

Sunday March 10th 2013
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Seventy Eight

1). Heb 13:1 ¶ *Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. 3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them--those who are mistreated--since you yourselves are in the body also. 4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. 5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

a). Hebrews Chapter 13 begins with a series of verses that draw directly from having faith to the saving of the soul.

b). And we have seen in past weeks how continuing in brotherly love would express the same thought as going on to 'perfection', going on to spiritual maturity just as we saw in - Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection.....*

c). Going on to perfection of necessity speaks of the process we know as the metamorphosis, where we turn away from conforming to, or being patterned after, this world, the things of this age, and instead embrace the transformation that takes place by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word - Eph 4:15 *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 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.*

d). As we allow the transforming work of the Spirit within us not only will sincere brotherly love continue to grow and be manifest amongst us, but also our marriages will continue to grow in an honorable way in all things as the living out of our marriages is also dependent upon having faith to the saving of the soul - dying to self and walking in faithful obedience with our focus in this upon the One to whom we must give account rather than our spouse.

e). And as we have seen it is marriage that God has ordained as the expression of the Divinely perfect relationship out of which rulership will take place in the age to come.

f). We will I am sure remember the scriptures - 2Co 11:2 *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

g). Re 19:6 *And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

h). From God's perspective then we are already betrothed to Christ and this contractual arrangement, if we can call it that, demands fidelity from both parties - 1Co 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Our Lord's fidelity is of course absolutely assured and has been proven through the sacrifice He has made on behalf of His future wife – Eph 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

i). In the natural, infidelity with respect to the marriage relationship in the OT is taken very seriously - Ex 20:14/ De 5:18 *"You shall not commit adultery.*

j). Le 20:10 ¶ *'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.*

k). And as we have seen so many times, that which we see in the natural in the OT provides for us a type, a picture, of that which we will see in the spiritual with respect to Christians in this dispensation. And as always Israel is our example.

2). Eze 23:37 *"For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols, and even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me, passing them through the fire, to devour them.*

a). Israel's involvement with the Gentile nations that surrounded them and Israel's involvement with those nation's idols is described by God as adultery for this is exactly what it is.

b). The Gentile nations and their idol worship must be seen as under the authority of the god of this age. Therefore as Israel, whose Husband was God, involved themselves whole heartedly with these other nations and their idols so they entered into relationship with Satan and in effect took a demonic lover in the place of their Holy Husband - Eze 16:32 *"You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband.*

c). And the picture that we see here carries over exactly to our own experience. Let's remember - 1Jo 5:19 *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

d) It is because the 'whole world' lies under the sway of the wicked one that we are not to conform ourselves to the things of this world, because if we do then we find ourselves as Israel entering into relationship with the enemy of our soul.

e). This is the very reason why we see this in James - Jas 4:1 ¶ *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?*

f). And within the context of Hebrews 13:4 sexual immorality, most especially for those in pursuit of the Kingdom, must be seen as a betrayal of Christ's work on the cross and in the Heavenly Sanctuary and all that this makes possible for us, because we will have chosen to enter into an illicit relationship with the powers of darkness, the very powers from whom we have been delivered. And if this should continue un-repentant there is the promise, 'fornicators and adulterers God will judge' - Jas 1:14 *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

g). Pr 6:32 *Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul. 33 Wounds and dishonor he will get, And his reproach will not be wiped away. 34 For jealousy is a husband's fury; Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. 35 He will accept no recompense, Nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.*

h). 1Th 4:6 *that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned*

you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

i). And just so that we are absolutely clear - 1Co 6:9 ¶ *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

3). The list that we see here in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is repeated many places in the scriptures and there is a word in this list which is always found in the same context as sexual immorality and this word we find in the next verse that we come to in Hebrews Chapter 13 - 5 *Let your conduct be without **covetousness**; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

a). It is of course the word covetous or covetousness as we see here. And the word translated covetousness literally means a 'phileo' love for silver- in other words a love of money.

b). And we see in our verse that our conduct, our manner of living is to be without covetousness – and instead of covetousness we are to be content with such things as we have.

c). And the reason for this should be pretty clear to us - Eph 5:5 *For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

d). So what do we see here in v5 from Ephesians? A covetous man is an idolater. Idolatry is the worship of someone or something other than God and so again covetousness takes us into the realm of Satan and the rulers of the darkness of this age, into being conformed to the things of this world just as we saw with Israel.

e). And this is what we find recorded about this in Timothy – 1Ti 6:9 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many*

sorrows. 11 *But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.*

f). In v9 the love of money is defined for us – it is the desire to be rich. Now please note this is not a prohibition against being successful that may result in wealth, but against wanting to be successful for the sole purpose of accumulating an abundance of wealth. And of course this kind of desire can be found in people from any economic strata.

g). But I would especially like us to note that those who have such a desire ‘fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition’. This then is a certainty for those who would have this desire.

h). We would also note that this has caused some to stray from the faith with the shocking consequences that are seen at the end of v10 – having ‘pierced themselves through with many sorrows’.

