

Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup> 2015  
It's Still Raining  
Part Three

1). Heb 6:7 *For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

a). As we revisit our foundational scripture here in Hebrews for the last time in this series, let us once again remember that this metaphor of the earth that drinks in the rain works on several levels.

b). The earth that 'drinks in the rain that often comes upon it' is a picture of the Christian who receives the word of the Kingdom.

d). Just as in the Parable of the Sower in the Matthew 13 parables, where the type of the ground in which the Christian finds himself - by the wayside, the stony places, amongst thorns and thistles and good ground – is determined by the individual's response to the Word of the Kingdom – so in Hebrews the Christian's response to that same word will determine what he will produce.

2). Let's go back into foundation to note something interesting –

Ge 3:17 ¶ *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."*

a). And here in foundation we find the picture for our present Christian experience, the same picture expressed through the verses from Hebrews Chapter 6, as we seek first His Kingdom.

b). Even though we are eternally saved we still possess a sin nature that is inseparably connected to our first birth, a nature that can only bring forth thorns and thistles, and is pictured here in Genesis in the ground that God curses following the introduction of sin into the Garden.

c). And so, as we know, we have our ‘old man’ and our ‘new man’ present in our body and these two must of necessity be diametrically opposed to one another, and in the midst of this conflict, to follow the picture from Genesis, we are told that we are to eat the herb of the field and in the sweat of our face we are to eat bread.

d). Even though we may find ourselves in the place characterized by the ‘good ground’, which is well watered and produces fruit, thorns and thistles will appear because of our sin nature and therefore there must be continual work to keep these weeds at bay as the earth is continuously cultivated.

e). This is another way of seeing the constant conflict we encounter between our sin nature which produces the thorns and thistles, and our spirit which produces the herbs of the field, and speaks of the striving which is necessary in order to continue to be fruitful and continue to eat bread while at the same time living in a body of death – Pr 12:11 ¶ *He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, But he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.*

*2Co 9:10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,*

3). Sin then has resulted in a curse, not only on the material creation, but also on that to which the material creation points – our sin nature, our old man, our first birth.

a). Everything connected to this first birth is unfruitful with regards to our inheritance and can only produce thorns and thistles exactly as God said in Genesis 3.

b). Only that coming from our new birth – walking in the Spirit – is able to produce fruit – the herbs of the field – and this requires consistent, continual work.

4). And the necessity of working hard to produce the fruit necessary to fulfill our heavenly calling is essential for us to understand because of that which scripture teaches about the ultimate destination of the material creation – *2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned*

up. 11 ¶ *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

a). Here we see the Day of the Lord, the 7<sup>th</sup> Day, the Millennial Kingdom, coming suddenly and without warning – coming with shock and horror to those who are not prepared for it, just as a thief who breaks into a house in the middle of the night and breaks up that house.

b). And then, at the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom, we see the earth, the material creation, and the works that are in it, being burned up.

c). The Holy Spirit, through Peter, then asks the question *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

d). And the reason for the question is this – if the material creation, presently under a curse is ultimately to be burned up, and exactly the same fate awaits that to which the material creation points – our old man, then what should we be doing now to distance ourselves from that fate then?

e). The answer of course is to be working and this is exactly what we see in our Hebrews 6 scripture – the cultivation of the land to produce herbs, holy conduct and godliness, in order to receive blessing, thereby dealing with our thorns and briars.

f). Or to see this from another perspective - Ga 4:29 *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.*

5). Now if we go back to the Parable of the Sower for a moment we will remember that it is those described as being sown in good ground who alone produce fruit - 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."*

a). And so our scripture in Hebrews 6 has to be dealing with the possible consequences for those who would make up this group – for those who are able to produce fruit, as contextually, within the Book of Hebrews, we are looking at those who come into a mature knowledge of the truth and then choose to turn away from that truth - Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith*

*toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.*

b). And once again we see the call to go on to perfection, to achieve our goal, moving on to maturity by building on the elementary principles of Christ, which we will do if God permits.

c). We then see that if anyone comes into a mature understanding of things surrounding the coming Kingdom of Christ and then ‘falls away’ from that truth – the phrase ‘falls away’ giving us our word ‘apostatize’, which literally means ‘to step away from’ – such a one cannot be renewed again to repentance.

6). This is the same thought that we see again in - Heb 10:26 *For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

a). As we compare our two scriptures we would conclude that ‘falling away’ – to apostatize – would be the same thing as to ‘sin willfully’.

b). Then in our Hebrews 10 scripture we have the added detail of *a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.*

c). And this ‘fiery judgment’ that will result in worse punishment for Christians found unworthy at the Judgment Seat, having fallen away, is an image consistent throughout scripture in relation to entrance into or exclusion from a position of rulership in the Millennial Kingdom –

Mt 13:30 *'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'*

Joh 15:6 *"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.*

1Co 3:15 *If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

7). Now as we look at this willful sin let's remind ourselves of something concerning the nature of sin - 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.*

Ro 14:23 *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

a). Sin and unbelief are one and the same and can cause us to depart from the living God – to apostatize – and sin is deceitful.

b). We can be deceived by sin and the deception always comes in the same form - Ge 3:1 ¶ *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said,*

It is the serpent's question that sows the seed of unbelief –

Heb 12:1 ¶ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

8). We can see this in relation to the works of the flesh - Ga 5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you*

*in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

a). Our scripture is very clear – any Christian who practices the works of the flesh will not inherit the Kingdom of God – the Millennial Kingdom.

b). Practice = Greek word – *prasso* = to perform repeatedly

c). Now we can see from this that we are dealing here with lifestyle.

d). And it is easy for us to see that the practice of these works of the flesh as lifestyle will of necessity mean we have departed from the living God by simply looking at - Ro 12:2 *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.*

e). The only way we are able to renew our minds is through the word of God. So if we choose to be conformed to this world, practicing the works of the flesh, we have automatically turned away from the word and therefore from God Himself, who is the word made flesh. And the deception that brings this about is exactly the same as in the Garden – ‘has God indeed said’.

