

Sunday December 16th 2012
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Sixty Nine

1). Heb 12:6 *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. 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.*

a). We have come to understand in past weeks that the race of the faith, the metamorphosis, being led by the Spirit, laying down our life and the child training of the Lord are so inseparably intertwined that we cannot see them other than facets of the same thing – the process to spiritual maturity that will bring us to the goal of our faith, the salvation of our soul and our adoption as a firstborn son at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And we had learned that if we subject ourselves to this process then the outcome for us at Christ's Judgment Seat is absolutely guaranteed.

b). In the Book of Ruth we saw this same process pictured in Ruth's journey to Bethlehem, in the symbolism of the barley and wheat harvests and in Ruth's work in Boaz's field, all done under the instruction of Naomi – Ru 3:3 *"Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 "Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do." 5 And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do." 6 ¶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.*

c). And then in the Book of Ephesians we would have to see our submission to the child training process of the Lord as an integral part of the spiritual warfare – a warfare that is waged through the Word of God by faith with the Millennial Kingdom in view - Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

d). And our submission to the Lord's child training process is the very thing expressed in - Php 2:12 ¶ *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

e). And this same process is presented this way in - Joh 15:1 ¶ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

f). And then we find the same thing again presented through the picture of circumcision in - Ro 2:28 *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

g). Col 2:11 *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*

h). So what might we conclude from all of this? Well firstly, that which we see presented in the 'chastening', 'rebuking' and 'scourging' of the Lord is to be found throughout the scriptures in a variety of facets – but whatever facet we look at, rulership and the Kingdom are always in view – And then of course the time would fail me to tell of all the OT saints whose life experience exemplified this training process. Perhaps we just need to go back and read Hebrews Chapter 11 for ourselves once again with this in mind.

i). This is a race then that most certainly can be won and a training process that will accomplish its goal and cannot fail - 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.*

j). And in this we can find great encouragement, great comfort and the opportunity to have great faith –Ro 4:20 *He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

k). Mt 13:23 *"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

2). Then as we consider all of this let's please keep in mind that this process of child training, in all its facets, however we find it expressed in the scriptures, is a work of the Holy Spirit brought forth from above through the Word of God and therefore the significance and importance of the Word of God in this cannot be overstated and as always is best presented through the scriptures themselves - Ps 19:7 ¶ *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.*

a). Now I dare we have always given our intellectual assent to the words recorded in v10 that tell us that the Word of God is 'to be desired more than gold, Yea than much fine gold', but I think that maybe we are now coming to an understanding of the value and significance of the Word of God to the extent that this would now not only be our intellectual assent but also our passion – 1Pe 1:7 *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious*

than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Our passion for the Word of God would have to be a passion for the One who is the Word made flesh, our passion then is for Christ - Php 3:10 *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

Col 1:27 *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

b). There is no amount of gold, there is nothing in fact that the whole world has to offer, that possesses the extraordinary 'wealth' that will be ours through our faithful obedience to the Word, to our submission to the child training of the Lord - this is clearly stated in the scriptures, but let's listen afresh to these 2 familiar verses - Mt 16:26 *"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.*

c). And the reward each will receive, 'according to his works', for those who have been properly trained by and through the Word of God, those who abide in the Vine, will be 'the peaceable fruit of righteousness' – which speaks of the position of a crowned ruler in the Kingdom of the Heavens – 2Ti 4:7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

d). Therefore we are not to 'despise the chastening of the Lord' as it is for our profit and is individually designed that we may fulfill God's glorious purpose for us - Pr 15:31 ¶ *The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise. 32 ¶ He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding. 33 ¶ The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.*

Pr 22:4 ¶ *By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life. 5 ¶ Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards his soul will be far from them. 6 ¶ Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

3). With all of this glorious hope yet before us it is really no surprise that Hebrews 12:12 begins with the word 'therefore' - 12 *Therefore strengthen the*

hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

a). 'The hands which hang down and the feeble knees' would take us back to the idea of being weary and discouraged in our souls from v3 and the words seen in this verse can be found in - Isa 35:1 ¶ *The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; 2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. 3 **Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees.** 4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you."*

b). The exhortation here of course is to the nation of Israel in the midst of their tribulation to take courage and be strong because of that which lies beyond their suffering and is filled with imagery of the 7th Day – the time to which all of history inexorably marches.

c). And this is exactly the same thought that we find in the use of these words in Hebrews Chapter 12 and we have already received the exhortation that we see at the end of Isaiah 35:4, given to us in – Heb 10:37 *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

d). Now within the context of Hebrews Chapter 12 the hanging hands and the feeble knees would again draw from the imagery of the Greek athlete – the athlete in this instance though having become exhausted in his race to the point of wanting to give up, almost unable to take another step.

e). The exhortation is to 'strengthen' the hanging hands, literally to lift them up, to get them back into race mode and the knees which have become paralyzed need to start moving again.

f). So then, because of those exceedingly great and precious promises, because of the certainty of what awaits us at the end of our training, because the child training of the Lord is absolutely necessary to bring about our adoption – now is not the time to give up, now is not the time to let go, now is the time to get back up and keep running. In the overall scheme of things there is only a short distance left to go; we just have to keep going a bit longer – it will soon be over, in whatever form that takes, and in that Day when His glory is revealed in us, we would no doubt have willingly run twice as far and twice as hard to have made our call and election sure.

