

Sunday January 13th 2013
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Seventy One

1). Heb 12:12 *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. 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

a). In these verses from Hebrews Chapter 12 we find the 5th part of the progressive warning given to those in pursuit of the Kingdom, a warning which began in Chapter 2 with this admonition – Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

b). Now if this progressive warning is ignored then it is perfectly possible, if not absolutely certain, that a drifting away from the truth concerning the hope set before us will occur.

c). That which God has said at various times and in various ways through the prophets in time past, that which He has now spoken in these last days through His Son, is to be the anchor of our soul – the immovable and steadfast foundation stone of hope to which the salvation of our soul is securely fastened.

d). But if we do not give the more earnest heed to the things that God has spoken through the prophets and through His Son with respect to this hope; if we stop hearing His voice on a present continuous basis as He daily speaks these things by the Spirit through His Word, our hearts will become hardened through the deceitfulness of the sin of unbelief thereby making it impossible for us to go on to completion in the process of spiritual maturity as seen in - Eph 4:13 *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

e). If this should happen, then we will find ourselves to be just like Esau, we will have despised our birthright, and his experience in the presence of his

father would be ours also – we would be rejected when it comes to receiving the blessing of the firstborn son.

f). Then as we consider this we need to keep in mind that Esau's despising of his birthright is not a single aberration on his part but a culmination of a life that is entirely worldly in its focus - *Ge 25:27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field;*

g). Esau, the man of the field, the man of the world, the man of the flesh, has no interest in the things of the spirit; he is not looking for a city with foundations, but is mindful only of his immediate needs. He could not be considered either a stranger or a pilgrim on the earth as was his grandfather, Abraham and his father Isaac, but was rather 'skillful' within the world system, conformed entirely to its forms and practices and values.

h). And so we would realize from this that our progressive warning is not only a warning about turning away from the truth, but also a warning against living according to the man of the flesh, because the despising of our birthright will not come through a single aberrant action but as the culmination of fleshly pursuits unabated – our carnal nature and the sin of unbelief are evil twins so to speak and for this very reason we can understand why unbelief is the sin that so easily ensnares us.

i). All the while we live in this body of death we are at risk, but remember this - *Ga 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*

j). *Ro 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

k). *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.

l). You see, we have a choice as to how we will govern our lives don't we? We have a choice like Ruth and Orpah, like Rebekah, and the choice remains entirely ours - Ro 8:10 ¶ *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*

m). And our choice will be determined by where our focus is, by what we consider to be most important – are we looking from this world unto Jesus or from Jesus unto this world?

2). Let's continue with the account of Esau - Ge 25:29 ¶ *Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom. 31 But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." 32 And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" 33 Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.*

a). Now let's be quite clear here that Esau willingly sells his birthright to Jacob – the scripture clearly states that he 'despised his birthright', showing that he considered it of no value to him whatsoever.

b). And having sold it he was not the slightest bit concerned or remorseful about it – he just continued as he was before, content with filling his belly - Php 3:18 *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.*

c). It is not until the time comes when his father Isaac is to bestow his blessing before his death that Esau then realizes the value of what he has willingly cast aside.

d). He no longer has the rights of the firstborn and yet he looks for the blessing that would accompany them, that he cannot now possibly receive.

e). The scriptural record of this event provides a powerful and heart wrenching picture of world focused Christians, like Esau, at Christ's Judgment Seat – Ge 27:31 *He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." 32 And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him-and indeed he shall be blessed." 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me-me also, O my father!" 35 But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." 36 And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" 38 And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me-me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.*

f). And there is an echo from these verses that we hear in the words of the Lord recorded in - Mt 7:21 ¶ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*

g). The anguish that we see in Genesis 27:38, and the shocking reality that we see in Matthew Chapter 7 should be enough to keep us on our knees in repentance, so that Esau's experience will not be ours.

h). Now clearly this whole sequence of bestowing blessing and rejection, as we have said, is a picture of the Judgment Seat and it would be correct to say that it will be at this time alone that reward and rejection will be determined.

