

Sunday January 1st 2012
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Twenty Seven

1). The last time we studied the Book of Hebrews together was Sunday November 20th and so I thought it might be prudent for us to spend a little time in getting back into the Book and also to consider the warning that there is for us in it, in as far as we had seen that warning to this point.

a). We will no doubt remember the warning as found in –
Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,*

b). Now, each of the warnings in our Book, of which there are 5 altogether, build upon each other – therefore there are not really 5 different warnings, but one warning that is progressively revealed over its five parts. And the ultimate conclusion to this progressive warning is that we can through our actions, emanating from unbelief, come to regard our high calling with contempt, which would bring us to a place of not only exclusion from a position as co-heir with Christ in the age to come, but also to a place from which we would no longer find forgiveness for our actions, no matter how hard or how long we tried – a point if you will of no return - Heb 12:14 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 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.*

c). This would be after a similar fashion to the situation with regards to the scribes and Pharisees attributing the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan, when the Kingdom of heaven was also in view at the Lord's first advent – Mt 12:32 *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

The scribes and the Pharisees here reached a point of no return in their actions, finding that they would not be forgiven in this age, the time we presently

live in, or the age to come – exclusion from the Kingdom rule. But of course being eternally saved, their forgiveness beyond the Kingdom Age, in the endless ages that follow is assured. And they provide for us a shocking example of that which would be our fate should we ignore the warning in Hebrews.

d). As we see at the beginning of Hebrews Chapter 2 our warning begins with the admonition to ‘give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.’

e). The second part of our warning is found in Hebrews Chapters 3 and 4 and can be briefly summarized in the following verses - Heb 3:14 *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

f). And here of course we see the nation of Israel given to us as an example of those who did drift away, who failed to hear His voice and who hardened their hearts. Consequently, they were not permitted to enter the land of their inheritance because of their unbelief, their lack of faith, their unfaithfulness.

g). Our warning then progresses in Chapters 5 and 6 – Heb 5:13 *For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. 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.*

h). The warning continues here concerning a failure to go on to maturity, because of the consequences of hardening our hearts and not hearing His voice, because we did not give the more earnest heed to the things we had heard and therefore drifted away.

i). And all of this is awaiting the next part of our warning to be found in Hebrews Chapter 10 - Heb 10:26 *For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a*

certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

j). There is a finality and certainty and horror contained in these verses that may well send a chill through the very core of our being – and rightly so.

k). However, before arriving at these verses we have to pass through the remainder of Chapter 9 and the beginning of Chapter 10 and we have already seen much in the preceding Chapters of our Book that would give us great encouragement.

l). Today though, rather than pick up in Chapter 9 where we left off in November we need to continue with our theme for the day[Day], that of review and warning. And so in order to set some more foundation in place let's go to the end of Chapter 9, and continue to build from there.

2). *Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

a). Chapter 9 of the Book of Hebrews ends by drawing our attention to something that should be so basic in our understanding of the Kingdom, and yet because it is so basic we might easily gloss over it without fully taking in that which is profoundly stated – ‘it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment’.

b). On the most basic level then our physical life has a set term that must end in our physical death and then beyond our physical death there is judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

c). On a deeper level we would understand the phrase ‘to die once’ to not only refer to physical death, but also to the present continuous action of dying to self while we remain in our physical body - *Ro 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

d). This is a present continuous action that is then to be followed by ‘the judgment’; bringing us to the same place, the Judgment Seat of Christ.

e). And what may particularly arrest our attention is the stated fact that ‘it is appointed’, it is laid down and established by God, ‘for men to die once’ – there was then never any intention on God's part that any of the eternally saved from this

dispensation should experience the second death - Mt 25:41 *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:*

f). Exclusion from the Kingdom rule with Christ and therefore experiencing separation from the Light of the World in the place of outer darkness has never been God's purpose or desire. In fact, as we would know, exactly the opposite would be true – the very thing that v28 of Hebrews Chapter 9 makes plain for us – 'so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many'.

g). Just as it is appointed for men to die once, so in the same way it is appointed for Christ to be offered once – His death and shed blood – in order to 'bear the sins of many'.

