

Sunday November 18th 2012
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Sixty Six

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 [from] unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [the] 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 [the] sin.*

a). We had seen last week that in order to properly run the race of the faith set before us we need to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares and run with patient endurance, and in order to properly accomplish this we need to look away from the things of this age, anything that would cause us to be distracted from the prize, and keep our eyes on Jesus.

b). And we are to keep our eyes on Jesus for two interrelated and inseparable reasons – Firstly we are to look unto Him because of where He is currently seated, at the right hand of the throne of God. The ‘right hand’ speaks of a position of power and authority, and such a position, as a joint heir with Christ, is our destination in that coming Day, this being the very purpose for our creation and for our salvation – this coming Day is where our focus is to be - Lu 11:2 *So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

And secondly we to look unto Jesus as He is the example that we are to follow that we may attain God’s purpose for us - 1Pe 2:21 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

c). Christ seated at God’s right hand then is in anticipation of that future Day when - Ps 110:1 ¶ <<A Psalm of David.>> *The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*

d). That future Day when His enemies are made His footstool and He will come forth as the great King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek; that

future Day when he and His coheirs will rule in the place of Satan and his angels.

e). So great is that coming Day, so incredible is God's purpose in it that Christ patiently endured the horrors of the cross and regarded the shame that accompanied it of little consequence when compared to the 'joy' that will be found there.

f). That God Himself, in the person of His Son, would choose to experience a horror that would defy description, because of what that experience would make possible in that future Day, must give us some indication of the enormity of what lies out ahead.

g). That's why the Holy Spirit through Paul challenges us –
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.*

h). And that's why God makes it very plain in - Heb 2:3 *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,*

i). And why there are 5 major warnings in the Book of Hebrews that deal with this very thing.

j). And I am sure we can understand why being found worthy to participate in this Day with Christ was the sole passion of Paul's life –
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.*

k). Then as we look unto Jesus as our example with regards to attaining a position with Him in the coming Kingdom, we are to follow the Holy Spirit's instructions to know Christ in the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

l). To know Him in 'the power of His resurrection' speaks to all things that His resurrection has made possible – the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, that does not fade away reserved in heaven and it is this same resurrection power that Paul prays about for the Ephesians recorded in - Eph 1:18 *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.

m). And then we must keep in mind that knowing Him 'in the power of His resurrection' must also speak of our walking in the spirit and not in our flesh - Ro 6:4 *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

n). We will remember that knowing Him in 'the fellowship of His sufferings' is to bring us to the place where we have the same attitude to suffering that Jesus had, to be like minded with Him - Php 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,*

o). An attitude to suffering that Paul identifies 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.*

2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

p). An attitude to suffering that we found exemplified earlier in the Book of Hebrews - 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.*

q). Then 'being conformed to His death' is the laying down of our life in the present so that we may take it up again in the future, just as Christ did - Joh 10:18 *"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). Paul speaks to Timothy of this very thing - 2Ti 2:11 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.*

s). And as we look unto Jesus we are looking to the One who is ‘the author and the finisher of the faith’ – it is because of Christ and for Christ that, that which we know as ‘the faith’ has been instigated. Christ is the One at the beginning point of ‘the faith’ and the One who brings ‘the faith’ to its conclusion. And it is for the purpose of bringing the faith to its conclusion, expressed as ‘the joy that was set before Him’ at the time of the cross, that He is at present working to the end seen in –Heb 2:10 ¶ *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory.*

t). And for the many sons to be brought to glory the captain of their salvation is also their High Priest – a present ministry of Christ that we must look to and avail ourselves of if we are to be cleansed from the sins associated with living in the body of this death - 1Jo 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

2). Let’s go back to our opening verses for a moment - Heb 12:2 *looking [from] unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [the] 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 [the] sin.*

a) As we have seen our attention is drawn to Jesus, the One who patiently endured the horrors of the cross in certain anticipation of what lay out ahead beyond His suffering.

b). And v2 concludes with Christ seated at the right hand of the throne of God, an exalted position of power and authority.

