

PREPARATION FOR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

BIBLE TEXT : Hebrews 12:1-29; 13 :1-25.

LESSON 444 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Hebrews 12:1-29

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own

Bible References:

Notes:

The Race

"WHEREFORE seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

This is a picture of an athlete upon the racecourse. That is a beautiful and striking picture of Christians. They are not on a pleasure excursion; they are not loitering along on a promenade; they are not just filling in time. They are engaged in a great contest. Paul likens them elsewhere to warriors engaged in a warfare.

He gives us some precepts in running this race. The first one is to lay aside every weight. Paul said that a soldier does not entangle himself. We are not here to accumulate this world's goods; we are not here to win anything that this world has to offer. We are here for the supreme purpose of winning what God has for us, and of excelling in those things to which He has called us, that we might walk worthy of our vocation. In order to do that it is necessary to strip for the race.

. . . and the sin which doth so easily beset us, . . ."

Those words "so easily beset us" mean "stationed round about us," entrenched, as it were, round about us. The sin to which these Hebrew Christians were exposed was unbelief, forsaking the gospel, and apostatising. That might not be everyone's besetting sin, yet, there is always some thing. It does not mean that when we are delivered from the guilt and power of sin we are delivered from the temptation of sin. We do not reach that stage in the world. God is going to see to it that He has a people schooled here below. When we enter Heaven all backsliding will be forever over; there will be no more of it. That is why He is putting us through a schooling here below, getting us ready for that high realm of holiness and righteousness, of purity, of power, of victory that will forever be ours.

Do not think that you are on your way out when you are under heavy temptation and the enemy is assailing, and you are right in the midst of affliction; you might just be on your way to higher ground.

. . . and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Here is the course out ahead of us with all the afflictions that it promises: the temptations by the way, the enemy that assails that course. Are we going to go through, whatever betides? Are we going to continue with that perseverance and endurance and intrepid spirit in spite of men and devils? One may fall; he may make mistakes; he may go under through some of his weaknesses, but victory is for the man who will hold to his purpose that he is going to see the end of the race. God will eventually get that man where men or devils, or powers in earth, or powers in hell, will never overthrow him.

The Author and Finisher of Our Faith

In the second verse of this chapter he gives us an example of

pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear

One who completed this course. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. That word "author" carried very much the same meaning as he gave us in another part where he spoke of the "forerunner."

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 6:19, 20).

So He is our Forerunner, the Author and Finisher of our faith; or the One who has taken the initiative and gone ahead of us as a file-leader. Here we are filing in behind Him. He has entered into that place above, and finished the course. Listen to what is said about Him:

". . . who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, . . . (Hebrews 12:2).

His primary mission in coming into the world, taking on his flesh and blood after the seed of Abraham, was that that body should be a sacrifice laid down so that the will of God might be carried out. That was His delight. "Who for the joy that was set before him. . ." The joy of doing the will of God carried Him through. For that reason He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God. How much stress He put upon that!

A woman came to Him one time and said how blessed was His mother, but He immediately replied, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28).

Chastening

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

He is using the figure here of the athlete upon the racecourse who is exercised that he might win the contest. There is much in the exercise that he goes through that is not pleasant, but it is that which fits him for the race.

Bitterness

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:14,15).

That root of bitterness is a rising up again of the carnal nature. You can have that purged out and cleansed away and destroyed. But if the seed of sin is planted again in your heart, that root of bitterness will spring up again. Sin comes in through yielding to temptation. That is when the seed is planted. More than that, that root of bitterness is contagious. Let it get started in the camp and many can become defiled (and very quickly, too) by just a little gossip, or loose talk.

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12:16).

It said that Esau despised his birthright. His birthright was to be in the line of the Messiah, of God's blessings that were promised. He said, "What profit shall this birthright do to me?" (Genesis 25:32). "What profit is God's salvation to me?" he might as well have said, or, "What profit is it if I serve the Lord?"

"For ye know how that afterward, when he would

and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

27 And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Hebrews 13:1-25

1 Let brotherly love continue.

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; *and* them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

4 Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Hebrews 12:17).

He coveted the blessing then, but it was gone.

Mount Zion

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest" (Hebrews 12:18).

Now here is Mount Sinai where the Law is given; and here upon the other hand is Mount Zion.

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

He takes the Mount where the Law was given, contrasting it with the New Covenant. The one was material and the other was spiritual.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

In the beginning he said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, . . ." And now he comes right back to that:

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).

Renewed Image

Throughout these chapters Paul has been unfolding to us the wonderful significance of those types. They all lead up to this same end: that we in this Dispensation also may draw nigh unto God.

In Ephesians 4:24 we read:

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

We find a similar verse in Colossians 3:10:

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him!"

Here we have the aim of God's plan: the restoration of that image which was lost in the fall. Man is brought back into his inheritance and into his proper relationship with God, as Adam enjoyed before the fall.

Our Altar

"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Hebrews 13:10)

According to the Law (Leviticus 6:26) the priests that offered the sin offering had a right to eat of it. However, any offering where the blood was brought into the Holy Place could not be eaten; it was to be burned (Leviticus 6:30).

"For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp."

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:11-13).

Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and

5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.

8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that

drink his blood, ye have no life in you," (John 6:53). While the priests of old could not eat of the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary, we have been invited to eat at an altar to which they had no right. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp."

Holiness

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:16).

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)

Every one of those injunctions and exhortations commends itself to our conscience. Whatever other fault men may find with certain teachings or doctrines of the Scriptures, there is one thing certain: if they have a spark of honesty in them they will lend their approval to every One of these verses regarding the relationship we ought to have with God.

There are strenuous objections raised by many people to the possibility of attaining unto holiness. Thousands of men professing Christianity will say that such a standard is entirely too high; it is out of reach; we cannot attain unto it.

It would not have been in God's Word unless God intended it to be reached; unless God intended us to have these very things that He has set forth in His Word. That is the reason that by type, by shadow, by precept, by commandment, by exhortation -- step upon step -- He has unfolded unto us the plan by which we may attain unto these spiritual things set forth in His Word.

David's Prayer for Sanctification

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin [singular]" (Psalm 51:1, 2).

As a rule, sins (plural) refer to committed acts, and sin (singular) to the principle of sin. There we have the outward transgressions and the inward principle from which David was seeking deliverance, set forth in the Old Testament. That is why we maintain that they had the experience of sanctification under the Old Testament Dispensation.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:1, 2).

There you have the two things: pardon, and a spirit without guile -- the result of sanctification.

Our Sanctification

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and Just to forgive us our sins [plural], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [singular]" (I John 1:9).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1).

Here is entire sanctification -- "perfecting holiness." That means that it is complete, with nothing wanting.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).

Now in Christ's intercessory prayer in John 17:20 we read:

they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19 But I beseech *you* the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23 Know ye that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25 Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

That reaches down through the ages to our time, to everyone who will believe on Christ through the word of these disciples for whom He was praying.

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, [That same oneness that we find in the Godhead which goes beyond our comprehension] and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

And how is the world to believe that? By the oneness of the children of God: a people in whom and among whom there are no schisms, no differences of belief, no heretical doctrines brought in, no strange teachings to which they lend an ear; but they are all of one accord. If we are to fulfil our mission in this world it will be because we preserve that kind of sanctification.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22).

Those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. See how perfectly they agree with the words of the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 2:11:

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Death to the "Old Man"

Here we find a plain illustration of the relationship that justification bears to sanctification.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him" (Romans 6:5, 6).

It is called the body of sin, the "old man," the carnal mind, and sometimes it is known as the flesh, the principles of sin within man from which come forth all his evil acts. We read in some other verses about putting on the "new man". Before that new man can be put on, the old man must be put off. Before there can be any positive work, there must be a negative work. The negative work is the destruction of sin; the positive work is a growing in grace. The people who fail of true holiness and sanctification fail of the perfection which God has for them. There can be no perfection such as God has set forth in His Word until first of all sin is absolutely dispensed with in the heart and life.

". . . that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

That is taken from the figure of Christ's crucifixion. From the moment that He was nailed to the cross, death set in; but there came at the ninth hour an instant in which death ensued and he cried that it was finished, and committed His soul unto the Father and died. That was instantaneous.

Paul draws a parallel here: when one is justified, death begins: death to sin, death to the carnal nature. But it has not been completed yet. There is a measure of holiness even in justification, when that carnal nature receives a stunning blow and is no longer able to operate. That is why babes in Christ have joy overflowing if they receive a genuine experience of Justification. The carnal nature, though not dead, has received a blow that has rendered it inactive. But from that moment, God speaks to the babe in Christ to move on to the point where death

shall ensue. That may be in five minutes, five weeks, five months, or it might be five years. But whatever the length of time it takes, the result is the same.

If that seeker presses on for his fullness in Christ there is going to come a time, an instant, in which the death of the carnal nature takes place; and that is entire sanctification. When Jesus expired He was not partly dead, He was entirely dead; He had passed into the vale of death.

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

The burning of incense in the Holy Place morning and night symbolised constant prayer ascending unto the Father. We also found that the Holy Place symbolises the position of the sanctified heart. He resides where the lamp is lit, signifying the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. The Word of God is his food, and the incense of praise is constantly rising from the "golden altar" of his heart. Henceforth he is in that sphere of life.

There is a great dispute about this question of entire sanctification. Some people claim to believe in sanctification, but they will not believe that it is possible to be rid of every vestige of sin; but if we believe the Word of God, we will have to believe it.

John Wesley sums up what Christian perfection is: "Pure love reigning alone in the heart and life: this is the whole of scriptural perfection. Prophecies shall cease, tongues shall be no more; there will be a time when we shall not need even to exercise faith. Knowledge shall be done away with. But the love of God will continue through the countless ages of eternity. Let us see to it that we perfect it in our lives."

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20, 21).