

The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews V How to Recover from Laxity

(Chapter 2)
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Hebrews 1 talks about:

- the Divinity of Christ
- the proof of His Divinity
- that He is special and unique
- He is greater than the angels
- He is greater than any human being
- the firstborn in the flesh
- the firstborn from among the dead

You'll see this is a pattern all the way through Hebrews. You set the stage, in this case the Divinity of Christ—the greatness of the salvation—that God personally came in the flesh and talked to mankind to answer the question: If God were a man, what would He say? And that's what most people would say of God. 'If God would come down here and talk to me as a man, then I would believe Him.' That's why Christ came. Have they believed Him? *No!* They find another excuse, because when you take away one excuse human nature *looks for another excuse*, rather than *believe God and obey Him!*

After he states the case very clearly—which he did in Heb. 1:1-4—now comes a warning. Then Heb. 2:6-18 are also stating the case for *the humanity of Christ*. If He is a human being—which He was... Read those sections in *The Christian Passover* book again: The Nature of God and The Nature of Man. Also the sermon series on *The Prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament*. That will add a great deal to your understanding as we go through. By the time he gets done with Heb. 2:18, Paul compares Christ with Moses. What did the Jews say concerning Christ? *'Moses we know. God talked to him. As for this Man, we don't know.'* So, Paul has got to answer the question concerning Moses, which he does in the first part of Heb. 3.

Hebrews 3:7—here is another warning: “For this reason, even as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the rebellion, in the day of temptation in the wilderness’” (vs 7-8). Then all the rest of Heb. 3 and the first part of Heb. 4, all the way down to Hebrews 4:14 is a very strong warning. We will see that in the rest of the chapters again.

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.”

The *King James* says, ‘lest *they* should slip

away,’ but that's not correct. It is: “...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*; God also bearing witness with *them* by both signs and wonders, and various miracles and gifts of *the* Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” (vs 1-4).

Verse 1: “For this reason, it is imperative... [that's the strongest that I could get in the English for the Greek 'obligatory'] ...that we give much greater attention to the things *which* we have heard, lest at any time we should slip away.”

After Hebrews was written they slipped away even more, in spite of the warnings in the book of Hebrews about committing the unpardonable sin. Now we are living in the identical days today.

- Are people tired of hearing God?
- Are people tired of keeping the Sabbath?
- Are they tired of keeping the Holy Days?

For whatever reason! Now true enough, the ministers did not do much to inspire the brethren to keep the Holy Days, because they became disinterested and bored. So, the brethren would come to church and they would become disinterested and bored, and they weren't fed. They *slipped away* because they weren't paying attention to the things that they heard.

Let's see what we need to do when this occurs. It's for the Laodicean age, v 3: “How shall we escape, **if we have neglected** so great a salvation...” Why does he say that? What is *the salvation* that God is giving us?

- to be His sons
- to be spirit beings
- to live in glory with Christ with the same glory that He has

Is that not a great salvation? *Yes, it is!* What do people settle for when they give up on that? *They settle for comfort in the flesh!* When they give up on that they begin to compare themselves with other people.

Let's look at the process here of comparing yourself with other people first. Today this is even

more of a troubling problem than back when this Psalm was written. We can be almost guaranteed of that.

I used the *Word Biblical Commentary*, and it gives some very good things. I don't use any other commentary because very few of them really discuss the Greek in a way that is helpful. But here is part of the commentary that was written. And this, I think, is a very well-written paragraph from the perspective of Christology. Now unfortunately, they use these long words. What is Christology? *That is the study of Jesus Christ to know who He is.*

from Word Biblical Commentary:

Hebrews is an unusually important document because of the distinctiveness and the clarity of its witness to Jesus Christ. The key to that witness is the recognition that the Christology...

Or that is the presentation and understanding of Who Christ was, Who He is, and what He is doing now.

...in Hebrews is a pastoral response to a crisis.

What was the crisis? *They were neglecting! They were not paying attention! They were letting other things get in the way.*

The failure of nerve on the part of the community addressed, as evidenced by the parenetic warning sections, occurred because of an inadequate Christology... [understanding of Christ] ...an inadequacy the writer is endeavoring to address by the exponential sections of the discourse.

In other words, he's trying to correct them in certain sections, just like I pointed out in Hebrews.

The laxity against which this writer is striving... [spiritual laziness] ...in this series of exhortations he directs to his audience results at least partly from a deficiency he attempts to remedy, and the development of his theology.... [teaching about God] ...To be more precise...

This is in easy-to-understand English here:

...the reader's lethargy derives from their failure to grasp the full significance of Christ: that He was God, that He became flesh, was the Son of God, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God as our High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

They didn't grasp that!

