

The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews IX The Faithfulness of Christ and Us Compared to the Children of Israel

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Let's come to where we were in Exo. 32 and let's just continue the rest of the story of the great provocation, where they broke the first commandment, the second commandment, the third commandment and undoubtedly the fourth commandment when they had the golden calf. Then you also have the *breaking of the trust with God* by Aaron that he would lead the people into so great a sin.

Exodus 32:25: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked to *their* shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, 'Who is on the LORD'S side? *Come* to me.' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him. And he said to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Each man put his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and kill each one his brother, and each one his companion, and each one his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men; for Moses had said, 'Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD—even though it has been at the cost of a son or a brother—in order that *He* may give you a blessing today'" (vs 25-29).

Verse 30: "And it came to pass on the next day, Moses said to the people, '**You have sinned a great sin.** And now I will go up to the LORD. Perhaps I shall make an atonement for your sin.' And Moses returned to the LORD, and said, 'Oh, these people have sinned a great sin, and have made themselves gods of gold! And now if You would only forgive their sin!....'" (vs 30-32). We're not told what it was that he spoke.

"...And if not, I pray You, blot me out of Your book which You have written.' And the LORD said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. And now go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My angel shall go before you. And in the day of My visitation I will visit their sin upon them.' And the LORD plagued the people because they made the calf, which Aaron made" (vs 32-35). It showed that they were responsible for it. That is the 'great provocation'!

God said that these people were rebellious from the day that they left Egypt. Moses said to

them that they were rebellious from the very day that he knew them. So, it's really quite a thing that the children of Israel were doing.

Num. 14 is where they got the sentence for their sin, having to wander for a total of 40 years. They had sent in the 12 spies to spy out the land. Moses had to pray for the people all the time!

Numbers 14:17—Moses said, "And now, I beseech You, let the power of my Lord be great, according as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD *is* long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons to the third and fourth *generation*.' I beseech You, pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your mercy, and as You have forgiven this people from Egypt even until now" (vs 17-19).

Verse 20: "And the LORD said, 'I have pardoned according to your word. But truly, *as* I live, all the earth shall be filled *with* the glory of the LORD. Because all those men who have seen My glory and My miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice, Surely they shall not see the land, which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it. But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him and has followed Me fully... [we also know that it was Joshua, too] ...I will bring him into the land into which he went. And his children shall possess it'" (vs 17-24).

Verse 26: "And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 'How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation which murmurs against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me. Say to them, "*As* I live," says the LORD, "as you have spoken in My ears, so I will do to you. Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against Me, you shall certainly not come into the land, which I swore to make you dwell in, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which you said should be a prey..."'" (vs 26-31). What you accused Me of bringing out here in the wilderness to kill.

“...I will bring them in and they shall know the land, which you have despised. But *as for* you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall feed in the wilderness forty years and bear your whoredoms until your dead carcasses have been consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you searched the land—forty days—each day for a year you shall bear your iniquities, forty years; and you shall know My displeasure *of this generation*. I the LORD have spoken it; I will surely do it to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. They shall be destroyed in this wilderness, and there they shall die” (vs 31-35).

Verse 36: “And the men whom Moses sent to scout out the land, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up an evil report upon the land, even those men that brought up the evil report upon the land died by the plague before the LORD” (vs 36-37).

They really provoked God! What an amazing thing it is that God still dealt with them, because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Num. 16—here we have those wanting to become of the priesthood, which were not a part of Aaron. *And that provoked the Lord!* It was Korah and the princes of the men and they came and they said, ‘Moses and Aaron, you take too much yourselves. Seeing that all the people are Holy, let’s make this equal here and let’s go ahead and we’re going to take over the priesthood.’ Well, you know what happened there! God said, ‘All right, let them bring their sensors; let them come in; God showed His business. ***They provoked the Lord!***

Numbers 16:30: “...then you shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.’ And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who *were* for Korah, and all *their* goods. They and all that they had went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. And they perished from among the congregation” (vs 30-33).

I tell you, that’s something! What a sight that would have been! God really had to deal with these people.

Out of this we can get the lesson: God is going to have some harsh words to say to the false prophets. He’s going to have a harsh punishment for them. Let me just stop and mention here: Since these things were given to us as examples, that we learn

not to do the same thing, I think that all those men and women who run around trying to be prophets, trying to be teachers and leaders, when God never sent them, they better stop, look, listen, ***hear, fear and repent!*** James said, ‘Not many of you should desire to be teachers, because you know that those who are teachers are going to receive the sterner judgment.

Look at the judgment that came upon them immediately, because they assumed to usurp the priesthood and the Levitical priests that were with Moses and Aaron, and *look what God did!* He just opened up the earth and took care of them! We’ve got to understand we’re dealing with a God Who is:

- merciful
- kind
- generous
- gracious

Look at how many times He forgave them—over and over and over again! But this provocation went on for 40 years! Quite a situation! We can be thankful that God keeps His promises.

