

Sunday February 26th 2012
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Thirty Four

1). We had seen again last week that it is where we keep our focus during our present pilgrim journey that will determine how we live our lives now and the outcome we experience at the Judgment Seat.

a). We had seen that Israel in Deuteronomy Chapter 32 were admonished to ‘remember the former days’, to remember the high calling for which the nation was brought into being and delivered from Egypt, and they were to do this because they had turned away from that which God had promised them, becoming embroiled with the nations of the world rather than focusing on their high calling.

b). We had seen that Christ had admonished the first of the 7 Churches seen in Revelation to ‘remember from where you have fallen’ – to remember the enormity of the heavenly calling which is the specific province of the ‘church’ and to go back to doing ‘the first works’ associated with that calling.

c). And then of course we had seen that the recipients of our letter to the Hebrews were also admonished to ‘recall the former days’ – those days when they performed works of faith in the midst of trial and persecution because they believed wholeheartedly in the ‘better possession’ they had for themselves ‘in heaven’, through the promises of God.

d). We had also seen this very same idea through the accounts of Lot and Daniel – Lot looking only with his natural eye and thereby making choices according to his flesh, ultimately resulting in him being found in a cave on the side of the mountain, rather than the top of the mountain, in a place of darkness and shame.

e). Daniel on the other hand believed that which God had said about the restoration of Israel and looked towards Jerusalem – something that could only be seen with the eyes of faith – and because of his faith he was delivered from the lion’s den and exalted within the kingdom of Darius.

f). And all of this of course provides us with fairly obvious teaching as to where our focus needs to be. But before we leave this I would like us to take encouragement for ourselves from the account of Daniel that we looked at last week.

g). We find this written in - 1Jo 5:19 *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

h). And the wicked one is described as follows in - 1Pe 5:8 ¶ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

i). In this respect then the world in which we live is ‘the lion’s den’, but just as Daniel was protected and delivered from the lion because of his faith concerning the promises of God for the future for Israel, so can we be protected from the lion because of our faith in the promises of God with respect to the Heavenly Kingdom.

j). Do you remember what Peter has to say about us and the roaring lion?
1Pe 5:9 *Resist him, steadfast in the faith,.....*

k). Do you see how we are to resist him? ‘Steadfast in the faith’ – Steadfast in believing God to the saving of the soul – and this is exactly what is exemplified for us in the actions of Daniel - Da 6:10 *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.*

l). And if we should follow the example of Daniel the scriptures confirm the outcome that will be ours - 1Pe 1:3 ¶ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time9 receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

m). And this is the same power of God that we see in - Eph 1:19 *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.*

2). Let’s return to the conclusion of Hebrews Chapter 10 - 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: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just*

shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. 11:1 ¶ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

a). Chapter 10 of the Book of Hebrews begins to draw to a close with the fourth part of the progressive warning to Christian's, that concerning the willful sin, and the consequences for the Christian who has come into a mature understanding of that which God has said about the 7th Day and the rule of His Son and then continues to commit the willful sin by turning back from that which God has said.

b). Faced with the prospect of the recipients of this letter doing that very thing our writer admonishes them, as we have seen, to 'recall the former days' when they believed God, they had faith concerning their 'enduring possession in heaven' to such a degree of certainty that they 'endured a great struggle with sufferings'.

c). The word translated 'struggle' here is the Greek word, 'athlesis' which has the idea of an athlete competing in the games with every fiber of his being in order to win the prize - 1Co 9:24 ¶ *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

d). So certain were they of their 'enduring possession in heaven', the same possession we have just seen described in 1 Peter as - 1Pe 1:4 *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*

e). A possession, an inheritance [one and the same thing] which is inextricably connected to - 1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

f). So certain were they of this that they joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods.

g). Right here then, in the midst of persecution and reproach, they displayed a confidence, a boldness, an absolute assurance with regards to the promises of God concerning the coming Kingdom of Christ, that they no longer considered the things of this world to be important - Heb 10:22 *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

h). And in their actions in these former days we can see them doing the very thing they are admonished to do in - Heb 12:2a *looking* [lit. looking from this world] *unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,*

i). And then with the remembrance of these former days in mind they are admonished - 35 *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*

j). The idea here then is that they should not ‘cast away’, in the sense of throwing something away that no longer has value, this confidence that they at one time displayed so openly - because to maintain it, to keep it and to continue to walk in this confidence ‘has great reward’ – a phrase which takes us back again to the ‘enduring possession in heaven’ - Col 3:23 *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.*

k). This is exactly what we have seen exemplified in Daniel.

