

Sunday April 7th 2013
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Seventy Nine

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?" 7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

a). Our previous study in the Book of Hebrews had concluded with the most extraordinarily encouraging promise given by the Lord found in the second half of v5.

b). A double promise really which we will remember can be translated, 'I will never, I will never send you back or loosen My grip on you or let you sink, nor will I, nor will I, nor will I let you down, abandon you nor desert you'. A promise that 'He Himself has said'.

c). The great issue then in v5-6 is the antithesis between fear and faith to the saving of the soul – we see the fear of external circumstances expressed through the idea of what man can do to us – a fear that is the root cause of covetousness, the love of money as we see it here.

d). Covetousness is equated in scripture with idolatry - Eph 5:5 *nor covetous man, who is an idolater,* and so it is as covetousness is putting our trust in currency that bears the inscription of an earthly ruler within the kingdom of Satan rather than the God of our salvation and this of course would be contrary to the clear teaching of scripture - 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 [age lasting] life.

e). As we saw last time the issue isn't to be rich or not to be rich, but where is our focus in the midst of whatever circumstance we find ourselves, because if our focus is right, if we are exercising faith to the saving of the soul, then we have God's promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us; we have God's promise that we will be guarded and protected by His power in response to our faith ready for the salvation to be revealed in the last time.

f). This is why Paul can write - *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.*

g). What Paul knew then was how to remain faithful, how to have faith to the saving of the soul, whether he was full or hungry, whether he had an abundance or was suffering need – and the reason he can do this is clearly stated, it is 'through Christ who strengthens' him – 'the Lord is my helper' - the same Christ who had promised not to leave him nor forsake him, just as He has promised us.

h). You see the promise that He will neither leave us nor forsake us is not a free pass out of adversity, but rather the power of Christ in us through faith to strengthen us, to enable us, so that we do not lose our inheritance in the midst of our adversity by falling away – and this we have already seen in Hebrews Chapter 11 - *Heb 11:36 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. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith,*

i). Christ never left these 'others' nor did He forsake them – in response to their faith He did not loosen His grip on them, nor did He abandon them with respect to His coming Kingdom and as a consequence they finished the race, they kept the faith and now there is laid up for them a crown of righteousness – and this faith of theirs has been held up as an example in the pages of scripture for all generations of Christians throughout this dispensation.

j). They may have been destitute in the eyes of the world, but through their faith to the saving of the soul they have laid up for themselves treasure

in heaven, whose value surpasses all earthly wealth – and they were kept by the power of God in this.

k). Now let's also remember that the promise not to leave us nor forsake us also applies to us in our abundance as well, if we respond to our abundance by faith so as not to be overcome by the deceitfulness of riches – we will remember that Lord said – Mr 10:25 *"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."*

Something recorded in 3 of the 4 gospel accounts – as we see He makes the statement that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom except for one thing - Mr 10:27 *But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."*

So then, those in their abundance who would choose to align themselves 'with God' rather than 'with men' will be the ones who are recipients of the Lord's promise. The rich young ruler on the other hand would be the epitome of trusting in uncertain riches - Lu 18:22 *So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.*

l). And again, the issue here is not what we have, but the placing of our trust in the living God. If we believe God, if we have faith to the saving of the soul then we will not be fearful of what man may do to us with respect to the loss of our abundance, nor will we be fearful of what man may do to us as a result of our suffering need. Our Lord sums this up nicely for us once again – Mt 10:28 *"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in [Gehenna] hell."*

2). Then as our verses in Chapter 13 continue, faith to the saving of the soul remains central - 7 *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

a). The word translated 'remember' here speaks of constantly and continuously calling to mind – this is not a onetime thing then but a constant practice.

b). And that which is constantly to be called to mind is 'those who rule over you, [those] who have spoken the word of God to you'.

