

Finishing off from last week

Reading the warnings through the lens of a corporate worldview

2nd and 5th warnings (2:1-3 & 12:15-17) concerned with the one who can lead the whole astray, example of the wilderness generation in 3:7-19

Who is being described in the **3rd warning**, 6:4-8?

Heb 6:4-8 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Imagery borrowed from exodus story. So is it genuine Christians, or a genuine Christian community?

(7) For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. (8) But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Imagery borrowed from Deut 28 and 29, esp 29:23. Deut 29:18 Directly quoted in Heb 12:15

What about the **4th warning**, 10:26-31? Can it be interpreted corporately also?

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (28) Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

First, note 1st person plural, “we”
Sinning deliberately – high handed sin? Likely, given that unintentional sin is mentioned in 9:7

Num 15:27-31 “If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. (28) And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. (29) You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. (30) But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. (31) Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.”

<p>(29) How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (30) For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." (31) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.</p>	<p>Who is the one? Trampled underfoot the Son of God – Threshold covenant Zeph 1:7-9 Deut 32:34,35</p>	<p>Num 15:22-26 "But if you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses, (23) all that the LORD has commanded you by Moses, from the day that the LORD gave commandment, and onward throughout your generations, (24) then if it was done unintentionally without the knowledge of the congregation, all the congregation shall offer one bull from the herd for a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the rule, and one male goat for a sin offering. (25) And the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the people of Israel, and they shall be forgiven, because it was a mistake, and they have brought their offering, a food offering to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD for their mistake. (26) And all the congregation of the people of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger who sojourns among them, because the whole population was involved in the mistake.</p>
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So how do we understand this warning?

If the unintentional sin of one requires the repentance of and atonement for the whole congregation (Num 15:22-26) what if one in the congregation sins deliberately (high handed sin)? The answer in Num 15:27-31 is "that person shall be cut off from among his people".

What will happen if the congregation fails to take this action? Deut 29 gave us the answer – "the whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout..." imagery which the writer of Hebrews draws on in 6:8 (But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned) and 10:27 (a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries).

What then is high handed sin? The key verse in Numbers 15 is 31 "Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him". This fits the description of the one with the "evil, unbelieving heart" in 3:12 and the root of bitterness in 12:15 and Deut 29:18.

Conclusion

The writer of Hebrews is not interested in whether or not individuals can lose their faith. He is concerned about the one without faith in a church who has seen a community "...enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come," and has refused to put his/her faith in Christ, and yet remains in that community, risking the destruction/judgement of all.

Talk 3 - The beginning and the end

“Perfect” in Hebrews

In 5:14 the congregation is told that “solid food is for the **mature**” and exhorted to “go on to **maturity**” in 6:1. Jesus is described as “**made perfect**” in 2:10 and will again in 5:9 and 7:28. In 7:11 we’re told that **perfection** could not be attained through the Levitical priesthood; the law cannot make any one **perfect** in 7:19 and 10:1; in 9:9 gifts and sacrifices offered through the old covenant system of worship cannot **perfect** the conscience of the worshiper; Christ entered the more **perfect** tent in 9:11; by a single offering Christ has **perfected** for all time those who are being sanctified in 10:14; in 11:40 those that died having never received the promises died in hope that they would be made **perfect** with us; in 12:2 Christ is the founder and **perfecter** of our faith; and in 12:23 the recipients of the letter are told that “you have come to... the spirits of the righteous made **perfect**”.

Teleios - complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.); neuter (as noun, with G3588) completeness: - of full age, man, perfect.

Finding the write English word to translate the Greek – not an easy thing to do!

Perfect, mature, finished, complete, ripe, consummate

A New Testament pattern of teaching

1Co 13:7-13 (Love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (9) For we know in part and we prophesy in part, (10) but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. (11) When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. (12) For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (13) So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

A chiastic structure:

A Believing, hoping, remaining, love

B For in part we know

C will be set aside

D child, child, child, child

C¹ I set aside

B¹ now I know in part

A¹ faith, hope, love, remain

...bears all things, **believes** (πιστεύει) all things, **hopes** (ἐλπίζει) all things, **endures** (ὑπομένει) all things. 1Co 13:8 **Love** (ἀγάπη) never ends.

As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 1Co 13:9 **For we know in part** (ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν) and we prophesy in part,

1Co 13:10 but when the perfect comes, the partial **will be set aside** (καταργηθησεται).

1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, **I set aside** (κατηρηκα) childish ways.