Not content with that, v 41: “But on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron saying, ‘You have killed the people of the LORD.’ And it came to pass when the congregation was gathered together against Moses and against Aaron, they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation. And behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared” (vs 41-42). Utt-oh! We’re in great trouble!

Verse 43: “And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, Get away from this congregation so that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a censer, and put fire in it from the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly into the congregation and make an atonement for them. For wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun.’ And Aaron did as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the congregation. And behold, the plague had begun among the people....” (vs 43-47). We don’t know what the plague was, but they were just dying on the spot.

“...And he put on incense and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed. And those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand, seven hundred, besides the ones who died about the matter of Korah” (vs 47-49).

Wow! Listen, let this be a lesson to be learned very deeply just in case we might happen to

be blessed to get to a 'place of safety': *Once you are there—regardless of how harsh it is—don't whisper a peep!*

Let's see something concerning Moses and why Jesus Christ is greater than Moses. Jesus never sinned! But, in this case Moses sinned! It was not a great sin, but nevertheless, it was a *lack of faith*. This tells us that *we better be careful how we hear what God says!* God gave Moses some very specific instructions, and it brought a great penalty upon Moses.

The people were at Kadesh and the people were complaining again and wondering where they were going to get water:

Numbers 20:7 "And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and **speak** to the rock before their eyes....' (vs 7-8). In other words, while they are there watching the rock, you tell them to look at the rock and you *speak*.

"...And it shall give forth its water, and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock. So you shall give the congregation and their animals *water to drink*.' And Moses took the rod from before the presence of the LORD as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels.... [Moses got angry here] ...Must we bring water for you out of this rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he **struck the rock twice**. And the water came out plentifully, and the congregation and their animals drank" (vs 7-11).

You'd think that that would be just a *little violation!* After all, if we would do a little psychoanalysis we would say that Moses was under great stress. Did he not lose his temper? *Yes, he did!* All of those things God put up with. But to use that as an excuse to *not believe God* cost him dearly! That shows you how important it is to believe God.

Verse 12: "And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore, you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.... [**both** Moses and Aaron died and didn't go into the land] ... These *are* the Waters of Strife because the children of Israel contended against the LORD, but He showed Himself Holy among them'" (vs 12-13). I tell you, what a thing! Going on and on and on!

The book of Numbers is a *heavy* book, but there are a lot of lessons in here for us *that we don't provoke*. We are given the warning that *if we want to enter into His rest, that we should not sin as the*

people sinned. As an example to us, it was done and recorded that look at what we have today within the Church of God. Look at all the people that complain and gripe, instead of *coming to God* and:

- learning of His love
- repenting
- asking for a right attitude

They stand up and carp and complain and just come after people. I tell you, it's something! Then, when those people come after me with some of their silly doctrines and I won't accept them, or someone sends me some sort of silly paper that they expect me to answer with a great long dissertation, and I ignore it and throw it away because it's worthless, then someone gets mad at me because I don't want to waste my time on their stupidity. In a small sense, that's my being caught between God and the people and it's called *being pushed together with paper*.

Numbers 21:4: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom...." They asked the children of Edom if they could pass by, just by the highway. We won't take any of you cattle, we won't even touch your land, we won't walk through a field, just let us go on the highway. Edom came down with swords and said, 'No, you won't do it.' Edom was the son of Esau!

"...And the soul of the people was very discouraged because of the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?....'" (vs 4-5).

Yes, for all of *you who rebel*, that's true! All of those who accuse God that their children were brought out there to be killed, the children are going into the land.

"...For *there is* no bread, neither is there any water. And our soul hates this light bread.'.... [angel's food] ...And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people. And many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you.... [it's about time that you learn the lesson] ...Pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.' And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole. And it shall be when everyone who is bitten looks upon it, he shall live.' And Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole. And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived" (vs 5-9).

You know what happened later? This was to be an historical relic of the children of Israel. But

during the days of the kings *they worshipped it as an idol!* So, I tell you what a thing this is! This is something! This just goes on and on. You would think that sooner or later they would learn a lesson; sooner or later they would get the point, but they never did. Here again, we have *another provocation* and this time by the very leaders and princes; Numbers 25:1: “And Israel dwelt in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.”

This was by the council of Balak. Baalim came and he could not curse because God said, ‘No, I’m not going to curse the people of Israel. Here’s the point. God can take care of and correct His own people, *and He will!* But He’s not going to let some pagan priest come and curse them. So, He made poor old Baalim bless seven times and Balak went out of his gourd because he said, ‘Didn’t I hire you? Didn’t I give you all this money to come here and curse the people, and all you do is bless. What’s the matter with you?’

What he did he said, ‘Look, I can’t go against what God said. Here’s what you do. You have a feast, you have all your beautiful women, and you have them allure and come over and commit fornication and God will punish them.’ That’s the doctrine of Baalim. That’s what they did.