They were prepared to abandon their confession because they had lost the realization of its significance.

Let me give you a good example of that: When the Spanish came over here and conquered Central America and South America, what was it they were after? *Gold and silver!* The Indians, especially the Incas, had so much gold that it had lost its value. They willingly gave it away. A lot of them gave it away so they could live a little longer in the flesh. The Spanish were there to run the spears through them and chop off their heads because, being Catholics, these heathen were heretics and deserving of death. But they could stave off death if they would profess Catholicism and give them the gold. In the face of death, gold didn't mean too much. *So, they willingly gave it!*

We have the same thing here. People did not appreciate—the brethren did not appreciate—what God had done, and they were prepared to abandon their confession, because they had lost the realization of its significance. And that is profound, because that is exactly what has happened in the world, in Protestant Christianity, and in the Church of God, with the true Christianity of Christ.

- How did they lose it? *They became lazy!*
- Lazy in what? *Listening to the Word of God!*
- How is it that you become lazy?
- What is the first neglect that people slack off on in their Christian growth? *Study! Less than that, even reading the Bible!*
- When you don't study, what is it that is really happening?
- What are you reading when you study, or when you just read the Bible? *You're reading the Word of God!*

Which is ***the voice of God! To obey the voice of God!***

- What happens when *you don't study? God is not talking to you!*

God does not come down with an audible voice in your brain and say, DING! 'Hello, this is God. May I have five minutes of your attention please? I want to tell you something.' *NO!* Because

- *you have to choose* to open the Bible
- *you have to choose* to strive after God
- *you have to choose* to serve God and love God

God is the One Who is perfect; we're the ones who are imperfect. Therefore, in their laxity, if they don't study *they don't hear the voice of God.*

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.”

What happens when you don’t study the Bible for a long time? What is the first thing that happens when you don’t study? *The first thing that happens is you get a guilty conscience because you know you ought to!* Then somehow you justify your guilty conscience so it doesn’t stab you. But what the guilty conscience is, *is God’s Spirit* saying you better study. Then if you don’t, you begin to forget. What happens with forgetfulness?

- *you let it slip*
- *you deliberately avoid it because you don’t want to remember it*
- *you give up on God!*

You don’t give up on God first, you give up on the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and you opt for a Sunday god. You still think you have God, but *you don’t have God!*

Now in this age, what’s another factor that comes into play that they didn’t have in other ages? *The things in the world, the ways of the world!* And it’s so easy. I mean, in your own home how many things are there to distract you if you let it? *Television, radio, movies, neighbors!* Then you assuage your conscience by saying, ‘Well, God wants me to do good.’ Then you make friends with your neighbors that you were enemies with, and you think, ‘I’ve really done a good deed.’

God could care less, because *you haven’t come back to Him*. Especially when your employer wants to work on the Sabbath or Holy Days, and he comes up and he says, ‘Now look, I’ll pay you double-time, but I really need you tomorrow, Saturday.’ If you are not strong in Christ, that could be very enticing. You don’t view that as coming from Satan, because, after all, he’s just your boss. But your boss is in the world. So, *it’s the world knocking on the door of your mind!* Who’s the ‘god of this world’? *Satan the devil!*

Here is the ultimate that happens, Psalm 36:1 “The wicked utters transgression in his heart. There is no fear of God before his eyes.” Let’s understand something:

- If you start slacking up on the Sabbath, what does that represent?
- If you do not keep the Sabbath, what does that represent?
- If you begin sinning, what does that represent?
- *No fear of God!*

God expects you to keep the Sabbath the way He has defined it, from sundown to sundown. He wants you to keep it because you love Him so that you can get a great deal out of the Sabbath and God can fellowship with you, because God loves you. *This is an expression of your love to God!* But if you lose that love and come to the point that you no longer have any fear; in other words, *fear* is a last resort to keep you from sinning against God.

What about a man or a woman who is taken up with temptations of adultery? They get ready to fall into it? Then all of a sudden it comes to their mind and they run away and do not commit the act, because they’re afraid. *They are afraid of the penalty of God! That fear is the bottom line to keep you from going over and transgressing!*

That’s why it’s saying, v 1: “The wicked utters transgression in his heart. There is no fear of God before his eyes, for he flatters himself in his own eyes until his iniquity is found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he has stopped acting wise and doing good.... [slacking up, not doing any good] ... He plots iniquity upon his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not hate evil” (vs 1-4). That’s the ultimate condition of falling away.

