

Sunday November 11th 2012
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Sixty Five

1). 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, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 ¶ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

a). We have seen in previous weeks that ‘the sin which so easily ensnares us’ is the sin of unbelief, that which is the very antithesis of faith to the saving of the soul. And we had seen how this sin, in a remarkably predatory way, encircles us as we run our race of the faith, looking for the opportunity to cause us to fall away, and unbelief is presented with this predatory characteristic as it is at the very heart of our sin nature. All the while we are in ‘the body of this death’ it is ever present and ever waiting – Ga 5:17 *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

b). To lay this sin of unbelief aside our faith needs to continue to progress from faith to faith, and we have seen that this progression can only take place after a particular fashion – Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by [out of] hearing, and hearing by [through] the word of God.*

c). As we correctly receive the Word of God into our saved human spirit by laying ‘aside every weight’ and ‘laying aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness’, by not conforming ourselves to this world/this age, so the Holy Spirit takes the Word and works in us the metamorphosis, thereby producing growth with respect to the salvation of our soul – something that is to be a continuous process - Php 1:5 *for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

d). What we would especially note about this is that the metamorphosis is entirely a work of the Holy Spirit, there is absolutely nothing that we can do of ourselves that could bring about such an inward change.

e). The Christian world has devised many schemes and strategies and legalistic structures that attempt to demonstrate a change, something that is only surface deep. There is in this the outward appearance of change, but in reality it is only at best behavior modification and at worst religious mendacity; only God can bring about the inward change that is necessary in us that will result in rulership. And if such an inward change is allowed to take place during the course of our pilgrim journey then at Christ's Judgment Seat that which has changed on the inside will result in a change on the outside as we receive the covering of glory that was lost in the Garden - 2Th 2:13 ¶ *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

f). That this is a work of God alone for the purpose of rulership is shown in our scripture from 2 Thessalonians, but the origin of this can be found in foundation through the picture given in the six days of the restoration of the ruined creation in Genesis, with a 7th day to follow; here in foundation we find God's work that sets an unalterable pattern for restoring a ruined creation - Ge 1:3 ¶ *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

g). The events of day 1 in the Genesis account picture for us eternal redemption. Our whole being prior to this point is associated with darkness, that which is completely separate from God. Just as the ruined creation could not of itself bring light out of darkness, nor can we bring about our own eternal redemption - Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

h). Such action is and remains a work that is God's alone.

i). Following God's actions in day 1 though we see that there are a further 5 days of work that are necessary to bring about the complete restoration of the ruined creation with Man being created on the 6th day for the purpose of entering into rulership on the 7th Day.

j). And on each of these following 5 days in Genesis we see a continued sovereign act of God – at no point is the creation ever in a position to act on its own behalf when it comes to restoration – it is God who does the work and His work is always accomplished in the same way - at the beginning of each day we see – ‘Then God said.....’

k). God speaks – the Word, His breath which is His Spirit, goes forth and through a unified action of the Trinity a subsequent change takes place in the ruined creation, moving it closer and closer to total restoration and a 7th Day

of rest - Ge 1:9 ¶ *Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.*

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.

l). Taking this picture into our own experience then we can clearly see that following our eternal redemption there must be a continued work in us on God's part that would correspond to His work on days 2-6 in the Genesis account.

m). It is only through the work of that which is God breathed, which is brought forth from above, that we can be brought to the place of complete restoration – redeemed spirit, redeemed soul and redeemed body – with a view to rulership in the 7th Day.

n). 2Ti 3:14 *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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.*

o). Eph 5:17 *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*

p). 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.*

2). Then as we continue to receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save our souls we are to patiently endure under the trials and tribulations that come our way as our faith is tried and tested –

Jas 1:2 ¶ *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [patient endurance]. 4 But let patience [patient endurance] have its perfect work, that you may be*

perfect and complete, lacking nothing [when we stand at Christ's Judgment Seat].