g). We are also to exert ourselves to make 'straight paths for your feet'.

h). The word translated 'straight' is not to be understood as the opposite of crooked, but rather in the sense of being plain, being clear, being obvious –

Ps 119:102 ¶ *I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me.* 103 ¶ *How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!* 104 *Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.* 105 ¶ *NUN. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.* 106 ¶ *I have sworn and confirmed That I will keep Your righteous judgments.* 107 ¶ *I am afflicted very much; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.*

i). And the word 'straight' also has the idea of even and smooth, therefore not rough and difficult to run on.

j). The word translated 'paths' is literally a wheel track and in this word we would see the idea of a narrow way such as we saw with regards to the plowman 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."*

And this is not narrow in a literal sense but narrow figuratively in the sense of there being no room for deviation, no room for turning aside, but rather being focused on that point out ahead to which we are moving.

k). Now according to our Hebrew scripture we need to make straight paths for our feet *so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.*

l). The natural imagery here would picture for us a person who has lameness who could then stumble on an uneven path causing the lame joint to become dislocated, but, if the path they were on was even and smooth then the lame joint would not be put under pressure and instead could heal.

m). Within the overall context of the Book of Hebrews we would see the idea of being lame as a picture of unbelief – the very thing that would cause us to stumble with regards to the completion of our race - 1Pe 2:7 *Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.*

This is the sin which so easily ensnares us.

n). If however we determine to humble ourselves as a little child then we will not stumble because of disobedience to the Word and in humbling ourselves in this way whatever unbelief we may have will, over time, be 'healed' through the Word by the renewing of our mind.

o). If however we should choose not to do this then our lameness would turn into dislocation, and this word has the meaning of being wrenched out of place. The outcome here I think will be very obvious to us.

4). Heb 12:14 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*

a). The word translated 'pursue' continues the race imagery from our previous verses as it literally means 'to run after' and it conveys a sense of urgency. We are then to urgently pursue peace with all – the word 'people' has been added by the translators and so we are likely not dealing with humanity in a general sense, but with those who are of the household of faith in particular – this would be a similar idea to that seen in - Ga 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

b). Let's remember that the word 'peace' has to do with 'rest' and therefore has a direct connection with the coming Kingdom, which of course is the subject matter of the whole of the Book of Hebrews [the age to come which is not in subjection to angels] when the Prince of Peace will come forth as the great King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek, whose very name means - Heb 7:2b.....*first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace,"*

c). We are then, not looking here at peace with God, but the peace of God, and to understand this we can go firstly to - Col 3:12 ¶ *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And **let the peace of God rule in your hearts**, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

d). And what we will immediately see here is that the peace of God which is to rule in our hearts is set within the context of how we are to relate to each other and comes immediately after the admonition to 'put on love, which is the bond of perfection'.

e). We can then add to this - Php 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and **the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

f). And here in Philippians we see the peace of God within the context of being anxious for nothing. And amongst all the things that we have opportunity to be anxious about our relationship with one another plays no small part.

g). Now we have no control whatsoever over how others relate to us, but we do have control over ourselves – we have no control whatsoever over the behavior of those who are outside the household of faith, but amongst ourselves, amongst those in pursuit of the Kingdom, we must pursue the peace of God, as a matter of urgency, through relating to one another after the fashion we see in Colossians Chapter 3.

h). So how do we get to this point? How do we manage to do this? Well, through the child training of the Lord most definitely and the process that gets us there, another facet of the child training, we have already studied in 2 Peter – and considering the length of time ago we studied that Book we should by now be well on our way – 2Pe 1:5 ¶ *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.*

i). And what do we see here in v10? ‘If you do these things you will never stumble’ – and here we are right back on the straight path we are to make for our feet where our lameness may be healed.

j). And to take up the thought of dislocation again for a moment let’s remember something from Ephesians - Eph 4:16 *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

k). We will remember that the picture here is of every one of us being a joint in the Body of Christ, and every joint, each one of us, is to do our share of growing to spiritual maturity through submission to the child training of the Lord – so what would cause the dislocation of the joints in the Body? Despising ‘the chastening of the Lord’, thereby revealing the lameness of unbelief, manifested in unscriptural relationships, which if unchecked will result in dislocation, tearing apart - division.

l). John says this about our relationship with one another in – 1Jo 2:6 *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.....10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in*

darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

m). I hope that we have noticed that in Colossians Chapter 3, 2 Peter Chapter 1 and 1 John Chapter 2 it is love for one another that is our ultimate objective – the ‘agape’ love that is the very character of God – a love that can only come through the working of the metamorphosis within the process of our child training as Christ is formed in us.

m). As our pursuit of the peace of God with all ‘people’ is inextricably connected to our child training it is not surprising that our Hebrews 12:14 verse also says we are to pursue holiness as, according to Hebrews 12:10, it is only through our submission to His chastening that we can be partakers of His holiness and only through becoming a partaker of His holiness that we will ‘see the Lord’ with respect to His Kingdom.

5). And it is continuing within the context of child training with a view to adoption as a firstborn son and relationship with one another that we now find ourselves coming to the fifth and final warning in our Book –
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.

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