Let’s look at a more likely one that takes place with us, Psa. 37. It’s interesting how these come, one after the other. I’m going to write ‘Lot’ at the beginning of this—Psa. 37—because it says in 2-Peter that Lot was vexed, or frustrated because of the evildoers in Sodom. He could have moved out; he didn’t have to stay there.

It’s like a person living in the middle of San Francisco, coming to church every Sabbath and saying, ‘Oh, those wicked people! I see them on the street: men holding hands with men, and kissing men in public. I went by one of those gay bars the other day, and you wouldn’t believe what I saw!’ Well if that upsets you, move out of San Francisco. God had to send down an angel to deliver Lot and his two daughters, and his wife and his two sons, and their families didn’t even believe. They said, ‘No, this is craziness; we like Sodom. We know the problems of it, but we like all the benefits of it.’ Even his wife couldn’t stand to obey the angel and she looked back. Remember it says, ‘Every transgressor of an angel is just recompense.’ And hers was instant, *a pillar of salt!*

Here’s what happens, Psalm 37:1: “Do not fret yourself because of evildoers... [don’t be frustrated] ...and do not be envious against the workers of iniquity.” That is in their prosperity. Why does God let the wicked prosper? *And they do—don’t they?* There are two reasons:

1. in hopes that they will repent
2. so that when His judgment finally comes it will be completely just

He has given them space. That's why God sends the rain on the just and on the unjust.

Verse 2^[transcriber's correction]: "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass; and wither as the green herb."

Right now we're right at the tail end of the haying season. And as I go do my water therapy—and Rachele said, one man thought that my water therapy was colonics; trust me, water therapy is not colonics, it's exercise in a pool—and I have to go by this place where their business is making hay. He's got these fields of alfalfa, and he does a really good job. He, so far, has had five cuttings, and he's working on his sixth cutting. This far north, that's a well-managed set of fields to do so. It's alfalfa that he cuts, so it grows fast. But as soon as it's cut, what happens? *It loses its life sap from the stem from the roots!* It begins to dry up. That's the whole purpose of hay, to dry up. That's what it's talking about here. Don't worry about it if they look green and prosperous. When they're cut they're going to dry up.

Verse 3: "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land... [or enter into the Kingdom of God at the resurrection] ...and cherish faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD..." (vs 3-4). This is how you overcome the neglect and laxity:

- don't fret because of the prosperity of the people out there
- don't be envious of the things that they have.

Just remember, there's going to be an economic downturn, and the repo-man is just around the corner. You will see it! Remember all those dot-coms a few years ago? *They had repossession sales!* You could buy nearly brand-new equipment for a few cents on the dollar. All those rich highfliers, where are they now? *In bankruptcy court!* Were they cut down? Were they shriveled up? Did it go away? *Yes!*

If you are faithful and continue with God, v 4: "Delight yourself in the LORD and He shall give you the desires of your heart"—which may not be physical things at all.

But a greater thing is—if you desire to know the Word of God and really love God—that's what He will give you, and that's what is more important and that is something that no money can buy. That's why, as we will see with the Laodiceans, it is so tragic that they say, 'We're rich and increased with

goods,'—what does that amount to? It's like they asked when the rich man died, 'How much did he leave?' *All of it!*

Verse 5: "Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness like the light, and your judgment like the noonday" (vs 5-6). What I'm giving you is how to overcome the laxity.

Verse 7: "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of him who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret yourself, it leads only to evil" (vs 7-8).

Isn't that what happens? *Carnal nature!* 'If they do it, I'll do it.' That's generally because you get frustrated and you feel deprived.

Verse 9: "For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. It is but a little while, and the wicked shall be no more... [that's going to happen] ...yea, you shall diligently consider his place, *but* he shall not be *there*" (vs 9-10).

What does God say is going to happen to the wicked? *They're going to be burned up!* Where are their ashes going to be? *Under our feet (Mal. 4)!* Is that not a complete fulfillment of this? *Yes!* You don't even consider their place.

Verse 11: "But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes against him with his teeth. The LORD laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming" (vs 11-13).

The first way you overcome laxity is to *understand that the world and all of its prosperity out there is a deception!* Yes, for a little while you can enjoy some physical things. But it's going to come to an end.

Verse 14: "The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to kill those who walk uprightly. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Better is the little that a righteous man has than the riches of many wicked" (vs 14-16). That's how we stir ourselves up.

Compare all of that, compare all the world, all the riches, everything that's here; Psalm 36:5. "Your loving kindness, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your

judgments are like the great deep...” (vs 5-6). You think about that!