a). So we can see then that patient endurance must be our consistent practice as God works the metamorphosis in us, it must be allowed have its perfect work, if rulership on our part is to follow – 2Ti 2:12 *If we [patiently] endure, We shall also reign with Him.*

b). Jas 1:12 *Blessed is the man who [patiently] endures temptation [trials and testing]; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

c). Then, throughout this whole process, a process that continues throughout the entire length of our Christian life, as we patiently endure, we are to be - 2 *looking [from] unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

d). That which we are to look from would be the things of this age, anything within the present world system that would cause us to take our eyes from the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

e). This is the very thing the Lord spoke about in - Lu 9:62 *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

f). The analogy given in this verse is that of plowing a field – as the plowman would take hold of his plow behind his horse or his ox he would need to focus on a point out ahead to which he was headed in order that his furrow would be straight – if he allowed himself to look around or look behind he would immediately go off course.

g). The plowman putting his hand to the plow is equivalent to us setting out in the race of the faith – we are to focus on that point out ahead looking unto Jesus and we are not to look around and not to look back. If we do we will deviate from our course, we will not keep to the narrow way, and will not be 'fit for the Kingdom of God'.

h). This is exactly what the Holy Spirit through Paul has in mind in – 1Co 9:26 *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.*

i). And also in - Php 3:13 *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

j). Our race of the faith then is not only to be run with patient endurance, but we are also to keep our eyes fixed on the goal out ahead, and the way we are to do this is to look away from anything that could distract us,

as we look 'unto Jesus', as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus – and this is not just being aware that He is out there somewhere at the right hand of the throne of God, but having our eyes fixed on Him as our example.

3). Again, we would see that this is exactly what Paul was talking about, by inspiration of the Spirit, in the preceding verses in Philippians Chapter 3 –
Php 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 ¶ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

a). In v10 we see that Paul wants 'to know' Christ – now he clearly knew Him as Savior, he knew Him as the risen Christ in His glory on the road to Damascus, had spent 3 years in Arabia being taught personally by the Lord and had been taken into the 3rd heaven – yet despite all this Paul desired a greater level of intimacy with Christ, and he counted all things in his life as loss that he might 'gain Christ' after this fashion.

b). This would be a similar idea to that which we had seen earlier in Hebrews – Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection.....'*

c). We all know Christ as our Savior, but there are levels of knowledge of Christ beyond this that would give us a more intimate relationship with Him that we need to seek after, just as Paul did.

d). We might remember this in - Heb 4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit,*

e). And also this from - Joh 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,*

f). In the course of our Christian life we come into levels of knowledge of Christ, and therefore intimacy with Him, through the amount of time we spend in studying God's word – through the time we spend in studying the written Word, which is alive, which reveals the living Word, the Word which became flesh.

g). We cannot begin to know Christ without spending time in the written Word, which reveals to us the 'living Word'. Any notion that suggests that we can have an intimate relationship with Christ apart from the written Word is just arrant nonsense.

h). So we can safely say that the more time we spend in God's written revelation of His Son, the more we will move towards attaining the intimate relationship with Christ that Paul sought above everything else. And the time we spend in the written Word would include receiving the preaching of that Word and continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

i). Again this is the reason why we are to look away from anything which can be a distraction as we look 'unto Jesus' – revealed to us through the Word.

j). Then as we receive with meekness the implanted Word, so the Holy Spirit takes that Word and works the metamorphosis within us, leading us into all truth – just look at what we find in - Col 3:10 *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

k). And in - Ga 4:19 ¶ *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*

l). And in - 2Co 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

4). Now if we continue with the idea of 'looking from unto Jesus' with a view to intimate relationship from Paul's perspective in Philippians Chapter 3 then we will see that there are 3 areas in which Paul wanted to know Christ, 3 areas on which he wanted to focus. These 3 are 'the power of His resurrection', 'the fellowship of His sufferings' and 'being conformed to His death'.

a). 'The power of His resurrection' does not have to do just with the idea of Christ being raised from the dead, but rather the purpose and outcome of His resurrection - Ac 13:30 *"But God raised Him from the dead. 31 "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 "And we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' 34 "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'*

b). These verses from Acts 13 show an inextricable link between Christ's resurrection and that future Day, the 'promise which was made to the fathers', when He will rule and reign, receiving the holy things of David – a throne and a Kingdom.

c). Jesus said in - Mt 28:18 *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

d). But He is not yet exercising that authority as He is now seated at the Father's right hand awaiting His enemies being made His footstool.