h). And given the way that this sentence is constructed we must connect Christ bearing the sins of many with the judgment. His bearing the sins of many is not then just a reference to His provision of eternal salvation, but most especially to His present ministry as our High Priest, dealing with the sins of the saved – a High Priestly ministry that has been the subject of so many verses that we have studied within this Book, a Book that deals exclusively with the age to come that is not in subjection to angels - Heb 2:5 ¶ *For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*

i). And we would also note the contrast between men who die once and are then to be judged and Christ who dies once, as man, and is then to be the One who is to judge – Joh 5:22 *"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,*

Christ having made provision through the offering of Himself for His judgment upon 'men' to be positive and not negative. There is no reason why our experience at the Judgment Seat should be anything other than joyful – except of course for our own foolishness.

j). The second half of v28 speaks of this very thing - *To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

k). That Christ will appear a second time is absolutely certain, but His second appearance will not be to come to earth to live and die to make provision for sin, for that he has done once for all – no His second appearance will be apart from any provision for sin, His second appearance will be for salvation – for the salvation of the soul to be granted in the judgment – a salvation to be granted at the Judgment Seat of Christ to those who have died once, who have embraced the Lord's High Priestly provision for sins, who are the ones who eagerly wait for Him - La 3:25 *The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him.*

l). Php 3:20 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body*

that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

m). Heb 10:37 *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

n). Those who eagerly wait for Him are those who have given the more earnest heed to the things they have heard and have not drifted away, those who have heard His voice and not hardened their hearts, those who have gone on to maturity.

o). Not only this, but we will also remember from our study of 2 Peter – 2Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*

p). That He has provided for our protection as we saw in the Book of Ephesians - Eph 6:11 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

q). And then in the midst of our weakness and our sinful nature, possibly the most remarkable of all - Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

r). Heb 6:17 *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

s). Heb 7:25 *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.*

3). Now the thing which still bothers me so much in all of this is, that despite all that God has done to make our success in the race of faith more than possible, despite the example of the nation of Israel's unfaithfulness and despite the very explicit warning that we see here in Hebrews, there remains the possibility, because of the existence of that very warning, that we might still lose everything and find ourselves rejected at the Judgment Seat.

a). None of us I am sure would deliberately set out to do this and yet the example of scripture and our own experience over and over again is of those who

have done that which, given the truth of scripture, should have been unthinkable - 1Ti 1:18 ¶ *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, 20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander,*

b). 2Ti 4:10 *for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica*

c). 2Ti 1:15 ¶ *This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*

d). Ga 3:1 ¶ *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

e). And as we consider these examples let's remember the words spoken to the Church of Ephesus in the second Chapter of the Revelation - Re 2:1 ¶ *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.*

f). Now we might remember from our study of the Book of Ephesians how we had seen that this 'Church' was the first of the 7 Churches addressed by the Lord in the Revelation, and as such showed what had happened at the beginning of this dispensation, 'you have left your first love', that had then resulted in the condition of the Church at the end of the dispensation, pictured in the 7th 'Church', the 'Church' of Laodicea - Re 3:16 *"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

g). And we had noted at the time that the experience of the Ephesians would picture the potential danger for any group of Kingdom believers as they set out in the race of faith - the danger of leaving their first love.

h). Then if we see this in conjunction with the warning in the Book of Hebrews we will realize that there is a direct correlation between leaving the first love and drifting away – they would in effect speak of one and the same thing. And in like manner the final condition of the 'Church' at the end of the dispensation

pictured in the Church of Laodicea would correspond to the final facet of our warning in Hebrews – selling our birthright for a morsel of food.

i). And as we consider that which the Lord says to the Ephesian Church we will realize that this is not a congregation that just ceased to function. Rather they were on the contrary, according to our scripture, producing works, they were laboring, they had patience, they made a distinction between good and evil, tested those who claimed to be apostles and found them to be liars; they persevered, and labored for His name's sake, did not grow weary. To all outside appearance they were a fully functioning church, but from God's perspective they had left their first love and had therefore fallen from their high calling. And it is this ability to continue to function, and have the appearance of doing the right thing, and yet having left the first love, having drifted away, which is most troubling.

j). If the word 'Nevertheless', had not appeared with regards to the Ephesian Church, we may well have seen them as a good example of what seeking the Kingdom first looks like.

k). So what changed here? What happened and how would we know? Well I am thankful to our good friend Royce for opening something up here that we need to pursue.