I was watching the other day something about the Himalayas. I tell you, those mountains go up as nearly vertical, it’s unreal. I never thought of it until just reading it now, that the righteousness of God is like the great mountains. Even at almost incomprehensible heights there is life. There are birds, there are animals, there are plants. I’m just glad I’m a valley, sea-level person.

“...O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your loving kindness, O God!...” (vs 6-7). That’s what to focus on. That’s what to get your mind on, *the loving kindness of God*.

“...Therefore, the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the richness of Your house...” (vs 7-8). When will that be? *At the resurrection!*

“...and You shall make them drink of the river of Your pleasures, for with You is the fountain of life...” (vs 8-9). Doesn’t that sound a little bit like Rev. 22 and the Tree of Life that’s on either side of the river as the water flows out under the throne of God? *Yes it does!*

“...in Your light we shall see light. O continue Your loving kindness **to those who know You...**” (vs 9-10). That’s the key. You know God because you have His Spirit and because you keep His commandments. And don’t ever let that slip away.

“...and Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Do not let the foot of pride come against me, and do not let the hand of the wicked move me” (vs 10-11). In other words, this is saying, watch yourself, discipline yourself; don’t let pride, vanity and foolishness come up in you. Realize everything you have comes from God.

Verse 12: “There the evildoers have fallen; they are cast down, and cannot rise.”

Now let’s look at a couple of other things that we need to do. The first thing that you become lax in is *study*. What is the second thing you become lax in? *Prayer!* So therefore, in the first instance when you become lax in it, God is not talking to you because you’re not studying His Word. In the second instance you’re not talking to God because you are not praying. We could probably get a list ten feet long of all the excuses that everybody—including me—have used as to why we can’t pray when we know we need to. Isn’t that something? It’s an amazing thing! This human mind is tricky!

Peter is doing the same thing. He is dealing with those who have been slack. This was the problem that Paul was addressing in Hebrews. This was a church-wide problem.

- John addresses the problem
- Peter addresses the problem
- Jude addresses the problem
- Revelation addresses the problem
- Hebrews addresses the problem

So, Peter, in being able to point out the solution to the problem, He wants to inspire them.

Today you hear the word *focus*. Almost anything that you hear about instruction to do this, or do that, or how to improve, or how to motivate employees, or how to be better in sports, or whatever it is, the key word is *focus*. *Focus* on this; *focus* on that. That’s not too bad of a word, but Peter is trying to get them to focus on *what God has done for them* so that he can stir them up. In other words, there is a stirring-up that comes through the power of God’s Spirit to help inspire and motivate people to change, to get them to come to the point that they say, ‘Enough is enough in my life, and I’m going to change’; whatever that may be.

2-Peter 1:3: “According as His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue.”

He is saying to *focus*, get your mind up on the glorified Christ and your calling to glory and everlasting virtue.

Verse 4: “Through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these you may become partakers of *the* Divine nature...”

There’s a promise! You’re going to get rid of the human nature. The older we get and the closer we come to putting our feet in the grave and laying our head down there, the more weak we become and the more fantastic having the Divine nature really becomes. We realize that as we get older, because of the weakness of the flesh you have the reverse of growing up. Growing up you get stronger and bigger, have more ability and skill. When you get older it reverses. You get weaker, you rust out, you have *senior moments*.

Verse 4: “...having escaped the corruption *that is in the world through lust*.” There is a big key to overcoming, which is this: **learn to recognize lust for what it is when it starts!** It’s easier to see in other people; somehow it is. It’s harder to see in yourself, because you don’t want to say, ‘you lustful old fool’—whatever it may be. I’m not just talking

about sex lust; it can be lust after this or that or the other thing. So, we escape that. When you begin to recognize it in yourself, as well as other people, then you know you are escaping the lust of the flesh. If you escape the lust of the flesh, that means that you're going to be minding the things of the Spirit, and *minding the things of the Spirit leads to eternal life!*

Verse 5—here's how he is stirring them up: "And for this very reason also, having applied all diligence besides..." Then he gives the steps on spiritual growth. {note sermon series: *Epistles of Peter* and the book *The Seven General Epistles* }.

Notice the steps: "...having applied all **diligence** besides, add to your **faith, virtue**; and to **virtue, knowledge**; and to **knowledge, self-control**; and to **self-control, endurance**; and to **endurance, Godliness**; and to **Godliness, brotherly love**; and to **brotherly love, the love of God**" (vs 5-7)—'agape.'

This shows the building blocks of your Christian character. This shows you how you can look and evaluate yourself before God by looking at these things and see that you practice them.

Verse 8: "For *if* these things exist and abound in you..." That's what it needs to be. We are going to see that it is going to be, I am convinced, a dwindling number of people in whom it is in and is abounding; no question about it. That's what happened in the Church at that time, too.