Verse 2: “And they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods...” Come and enjoy a nice meal, you haven’t had any good flesh for a long time—have you? Look, we even have bread over here.’ Remember, they weren’t to eat bread until the wave sheaf was offered after they came into the land.

“...And the people ate and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself to Baal Peor...” (vs 2-3). I wonder if this was Sunday? *Baal is sun-worship!* I wonder if this may have been Christmas? *Who knows! The nativity of the sun!*

“...And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take all the heads of the people and impale them before the LORD facing the sun, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.’ And Moses said to the judges of Israel, ‘Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal Peor’” (vs 2-5).

And to show how brazen this was, v 6: “And behold, a man of the children of Israel came and brought to his brethren a woman of Midian, in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” You talk about gall! Wow!

Verse 7: “And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation and took a spear in his hand. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman, through her belly...” (vs 7-8). It doesn’t take very much imagination to understand what was occurring here when that was done.

“...So, the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. And the LORD spoke to Moses saying...” (vs 8-10). Once in a while someone will stand up for God and Phinehas did. So, here he has a blessing from God.

Verse 11: “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the children of Israel in that he was zealous for My sake among them, so that I did not destroy the children of Israel in My jealousy. Therefore, say, “Behold, I give him My covenant of peace” (vs 11-12). Here’s another special covenant. {note sermon series: *Covenants of God*}

Verse 13: “And he shall have it, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood...” Somewhere today there is someone of the line of Eleazar—who was a Levite—serving God somewhere in the Church of God.

“...because he was zealous for his God and made an atonement for the children of Israel.’ And the name of the Israelite who was killed, he who was struck with the woman of Midian, *was* Zimri, the son of Salu, leader of a chief house of the Simeonites.... [one of the leaders] ...And the Midianite woman’s name who was killed *was* Cozbi, the daughter of Zur. He was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian” (vs 13-15).

What a provocation! ***The children of Israel never learned the lesson!*** Even after they came into the land—those that came—they never did wholly follow after God. Isn’t it interesting that they had to be *forced* to follow God? *With carnal people you have to do that! Carnal people look for ways to disobey God*, whereas *converted people seek every way to obey God and do the things that please Him!* The *carnal people seek every justification* in their mind as to why they are right and given license to do this thing. Just like the Protestants today, they come to one verse:

Romans 10:4: “For Christ *is the end of works* of law for righteousness...” and they take that and throw out all the laws of God and bring in a whole system of lawlessness. Amazing! Absolutely amazing! That should read the ‘Christ is the end of

the *works of law* for righteousness’ —not terminating the Law. It is forever, done in Spirit and in Truth!

Let’s see what they did. God told them what to do, Judges 2:1: “And the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, ‘I made you go up out of Egypt, and have brought you into the land which I swore to your fathers. And I said, “I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no treaty with those who live in this land. You shall throw down their altars.” **But you have not obeyed My voice.** What is this that you have done? And I also said, “I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you”’” (vs 1-3).

Notice again how with the book of Hebrews we tie in the theme *to obey the voice of God* or *not obey the voice of God* as we see here in v 2. So, He says, ‘Okay, I’m going to give you an ongoing penalty or a thorn in the flesh that is always going to needle you, because you are just intent on doing wrong.’

Verse 4: “And it came to pass when the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.” They don’t like to hear bad news. ‘Oh, God, we tried our best, why are You doing this to us?’

Verse 5: “And they called the name of that place The Place of Weeping. And they sacrificed there to the LORD. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel left, each man to his inheritance, to possess the land. **And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua...**” (vs 5-7). That means they kept the Sabbath, the Holy Days; they did what God said.

“...And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD that He did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him on the border of his inheritance... [v 10]: And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers....” (vs 7-10).

In America we are reaching a generational change that is going to be profound. This generational change is being fed by the likes of things like *Harry Potter* and witchcraft. This generation is going to go whoring after other gods like no other generation as this older generation of us passes. You wait and see! No question about it!

Verse 10: “And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another

generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor even the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim” (vs 10-11).

- they went back to Sunday-worship
- they went back to the golden calf worship
- they went back to the pagan-worship

—*immediately; as soon as they could!*

Verse 12: “And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt. And they followed other gods, even the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed themselves to them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD and served Baal and Ashtaroth” (vs 12-13).

So, God sent them off into captivity. Guess what’s eventually going to come to America? *The same thing!*

Let’s review a little bit about the background here in Hebrews. The things we come to are:

- slipping away
- apostasy
- disobedience
- leaving God

This is quite a problem at that time because there were many who were saying—because of the disappointment that Christ didn’t return at that time the way the people and many of the apostles had thought—and it was only at this time, right after the writing of the book of Hebrews that that the apostles were given a revelation that Christ would not return for many, many years, perhaps even for centuries.

