, resulting in them having drifted away from the things they had heard – and these things they had heard, given the context of the Book of Hebrews - Heb 2:5 ¶ *For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*

These things would be that which God had said concerning the coming of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day and the Kingdom of Christ - Heb 1:8 *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." 10 And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.*

b). Then as a result of the process of drifting and hardening their hearts they had regressed, they had gone backwards, from being spiritually mature Christians to spiritually immature Christians – Heb 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

c). Then at the beginning of Chapter 6 this same group is admonished to abandon ‘the elementary principles of Christ’ – to abandon those religious rituals and practices to which they now clung in their immaturity and instead be carried along to perfection – to allow the Holy Spirit to work in them in order to bring their faith back to the place where it could be brought to completion –

1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

d). This admonition is then qualified with the statement – ‘this we will do if God permits’. And God may not permit all or some of this group to go on to perfection dependent upon whether they choose to cross a line of unbelief that once crossed cannot be re-crossed. And the line which God draws in respect of this we can find in Chapter 6:4-6 *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 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.*

e). Now let’s please note that these verses are dealing with those who have attained a level of spiritual maturity with regards to the word of the Kingdom – this can in no sense be seen to refer to the eternally lost and nor do they verses have any bearing on the free gift of eternal life.

f). Now just as eternally saved Israel at Kadesh Barnea was allowed insight into the earthly land through the report of the 10 spies – Nu 13:26 ¶ *Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.*

g). So those referenced in our verses from Chapter 6 will have attained insight into the heavenly land, the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. And this insight would come from the report given by the Apostles through their writings, that which we know as the NT epistles, in conjunction with the ministry of the Holy Spirit – Joh 16:13 *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

h). Col 1:24 *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

2). And so, in order that we might be clear as to the level of maturity we are talking about that provides this glimpse into the heavenly land let’s just take a few moments to add some detail to the 5 things listed in Hebrews 6:4-5.

a). Firstly, enlightened – this is a word that speaks of shining a light for the purpose of illumination and given the context in which we find it here in Hebrews the use of the same word in the Book of Ephesians will show us what is meant by it.

b). Eph 1:17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being **enlightened**; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

c). So, those who were once enlightened will have received the spirit of revelation in the knowledge [epignosis] of Him; they would know what is the hope of His calling; they would know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and they would know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe – and all of this in the Book of Ephesians is exclusively in connection with Christ and His coming Kingdom, just as it is in Hebrews.

d). Secondly, our Hebrews scripture talks about having ‘tasted the heavenly gift’ – the word ‘tasted’ takes us into the realm of personal experience. It is something that takes place on a personal level with which we have intimate involvement. As we think about what it means to taste something in the natural we will get the idea. So exactly what is ‘the heavenly gift’ that has been tasted?

e). Well let’s be clear once again that we are not dealing with the free gift of eternal life here as this ‘heavenly gift’ comes into view only after eternal salvation has taken place and is therefore part of the process towards spiritual maturity – In order to bring some ‘enlightenment’ to this we will need to compare scripture with scripture. So let’s begin with Paul’s words in Ephesians Chapter 3, and we will back up a few verses from where we find the reference we are looking for in order to give us context- Eph 3:4 *by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.*

f). Eph 4:7 *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

g). Then we can bring this all together in - 1Pe 2:1 ¶ *Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

h). And do you remember that which we read at the end of Hebrews Chapter 4? - Heb 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

i). We are dealing here then with personal experience of the grace of God actively working in our lives through patient endurance.

j). ‘partakers of the Holy Spirit’ – The word translated ‘partakers’ is the same word we find in Hebrews Chapter 3 where we find ‘partakers of the heavenly calling’ in v1 and ‘partakers of Christ’ in v14 and has the idea of being a companion. Now the Holy Spirit is our companion in the sense of being our ‘helper’ as He works in us and with us to produce that inward transformation – Joh 14:26 *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

k). ‘tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come’ – and again here the word ‘tasted’ takes us to personal experience and tasting the good word of God is an apt description of our diligent, continuous involvement with the bread of life that provides all we need to sustain us on our journey to the land of promise – the word that is both valuable and virtuous - Joh 6:63 *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

l). The powers of the age to come are a little more difficult for us as they would refer to the performing of miracles, miracles that were still taking place during the re-offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to Israel by the Church during that period of time covered by the Book of Acts, of which the original recipients of our letter would have been witnesses. Miracles are not things that are possible for us to witness today, but as they are documented in the scriptures their reality is without question and as we know they all point to the spiritual healing that will be available to Israel upon Israel’s repentance when the earthly kingdom is in view – Isa 35:5 ¶ *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.*

Lu 7:21 *And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. 22 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

Ac 15:12 *Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.*

m). And so as we consider all these details we need to ask ourselves the obvious questions – Have we been ‘enlightened’? Have we ‘tasted the heavenly gift’? Are we ‘partakers of the Holy Spirit’? Have we ‘tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come’?

n). If our answers are ‘yes’, then let us take with seriousness the warning – if we ‘fall away’ from this it will be impossible to renew us again to repentance either in this life or at the Judgment Seat – just as we saw with Israel at Kadesh Barnea and with Esau - Heb 12:16 *lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

o). But let us be absolutely clear here that we are dealing with the rejection of our inheritance and all that is involved in that and this is a completely different thing to our daily struggle with our sin nature. There is no sin that will not be forgiven us except that which involves our deliberate and intentional rejection of the purpose for our creation and the reason for our salvation once we have come into a mature understanding of what these are, and this is a sin we cannot commit in ignorance or by accident. However, we may all too easily begin down the road that could lead us there if we don’t remain diligent. Let’s remember what we find in - Heb 12:1 ¶ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