c). And so with all this in our view we are instructed at the beginning of v3 to ‘consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself’ – we are to think about, to contemplate all that Jesus went through – ‘such hostility’ – and this hostility from sinners would encompass all the hostility He encountered throughout the years of His earthly ministry, culminating in the horrors that led up to and included the cross – and we are to consider Him in this ‘lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls’.

d). It is perfectly possible for us to become weary and to be discouraged as we patiently endure through the trials and testing and persecution, and as we become tired and discouraged the more easily we may be drawn away after the things of the flesh, to be tripped up by the sin that so easily ensnares us, to take our eyes off of Jesus.

e). Paul also talks about this in - Ga 6:8 *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting [age lasting] life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

f). Doing good in v9 would equate with sowing to the Spirit in v8 and both doing good and sowing to the Spirit would have to do with patient endurance during the race of the faith as we lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, as we come to know Christ in the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

g). To grow weary and lose heart in v9 of Galatians Chapter 6 is the same thought as becoming weary and discouraged in your souls in Hebrews Chapter 12.

h). And in both Hebrews and Galatians our attention is drawn to that which is out ahead. In Hebrews we are to consider Jesus and what He endured because of that which lay beyond His suffering - His being exalted to a place of power and authority, the joy set before Him - and in Galatians we see exactly the same thing from a slightly different perspective - Following the principle of sowing and reaping, if we sow to the Spirit - if we patiently endure while doing good, that which we have just seen, then we will reap age-lasting life which will afford us a place of power and authority in the age to come as a co-heir with Christ - the Captain of our salvation who is bringing many sons to glory.

i). Then, back in our Hebrews scripture, we are told to think about all that Jesus has gone through with respect to that future Day so as to encourage us to not grow weary as we patiently endure towards that same Day, realizing that we have 'not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against the sin'.

j). Realizing that Jesus did resist to bloodshed, striving against the sin.

3). Now there are 2 occasions we will look at in the scriptures where we find Jesus shedding His blood as He strove against the sin of unbelief. And looking at these 2 occasions will help us to understand this with respect to ourselves - Lu 22:44 *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. And the context for this we find in - Mt 26:36 ¶ *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 39 He**

went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

a). Now at the outset let us be absolutely clear that Jesus was not striving against His own unbelief – unbelief for Him was not possible – rather He was striving against the unbelief of others – a generation of eternally saved Jews who would not accept who He was and what He had come for – and it was through the unbelief of others that He was brought to the cross.

b). His sorrow and distress and His plea to ‘let this cup pass from Me’, had nothing to do with wanting to avoid the cross, again such a thing would be impossible as He came to be ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’, but the horror of the suffering that faced Him was a different matter.

c). Not only of course the anticipation of the terrible violence that awaited Him and the mental anguish that would accompany this, but also the period of separation from His Father as He became sin for us – this would constitute the cup He wanted to pass from Him. But the final arbiter here was to be the Father ‘nevertheless not as I will, but as you will’ – *Php 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

d). We need to remember that although Jesus did not have a sin nature He still experienced the full range of human emotions –

Lu 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit

Mr 3:5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts,

Joh 11:35 Jesus wept.

The absence of a sin nature is not an anesthetic to pain and anguish.

e). So intense was the pressure of the anticipation of the violence that awaited Him and so great the anguish that accompanied it that He literally sweat great drops of blood.

f). And then of course as He moved from the Garden to the cross He was beaten, spat upon, mocked and humiliated, the like of which it is hard to comprehend - but going through this before the cross and then the reality of the horror of the cross itself is exactly what our Lord patiently endured, because of the joy that was set before Him – in obedience to His Father.

g). None of us have yet have striven against the unbelief of others or even our own unbelief for that matter to the point where we have shed our blood after this fashion – and this is what we need to remember so that we don’t become weary and discouraged, so that we don’t lose heart.