9). Please note though that the willful sin of unbelief, leading to the continual practice of the works of the flesh, is not something we can accidentally fall into. A lapse into sin on our part, even if it happens often, is not what this is about – God has made provision through Christ’s present High Priestly ministry to deal with this – no, we are dealing here with a mindset that says for example, ‘I am committing adultery, I enjoy committing adultery, I don’t see anything wrong with committing adultery, irrespective of what scripture says’.

a). We may struggle with the same sin all our Christian life, but the key is in the struggle. It is the calloused knees, the gritted teeth, the white knuckles as we wrestle to overcome, as we strive to enter by the narrow gate.

10). The example of the works of the flesh is easy to see, and it is possible for us to be blindsided into thinking we are OK, because we can check off those examples and say, ‘I don’t do that’, but sin can be more subtle in its deceptive work.

11). To look at this further let’s draw on some OT examples.

a). Firstly Esau - Ge 25:32 *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.*

b). Simply, Esau was hungry, Jacob had a pot of stew, and Esau was willing to give up his birthright to make his life easier. And what does the last sentence of our scripture say? ***Thus Esau despised his birthright.***

c). As part of our process towards maturity we need to make sure that we fully understand what our birthright is, and come into an understanding of how this is the greatest thing the God of the universe could offer to His creation – the so great salvation for the age of the ages. If we don't grasp its significance it would be easy for us to consider it of only marginal value and therefore to be even dismissive of it, as with Esau.

d). Once we understand the enormity of it we would pluck out our eye and cut off our hand to get it – not literally of course.

e). Secondly we can remember what we have learned concerning Lot, who became so enmeshed in the affairs of this world that he became dull of hearing and therefore wouldn't receive the warning he was given – Ge 19:17 *So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed."* 18 *Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords!* 19 *"Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil overtake me and I die.*

f). To escape to the mountain would have required Lot to die to self, and this he wouldn't do, considering it to be an evil that would overtake him. Sin prevented him from hearing properly resulting in his rejection of God's warning. This is producing thorns and briars.

g). Next we can look at Saul - 1Sa 15:20 *And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.* 21 *"But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."* 22 *Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And*

*to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."*

h). Saul had been given instructions by God to destroy Amalek and everything that was his, but he didn't do so, keeping back the best of the animals to sacrifice to the Lord, deceiving himself into believing that God would be pleased with what he had kept back, but God, through Samuel makes clear to him - *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.*

i). We can deceive ourselves into believing that it's OK to keep 'the best bits' of our old man, which can only produce thorns and briars, because we do not take God literally at His Word when He says we must consistently put to death the deeds of the flesh – destroy everything connected with Amalek.

j). And our last example, not surprisingly, is Israel at Kadesh Barnea Nu 13:31 *But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."*

k). In essence, from Israel's perspective, the enormity of conquering the land was too great a challenge. It was going to be too hard and too difficult – they were focused on the giants and their own inadequacy and not on the God who told them that He had delivered the giants into their hands. This produced thorns and briars and the whole generation 20 years old and above, except Caleb and Joshua, died in the wilderness short of their inheritance.

l). Now from our perspective God has told us everything we need to know about the land of our calling, the Kingdom of the heavens and what is expected of us to gain our inheritance there.

m). Then as we look at what God requires of us – faithful obedience to His word in every aspect of our lives - we can see giants and walled cities, we can see the extent of the life change that must be embraced which could lead us to declare, just like the 10 spies, 'I can't do this – it's too difficult' – and here is where we would unmask the lie, here is where we see

the deception – we believe that the word that describes our inability to be obedient is ‘can’t’, rather than ‘won’t’, which is what it really is.

n). I am sure we realize that in taking such a stance as, ‘I can’t’, we would be denying the voracity of the Word of God to bring about the metamorphosis in us, we would be professing the inadequacy of the blood of God on the Mercy Seat on our behalf and denying the power of God to deliver us from the hand of our enemy.

o). Such thinking can only produce thorns and briars resulting in the loss of inheritance, this is willful sin because such a one deliberately chooses not to believe and act by faith upon that which God has said. This is what turning away from the truth can look like.

p). In the midst of this there is something we should keep in mind – 1Co 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

12). And as we come to the end of this short series I would like to leave us with this encouragement taken from the second generation of Israel to come out of Egypt – they faced same giants and the same walled cities as the first, yet look what we see at Jericho as Joshua acts in faithful obedience to the command of the Lord? – Jos 5:13 ¶ *And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" 14 So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come ... .. Jos 6:2 And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.*

13). And one final visit to Hebrews 6 - Heb 6:1 ¶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they*

*crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. 9 ¶ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*