"...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... [Sound a little Laodicean? *Yes!*] ...so short-sighted... [in other words, you are only looking at the present, up close] ...*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; because *if* you are doing these things, you will never fall at any time" (vs 8-10).

See how that ties in with Hebrews 2:1: "...lest at any time **we** should slip away." If you slip away, what happens? *You have failed! No doubt!*

2-Peter 1:11: "For in this way, you will be richly granted an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.... [if you do these things] ...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 11-13).

If you do that then you're not going to slip

away. Here is the responsibility for everyone who is a teacher or a minister to stir up the brethren. We all need to be stirred up! Aren't there times when you go along and you kind of feel *blah*? Well, **go to Christ and let Him stir you up**. If you do that, God will really intervene in your life; and there is going to be a spiritual experience that you will have either in studying, or in praying, or together where God's Spirit will be with you and inspire you and stir you up like you never have been before. That will happen if you apply yourself as Peter has said.

Let's notice here what was happening. Jude 3: "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence..." Jude the brother of Christ, was stirred up because of what was happening. What happens when you get all stirred up and you come against some laid-back, kind of just 'cool' Christians: 'Don't get excited. Don't rock the boat. There's no need for this. We're doing fine.' If you give them any correction at all, 'you're hateful; you're putting a guilt trip on me.' Isn't that what they say?

Notice why he had to write, v 3: "...when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting you to fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints."

Now you're losing it. They are *slipping away!* It's like as we brought up many times, when you're standing in the light, walking to the light, you are making progress.

John 3:19 is the trap and the snare that comes upon everyone that thinks he or she is secure: "And this is the judgment... [there has been a judgment on this world because Christ came] ...that the Light has come into the world..." That can be:

- a) the Truth of God
- b) Christ, the Son of God

...but men loved darkness rather than the Light because their works were evil" (v 19).

They don't like them exposed. If you try and expose them in the climate that we have today—let's say for example you're against homosexuality and you won't work with them—you can lose your job. They can't stand to have their deeds exposed because they're evil. So, what God does, He sends a little virus. God can take care of them with something that is so small they don't even know it.

Verse 20: "For everyone who practices evil hates the Light..." *Don't preach this Bible to me. I don't need the Bible.* Or if they're in the Church of God, 'Well, you are just hard-nosed. You are a bigot. You're radical.' **Hates the light!** 'Just keep it

calm.'

"...and does not come to the Light... [doesn't come to God or to Christ Himself] ...so that his works may not be exposed... [or corrected] ...but the one who practices the Truth comes to the Light, so that his works may be manifested, that they have been accomplished by *the power of God*" (vs 20-21). Here's what happens:

- you're coming to the Light
- you are walking to Christ
- you're coming to the Word

and then there comes a time when laxity sets in. You're still standing in the Light and you're looking at the Light, but you don't understand that the Light is moving on, because if you don't move with Christ, it's going to move beyond you. As long as you are standing in that Light, you think you are in good shape, even though you're lax.

Now then, a day will come when that person will turn and start walking away from the Light. And it's so deceptive when it happens because of this: you still see the Light as you are walking away from it. Have you ever done that at night, when, say, you're at a place where, especially, if there's any land or acreage around and there's a big light on the back porch? And as you walk out from that, there is light that you can see. You can see where you are going.

But unless *spiritually* you understand that you are walking away from Christ you won't realize that you're going to walk off into the darkness. So that's what happens when you become lax. It's very, very imperative, this is not the first time it's happened; it's happened over and over again. The Church runs in cycles. We're in the correction phase and the regrouping phase right now.

Jude 3: "...fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints. For... [the reason you need to do it is] ...certain men have stealthily crept in..." (vs 3-4).

You've heard of the stealth bomber. You can't detect it on radar, but did you know that now they can detect it with cell phones? You can get two or three or four cell phones, and they're getting a beam down from satellite to the cell phone. And what happens, if you have a certain set of equipment you can see where in the air the beam comes down around the stealth. Radar going up is the beam going up, and it's meant to bounce off of it, so you can't see it. But when whatever kind of radio wave is coming down from the satellite down to the cell phone, it's coming down on top of it and exposes it. You only need about six \$40 cell phones and you can detect a stealth plane coming in on you.

There's a good analogy for us. If we know our Bible we can detect the stealth infiltrators into the Churches of God so we won't let them get a foothold. But it's easy for them to come in where there has been laxity. It's easy for them to come in and sit there and wait until the right moment to spring it. That's what happened then! That's what happened now!

"...those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness, and are personally denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (v 4).

