

Sunday March 17th 2019
The Word of God
A Survey of the Bible – Lesson 16D
'Let Us Go On'

1). 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.*

We had seen last time how the writer of Hebrews had previously reprimanded his audience for having regressed to a point whereby they needed to be taught the milk of the Word, the first principles of the oracles of God, again because they had failed to grow in their maturity in the faith to the place where the strong meat of the Word would have been theirs.

a). This group of Christians had spent a significant amount of time in the Word of the Kingdom and should have been in a place where they could teach others this same Word. But that had not happened.

b). But then, rather than despairing of their situation our writer exhorts his audience to leave behind them the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ and to now go on to maturity in the faith, as the opportunity to do so still remained open for them, if they would now give the more earnest heed to the things they had previously heard – Rom 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

And then our writer qualified his exhortation to them to 'go on' with the words, 'And this we will do if God permits'.

c). The Lord in His omniscience knew that there were some Christians whose attention was firmly fixed on the land out of which they had been called rather than on the land they were called to go to. And such was their fixation with this age that nothing would move them. And the Lord also knew that there were some Christians whose attention would be moved in the right

direction for a while but whose attention would then revert back to this age as that is where their interest was really to be found.

d). And we had seen how Lot had provided the type for this kind of Christian.

e). What we will also realize is that God's permission to go on or not to go on has nothing to do with some Divine lottery, but everything to do with which land we choose to align ourselves with. God's permission then, is really the outcome of the choice we make. And we are given a positive example concerning this – Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

2). And the reason why God's permission to go to maturity in the faith would be withheld from those whose attention is fixed on this age, under the god of this age is clearly given – Heb 6:4 *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.*

And the type once again provided for us here is the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt.

a). This generation had been given God's Word at Sinai where they had heard His audible voice. God's presence continued with them as He filled the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Meeting and led them by day and by night. And they experienced His supernatural provision. And because of all these things we can see that they would have had a mature knowledge of God's purpose for them with respect to being, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, in the land of their inheritance at the head of the nations within a Theocracy. They had experienced those things set out in Hebrews 6:4-5.

b). And as such they form the type for us with respect to the land of our heavenly calling.

c). As they reached the border of the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob 12 spies were sent to bring a report of the land which was to be their inheritance – Nu 13:1 *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.”*

It was a land in which God had already promised them blessing – Deut 11:10 *For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; 11 but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, 12 a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.*

And all that was required of the nation, both the first and second generation, to possess the land and receive the blessing God would pour out on them was Deut 11:13 *‘And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14 then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. 15 And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.’*

And when the spies sent into the land returned, all 12 confirmed that which the Lord had previously said about it – Nu 13:26 *Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.*

However, despite this, for 10 of the spies there was a problem – Nu 13:28 *Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”*

But for Caleb and Joshua no such problem existed. They remembered how God had dealt with the Egyptians and how He had dealt with their enemies once they had crossed the Red Sea. They had seen God's supernatural provision of food and water as they made their journey and they concluded that none of this had happened by their own effort, but by God's power, the exercise of His Sovereign grace. And that said they saw no reason why He would not continue to do the same as they entered the land of Canaan.

d). What the 10 spies said about the inhabitants of the land was true, but for Caleb and Joshua this was of no moment whatsoever – Nu 13:30 *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."*

But a contrary view was given by the remaining 10 – 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."*

All the people had experienced God's supernatural power on their behalf, just as Caleb and Joshua had and were then faced with the choice of believing the report of the 10 spies or trusting God along with Caleb and Joshua.

e). Nu 14:1 *So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."*

The first generation chose to believe the report of the 10 and in doing so turned away from God who had delivered and sustained them. And as a consequence of turning away, they complained against Moses and Aaron, who had led them to the border of the land of promise and they looked back to the land from which they had been delivered, looking to find another leader to take them back to where they had come from. And in doing this they rejected God's purpose for them, they rejected the Word He had given to them and in effect rejected God Himself. Choosing instead to align themselves again with the Assyrian Pharaoh from whom they had been separated by the death and shed blood of the Passover lambs.

f). We might remember as we look at this God's command to Lot, 'don't look back', and the command given to us, 'Remember Lot's wife'

Lk 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

And the exhortation the writer of Hebrews gives us, quoting from Habakkuk Chapter 2 – Heb 10:36 *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

g). And this is at the heart of the 3rd warning given to us. If we should be permitted to come to maturity in the faith, having a mature knowledge and understanding of Christ's coming Kingdom when He will come forth as the great King/Priest according to the order of Melchizedek so that we were 4..... *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,*

If this is our experience, knowing that this age and everything associated with it will be completely overthrown and we then turn back to the land of our birth, the land from which we have been separated by the death and shed blood of God in the person of Son, aligning ourselves again with the god of this age, then this is a position from which there is no way back. 'For it is impossible.....if they fall away to renew them again to repentance'.