Let’s see what Peter said. There were a lot of people saying this, and it really caused a lot of difficulties and problems because people began to give up on God. Especially those in Jerusalem, and especially the Jews who were going back to the traditions, the rituals, and the temple service. Yet, the temple was soon to be destroyed as Paul showed here in the book of Hebrews, and they didn’t realize it, but **God was preparing them for the superior covenant of the New Covenant** and the things that would be accomplished that way. Where you have the temple in heaven above and the High Priest in heaven above.

As we are seeing, all the things that are here beginning in the first part of Hebrews and leading right on up to Heb. 5. The first part talks about the qualities of Christ as God and then the qualities of Christ as a human being, with the sacrifice that He had, and then how He was faithful, more faithful than Moses, because He was the Builder of the

house. We're going to see that Paul in writing Hebrews compares the faithfulness of Christ to the lack of faithfulness that the people were having then and then also compares that to the problems of those who were rebelling in the wilderness, and whose bodies were strewn in the desert because of their sin.

2-Peter 3:1: "Now, beloved, I am writing this second epistle to you..." He warned them that he was writing it and promised them that he would have a written remembrance of the things that they were taught. So, this is also a part of the canonization of the New Testament.

"...in *both*, I am stirring up your pure minds by causing *you* to remember *in order* for you to be mindful of the words that were spoken before by the Holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Lord and Savior, *spoken* by us, the apostles" (vs 1-2).

This does not mean that the 'Holy prophets' are those that give a forecast of future events. Prophets in the New Testament have to do and refer mostly to those who give inspired preaching. That is called *prophesying*; it is a telling forth of the Word of God rather than a foretelling of future events. He's talking about those:

- who spoke to them
- who inspired them
- who uplifted them
- who taught them the Word of God

and of the commandment of '*us*,' the apostles of the Lord and Savior. So, he's including all of the apostles in this statement.

Verse 3: "Knowing this first, that in the last days *there* will come mockers, walking according to their own personal lusts."

That is precisely what happened before the fall of Jerusalem and the total upset in the Church, and the apostasy that occurred. We will see in Heb. 3 Paul was trying to warn them so they would not apostatize; that they would look at the example and not follow the things of disobedience as the children of Israel did when they were coming out of Egypt and wandering in the wilderness before they went into the 'promised land.' Even after they went into the 'promised land' they were not faithful. They're walking after their own lusts.

This is the same thing we're going to be confronted with today. How many times have we heard Christ is returning? How many times have we set down a presumed date and made the Scriptures fit around the presumed date when we know that Christ said, '*no man knows the day or the hour, no not even the angels in heaven above, but My Father only.*' And when the apostles, before they

received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1), asked the Lord, 'Will You, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel.' And He said, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has put in His own authority.' This is the mistake that everybody has made concerning the return of Jesus Christ.

When it happens and it doesn't work out the way that we suppose, then we start saying this, v 4: "And asking, 'Where is the promise of His coming?....'" In other words, we begin to accuse God. We begin to say that something is wrong with God. Of course, at that time there were so many saying that.

Here's what they say: "...For ever since the forefathers died... [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob] ...everything has remained the same as from *the* beginning of creation.' But this *fact* is hidden from them—they themselves choosing *to ignore it*—that by the Word of God *the* heavens existed of old, and *the* earth came forth out of water and amid water, by which the world at that time, having been deluged with water, had itself been destroyed" (vs 4-6).

What he's saying is, 'Look, just like the people at the Flood, they ridiculed Noah, they didn't think it was going to happen, they didn't think that the rain was going flood the earth or the world, and lo and behold, it did! Then Peter uses that and steps forward to the end-time and says:

Verse 7: "But the present heavens and earth are being held in store by His Word, *and* are being reserved for fire in *the* day of judgment and destruction of *the* ungodly. Now, beloved, do not let this one fact be hidden from you: that with *the* Lord, one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (vs 7-8).

He's telling us, at the time that he wrote this, very clearly here that it may be thousands of years before Christ returns, at the time that Paul wrote this. That was a revelation that was given to him and to all of the other apostles when God made known the *mystery of God* in its fullness, that we would become, literally, the very sons of God.

Verse 9: "The Lord is not delaying the promise *of His coming*, as some in their own minds reckon delay..." Let's understand concerning the return of Christ: ***Everything is right on time! Just as the Father has planned it!***

So there's something that we need to do because God has planned it that way so that we can be in the Kingdom of God, rather than saying, 'Look, Christ isn't returning, let's eat and drink and play, just like they did in the wilderness.' And as they did in the wilderness, 'Let's go after other gods.' So, God is not slack concerning His promises,

as men count slackness.

“...rather, He is long-suffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (v 9). God wants more people in the Kingdom of God than we, in our selfish end-time plans have devised in our own minds to bring the return of Christ real soon. God wants more people in His Kingdom. He wants as many as possible to repent, if they will listen and hear and repent and obey. That’s one of the reasons that they didn’t know, that they didn’t understand.