e). The Day is coming though when He will take possession of the Kingdom and he will come forth as the great King-Priest 'after the order of Melchizedek' in order to rule the nations with 'a rod of iron' from His own throne in the heavens and from David's throne in Jerusalem.

f). It is everything to do with this coming Day then that Paul has in mind in wanting to know 'the power of His resurrection' – In that coming Day Paul wanted to be among those who be allowed to ascend the throne with Christ and have a part in the exercise of regal power within the Millennial Kingdom - *11 if, by any means, I may attain to the [out] resurrection from the dead.*

g). And this should be our desire also as we 'look unto Jesus' who at present is still sitting at the right hand of the throne of God – we should be focused on that which His resurrection has made possible - 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 time.*

h). As well as 'the power of His resurrection' Paul also wanted to know Him in 'the fellowship of His sufferings' – to understand what this means it is helpful to know that the word translated 'fellowship' here is a Greek word which means 'like-minded'. What Paul is wanting then is to be able to look upon his own sufferings in the same way that Christ looked upon His.

i). And the way Christ looked upon His sufferings has been given to us in Heb 12:2 *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him [the Day He would rule and reign with His co-heirs] [patiently] endured the cross, despising the shame, [considering it to be of little consequence by comparison]*

j). What we see in this verse then is a comparison – the 'joy set before Him', that Day when He will take the Kingdom is set over against the horror and the shame of the cross.

k). When these two are put together Christ's experience at Calvary is in no way diminished – it remains as awful as it always has been – but when set alongside what is to happen in the future Day, the joy set before Him is so exponentially greater, that it makes the suffering of the cross appear to be of little consequence.

l). This is the very thing Paul writes about in - Ro 8:18 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

m). This would account for what we find in - Ac 5:41 *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

Why were they rejoicing? Because they knew what lay beyond the shame and that's where their focus was.

n). 2Ti 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

Persecution, being reviled, having all kinds of evil spoken against us is an absolute certainty for everyone who will 'desire to live godly in Christ Jesus'. And as, and when, this 'persecution' comes, which it surely will, we must have the same mind as Christ had in the midst of His persecution.

o). Remembering that Christ is our example - 1Pe 2:19 *For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example [of what our attitude to suffering should be], that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

o). And with regards to this we find this encouragement in – 2Co 4:16 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

p). Then in addition to knowing Christ 'in the power of His resurrection' and the 'fellowship of His sufferings', Paul also wants to know Him 'being conformed to His death'.

q). The word translated 'conformed' here is a word that means 'to take on the same form' – so what do the scriptures teach us about the form of Christ's death? - Joh 10:17 *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*

r). What we see then is that Christ lays down His life in order that He might take it again and this is done for the specific reason we have already seen – for the joy that was set before Him. Christ's life moved inexorably towards death, in this age, that He might take up His life again in the age to come. This is the very thing that Paul looked for and must be the experience of every Christian who would reign with Christ – our life now must move inexorably towards death, the death of self, just as Christ's did. We are to lay down our life now, that we might take it up again then – and this essentially is what the Lord teaches in - Mt 16:25 *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 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.*

s). And so to bring all this together, to look from this age unto Jesus with a view to knowing Him in 'the power of His resurrection', 'the fellowship of His sufferings', 'being conformed to His death' will come about through the work of the Holy Spirit, through the metamorphosis. How could we possibly lay down our life now if we didn't have the certainty that we could take it up again later? And how could we have that certainty apart from the faith? And how could we have the faith apart from hearing and hearing through the Word of God?

t). And again we return to a familiar theme – apart from correctly receiving the Word of God we cannot grow with respect to the salvation of our soul, we cannot be continually filled with the Spirit, we cannot experience the metamorphosis, we cannot be adopted as a firstborn son.

u). So, is it possible for us to know Christ in the same way that Paul desired to know Him in Philippians Chapter 3, so that we also can attain to the out-resurrection from the dead? Absolutely we can – absolutely we must – we just need to let the Holy Spirit do His work within us by providing Him with 'the pure milk of the word'.

v). And in the midst of this we should remember that Jesus is 'the author and finisher of *our* [the] faith' – He is the Alpha and the Omega – the One who is the starting point for the faith and the One who brings the faith to its

conclusion - 1Pe 1:13 ¶ *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*

5). We will continue with this next time – if the Lord is willing.