3). But what has become very obvious as we have studied this letter is that those who received it were not walking in that same level of ‘confidence’ as they did at the beginning, in the ‘former days’, but rather had begun to let it slip; they had begun to take their eyes off the prize and look at other things, just as Lot did.

a). What we will realize then from this is that maintaining our ‘confidence’, our boldness, our absolute assurance with regards to the promises of God concerning the coming Kingdom of Christ requires diligence, it requires effort and is not automatic –

b). Pr 13:4 ¶ *The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.*

c). Heb 4:11 ¶ *Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

d). It requires our diligence in giving the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, diligence in making sure that we hear His voice and don’t harden our hearts through the deceitfulness of sin; diligence to go on the maturity, to make sure we don’t fall away, to make sure we don’t forsake the assembling of ourselves together, diligence to consider one another to stir up love and good works. To make sure we do that found in - 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

d). It is because of our need for diligence that we find this in - 36 *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

e). It is without doubt that we all have need of endurance - hupomone, [hoop-om-on-ay'] – patient endurance; literally to stay under [trials and tribulations] – and at the same time demonstrate and maintain our ‘confidence’ in the midst of them through our diligent effort to rightly divide ‘the word of truth’; so as to believe what God has said, so as to have faith to the saving of the soul.

4). And we are, according to the scripture, to continue in patient endurance and to be diligent to maintain our ‘confidence’ - 37 *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

a). We have the absolute certainty of the Lord’s return, which will not be delayed for any reason and when He comes we will witness that given in – Mt 16:27 *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*

b). Now we may remember this from our study of - 2Pe 3:3 ¶ *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

c). Now we may well come back to this later, but for now I want us to remember from Peter that it was those who had stepped away from the faith to the saving of the soul who were now calling into question the promise of His coming – and it is the promise of the coming of Christ, ‘in a little while’ that by faith we are to wholeheartedly embrace in Hebrews.

d). And the apostates referenced in Peter had called into question the promise of His coming because they had chosen to ‘*willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old*’ – the very thing that we are told is only seen by faith in – 11:3 *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

e). In the action of the apostates then we can see that their willingness to forget that which God has said, that which can only be seen by faith, would be the means by which they commit and continue to commit the willful sin and will therefore face the consequences of the righteous judgment of that sin when they stand before the Lord in Judgment –Heb 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

5). Believing then, that which God has said about the 7th Day and the coming of His Son, we are told - 38 *Now*[as in the present] *the just shall live by faith*;

a). That which we see in Hebrews 10:37-38 is taken from the Book of Habakkuk and can be found in - Hab 2:2 *Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*

b). Here then, in Habakkuk, is one example of the promise of His coming – the vision which ‘is yet for an appointed time’, that will at the end ‘speak’, is reference to the second coming of Christ – and it is believing/having faith in this which God has said about ‘the vision’ which is the foundation for the organization of the life in this age of the one who has been eternally saved– it is through this faith that the just ‘may run who reads it’; it is by this faith that the just shall live looking to the hope set before them.

c). It is also interesting to note the comparison that is made in these verses in Habakkuk between the proud and the one who is of faith – the proud will not humble himself under the mighty hand of God, but those of faith would chose to do nothing else.

d). We see v4 of Habakkuk Chapter 2 quoted elsewhere in scripture in – Ro 1:16 ¶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

e). What we see here is that in the gospel of Christ, the good news of Christ and His coming Kingdom, the righteousness of God is revealed ‘from faith to faith’ – faith then is to be continuous and progressive and those who are justified, those who have been eternally saved, are to live, are to organize their lives in accordance with this continuous, progressive faith – And what we will also be most careful to note is that we are dealing here with faith, with believing God, that continues after the point of eternal salvation therefore the salvation spoken of in v16 and the faith we are to have in respect of this salvation, is faith to the saving of the soul.

f). The same would be true of what we find in - Ga 3:10 *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."*

g). Whether we see the phrase ‘the just shall live by faith’ in Habakkuk, Romans, Galatians or Hebrews it has to do with one thing alone – those who are already eternally saved living out their lives with a continuous, progressive faith to the saving of their soul.