Let’s understand as we go through this: what **we** need to do:

- when we hear the warnings
- when we see these things
- when there are pronouncements
- when there are warnings against falling away
- when there are warnings of becoming lukewarm
- when there are warnings because you’re dull of hearing

is go back to the greatest thing that God has given us and that is ***to understand*** that:

- God loves us
- that God gave His Son for us

That’s what Paul is teaching us here in the book of Hebrews, and that we are to respond and ***love God with all our heart, mind, soul and all of our being.***

- then we can make it through these dark times
- then we can make it through the things that we face
- then it doesn’t matter what the circumstances in the world are

But we are to continue to watch and we are not to start slacking off, and we are not to become apostatizing. Human nature is all the same—mine, yours and everybody else’s—if it’s not urgent to do then we put it off, and *we put it off*. ***That’s what happens spiritually:*** we put it off, *we put it off!* and *we grow lukewarm!* We do live in a Laodicean age. Our apostatizing could follow right along with the rest of them; we just go along the way that *we think* we should.

Let’s see what Peter said we need to do. After saying that love and the steps of coming to Godliness:

2-Peter 1:8 “For *if* these things exist and abound in you, they *will* cause you to be neither lacking effort nor lacking fruit in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the one in whom these

things are not present is *spiritually* blind...” (vs 8-9). What does God say of the Laodiceans? *They are blind!*

“...—so short-sighted *that* he has forgotten that he was purified from his old sins. For this reason, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure... [that’s what we have to be about doing] ...because *if* you are doing these things, you will never fall at any time. For in this way, you will be richly granted an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I will not neglect to make you always mindful of these things, although you *already* know them and have been established in the present Truth. For I consider it my duty, as long as I am in this tabernacle, **to stir you up by causing you to remember these things**” (vs 8-13).

That’s the whole purpose of the book of Hebrews, too. To stir them up! To have them look at themselves! To not let themselves slip away!

Let’s just review a little bit, some of the important things and the warnings that are given in Heb. 2. Let’s understand that these things apply to us today, because we are in very much the same situation as they were then. There were a lot of people back then who were turning from God, just like there are today.

Hebrews 2:1: “For this reason, it is imperative that we give much greater attention to the things, *which* we have heard, lest at any time we should slip away. For if the word spoken by angels was *enforced* without fail, and every transgression and disobedience received just recompense, how shall we escape, *if* we have neglected so great a salvation; which was first received when it was spoken by the Lord, *and* was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*” (vs 1-3).

Let’s review Heb. 3 and let’s look at some of the ***IF*** clauses from this point forward. There is no question whatsoever about God:

- God is eternal
- God is always consistent
- God never lies
- God is never lazy
- God never slacks down
- God’s love is always there—if we yield ourselves to it; it is always conditional to us if we don’t

We’re going to see that there are a lot of conditions which are given to human beings which, when you stop and analyze it, goes all the way back to Adam and Eve and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and being in the Garden of Eden and

so forth.

Hebrews 3:5: “Now on the one hand, Moses *was* faithful in all his house, as a ministering servant, for a testimony of those things which were going to be spoken afterwards. But on the other hand, Christ *was faithful as the Son...*” (vs 5-6).

We’re going to see that just as he compares the faithfulness of Moses with the faithfulness of the children of Israel—*or the lack of faithfulness*—so he is drawing the parallel with the faithfulness of Christ in relationship to us as compared to the children of Israel in relationship to Moses.

“...over His own house; Whose house we are...” (v 6).

- we’re the *temple* of God
- we’re the *building* of God
- we have the *Holy Spirit* of God

but notice, *there is a condition!* “...**if** we are truly holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to *the end*” (v 6). We’re not to slip away. We are to hold it firm until the end.

Then he begins drawing the comparison, v 7: “For this reason, even as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, **if you will hear His voice.**’”

Verse 11—because of their disobedience: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘**if** they shall enter into My rest—’ Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from *the living God*” (vs 11-12). We’ll come back to that and ask what are some of the steps of apostasy.

Verse 14: “For we are companions of Christ, **if** we truly hold the confidence *that we had* at the beginning steadfast until the end.” He’s repeating himself here, so it’s very important for us to understand that God inspired him to say that in vs 6 & 14. We’ve got to hold steadfastly! He repeated himself, so it’s got to be very important.

Matthew 24:13_[transcriber’s correction]: “But the one who endures to *the end*, that one shall be saved.”

Hebrews 3:15: “As it is being said, ‘Today, **if you will hear His voice...**’” The question is:

- Do we *hear* the voice of God?
- Are we *doing* the things that God wants us to?

The condition is upon us! “...do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion” (v 15).

Hebrews 4:3: “For we who have believed, we ourselves are entering into the rest, as He has said, ‘So I swore in My wrath, “**if** they shall enter into My rest—”’...” Entering into the Kingdom of

God is dependent upon—not God’s part, because He is firmly and fully committed to that, and there is no turning back on God’s part.