h). The first generation of Israel changed their mind concerning their decision, they repented the following day and wanted then to take that which God had promised. But God would not change His mind and all that remained for them was death in the wilderness.

i). This is exactly what we see in the type and this is exactly what must happen in the antitype. The Kingdom would be lost to us and God will not change His mind about it.

j). And the reason is as we have seen - *since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.* On the day of His crucifixion the god of this age and the powers of darkness with him exalted themselves as they inflicted shame and reproach of unimaginable proportion

upon the Lamb of God as He was beaten, spat upon, reviled and paraded naked before the jeering crowds to suffer the ignominy of crucifixion.

k). And if we should turn back wholeheartedly to the world, having known the glory of Christ's Kingdom then we would inflict this same shame and reproach upon the Lord again and allow the enemy of our soul to exalt himself once more over the One who died to set us free. And God will not permit this to happen.

l). Hence, He will not permit any Christian to go on to maturity in the faith, if this age is where his attention is fixed, so that he cannot bring that shame and reproach upon our Lord by turning back.

3). 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 briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

The writer of Hebrews then gave an example from the world of nature to give further commentary on what he had been saying. V7 and 8 of Hebrews 6 talks about a land that can receive blessing from God or can be rejected. And in this we can see once more the contrast between being focused on the land of our heavenly calling or being focused on the land, the world, we have been called to leave behind.

a). Rain is used in Scripture symbolically to represent blessing from God in connection with His Word – Deut 32:2 *Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass.*

Isa 55:10 *“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

For the Christian then whose attention is fixed on the age to come, who continually 'drinks in the rain that often comes upon' him, that which God brings forth from above concerning Christ and His Kingdom, such a Christian will produce fruit 'useful for those by whom it is cultivated'. And this person

will receive 'blessings from God' – blessings to be realized within the land on which their attention is fixed.

b). On the other hand though, the Christian whose attention remains fixed on the land he was called to leave behind, although hearing the same Word can only produce fruit connected to the land on which his attention is fixed, the land that is under a curse – Gen 3:18 *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,*

And as we see from Hebrews 6:7-8 there is no blessing from God to be found in connection with this land, but only rejection.

c). It would be difficult for it to be presented any more clearly than this.

4). This all seems extremely serious, and of course it is. The Holy Spirit through the writer of Hebrews has been diligent to present this warning to us and we will realize that this comes out of the Lord's great love for us and His desire for us to be successful in this race of the faith, just as He says through Peter – 2 Pe 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Just as He says in the Revelation – Rev 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

And this is greatly encouraging. And encouragement is what follows for the writer of Hebrews' audience – Heb 6:9 *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.*

The writer had written this serious warning, 'though we speak in this manner', because this is how the Holy Spirit had directed him. But although what he had written is enormously challenging, he was confident of better

things concerning his audience, things that would accompany the salvation of their souls.

a). Despite the fact they had regressed, he was confident they would now move forward to maturity in the faith and he cited their 'work and labor of love which' they had 'shown towards His name', in that they had 'ministered to the saints' and continued to do so, as evidence of this.

b). What he saw in their work and labor of love was an encouragement to him, because love for the saints and the resultant work of ministering to them, can only come out of faith. And the love to be extended to the saints and the work of ministry to them can only be with a view to the salvation of the soul after the fashion that we see in – Eph 4:1 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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— 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.*

This then is not a love of contrived emotion or religious obligation, but a genuine, unconditional love, exercised through faith exclusively in the realm of the spirit, towards those of our Lord's Church as we minister to them in prayer and exhortation and encouragement, even by providing a cup of cold water, the things needed for the body. All done with a passionate zeal for each one to receive the salvation of their soul – a love that would see our brother's or sister's salvation as more important even than our own. The very love that our Lord had for us that took Him to the cross. And this of course does not happen overnight, but is the result of process – 2 Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control*

perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

c). And clearly, those to whom the letter to the Hebrews was originally written, had ministered to each other to some degree in this way. And the writer reminds them that God would not be unjust and forget this, because in so doing it is as if they had ministered to the Lord Himself. And this would hold true for ourselves as well. To minister to one another in this way is to minister to the Lord Himself.

d). And it was because of this that our writer was 'confident of better things' for them, things that would accompany salvation.

e). And having established this positive action, the writer then asked his audience to show the same diligence they exercised toward ministering to one another 'to the full assurance of hope until the end'. In other words, to have their attention fixed on that which lay ahead in the land of their calling, giving the more earnest heed to the things which they heard. And He exhorted them not to become 'sluggish' in this, not to neglect so great salvation, but to imitate those who through their 'faith and patience will inherit the promises' –
1 Cor 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

We will pick this up again following our return from Kenya – if the Lord is willing.