3). So as we consider this third warning, realizing that there is a real danger that we could end up there let’s just remember how this warning adds to the previous two. The first warning we will remember had to do with giving ‘the more earnest heed’ to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. The process of not giving the more earnest heed and therefore drifting away would produce in us the substance of the second warning, where we would harden our hearts so as to not hear His voice – if we were to continue in this condition and not change our minds then we need to know that there is a point of no return, which has been the subject of our third warning.

a). What we will notice in all of these warnings however is that God is not silent – He continues to speak through His word, so our inability to hear what He is saying, as a result of our unbelief, is not because of a lack on God’s part, but it would rather be because of a lack on our part - Heb 3:7 ¶ *Therefore, as the Holy*

*Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,*

b). It is the rebellion of Israel at Kadesh Barnea with respect to the land and their inheritance that is given as our example, and we know only too well that at no point did God stop speaking to them, but they hardened their hearts and would not hear His voice which had catastrophic results.

c). And it is this very same theme that is then continued in Hebrews Chapter 6 in the verses that follow.

4). Heb 6:7 *For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

a). Here in these two verses our writer uses a farming metaphor to exemplify that which has just been said.

b). What we see then is a piece of land ‘which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it’ – having received the rain there are then two possible outcomes in response to the rain.

c). The land may ‘bear herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated’ which will result in blessing from God.

d). Or it may bear ‘thorns and briars’ in which case ‘it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned’.

e). In both cases it is the same land and the same rain, it is just the outcome that distinguishes the two. We might remember Ruth and Orpah here.

f). Within the context of our third warning the land would be a picture of Christians, and most particularly those who have been admonished to abandon the elementary principles of Christ and go on to perfection. Then in a more general sense these verses relate to the experience of all Christians.

g). The rain of course would be the word of God that we receive through the preaching, teaching and reading of the scriptures.

h). And once again our writer is drawing imagery from the OT scriptures, and particularly from that which relates to Israel and the earthly kingdom.

i). We might remember the first time we see land in connection with both fruitfulness and barrenness - Ge 1:10 *And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

*11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself*

*according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day.*

j). It is of course on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Day, having been brought from the place of death by the power of the Spirit, that the earth produces fruit.

k). Then in - Ge 3:17 ¶ *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."*

l). We see here that the land that was fruitful is now cursed and will bring forth thorns and thistles. And do we remember why this situation is brought about? Because of Adam's disobedience to that which God had said.

m). Then with respect to Israel and the land we see this in - Jer 44:22 *"So the LORD could no longer bear it, because of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed. Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant, as it is this day.*

n). This scripture has both a past and a future fulfillment, but what we will particularly note is that their land is cursed 'because of the evil of your doings'.

o). This of course is not the end of the story - Ho 6:1 ¶ *Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. 2 After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. 3 Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth.*

p). Based on their repentance in connection with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Day [which is also the 7<sup>th</sup> Day] Israel will again receive 'rain' and they will be fruitful.

q). So what do we see here in these examples? Well simply that God speaks and the recipients' response to what He says produces either fruitfulness and blessing or barrenness and a curse and all are directly connected to rulership and inheritance.

5). The examples that we see here are very straight forward to understand and the lessons to learn from them are very obvious, nonetheless let's add something more to the land that receives blessing from God - Jas 5:7 *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

a). And that which we need to add is patience – we all [the land] continually receive the word of God [the rain], now if we are to be fruitful, if there is to be something ‘useful’ produced, there must also be cultivation - Heb 6:7 *For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;*

b). The production of fruit in our lives takes time and continues over time, and therefore we must be patient in the process, just as the farmer is patient in our scripture from James; because only in this way will we receive blessing from God, and in conjunction with the admonition to patience in James is also ‘establish your hearts’; it is without doubt the established vine, the established tree has the greatest potential to produce the most fruit - Ps 1:1 ¶ *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 ¶ The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

c). What it takes to be established is very straight forward - De 28:9 *"The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.*

1Pe 5:10 ¶ *But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

c). The ideas of cultivation, fruitfulness and being established would also take us again to that work of the Spirit within us that will carry us along to completion – Joh 15:1 ¶ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

d). The Lord of course is the ‘Word’ made flesh and we cannot abide in Him and therefore produce fruit and be established apart from walking in the Spirit, apart from faithful obedience - Joh 15:8 *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. 9 ¶ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will*

*abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*

6). I think we can plainly see then that which pertains to the land that will receive blessing from God. But what about the other? Heb 6:8 *but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

a). Even though we are dealing with the same land and the same rain, if that land is not cultivated then it will only bring forth thorns and briars – if we drift away, harden our hearts and refuse to hear His voice then we are choosing to walk in disobedience and unbelief, we refuse to allow the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about an inward change in us; as a result there is no fruit production for the Kingdom and we are not established - Joh 15:6 *"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

b). There is then a line, as we have seen, that it is possible for us to cross from which there is no way back – eternally saved, but falling painfully short of our inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom.

c). And should we ever through our own foolishness come to this place, the outcome is not a happy one - Heb 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

d). De 32:35 *Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them.'*

e). Perhaps now we can hear the urgency of our second warning – Heb 3:7 ¶ *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, & Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,*

7). Now with regards to the original recipients of this letter, this very disturbing section of scripture is followed by something much more encouraging – Heb 6:9 ¶ *But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.*

a). The reason for our writer's confidence of 'better things' will have to wait until next week – if the Lord is willing.