- *we are the ones* who have been given free moral agency
- *we are the ones* who have to choose
- *we are the ones* who have to listen
- *we are the ones* who have to be diligent and stirring ourselves up

Verse 5: “And again concerning this: ‘**if** they shall enter into My rest’—” Of course, that’s all tied around the Sabbath, and the Sabbath Day is the first thing that people begin to reject or never accept and *harden their hearts and will not listen*, though it is right in front of their faces! It’s amazing how people do. They say, ‘God knows my heart; I go to church every Sunday; I’m a good person; God knows my heart.’

That’s just a nice carnal excuse for *hardheartedness*. Yes, God does know your heart! Yes, God does know that you go to church on Sunday, if you do. I had one man tell me that, and it was quite shocking just to hear him, but it was really quite a justification in carnal reasoning and how people think. Most people think of themselves as good. Most people think of themselves as doing right. Even in the criminal acts when they go against the law, and even know that they do, they justify it in their mind that there is a right and proper reason why they did it, so therefore, they give themselves an allowance to do it and they should not be held accountable. ***That’s not how God looks at it!***

Verse 7: “...‘Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’” Paul is talking to those who know the Word of God, and it all centers around the Sabbath.

Verse 11 shows a very important thing which we should do: “We should be diligent therefore to enter into that rest... [resting on the Sabbath] ...lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.”

This whole book of Hebrews is filled with warnings and admonitions and encouragement. Some of the warnings get very blunt and very to the point.

Hebrews 10:23: “Let us hold fast without wavering to the hope *that we profess*... [see how many times he repeats himself] ...for He Who promised *is faithful*... [the One Who is always faithful is God] ...and let us be concerned about one another, and *be* stirring up *one another* unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... [here again we have the

Sabbath issue] ...even as some *are* accustomed to do; but rather, encouraging *one another*..." (vs 23-25).

- to be faithful
- to not fall away
- to hear the voice of God
- to love one another
- to do the good works of God

"...and all *the* more as you see the day drawing near" (v 25). And that is prophecy for us today at the end-time, as it says, 'upon whom the ends of the world have come.' All the way through the book of Hebrews we are going to see:

- teaching
- admonition
- correction
- warning

and here we have a warning, v 26: "For if we willfully go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins... [then here is a real warning]: ...but a terrifying expectation of inevitable judgment and of fierce fire, which will devour the adversaries of God" (vs 26-27). Quite a warning! Who is the responsibility upon *but us!*

Verse 28: "*Consider this*: anyone who rejects *the* Law of Moses dies without mercy under *the testimony* of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, *as* an unholy thing, and has scorned the Spirit of grace? For we know Him Who has said, "*Vengeance belongs to Me. I will recompense!*" says *the* Lord.' And again, '*The* Lord will judge His people.' **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**" (vs 28-31). You talk about the admonitions; it's something!

Then he reminds them again; here's an exhortation or encouragement, v 32: "But remember the earlier days when, after you were enlightened, you endured much conflict in *your* sufferings."

We need to remember when we were first called. We need to remember when we were baptized and received the Holy Spirit of God, and started keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days and the joy and our zeal and drive and our understanding. **We need to have that again in a mature way**, and to really develop the perfection of these things through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 12:7 talks about correction, and there will be correction along the way: "**If**... [there's the condition again] ...you endure chastening, God

is dealing with you as *a Father* with *His* sons. For who is the son whom *the* Father does not chasten? But **if** you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons" (vs 7-8). Quite a warning!

Here is encouragement, and what we need to look forward to. Here's where we need to focus the long-range thoughts and vision and understanding of the purpose of our calling, which is the resurrection, which is to come to the resurrection on the Sea of Glass.

Verse 22: "But you have come to Mount Sion, and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; *to the* joyous festival gathering... [which it will be in that day of resurrection] ...and *to the* Church of *the* Firstborn... [that's us, brethren] ...registered in *the Book of Life* in heaven; and to God, *the* Judge of all; and *to the* spirits of the just who have been perfected; and to Jesus, *the* Mediator of *the* New Covenant; and to sprinkling of *the* blood of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of* Abel" (vs 22-24). You have:

- the encouragement
- the vision
- the explanation

Verse 25: "**Beware** that you do not refuse to *hear* Him Who is speaking! For if they did not escape *judgment*, who refused *to hear* the One Who was on the earth Divinely instructing *them*, how much more *severely will we be judged*, if we ourselves apostatize from Him Who speaks from heaven."

Let's see the warning about apostatizing. Apostatizing means *going away from God! Leaving God!* But also leaving God in a *hostile* and *rebellious* and *angry* way. That's what the people did when they came out of the land of Egypt, when they apostatized.

Hebrews 3:12: "Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from *the* living God. Rather, be encouraging one another each day, while it is called 'today,' so that none of you become hardened by *the* deceitfulness of sin" (vs 12-13).

Sin is deceitful because there is a 'pleasure in sin for a season.' How does one begin apostatizing?