1Co 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. **Now I know in part**; (ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους) then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

1Co 13:13 So now **faith** (πίστις), **hope** (ἐλπίς), and **love** (ἀγάπη) **endure** (μένει), these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Hebrews also has a chiasmic structure with Faith, Hope and Love central to that structure, suggesting that the writer of Hebrews is using the same definition.

What then does it mean for Christ to be made perfect?

Paul's use of "perfection"

The individual:

Col 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone (every person) and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone **mature** in Christ.

Php 3:12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already **perfect**, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Php 3:15 Let those of us who are **mature** think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

The Corporate Body:

Col 3:14-15 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in **perfect** harmony. (15) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

Eph 4:11-16 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

1Co 12:12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... 13:10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away... 14:4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church... 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect... 12:4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function...

The four times Paul uses the image of the body to describe the church In Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Corinthians and Romans it is associated with “perfection” or “maturity”

What’s the problem with the Christian community addressed in Hebrews?

1. The one with the evil, unbelieving heart
2. It is an immature church: Heb 5:11-14 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (12) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, (13) for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. (14) But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (6:1) Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (2) and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (3) And this we will do if God permits.

In the pattern of “maturity” presented in the NT, this church is falling over at the first hurdle - faith.

How does the writer of Hebrews address these two issues in his letter?

Following the chiasmic pattern of the letter we will look at the first and last sections together:

Warning 1 2:1-3 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.
WARNING 2 3:12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.
WARNING 3 (6:4-8) 6:10 Love, 6:11 Hope, 6:12 Faith
6:13 – 10:21 Central argument: The basis of our faith
10:22 Faith, 10:23 Hope, 10:24 Love
WARNING 4 (10:26-31)
WARNING 5 12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;
WARNING 6 (13:9) Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings

Warning 1 and surrounding text

Heb 1:1-2:16 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (3) He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (4) having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

(5) For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? (6) And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." (7) Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." (8) But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. (9) You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." (10) And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; (11) they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, (12) like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." (13) And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (14) Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

(2:1) Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, (4) while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (5) For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. (6) It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? (7) You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, (8) putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. (9) But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by

Given that the first issue is the presence of "deliberate sin", characterized by "despising the Word of God" (Num 15:31), the first thing the writer of Hebrews wants to establish is the authority of the Word of Christ.


After contrasting the word received through the prophets with the word which came through the Son, he then contrasts the Son with the angels. The reason for the switch is that it was commonly held that the law given at Sinai was mediated to Moses through angels (see Deu_33:2; Psa_68:17-18; Act_7:38; Act_7:53; Gal_3:19; and Jub. 1:27, 29; Josephus, Ant. 15.5.3) He will come back to the comparison with the Son with the prophets (*the prophet, Moses*) in ch 3.

The whole point in the contrast between the Son and the angles is here, in the first warning. To the "one", the warning is, "you'd better listen and believe". To the church, the warning is, "if you do nothing about the "one" you're in trouble!

The second issue is the immature faith of the congregation. So while establishing the authority of the word of Christ the author is simultaneously addressing this problem by establishing the credentials of Christ himself, given that

<p>the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (10) For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (11) For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, (12) saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." (13) And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." (14) Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (16) For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.</p>	<p>the person of Christ himself is the basis of our faith.</p> <p>How does this address the second issue? "Your faith can only be as strong as the one in whom you put your faith"</p>
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Warning 6 and surrounding text

<p>Heb 12:18-13:25 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest (19) and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. (20) For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." (21) Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."</p> <p>(22) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, (23) and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (24) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.</p> <p>(25) See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. (26) At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (27) This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. (28) Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,</p>	<p>Note that the writer of Hebrews finishes exactly where he started – with the giving of the law at Sinai</p> <p>Given that we are dealing with the problem of an immature congregation, and that the core issue throughout Hebrews has been faith, where would you expect the author to finish?</p> <hr/> <p>(Note that refusing the Word of God is refusing God himself)</p> <p>and...</p> <hr/> 
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and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, (29) for our God is a consuming fire.

(13:1) Let brotherly love continue.

(2) Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (3) Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. (4) Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (5) Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (7) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (9) Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. (10) We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. (11) For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. (12) So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. (13) Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. (14) For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. (15) Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (16) Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (18) Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. (19) I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. (20) Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, (21) equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (22) I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. (23) You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. (24) Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. (25) Grace be with all of you.

Hebrews 13		Rom 12 ff
12:23	"perfect"	12:2
12:28	Acceptable worship	12:1
13:1	Brotherly love	12:10
13:2	hospitality	12:13
13:3	One Body	12:4-8
13:7	Submit to authority	13:1
13:4	adultery	13:9