4). Perhaps we will remember the account concerning the rich young ruler - Mr 10:17 ¶ *Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" 21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." 22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."*

a). Here then is a man who epitomizes the idea of covetousness from Hebrews Chapter 13:5. Even though his desire is to enter into Christ’s Kingdom, his trust is in his riches rather than in Christ. Again we would see his focus being on his present circumstances, the things of this world and not on that which lay out ahead of him.

b). And then of course we see the extraordinary statement that Christ makes in v25.

c). Now, you may have heard it taught that this refers to a gate in the city of Jerusalem through which a camel could only pass with great difficulty. This though is just one of those religious fairy tales that take us away from the truth of what is being taught here.

d). The word used for needle has nothing to do with a gate but with a needle that would be used for sowing thread, or a surgical needle. And what the Lord is saying here is that it is impossible for anyone who is rich to enter the Kingdom. How would we classify who is rich?

e). This is the reason for the disciples response in v26 - *And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"*

f). And I think it is safe to say that the Lord set them up with the statement about the camel and the eye of the needle in order to teach what comes next - *But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."*

g). Now it is really important that we understand what is going on in this verse as this verse is all about having faith to the saving of the soul.

h). Note carefully that in this verse we see 2 possibilities - 'with men' and 'with God'.

i). If those who are 'rich' align themselves 'with men', with the world's approach to riches then they are inevitably covetous and it is impossible for them to have entrance into Christ's Kingdom, something we have already seen in Ephesians 5:5.

j). If however those who are 'rich', the same people, align themselves with God with respect to their riches, then it is absolutely possible for them to enter Christ's Kingdom, because for those aligned with God 'all things are possible'.

k). Aligning ourselves with God is having faith to the saving of the soul, whereas aligning ourselves with 'men' is to walk in unbelief.

l). This then is exactly the same truth as not being conformed to the things of this world but being transformed by the renewing of our mind.

m). Once again the issue here is not whether we have riches or not, but are we exercising faith to the saving of the soul with respect to this? Is our focus in the right place?

n). For the rich young ruler in our account in Mark he was asked to have faith [to the saving of the soul] with respect to exchanging his earthly wealth for treasure in heaven - *Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven;*

o). The implication here is that his wealth would still be his if he did what the Lord said and would await him as 'treasure in heaven' - which can

only refer to the works of gold, silver and precious stones of 1 Corinthians Chapter 3 – the works that remain that receive a reward.

p). And there is a parable that the Lord gives that teaches the same thing Lu 12:15 *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." 20 "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

q). And there are of course other scriptures within the epistles that speak to this same thing - 1Ti 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

r). And we will come across this again later in Hebrews – Heb 13:16 *But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

s). Pr 13:7 ¶ *There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches.*

5). So then, as grow in our faith to the saving of the soul then our life will be without covetousness and we will be content with such things as we have.

a). 1Ti 6:6 ¶ *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*

b). And here is a great key for us to understanding all this. We are to be content with our circumstances, those things that take care of our needs, not our wants and this is not just talking about material possessions, but also the circumstances of our life.

c). Paul said - Php 4:12 *I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

d). Neither our material possessions nor the circumstances of our life have any control over the hope that is within us unless our hope takes second

place to our circumstances. We are to remain steadfast and immovable in the faith irrespective of what may come our way. And we can have this steadfastness because we know that God is faithful.

e). Not only this – let’s realize that we become fearful of our circumstances, of the economy, of the events of the stock exchange and a myriad of other external factors because of unbelief.

f). Let’s go back to Hebrews Chapter 13 for a moment –

6). Heb 13:5 *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

a). Do you see the second half of v5? Our manner of life can be without covetousness and we can be content with such things as we have because of the promise God has made – a promise that is given added validity because ‘He Himself has said’. And the context in which He Himself said this is with regards to the second generation and their entrance into the land under Joshua to receive their inheritance - De 31:6 *"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."*

b). Now we are promised an inheritance in a heavenly land, and so even though our adversary is stronger and mightier than we are we do not need to fear nor be afraid of them because it is the Lord our God who goes with us and He has promised not to leave us nor forsake us.

c). The Greek word translated ‘leave’ in Hebrews Chapter 13 does not mean simply to leave’ but, ‘to send back’, ‘to relax’, ‘to loosen’, ‘not to uphold’, ‘to let sink’.

d). And this word is preceded by 2 negatives in the Greek language which serve to intensify that which is being negated – and so we can translate this as, ‘I will never, I will never send you back or loosen My grip on you or let you sink’.

e). This is then followed by the promise not to forsake us and this word translated ‘forsake’ is a compound word that means, ‘to abandon’, ‘to desert’, ‘to leave helpless’, ‘to leave destitute’, ‘to leave in the lurch’, ‘to let down’.

f). And this word is preceded by 3 negatives in the Greek language, intensifying even more the negation of this word more than the one before. We can therefore translate, ‘I will not, I will not, I will not let you down or abandon you or desert you, leave you destitute or helpless’.

g). What an extraordinary and incredible promise for those who will believe what the Lord has said, who will have faith to the saving of the soul. If we are faithful, with our focus on the coming Kingdom then our Lord will never abandon us nor leave us destitute.

h). And so because of this promise - *So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

And here is the confession of our faith. A confession taken from -

Ps 118:4 Let those who fear the LORD now say, "His mercy endures forever."

5 I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. 6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

7 The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me. 8 It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.

i). This is a Psalm that deals with Israel's persecution and future salvation, but we could happily apply it to our own context -

Ps 118:13 You pushed me violently, that I might fall, But the LORD helped me.

14 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation Is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. 17 I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death. 19 ¶ Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation.

19 ¶ Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. 20 This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation.

j). And here we come full circle to the beginning of v5. Covetousness, a love of money, comes out of fear about what man may do to us. But we do not live by fear but by faith, and if we have faith to the saving of the soul then no matter what man may do God has promised He will never, He will never let us go; He will not, He will not, He will not abandon us and leave us helpless -
2Ti 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

k). In the light of that which we have seen today hear these verses afresh one more time - *Mt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [wealth]. 25 ¶ "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither*

*sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 **"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** 34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

7). Next time we will continue if the Lord is willing.