- they begin taking things for granted
- they get lazy
- they don't do the things that God says
- they turn their back on God

Rather than keeping the focus on the love of God,

their focus becomes *on themselves* and they lose the love of God. Let's see the beginning of apostatizing, because it's very important for us to realize it.

Let's see what God told the Church at Ephesus and their sin. Remember, the apostasy set in before the apostles died. By time we come to the Church, about 125_{A.D.} and history pulls back the veil, it is a totally different church from what it was when Christ founded it and the apostles taught and raised it up under the power of the Holy Spirit of God. This is why the Church at Ephesus is the apostolic church.

Revelation 2:2: "I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars; and *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that **you have left your first love**" (vs 2-4).

That is the first step of apostasy: ***you lose your love of God!*** This comes from the Greek 'protos.' The primary love, the first and greatest commandment is ***to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength and being!*** That's what they lost. That's the first step in apostasy.

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do not*, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent." So, it's the same thing for us today, exactly the same thing.

Let's look at another aspect of apostasy. Matthew 24:42: "Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming." If we don't watch, that is another step in apostasy!

Verse 43: "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have been watching, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready. For the Son of man is coming at a time that you do not think" (vs 43-44).

There are two ways that the Day of the Lord is going to come upon us:

1. we die in the faith and are put in the grave
2. we die in apostasy and are put in the grave

God has come upon you, and the next moment will either be that you're resurrected unto life, or you're resurrected unto the Lake of Fire.

Let's look at the next category, because it has to do with those who are servants and teachers.

Verse 45: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in due season?... [this is talking about ministers and overseers] ...Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing" (vs 45-46).

Every elder and every teacher better read, study and live by 1st & 2nd Timothy, Titus and all the words of Christ, Paul and the apostles concerning how to conduct your ministry and serve and teach the brethren.

Verse 47: "Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his property."

Here is another thing in apostasy, because what happens is when those people creep in unaware, as Paul said. Let's see the warning the Apostle Paul gave to those that he ordained, that God raised up as elders and overseers in the Church at Ephesus. Here it all ties together.

Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God..." That is the responsibility of the elders and ministers, ***to feed the Church of God!***

- they are to *know* the Word of God
- they are to *teach* the Word of God
 - ✓ to *perfect* the saints
 - ✓ to *uplift* them
 - ✓ to *help* them
 - ✓ to *exhort* them
 - ✓ to *encourage* them
 - ✓ to *inspire* them
 - ✓ to *correct* them
 - ✓ to *lead* them in the way

—because God, through the Holy Spirit, has made them overseers for that purpose!

It is the Church of God "...which He has purchased with His own blood" (vs 28). There is the profound and deep responsibility. It's not a political organization, not a hierarchy, and it is not to serve the ministers and have the brethren as lackeys to do the minister's bidding. It's the other way around. The ministers, elders and teachers ***are to serve the brethren, to teach them.***

Notice how this fits in with Hebrews, with 1-Peter, with Matt. 24. Notice the warning:

Verse 29: "For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will rise up... [Why? How?] ...speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves" (vs 29-30).

Remember, Christ gave the warning and He said that there will be many false prophets who will deceive many, and the majority of the people will follow them. That's just the way it is. Here is an apostasy of an elder, a minister, a teacher or anyone who is a servant of God:

Matthew 24:48: "But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delays *his* coming.'" How many warnings do we have about that? *It's unreal!*

Notice, he changes his behavior. Instead of serving them, he beats them. Instead of giving them meat in due season, instead of encouraging and correcting and uplifting and always pointing them to Jesus Christ and God the Father:

Verse 49: "And shall begin to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken."

What does it mean to eat and drink with the drunken? Does that mean to just go out and become debauching alcoholics? *No!* They begin to get *familiar with the world* and they begin to bring in the *world's ways* of doing things into the Church, and the *world's philosophies* and the *world's religion* and they drink out of the cup that the great Babylon, the whore, has: 'all the inhabitants of the world have drunk of the wrath of her fornication.' That's what it refers to here.

It's not just the return of Christ, because Christ can come upon anyone at anytime to do His will, and we've seen this happen:

Verse 50: "The lord of that servant will come in a day that he does not expect, and in an hour that he does not know. And he shall cut him asunder and shall appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vs 50-51).

Those are the steps of apostasy. Let's tie this in and see the warning given by God in Deut. 12. When it comes to eating and drinking with the drunken, and it comes to going out and bringing in the world's religion—whether it be the carnal 'Christianity' of this world or Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam or any of the other religions of the world—God gave specific commands. This is always the thing that happens. This is the cycle that has taken place over and over again, as we have seen in Heb. 3 with the children of Israel going after Baalim and Ashtaroth. ***He gave the warning!***

Deuteronomy 12:30: "Take heed to yourself..." We need to realize, brethren, ***we always have to be on guard!*** We always have to be

motivated by the Spirit of God. We can never ever be satisfied wherever we are in our Christian growth. What we do today is fine, but that only counts for tomorrow if we do well tomorrow. Remember the old saying—the old Laodiceans' saying—*the road to hell is paved with good intentions!*

Verse 30: "Take heed to yourself that you do not become ensnared..."