c). Within our own context here at Cornerstone this would be the Elders, 'those who rule over you' - and folks such as Cindy and Royce, in fact anyone who teaches and preaches here – those 'who have spoken the word of God to you'.

d). And this calling to mind is for a specific reason – ‘whose faith follow’.

e). Please note something very important here, we are not to follow a man or a woman, it is not the individual we are commanded to follow, but that individual’s faith – that which they practice in obedience to God’s word.

f). In fact the word translated ‘follow’ literally means to imitate.

g). So then to put this very simply, all of you are to constantly call to mind the lives of those who rule over you and those who speak the word of God to you with a view to carefully observing how the living of our lives measures up to that which is taught from the scriptures and where you see us living ‘by faith’, this is what you are to imitate.

h). And the corollary of this would be that if you don’t see areas of our lives being lived by faith then don’t imitate that – only that which is done by faith is to be followed.

i). We will remember that Paul has said - 1Co 4:15 *For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me.*

1Co 11:1 ¶ *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

Php 3:17 ¶ *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*

j). There are then a couple of things we would note here. First of all, that with the incredible privilege of shepherding the flock of God which Christ purchased with His own blood and of speaking the word of God comes an enormous responsibility, not just in making sure that the word of truth is rightly divided, but also in making sure that what is preached is also practiced. If we believe what the scriptures say then that faith must be lived out openly before you so that you have an example to follow. And this is not a burden – why would we want to do anything else when we know what is at stake?

k). Secondly, for you all, the word of truth is still the word of truth whether you see us living it out or not and it is incumbent upon you all to be so grounded in the word that you can discern in us that which is done by faith. And if there is any area in which we are failing you in this you can’t use us as an excuse for not doing what the word says – again it is not us you are to follow but our faith.

l). For us all then the words of the Lord hit the proverbial nail on the head so to speak - Joh 12:48 *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*

Re 1:16 *He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,*

m). Finally then with regards to those ‘who rule over you, who speak the word of God to you’ our Hebrews verse says, *‘considering the outcome of their conduct’* – literally then to observe attentively the way in which these have lived. Now the phrase itself is really dealing with the summation of these lives as a whole, considering what will be the end result for them at the Judgment Seat because of the way they have lived.

n). A good example of this would be Paul - 2Ti 4:6 *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 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,*

o). Now none of us are yet at the end of our lives and so it is not possible at present for you to have this overall picture to look back on. But should that time ever come then you should be able to look back over our lives and see the very things that Paul makes reference to, realizing that the end result of having lived this way is receiving the crown of righteousness – this then would be the pattern to imitate and to emulate.

p). And within the overall context of this it would be good to remember that - *8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* The Man Christ Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth is Jehovah of the OT, the Savior of the NT, the coming King of kings and Lord of lords. His plans, His purposes, His promises, His judgments are unchangeable - Jas 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

q). To use a modern idiom, we are all playing on a level playing field – it is the same playing field that Abraham played on, that Paul played on and I am playing on the same playing field that you are playing on – there is no partiality with God – Nor does He move the goalposts. Therefore we are to follow the pattern of having faith to the saving of the soul that is set before us, because in doing so success in the race of the faith can be assured.

r). One final thing to say concerning us who rule over you and speak the word of God to you – the only difference between us and you is the grace that God gives us to do that which we do. Outside of His grace we all struggle with the same things every Christian has ever struggled with, we are all still in the process of son training, we are all still growing with respect to salvation. The

lives we live in front of you are lived by faith as we die to self and walk in the spirit – no more and no less is expected of any of us.

3). Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* 9 *Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.* 10 *We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.* 11 *For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.* 12 *Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.* 13 *Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.* 14 *For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.*

a). V8 is really a connector verse as it provides context for the verses that have preceded it and context for the verses that now follow. Now within the historical context the recipients of this letter to the Hebrews did not have the scriptures that comprise the NT as we do, but the point is, which is also true from our perspective, is that the Lord was not going to say anything through the Apostles, or anyone else for that matter, that He had not already said through the prophets – there would be nothing in the NT that cannot be found in the OT.

b). That which God had said produced the faith in those who had the rule and spoke the word of God in this historical church, a faith that the members of this church were admonished to imitate. But, according to the beginning of v9 some had already started deviating from the true course.

c). The words ‘do not be carried about...’ suggest that this is something that they should have avoided doing, but a more correct translation for this would be ‘Stop being carried about...’ – this was not then just something to be avoided but something that some were already doing. And the admonition to those doing so is very clear – stop doing it.

d). And of course the warning in this is equally applicable to ourselves, we are not to be carried about by various and strange doctrines – if anything we hear or are told or we read does not mesh with that which is taught here through the scriptures according to - Isa 28:9 ¶ *"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."*

If it doesn't mesh with this then we need to leave it alone and not be carried about by it.

e). No doubt we will remember this from - 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; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ—*

f). If we don't spend sufficient time in our study of the scriptures so that we would know them then we are susceptible to strange doctrines, we can more readily receive the lie – we are an open vessel to deception.

g). And let's remember that all various and strange doctrines are there as a result of that which we have seen in - Mt 13:33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."*

h). And the reason for the leaven and the only reason for the existence of various and strange doctrines is to divert and distract those running the race of the faith for the purpose of causing them to lose their inheritance – 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*

i). The second half of Hebrews 13:9 - *For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.*

Draws from imagery surrounding sacrificial feasts and sets the foods of these feasts in contrast to the grace of God.

j). Now the point of this contrast is to show that the work of the Holy Spirit through the word of God, something which is ours by God's grace alone, is an internal work of purification and transformation – the washing of water by the word of Ephesians and the metamorphosis of Romans - 1Co 1:4 *I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

k). Whether we are talking of food eaten as part of the Judaic sacrificial system or foods from pagan sacrifices they are both merely external. Eating

food as part of a religious sacrificial feast does not bring about inward change – only that emanating from faith in the word of God can bring about such a change.

l). And if we were to connected this imagery of the feast back to the first half of v9 then the foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them would picture the various and strange doctrines that can carry us away.

m). Anything that is not brought forth from above by the grace of God has no spiritual nutritional value whatsoever and like all junk food it is specially formulated to make us want more of it while slowly and inevitably bringing about our demise - *2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

4). This theme is then continued in the next verse - *10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*

a). Again here our writer is drawing from the tabernacle ministry and setting this over against the fulfillment of the types and shadows pictured in this ministry accomplished in Christ.

b). Now we do not have, nor are we supposed to have, a piece of furniture that is an ‘altar’ – within the economy of Christ reference to an altar would be an all-encompassing, figurative, term that would embrace everything from the Lord’s sacrifice to the gathering of ourselves together – that which we find within this all embracing term ‘altar’ would be the bread of God, that which is given by grace and received by faith.

c). And the reference to the tabernacle ministry in v10 would take us back to that which the Holy Spirit has already said about this ministry, something we had studied in Hebrews Chapter 9 - *Heb 9:7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; 8 ¶ the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience-- 10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. 11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His*

own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

d). The tabernacle ministry as we see it here then is concerned with 'fleshly ordinances', that which is purely external involving foods and drinks and various washings. These external services no matter how diligently they were performed could not make anyone performing them 'perfect in regard to the conscience'.

e). Participation in the 'altar' of Christ is by faith alone and it is this which produces inward change, it can never be by legalistic observance that provides a merely outward show – our works do not produce change, rather our change produces works.

f). Just remember what the Lord had to say to the scribes and Pharisees concerning external appearance - Mt 23:23 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

g). Anyone then who chooses to believe that they can attain righteousness through their own efforts by keeping a set of externalized rules has no right to eat at the altar of faith.

h). Those who choose such a course of action fulfill that spoken by the Lord in - Mt 15:8 *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*

5). We will continue with this next week, if the Lord is willing.