4). 1Th 1:2 ¶ *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. 6 ¶ And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

a). Can you see what is different here in Thessalonians? There is work, but it is a work of faith; there is labor, but it is labor of love; and there is patience, but patience of hope – and this patience of hope is 'in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God'. In the Lord's comments to the Ephesian church there is work, but no mention of faith; there is labor, but no mention of love; there is patience, but no

mention of hope. And it is in the absence of these that we will find the leaving of the first love, the drifting away.

b). So is it possible to work apart from faith? Well clearly the answer is ‘yes’. Our work of faith would be work in response to believing that which God has said in His word and would have as its focus that continual process of dying to self, acting in accordance with the truth of scripture, despite what our flesh may want to do, or that which the world deems to be acceptable, or even that which the church at large might practice - Ro 12:1 ¶ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

c). And as we look at the example of the father of faith, Abraham, we will note that it is that which God had said concerning the 7th Day, the coming Kingdom, that was at the forefront of his obedience to God - Heb 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

d). And it is here I think that we find our challenge – we know without a doubt that the Kingdom is coming and that we will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ and there will be a separation amongst the eternally saved, and yet somehow in the certainty of this the events themselves can become ordinary. Because we know it we can put it on the back burner so to speak. Should we do this do we realize what we are in effect doing? Not giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard. And it is here, at this point, that some have looked for something other than, something different from, something in addition to, because somehow that which God has provided is not enough. Works may abound, but apart from the faith that is their purpose.

e). The labor of love is something we have studied in parts 19 and 20 of this study and we will remember from these that the labor of love speaks of a continuous action of doing good to all, especially to those who are of the household of the faith out of ‘agape’ love.

f). And hopefully we may remember again from our study of 2 Peter that attaining ‘agape’ love, which is the very nature and character of God Himself does

not come apart from the process to maturity. It is not attained by our own efforts, but as a result of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, the ‘metamorphosis’.

g). *2Pe 1:1 ¶ Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 ¶ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

h). So, without our process to maturity we can labor, but it won't be a labor of love – And as we have seen we are warned in Hebrews about not going on to maturity as a result of drifting away, not hearing His voice and hardening our hearts.

i). The patience of hope refers to our patient endurance under the trials and tribulations of this life as we look to the hope set before us. Can we be patient without looking to the hope? Yes, we can – but our patience will be grudging, will be accompanied by frustration and may even give rise to a root of bitterness, through which many may be defiled as we allow ourselves to sink into self-pity and maybe even allow a victim mentality.

j). And why would such a situation arise? Simply because we have chosen not to believe the truth of scripture - *Heb 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed*

for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

5). And so all in all what we may see with the church of Ephesus, that we are warned about in the Book of Hebrews, is going through the religious motions in order to move on to what we have to do next. Cindy drew our attention to the business of our lives a few weeks back and what she revealed to us we need to take to heart. What we will realize is that it is not the business itself that is the problem, because we should not suppose that our lives are any more busy than those of the first century church, but it is allowing the business to compartmentalize the word of God – to put it in a box over here while we go on and be busy over there. To allow the word of God to be something we do at a prescribed time rather than being the very compass of our life.

a). The longer we wait for the Lord's return and the greater the distance in time that we move away from our initial euphoria at having the scriptures opened to us, the more this becomes a danger for us.

b). Should we find ourselves in this situation then we only have to turn to the scriptures for our solution - Re 2:5 *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works,"*

c). The first works within the context of Hebrews is shown to us in – Heb 10: 32 *But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

c). And for the certain consequence if we should choose not to heed the advice in Revelation - *.....or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.*

d). And just in case we might feel hesitant, let's remember the reward for doing so - Re 2:7 *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*

e). Heb 10:39 *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*