While at the same time, we can add, they use the name of Christ. Isn't that a tremendous deception? *Yes, it is!* Next time you hear the pope speak, listen to how many times he may use the name of Christ. Just using the name of Christ proves nothing. You can hear it on the golf course, but that has nothing to do with worship. The worst is on a Sunday morning from the pulpits.

Audience question: What do you mean we're in a regrouping stage? I meant revival stage. In other words, being scattered, and now we're being revived. That would leave you hanging, regrouping. In a sense it's regrouping into smaller groups according to how God scatters. But revival is more what it is.

Here's how the infiltrators take advantage of *laxity*. They come in and they sow the seeds of discord, v 16: "These are complainers..." What does a *complainer* do? *Passes rumors, passes innuendos, criticisms, and false judgments!* 'He's just too hard. I wish we had something more pleasant. All he does is talk about sin,' etc.

"...who are walking after their own personal lusts, *while* their mouths are speaking great swelling words, flattering persons for the sake of advantage" (v 16).

Go back and read about Absalom the son of David. What did he do? *He came and stood at the gate in said, 'I'm David's son!* I know if you go to David you're not going to get the judgment that you want. So, if you come to me I'll be able to give you a better judgment.' You go back and study it and see what happened to Absalom.

Verse 17: "But you, beloved, remember the words that were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; because they said to you that in *the* last time there would be mockers, who would be selfishly walking according to their own ungodly lusts. These are the ones who cause division; *they are* psychic... [and the Greek there is 'psuche'—

psychic] ...not having *the Spirit of God*" (vs 17-19).

Meaning that they have a spiritual something about them, which we call today 'psychic,' but it is not the Spirit of God. Or, you could say they have another word which comes from the Greek, which transliterated in English is 'charisma'—'He has charisma. You wait and see, the next pope is going to have lots of charisma; they'll talk all about it.

Verse 20: "But you, beloved, *be* building up yourselves on your most Holy faith, praying in *the* Holy Spirit, *so that* you keep yourselves in *the* love of God..." (vs 20-21). That's how you overcome all of this. That's why the love of God is so very important. The love of God comes two ways:

1. keeping of His commandments
2. loving Him on a spiritual and emotional basis because He is your Father

"...while you are personally awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Now on the one hand, show mercy to those individuals who are doubting" (s 21-22).

This is talking about those who have been victimized by these men who crept in unawares and turned the grace of God into license. If you know other brethren who have been victimized by it, then what you do is send them *Rome's Challenge to the Protestants* {Appendix N, *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*}

I tell you, if anybody who has ever kept the Sabbath and reads that with a clear mind, even though they have left keeping the Sabbath, they will quit going to Sunday, because that's profound. It blew me away, that here that's been out there. It was written 108 years ago and was never heard of it in the Church of God, whatever brand of Church of God you were in. But I tell you what, if someone were handed that to them when they first began keeping the Sabbath and they kept that in mind, they would *never* go back and keep Sunday.

Then here's how you can deal with brethren that you know. There are a lot of you out there who know, and that's why I have said to see the book: *A Harmony of the Gospels*.

What you do, v 22: "...show mercy to those individuals who are doubting."

- I know it was hard for you
- I know you've been duped
- I know that you trusted the men
- I know you believe what they said
- listen to this or read that

And if you can give them a copy of *Rome's Challenge* and say, 'Look, I know you're keeping Sunday, and I know you probably think that it has been justified to do so. But do me a favor, would you, please? Here, read this and see if you want to keep Sunday. Now promise me that you will read every word of it.' ***Maybe you can help someone.***

Verse 23: "But on the other hand, save others with fear, snatching *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment *that has been* defiled by the flesh."

In other words, they have come to the point that the last resort is fear of the Lake of Fire. If you don't have fear of the Lake of Fire, it's over with. If you don't have any fear of the Lake of Fire, watch a special on Discovery Channel about volcanoes. Just look down into this bubbling lava, and you are looking at a lake of fire. Just think about how you would want to be cast in there, and be burned up, and there is nothing left. All hope, everything of your existence is gone. Some people you have to do that with.

Verse 24: "Now, to Him Who is able to keep them from falling, and to bring *them* into the presence of His own glory, blameless in exceeding joy, to *the* only wise God our Savior, *be the* glory and greatness, *the* might and authority, even now, and into all the ages of eternity. Amen." (vs 23-25).

Dynamic little book; just 25 short verses, but WOW, what a real message that it has there. So sometimes that's what we have to do.