- these things are interesting
- these things look like fun
- these things look like wonderful goodness and beauty and everything like that

I saw Larry King interviewing Laura Bush and it was so beautiful with the Christmas trees and, I thought as the interview was going on, here is a lovely woman—sincere and dedicated in what she's doing, and probably one of the best first ladies we've had in the White House for a long time—and Larry King (who's a Jew) interviewing her and talking about Christmas and the beautiful decorations. They don't even know what is happening, because to them it is a good thing.

That's why it comes as a snare. Satan has cleverly taken the paganism of Christmas and has wrapped it around the things of family gatherings, giving of gifts, being with your children, having wonderful and beautiful decorations, lights and all of those things, which appeal to ***the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.*** He says it's a snare!

Verse 30: "Take heed to yourself that you do not become ensnared by following them, after they are destroyed from before you... [God is the One Who destroyed them] ...and that you do not ask about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods that I may also do likewise?'"

'I'll do them in the same manner. I'll do it unto the Lord. If I do it unto the Lord, that makes it right, because I'm good and God knows my heart.' God says ***you're not to judge by what you see; you're not to judge by what you hear. You are to judge by the Spirit of God and the Word of God!***

God gives a warning again, v 31: "You shall not do so to the LORD your God, for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates, they have done to their gods; even their sons and their daughters they have burned in the fire to their gods. Whatsoever thing that I command you, be careful to do it. You shall not add to it, nor take away from it" (vs 31-32).

Is there any difference between that warning and the warning in Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* those who **keep** His commandments..." [Greek

‘poieo’—*practice*] ...that they may have the right to *eat of the Tree of Life...*” Going all the way back to the beginning with Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life, you cannot have access to it unless you are keeping the commandments of God and loving God. This is not much different that what we read in Deut.

“...and may enter by the gates into the city. But excluded *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and devises a lie. I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you in the churches...” (vs 14-16).

This is summing up the whole Word of God. Christ has given this so that it should be testified in the churches, wherever they are.

“...I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star.’ And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who thirsts come; and let the one who desires partake of the water of life freely” (vs 16-17). That’s what God says to us. We have to do it, but there are conditions: *that we remain faithful*.

Verse 18: “For I jointly testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book...” This is the summary of the whole Bible. The Apostle John in canonizing and finishing off the New Testament to be placed alongside the Old Testament as the complete instruction book for those that God deals with.

“...*that* if anyone adds to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book” (v 18).

As a witness and warning to all the world because He’s put the Bible out there for everyone to have, for everyone to know. How many really read it and know it, and understand it and want to love God and do His will? So, He gives this warning! Again, we’re back to hearing the words. Remember what we’ve read: **Today, if you will hear His voice!**

Verse 18: “For I jointly testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, *that* if anyone adds to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of *the* book of this prophecy...” (vs 18-19)—the inspired writings of God; not just the prophecies of the book of Revelation.

“...God shall take away his part from *the* book of Life, and from the Holy City, and from the things **that are written in this book....** [that’s quite profound] ...He Who testifies these things says,

‘Surely, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen” (vs 19-21).

That’s quite a thing! We need to understand what a tremendous thing it is that God has done for us in giving us these warning through the book of Hebrews and how He was preparing the people of God for that time. We need to use the book of Hebrews to prepare us for this time, because we are entering into a time of trouble that is really going to be very desperate, and it increases and multiplies as we go down through the time before Christ returns. We have to be ready at any time!

- let’s be **faithful**
- let’s **obey**
- let’s **hear His voice**
- let’s **love and serve one another**
- let’s **encourage and exhort one another**

—while it is called today and ***we hear His voice and do the things that are pleasing in His sight!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Exodus 32:25-35
- 2) Numbers 14:17-24, 26-37
- 3) Numbers 16:30-33, 41-49
- 4) Numbers 20:7-13
- 5) Numbers 21:4-9
- 6) Numbers 25:1-15
- 7) Romans 10:4
- 8) Judges 2:1-13
- 9) 2 Peter 3:1-9
- 10) 2 Peter 1:8-13
- 11) Hebrews 2:1-3
- 12) Hebrews 3:5-7, 11-12, 14
- 13) Matthew 24:13
- 14) Hebrews 3:15
- 15) Hebrews 4:3, 5, 7, 11-12
- 16) Hebrews 10: 23-32
- 17) Hebrews 12:7-8, 22-25
- 18) Hebrews 3:12-13
- 19) Revelation 2:2-5
- 20) Matthew 24:42-47
- 21) Acts 20:28-30
- 22) Matthew 24:48-51
- 23) Deuteronomy 12:30-32
- 24) Revelation 22:14-21

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Also referenced: Sermon Series: *Covenants of God*

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