

## Let Us Heed

### January 25, 2009

1). I think that since the writer of Hebrews, guided by the Spirit of God Himself, felt it necessary to record warnings to Christians, then it is probably necessary for us to consider them every once in a while with some serious attention.

- The warnings are many, but ultimately can be summed up in this—we should not relax nor let down our guards in respect of the fellowship here and the message we are to learn, live, and share.
- We may think at times that this Kingdom message, in its various facets, is a great thing for us in that it gives us purpose, meaning, and a direction. But it is not meant solely for us, nor are we to bask in it for our own sakes.
- At the very least we should consider that what we do here in ministering this Word can have a huge impact on not only ourselves, but our family, our community, and anyone we come in contact with.

2). We also should consider that the enemy of our souls will not be best pleased with this effort. And because of this, can't we predict that he has been, is presently, and continuously will target us and attack us to such a degree as to get us to stop what we're doing, stop where we are going, turn around (or even sit still) and forgo our destination for a more comfortable here and now? Are you aware of how huge the ramifications are?

3). If the enemy could destroy what is here, then who would there be to bring the message of the good news—the whole gospel—to this area? And while we haven't had an overflow of visitors through our doors here or through the doors of the homes where we hold Bible study, just having it available makes it a possibility for those who are seeking. And who knows what God has planned for us in the months or years to come and the impact we could have on those around us? It isn't about us as individuals—the good news of salvation of the Lord (the full scope of salvation) is for everyone and intended for everyone.

4). And again, we should be cautioned about getting to the point that we will be tempted to take things easy. Kind of like, "Hey, I got the message, now I know about a cool kingdom coming, now I just need to study once in a while, sit back and wait for it to come." I hope there isn't anyone here like that.

- If this happens, this will be the doorway through which the enemy may come.

5). The first thing we need to do is actively pray for the shepherds who lead and tend to this flock. Rodd, Ralph and myself need to be extremely careful not to leave this flock unattended, and not to stop watching. The shepherds need to be ready at every instant, for there are always wolves ready to come in and consume.

- We need to beware of an overflow of activity (good or bad) in our business lives that will seek to place our attention elsewhere in order to distract us from our purpose.

*Mark 14:27*

*Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"*

- Jesus is speaking of Himself here, and the consequence of His arrest and crucifixion, but there remains a truth here for us.
- If there had been no need for shepherds, God would not have provided them for His Church, and if the shepherd is removed from the equation, inevitably the sheep will be scattered. This must not happen. So please pray for your shepherds.

6). And secondly, everyone in this body has a responsibility to stay focused, as we are responsible for our own actions. And to encourage us in this, let's look at a couple of those warnings in the Book of Hebrews. Yes, the warnings are there to encourage us, not scare us into immobility. It's encouraging that we are that important to God that He so desires us to be successful that He recorded everything we would need to keep on the narrow road.

7). Before we get to the warnings, let's first make sure we have some foundations in place.

- Hebrews is a Book written to Christians who have received this message of the Kingdom and they know all about our inheritance within the Kingdom -

*Hebrews 3:1*

*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,*

- In other words, this particular book cannot be applied to the Laodicean church of this age, what we see around us as the "lukewarm" Christians.
  - Those addressed here are 'holy brethren' who are described as 'partakers of the heavenly calling' – and by extension this would be us.
  - The word 'Hebrew' = one who has crossed the river  
(Talk about the Red Sea crossing / Baptism)
  - Hebrews is a Book that deals exclusively with the coming Kingdom
- Hebrews 2:5*  
*For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*

- Did you note the clearly stated subject of the Book – ‘the world to come’ (Remember our Timeline) and a change of rulership in that time when the world will not be subject to angels –

**Ephesians 1:10**

*...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.*

- The world to come will not be subject to angels, but *will be subject to Christ and His coheirs*. But this has not happened yet –

**Hebrews 2:6**

*But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*

9). We are told that God has spoken about this subject through the Prophets and has now, in these last days, spoken of the same things (what same things? The things concerning the subject of the Book of Hebrews) directly to us through His Son –

**Hebrews 1:1**

*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 ¶ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?*

- And because God has spoken to us through the prophets (and isn't it just awesome that God recorded the words of those prophets and they are now fully available to us!?) and now by His Son we find the first of the warnings we are to heed –

**Hebrews 2:1**

*Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved*

*steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?*

- The writer uses Israel at Sinai as our example, showing that they heard the word of God concerning the earthly portion of the kingdom, **they were not ignorant** but had come into a mature knowledge of all God intended for them –

*1Corinthians 10:1*

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 ¶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*

- Let's be careful here with our interpretation of 'lusting after evil things' as we could easily just see this as a reference to their sexual immorality and idol worship.
- And although they were most certainly guilty of these things this would be a too limited view.
- Remember at Kadesh Barnea –

*Numbers 14:3*

*"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?"*

- It is while standing on the very edge of the land of promise, in sight of the end so to speak, with just a few hundred yards left to go that they are deceived into thinking that the task is impossible and their eyes look back.
- Notice God's commentary on the condition of His people –