4). Isa 53:12 *Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul [life] unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.*

Remembering - Le 17:11 *'For the life [soul] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'*

a). On the second occasion we will look at we find that Christ poured out His blood 'unto death'. This is His death on the cross with His death and shed blood paying the price for eternal redemption for all who would afterward believe on Him. And here we have the ultimate expression of resisting to bloodshed striving against the sin of unbelief.

b). At Christ's incarnation we see this recorded about Him - Mt 2:2 *saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?"*

c). It was the King of the Jews who was able to proclaim the message - Mt 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

d). And even at His arraignment before Pilate the truth is still the truth - Joh 18:37 *Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*

e). But even though the King was in their midst offering them the Theocratic Kingdom and confirming His offer with signs, wonders and miracles, those to whom He came with this offer of the Kingdom responded to Him just as their fathers had, in unbelief - not ignorance, unbelief - Joh 19:15 *But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"*

f). It was their unbelief on a grand scale that brought Him to the cross and it was here that he chose to lay down His life because of what lay beyond the cross, the very thing He had told Pilate in an earlier verse from John Chapter 18 - Joh 18:36 *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."*

g). And it is an obvious fact that we have not yet poured out our blood as a martyr at the hands of unbelievers.

h). Historically though, the original recipients of this letter had already faced a degree of persecution as we saw earlier from Chapter 10 and could well have been about to face a persecution that would demand their life if they were to remain true to the faith, if they did not become weary and

discouraged. And in the midst of this impending persecution they were to consider Jesus and of course were to remember the OT saints who had previously trodden the same path - Heb 11:35b...*And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword.*

i). And for ourselves the message here would be an obvious one – if we were ever brought to a set of circumstances where we would be killed because of ‘the faith’ then we should receive it just as Jesus did, just as the OT saints did, as we, like them, would patiently endure while clinging to the joy that is set before us.

5). Then within the context of that which we have just looked at let’s just remember some earlier verses from Hebrews – Heb 2:10 ¶ *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Heb 5:7 *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal [age-lasting] salvation to all who obey Him,*

a). In Hebrews Chapter 2 we see that Christ was made ‘perfect through sufferings’ – the very sufferings we have just been looking at – and in Hebrews Chapter 5 we see reference to this same ‘perfection’ which is brought about by learning ‘obedience by the things which He suffered’.

b). Now the word ‘perfection’ here has nothing to do with being perfect as we would understand it in our modern parlance, such a thing would be ridiculous as Christ is perfect in this sense and couldn’t be otherwise – rather this word in the original language means to complete or bring to its goal.

c). And so Christ, through suffering as a Man was brought to the place of completion, accomplishing that for which He came and He did this in the form of a man – an end result that is inextricably connected to age-lasting salvation – the salvation of the soul – of which ‘He became the author’.

d). Then we also see that He ‘learned obedience by the things which He suffered’ – now clearly the omniscient God knows everything so what He learned was not out of ignorance, rather He learned that which He already knew by experiencing it in the form of a Man.

e). And here again we see why we are to consider Jesus lest we grow weary and discouraged – all He endured through suffering He endured as a Man and because He endured in faithful obedience He was brought to His goal and so will we if we follow in His steps - Ro 8:17 ¶ *and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

5). Heb 12:3 *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. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:*

a). As we have seen the context for these verses is patiently enduring the persecution that comes through having faith to the saving of the soul and thereby running the race correctly, striving against the sin of unbelief – 2Ti 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

b). On the one hand we are not to become weary and discouraged as we patiently endure trials and testing by considering Jesus, by realizing that so much more was asked of Him than we have yet had to experience and that He accomplished all that was asked of Him in the form of a man with age-lasting salvation in view.

c). And on the other hand our scripture tells us that becoming weary and discouraged would mean we have ‘forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as sons’.

d). And this exhortation is as a quotation from Proverbs Chapter 3 recording Solomon’s words to his son - 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."*

e). The word translated ‘chastening’ is a word to do with child training – therefore contextually the training of a child of God for a specific purpose.

f). This is the very thing that the Lord speaks about recorded in – Mt 18:2 *Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

g). But this will have to wait until next time – if the Lord is willing.