2-Tim. 1:6 shows what we need to do. There is something that each one of us needs to do. Whether we have begun slipping away or not, but just when we start getting lazy and start letting ourselves slack up, then here's what you need to do. Peter said he would stir them up. Now then, when that happens, you need to respond by *stirring yourself up!* How do you stir yourself up?

2-Timothy 1:6: "For this reason, I admonish you to stir up the gift of God that is in you by the laying on of my hands." You go to God and say:

- God, grant me Your Spirit
- help me to overcome
- give me the strength to put these things aside
- help me to see what I am doing that's not right
- help me to pull back from my laxity
- give me zeal and understanding to go ahead

We're told of the Laodiceans, 'Be zealous, therefore, and repent.' That's what it needs to be.

Verse 7: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound-mindedness.” That’s how to recover yourself out of it. **If** you have been slipping away, and **if** you have neglected so great a salvation, that’s how to get yourself back on track. God can help you do it. The only unfortunate part about it is that *those who really need to hear this are not here*. That’s why if you can give this to someone who needs it, you can help them. Maybe they will listen. Maybe they won’t. But at least you can say you have tried.

I think it’s very interesting, as one person commented, that this series on Hebrews came out about the same time as *A Harmony of the Gospels*. If you want a good, fresh study on that, remember that that gives us the fulfillment of:

Hebrews 2:4: “God also bearing witness with *them* by both signs and wonders... [through Christ and later the book of Acts] ...and various miracles and gifts of *the* Holy Spirit, according to His own will?... [maybe that can be something which will help inspire you, too] ...For *it is* not to *the* angels that He has placed in subjection the world that is to come, of which we are speaking” (vs 4-5). They are the ones who rule and control this world.

Let me just mention that when we are converted and receive the Spirit of God, we come into a different relationship with the angels because of our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ; meaning that in the world the angels rule—righteous and demons—angels war and fight, as we see in the book of Daniel.

When we are converted and brought into the Church and have the Holy Spirit of God, angels now become ministers to help and protect those that have been called. They don’t rule over us. Who rules over us? *Jesus Christ!* He is the Head of the Church. Therefore, Christ deals directly with us. If Christ deals directly with us, then an angel—but for helping us:

- can be a messenger
- can intervene to protect you
- can keep you from evil

But the relationship to God is direct through Jesus Christ, as we know in Heb. 10, that we have direct entrance into the Holy of Holies through the blood of Christ. That’s why he is emphasizing this.

He is going to make a comparison between the angels and Christ, and the angels and men, v 6: “But in a certain place one fully testified, saying, ‘What is man, that You are mindful of him, or *the* son of man, that You visit him?.... [please put Psa. 8; we will need to add that] ...You did make him a

little lower than *the* angels... [the Greek is ‘angelos’—*angels*] ... You did crown him with glory and honor, and You did set him over the works of Your hands” (vs 6-7). What a fantastic thing it is. God made this whole world, created everything upon it.

- Who did He make it for? *For mankind!*
- What did He say? *Have dominion; you rule over the world!*
- Do men do that? *Yes, they do!*

The controlling factor is angels, because of sin now takes the place of God’s rulership over them. That’s the only difference.

Verse 7: “You did make him a little lower than *the* angels; You did crown him with glory and honor, and You did set him over the works of Your hands; You did put all things in subjection under his feet....” (vs 7-8). As we see the scientific things that men are doing now, that is *absolutely true!*

“...For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing *that was* not subjected to him.... [in the earth, that is true, and even a little bit in space] ...But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him” (v 8). Why?

1. because of sin
2. because the ultimate destiny of man is to become a son of God

So therefore, until you become a son of God and have the character of God the Father and Jesus Christ, you are not capable of having everything put into your subjection that you will use it rightfully. Witness the world!

Are you fed up with when you dial a number to call, that you get a recording? If you want this, press #1. If you want this, press #2. If you want this, press #3. You ask, ‘Which one do I want?’ They didn’t answer my question. And if that doesn’t help, go ahead and press ‘0,’ and you’ll get the next available operator. So, it comes on, ‘Hello. All the operators are busy; it may be 20 minutes before we can talk to you.’ They say we have too many mechanical things that do not really relate to people. So, what we need to do is make human-like robots. In other words ‘we’re going to put cloning to a good purpose.’ Wouldn’t you like to have your own humanoid robot?

Now, that’s a good example of being able to do things without the character of God to do it correctly, or to do it righteously. You just do it because it’s convenient and it’s there, and because you want to satisfy your own lust. That’s why all things have not been put in subjection to him, because:

1. of sin
2. because he doesn't have the character
3. he's not a spirit being yet

The rest of the story through the book of Hebrews is how to become a spirit being while you overcome in this life.