*Acts 7:39b*

*...And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt...*

- In Hebrews we find –

*Hebrews 3:19*

*So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

- And the admonition to us is –

*Hebrews 3:12*

*Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;*

- Notice here God’s perspective on what is evil – ***it is unbelief***. This is not talking of ceasing to be a Christian, such a thing would be impossible anyway, this is talking about giving up on what God has promised.
- It is a truth –
  - Romans 13:11b  
*...for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*
- We are on the very edge of the land so to speak, the end is in sight, and this may be the time when it seems the hardest to carry on, but this is not the time to give up –
  - Hebrews 10:37  
*"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*
  - Revelation 22:12  
*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*
- According to our Hebrews 2 scripture, the Children of Israel were punished for their transgressions against that which they had heard. Because they heard the truth, because they had the capacity to spiritually discern the truth, because they were redeemed for the very purpose for which God was showing them, because they were being told everything they needed to know...and they heard it all...they were ***severely punished*** for their disbelief. It’s the ones who hear that have the greatest opportunity to succeed, and it’s the ones who hear that have the greatest accountability.
- The writer of Hebrews then asks that if this was the case for Israel, and it was, how would we escape a similar end if we were to neglect ‘so great a salvation.’ Do you know what this “so great a salvation” is? It’s the reward of the inheritance, the salvation of our soul, becoming a coheir with Christ – and we will reach a similar end as Israel did if we were to drift away from this truth.
- And here is our warning - *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away* – earnest heed – the thought behind these words in the original Greek would be literally, **to pay attention to, superabundantly.**
- We cannot afford to be casual in our meditation and study of and prayer over that which God has spoken through the prophets –
  - 1Peter 1:12  
*To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things which angels desire to look into. 13 ¶ Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

- And we cannot afford to be casual in our response to what we have heard directly through the Son –  
     Mark 9:7b  
     ...*"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"*
- And we need to do this 'lest we drift away.' In the original language, this idea of drifting away is not so much us moving away, but rather us letting it go. Letting go in the same way that water would run through our fingers. You intend to hold on to it, sort of, but through lack of diligence, it disappears. And when it's gone....

10). If we will give earnest heed to what we have heard and embrace with rejoicing the foundational truths that we share, not being complacent, not thinking we don't need it, not thinking we've already got it, then I believe we shall be protected from this deceit of the enemy. Remember –

James 1:21

*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

11). Our first warning has to do with focus – keeping the truth of what God has said ever before us, and it could be summarized in this scripture from the same book–

Hebrews 12:2

*...looking (from this world) unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,*

12). The second warning concerns being diligent to enter His rest. Many people think that His rest means the peace we have when we abide in the Lord, but His rest of course is **the** Day of rest, the seventh day – the age to come – the millennial Kingdom. (Great topic of discussion tonight!) And this warning moves beyond what we have heard to putting what we have heard into practice. It is organizing our lives in accordance with that which God has said.

- Again our example is Israel –  
     Hebrews 3:16  
     *For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*
- Why could Israel not enter His rest? –'because of unbelief.' As we have already seen, not unbelief in who God is, but unbelief in what He had said about the land and their inheritance.
- What we see is their refusal to believe what God had said. This unbelief (doubt coupled with fear) led to an action that was completely contrary to God's will for

them. They thought wrongly so they lived wrongly, with dire consequences. Please note that they didn't stop their religious practices--they lost the purpose for them.

- The substance of our second warning is found at the beginning of Chapter 4 –  
*Hebrews 4:1*  
*Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.....11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*
- What we see here in Hebrews is the same thing the Lord Himself taught the disciples in –  
*Luke 13:24*  
*"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*
- This should shock you as you think about this. Do you know that many will seek to enter but won't be able to? MANY will seek to enter. MANY. That means that the MANY will be those who know about the inheritance in the kingdom which is to come. That limits it in this day and age, doesn't it? So MANY will know what they are seeking for and they will not be able to enter.
- Strive = Greek word – *agonizomai* = strain every muscle of one's being. Compare the English word – agonize. Because of the fact that many will seek to enter and won't be able, we need to **agonize** for the narrow gate.
- The reason for this we can find in a parallel scripture in –  
*Matthew 7:13*  
*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

12). We can conclude then that being diligent to enter that rest and striving to enter the narrow gate are speaking of the need for **effort** on our part to get to our destination. And this would of course be effort on our part in respect of the way we choose to live –

*Romans 8:14*

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

- We will put effort into faithful obedience – being doers of the word, that will take us through the narrow gate to that rest. OR we will be deceived into thinking that God won't really hold us accountable and therefore we don't need to make an effort. The greatest lie of all is, 'God understands why I don't do this. He knows my nature and it's okay.'
- Note the clear teaching of scripture –

**1Corinthians 9:24**

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

**1Timothy 6:12**

*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,*

**Philippians 3:13**

*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind*

13). We are at the moment of our greatest danger when we think there is no danger at all-

**1Corinthians 10:12**

*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

- We are running a race of endurance and during any race of endurance we will become tired and fatigued, we will look for opportunities to take a break, convincing ourselves it will only be for a while –

**2Thessalonians 3:13**

*But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.*

- The thing that makes the difference between the champion and the “also ran” is the determination to carry on when every part of our being says, ‘enough’. Some of us are already reeling under the weight of enormous burdens. In the midst of this let us remind ourselves of what scripture says

**2Corinthians 4:17**

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*

Isaiah 40:31

*But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*

- Let's not let division or dissent arise within us personally or corporately, but let's maintain the unity that comes through the faith.
- And let's guard your personal holiness.
- We have learned how to wear the whole armor of God – there is no more urgent time to be properly dressed for the battle than now.