6). Again it is because this progressive faith, going from faith to faith, requires diligence and effort with respect to the word of God that we will need patient endurance to continue to be diligent in the midst of trials and temptations and persecutions.

a). In connection with this let’s remember - 2Ti 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

b). All scripture is given by inspiration of God, literally God breathed, and is profitable providing it is received correctly and believed. Being profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness so as to be equipped for every good work, describes our progress from faith to faith, but this progress is only accomplished if we believe that which God has said, if we have faith – Now to state the obvious, we can’t believe that which God has said if we don’t know what God has said in the first place, therefore the growth of our faith, our progress towards maturity and ultimately to the salvation of our soul, will depend upon our proper engagement with the word of God – not ‘Christian’ tips and self-help on how to live, but the word of God – not what man has to say about anything, but the word of God - 1Pe 2:2 *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,*[with respect to the salvation of the soul].

c). The race we are currently engaged in that will lead to the salvation of our souls is a race then that takes place exclusively by faith. Although works must enter into this as we see in - Jas 2:14 ¶ *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*

Works can only enter in following faith as faith must always precede works, as works of gold, silver and precious stones can only emanate out of our progression from faith to faith, ultimately bringing faith to its goal as we have seen in – 1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

d). Jas 2:21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?*

e). Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

f). Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

g). Everything then, without exception, that will bring us to the salvation of our soul, must be by faith. Anything that does not come out of faith, out of believing that which God has said about the coming Kingdom of His Son has no value whatsoever with respect to the saving of the soul, but would rather be the wood, hay and straw that is burned up in 1 Corinthians Chapter 3.

7). Keeping this in mind we come to the final verses in Hebrews Chapter 10 – Heb 10:38 *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*" 39 *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

a). We see in these verses two types of Christian, those who live by faith, going from faith to faith and those who draw back to perdition.

b). Those who live by faith, going from faith to faith believe, they have faith to the saving of the soul – those who draw back do not have faith to the saving of the soul. And those who draw back will find that God has no pleasure in them, for very obvious reasons - Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

c). And again, at the risk of becoming redundant, the faith we are to have that goes from faith to faith, the faith that pleases God is faith to the saving of the soul. And it is important that we keep this in mind because although in our Bible Hebrews Chapter 10 comes to a close that which God is saying does not take a chapter break and nor does a new chapter denote a change in thought. Rather the beginning of Chapter 11 is a continuation of that we have just been studying in Chapter 10.

8). Heb 11:1 ¶ *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. 4 ¶ By faith Abel*

a). And so the faith spoken of in Chapter 11:1 is the same faith spoken of in 10:39 – faith to the saving of the soul, and it is faith to the saving of the soul that remains in view throughout the eleventh chapter [as it does throughout the whole of the book of Hebrews] – if we don't get this then the whole chapter will be lost on us and we would find ourselves in interpretive error.

b). So let's add this in so that we will have the idea cemented in our understanding - Heb 11:1 ¶ *Now faith*[to the saving of the soul {from the previous verse}] *is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it* [faith to the saving of the soul] *the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith* [to the saving of the soul] *we understand that the worlds were framed by the*

word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. 4 ¶ By faith [to the saving of the soul] Abel.....

c). And so as we close for today let's set aside one more fallacy that has often been taught which is that the beginning of Chapter 11 provides us with a definition of faith – the beginning of Chapter 11 does not provide us with a definition of faith, but rather with that which is the outcome of faith.

d). The word faith is its own definition – in the Greek language 'faith' and 'believe' are two forms of the same word – 'faith' is the noun and 'believe' is the verb. Therefore faith is simply believing that which God has said.

e). And here we will close for today – and if the Lord is willing we will continue with faith to the saving of the soul in Chapter 11 next week.