i). This would mean that any time up to the point of physical death or rapture the opportunity is there for the flesh driven Christian to repent and choose to be led by the Spirit instead, and for that same Christian to find opportunity for a place of repentance, a change of mind, from the Lord with regards to that which would be his lot at the Judgment Seat without it – this is certainly what we would see in foundation with respect to Cain - Ge 4:7 *"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

j). And I wonder if this is part of the picture we can see through the parable of the prodigal son - Lu 15:10 *"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* 11 ¶ *Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 "And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" 20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.*

k). There is also a responsibility on our part to try and turn our brother or sister away from the course leading to destruction that the unabated self-life would bring - Jas 5:20 *let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

Pr 14:12 ¶ *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. 13 ¶ Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, And the end of mirth may*

be grief. 14 ¶ The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied from above.

l). However, we would also need to note that turning the 'sinner from the error of his way' is by no means a certainty and although repentance and forgiveness are always available through the ministry of our High Priest, those like Esau who despise their birthright are unlikely to be motivated to repentance and are unlikely to even recognize a need for it; just as we see in our verses from proverbs 'the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways' – And this is certainly what we see with those pictured in Christ's presence in Matthew Chapter 7.

m). Isn't this the very reason why the sin of unbelief is described as deceitful and has the ability to harden our hearts against the truth? – Heb 3:12 *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

3). One last thing to take away from the account of Esau and Jacob – on the day that Jacob is blessed by his father and Esau is rejected [with respect to the rights of the firstborn] they both come into their father's presence with food. The preparation of this food we can see as a picture of works – that which Jacob brings is works done by faith – through believing that which God had said about the older serving the younger prior to his birth. That which Esau brings would picture works apart from faith as his actions are not based on God's promises, but rather as works done in the flesh. As with Cain and Abel, only that done by faith can be rewarded - Heb 11:4 ¶ *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

a). 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.*

b). 1Co 3:12 *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

c). 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.*

d). Now, in drawing from the account of Esau and his rejection we have been given insight into the anguish experienced by those who will be rejected at the Judgment Seat. The severity of the consequences for choosing to live in a way that results in rejection we can now see in the verses that follow on from this in Hebrews Chapter 12. Just before we go there though let's remember this from – Ro 11:22 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*

4). Heb 12:18 ¶ *For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

a). Once more we begin in these verses with a return to the experience of the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt.

b). And there is a dual teaching to be found in the experiences recorded here.

c). Verses 18 -21 draw from the account of Israel at Mt. Sinai when they received the law, an account to be found in - Ex 19:10 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. 11 "And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, "Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 'Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people,*

and they washed their clothes. 15 And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." 16 ¶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

Ex 20:18 ¶ Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." 20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." 21 So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. 22 ¶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

d). Now if we had to think of two interrelated words that would aptly describe this generation of Jews we would probably come up with disobedient and unbelieving as this is exactly what the Lord has said of them –
Heb 3:16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

e). And it is this same unbelief as seen in the camp of Israel that is the common thread interwoven throughout the tapestry of Hebrews Chapter 12 so far, most especially visible where we left off with Esau.

f). And so, on one level we see a dramatic contrast presented between Israel's experience at Mt. Sinai and our experience at Mt. Zion – a dramatic contrast between the experience of the disobedient and unbelieving and those who have faith to the saving of the soul at the time they appear before the Lord in Judgment.

g). And on another level we see a dramatic contrast presented between the Law [and therefore the Levitical priesthood] and that provided through Christ [Our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek]. A contrast that

we know about from earlier in Hebrews - Heb 7:17 *For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."* 18 *For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

h). The Holy Spirit through Paul also addresses this same contrast in Galatians and we will no doubt realize that the verses which follow come just before those verses from Galatians that we read earlier today - Ga 4:19 ¶ *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, 20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you. 21 ¶ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar-- 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

i). To fully explore these two teachings will have to wait until next time though – if the Lord is willing.