However, v 9: "But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels... [which is true] ...crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering **the death...**" [His one particular death, *the* death of God manifest in the flesh] ...in order that by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone... [who repents. It's not going to happen unless you repent] ...because it was fitting for Him..." (vs 9-10).

In other words, this is the fitting judgment of God that He Himself put upon Himself, being this: God said—two of God, two of Elohim—one Who became the Father, one Who became the Son. The One Who became the Son was the One Who was the Creator of all things. Being Creator, what is He? If you make something, what is your relationship compared to what you have made? *You are responsible*, are you not?

Just like in driving a car. If you drive a car and you kill somebody, you're responsible. Likewise, God created all these things, made it for man, created man, gave man choice. In giving men choice—just like with your own kids, you give them choice—there's a danger they may not choose the right thing. So, what happened? *There was sin!* Because God is righteous, He had to bring a penalty. Then came the curse. Then came death. But God is still responsible! He brought the curse, and He brought the death—did He not? So therefore, in order to redeem His creation and mankind, He said, 'I will become a human being,' which He did, born of the virgin Mary, lived in the flesh, lived a life without sin, though 'I have *the law of sin and death* in Me, so I overcome. Then, My death, because I made everything, is the perfect death for the forgiveness of sins.' ***No other death could do it!*** That's why it's fitting. That was His judgment.

Verse 10: "Because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

In other words, if God makes something, which He did, made mankind, which He did, and He looked upon them, and behold, everything was good (Gen. 1). If something goes wrong—though God loses none of His perfection as God—His creation is marred. Therefore, it's not perfect. He comes in the flesh, *He gives up His perfection as God* to become

a human being, and in becoming a human being, there is a perfection that happened to Christ because of His suffering, ***because He did not sin!***

How else can you explain, v 10: "...to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings?" *By suffering the same thing that all human beings do, but not sinning once!* You talk about a perfection! Isn't that something? What Paul is doing here now, he is showing that now there is no excuse for you not coming back to Christ, because look what He has done.

Verse 11: "For both He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified *are* all of one... [note John 17—we are to become one as the Father and Christ are one] ...for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." You think on that!

- God calls you 'My brother'
- God calls you 'My friend'

Jesus said to the disciples, '**You are My friends** if you do whatsoever I command you.'

Verse 12: "Saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; in *the* midst of *the* Church I will sing praise to You.'" There are three ways this can apply:

1. Jesus declared the name of the Father, revealed Him to the disciples who were His brethren.
2. In the midst of the Church, all the other brethren who were called hearing the Word of God declared to them.
3. The great congregation, which takes place at the resurrection, and we are all standing on the Sea of Glass, and Christ proclaims the name of the Father to all the brethren who are there in the first resurrection.

You have those three applications of it.

Verse 13: "And again, 'I will be trusting in Him.'..." Showing if you're lax, you're not trusting in Him. So he's trying to inspire them to trust in Him.

"...And again, 'Behold I and the children whom God has given Me'" (v 13). That's what Christ is going to say at the resurrection! I think He will literally say those words. When we're all there on the Sea of Glass, Christ is up there in front and God the Father is there, He will say, "...Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.'" What a magnificent thing that's going to be!

Now then, back down to earth, v 14: "Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul

him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; and *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death. For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham. For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God... [here's the first time we're told He's High Priest] ...in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted *in like manner*, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (vs 14-18).

This last part shows us the humanity of Christ, and the purpose of that humanity, and what it is in relationship to our salvation.

- *Rome's Challenge to the Protestants* (*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*, Appendix N)
- *Nature of God* (*The Christian Passover*)
- *Nature of Man* (*The Christian Passover*)

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

Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 3:7-8
- 2) Hebrews 2:1-4, 1, 3, 1
- 3) Psalm 36:1-4
- 4) Psalm 37:1-16
- 5) Psalm 36:5-12
- 6) 2 Peter 1:3-10
- 7) Hebrews 2:1
- 8) 2 Peter 1:11-13
- 9) Jude 3
- 10) John 3:19-21
- 11) Jude 3-4, 16-25
- 12) 2 Timothy 1:6-7
- 13) Hebrews 2:4-18

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Malachi 4
- Revelation 22
- Hebrews 10
- Psalm 8
- Genesis 1
- John 17

Also referenced:

Books:

- *The Christians Passover* by Fred R. Coulter
- *Word Biblical Commentary*
- *The Seven General Epistles* by Fred R. Coulter
- *A Harmony of the Gospels* by Fred R. Coulter

Sermon Series:

- *The Prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament*
- Epistles of Peter

Articles: