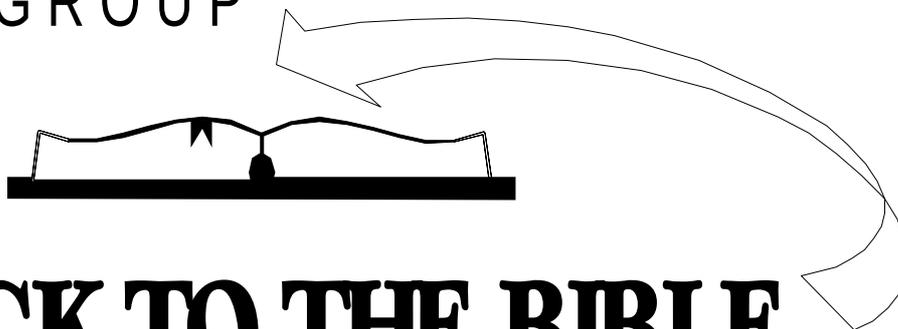


WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

Walking Worthy (chapters 1 to 5)

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Walking Worthy (chapter 1)

This is a subject of which much can be said. It is also a topical subject since the very first beginning of the Bible. Adam was already told - although we do not read this explicitly - that he had to walk worthy of the Lord. We find this commission throughout the whole Bible, up until the present day. For we as well, the believers of the present day, are called to walk worthy of the Lord. And how can we people, of whom no one is able to do any good, walk worthy of the Lord. We might think that way, but then we do not think right. Because if the apostle Paul calls us to walk worthy of the Lord, than it is possible indeed.

But then the question arises: How do you do so? How do I walk worthy of the Lord? How is it possible to please Him? How can I be fruitful in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God? (Col 1:10).

Two texts in the Word of God were on the basis of this Bible study "Walking Worthy":

- "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called." (Ephesians 4: 1)
- "That you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1:10)

Fundamentals (1)

To walk worthy of the Lord, someone must start believing. And when someone starts believing, he will be born again, then he is a newborn and then the Word wants to teach us to grow. And by growing we eventually get to know the Word. By growing we get to understand God's plan of ages. That does not happen all of a sudden, it takes a while. And while we are growing we "experience" all those stages of growing, which are necessary to grow to maturity. That is a fact in our daily lives, and should be in the spiritual live of every believer.

An example: When we were still children, we learned in school how to do sums. We learned that $2 + 2 = 4$. Later on we learned some more, and more, and it became a little more difficult, for example $64 : 8 = 8$ and so on. And when someone is later in his life studying, for example to become a constructional engineer, he or she still needs the basis of $2 + 2 = 4$. That is the foundation!

And that is the way it is in spiritual life. We have the basis, a Foundation, and we need all further stages to grow to maturity. And from all aged stages we can/must draw lessons, necessary to live and walk as an adult, still building further on the Foundation!

I would like to start in the Book of Hebrews, which is not for first instance written to us - believers of the present day, but the Book of Hebrews has great lessons for us. And in fact it shows how it ended up with the people of Israel at the end of the period of Acts. Besides

we can learn a lot from it too where it concerns our "walking worthy".

We will start in Hebr.5:7, where Paul says:

- "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebr. 5:7-10)

Paul would like to tell his listeners much about all these things, but he continues:

- "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebr.5:11-14)

To gain right insight in what we read about here, we will also read the next passage. Where Paul continues:

- "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft on it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near to cursing; whose end is to be burned."(Hebr.6:1-8)

This is not an easy Bible passage. Perhaps it is the heart of the Letter to the Hebrews. At the same time it is the most difficult part of the Letter to the Hebrews, about which a lot has been written through the years, and on which the opinions differ enormously. Of course, we have to read this passage in its context. If we do not we will come to an exegesis, which is open to interpretation, and which can deeply distress people, and sometimes leads to more falling away from faith than advancement, and that is exactly what we do not wish and that is why we have to view it in its context.

We start in Hebr.5:11: "Of whom we have many things to say," Of what has Paul many

things to say here? Well, he has many things to say about the previous passage, on that order of Melchisedec, that high-priesthood, etc. That is what he finally comes to in Chapter 5. And in fact Hebr.5 is a continuation of Hebr.3:1:

- "Why, holy brothers, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Who was faithful to him that appointed him." (Hebr.3:1-2)

They have to keep their eyes on the Apostle and High Priest, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the foundation! The first thing which comes to pass, is that when they keep their eye on that Apostle who is Christ, they are confronted with the fact that another one was sent, for apostle means "he who was sent (apostle)", that is sending. Christ is the One who was sent, but who was sent in the past, a lot earlier? It was Moses, as it says:

- "As also Moses was faithful in all his house." (Hebr.3:2)

But what is it about in Chapter 3? That in fact Christ is bigger than Moses:

- "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who has built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses truly was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." (Hebr.3:5-6)

So Moses worked **in** that house, but Christ was put **over** His house. And someone who is put over His house is bigger and better and more glorious, etc., than the one who works **in** that house. So Christ is more than Moses, bigger than Moses, better than Moses, that actually are the keywords of the whole Letter to the Hebrews.

After Paul has shown here that Christ is more than Moses, he goes on in Hebr.3 and 4 and in Hebr.5 he shows that Christ is even more than the high priest, for Christ, as is said in Hebr.3:1 is both an Apostle as a High Priest.

Moses was an apostle, someone who was sent, and Aaron was the high priest. But Christ was both and of a higher order! And Paul shows in Hebr.5 that Christ has a High-Priesthood which is higher than the one of Aaron, because it is a High-Priesthood after the order of Melchisedec.

And when Paul reaches that point, that Christ is a High Priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of the high-priesthood of Melchisedec, well, then he reaches a point from where Paul would like to continue his preaching. But what he would really like to tell, he cannot sufficiently tell those Hebrews. He says:

- "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, (*not that Paul thinks it is that hard, but*) seeing you are dull of hearing." (Hebr.5:11)

And that is the problem, they have become dull of hearing and actually they do not understand. For who is Melchisedec? In what differs the High-Priesthood from that high-priesthood of Aaron? The whole house of Aaron, which were all priests, the sons of Aaron as well. Melchisedec, we know from the Word, was King Priest. And actually – and that is what Paul would really like to tell them, **that** was also the destination of the people of Israel, even back then in Acts.

Already at Mount Sinai, when the pact was concluded these issues were told to the people by Moses through the Lord. Israel was God's chosen people, originated from Abraham and his 12 sons, which grew to a people of 70 families.

Better Things

And God had a purpose with that people, with those 70 families. After the Babel confusion of tongues humanity split up in 70 peoples after God's plan. And in the future those 70 families of Israel will reach those 70 peoples, who came into being after the Babel confusion of tongues and who will exist in the future, with the Gospel of the Kingdom. That is why it is 70 on 70 which we can read in Deuteronomy. But for that purpose Israel first has to become **a Kingdom of priests** and a holy people, before they can be used for the salvation of the nations:

- "And you shall be to me a **kingdom of priests, and an holy nation**. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do." (Ex.19:6-8)

These words showed us the pride of Israel and we know how it ended. And absolutely nothing came of it. Because they were confronted with a covenant of law, the old covenant, and they thought they could keep it on their own. They thought they could become a kingdom of priests on their own, but of course in their way nothing came of it. And the priesthood of Aaron and the priests among their own people too, discovered that Aaron's high-priesthood had shortcomings. Which is shown by Hebrews when we turn to Hebr.7:11:

- "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"

The **priesthood of Aaron** did **not** bring perfection (= original text – teleiosis). What is the word perfection? Actually in the original text the word is derived from "teleio", and "teleio" is actually the word you could also translate as "telos", which is the word "end", the word "purpose". So God created perfection. The word is translated as "perfect", but could also be translated as "mature", and also as "finished".

Yes, that purpose, what God intended with Israel, could not bring Israel in that position under that old covenant, under that Levitical priesthood. And even the sacrifices that were made there in the tabernacle and later in the temple under the old covenant, could in fact not bring Israel in the position, of which they thought they could reach it by themselves, that is a kingdom of priests. To that purpose, that perfection (maturity) the priesthood of Aaron could not possibly bring them.

And later in that chapter it says:

- "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw near to God." (7:19)

Yes, they needed a **better** sacrifice, a **better** corban, they needed a **better** High Priest too. And the word "better", we often find in the Letter to the Hebrews, it is another typical keyword, a key, which, so to say, fits to the whole Letter to the Hebrews, what we have to be aware of, which unlocks the Letter to the Hebrews for us.

In the Letter to the Hebrews we also find a **better** covenant, of which Christ is the Mediator. For what concerns the new covenant, a passage of Jeremiah is cited in Hebr.8:

- "For finding fault with them, he said, Behold, the days come, said the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, said the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he said, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away." (Hebr.8:8-13)

By then it will not be written on tablets of stone any more, but **on fleshly tables of the hearts**. When that is the case, when they are endowed with the Spirit, then they can rejoice in the law. For what is the law? The law is the same as under the old covenant, for the law is God's standard and God's standard is good, is righteous, God's law is holy, it is perfect, there is something wrong with man. God does not have to change His law, no, man must be changed, and that is only possible if God is actually not writing His law on tablets of stone and saying to mankind, thou shall..., but that He is writing His law on the fleshly tables of man's heart. If someone is born again by the Spirit of God he is automatically able to keep that law. He does not have to labour for that because it is written in his heart. That is how it is going to be. If someone is given that new life, he can fulfil that law. That is the

reason for the contradiction between the law and grace, which is actually a wrong contradiction. It is all right to make – as Hebrews does- the contradiction between the old and the new covenant. And how will that new covenant, which will in the future be made with Israel end up? It will end up with Israel being a kingdom of priests.

And now we must not apply all these things one to one to ourselves. For that is not possible at all. The Body of Christ is not a people, we are not a holy nation, that is the nation Israel, and that is the people which God has chosen as His own, and they will be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests. For the Body of Christ God has an even higher plan, even better things.

These things concerning Israel will be fulfilled in the future, under the new covenant. And in fact that is what Paul wants to tell his listeners in Hebrews 5, for they will be priests after the order of Melchisedec. To them quite a lot is at stake. They, those Hebrews have to fulfil this. And what kind of faith attitude do you need then? Now, then you should not want to butter your bread on both sides. Then you should become a real Hebrew. Now what is a Hebrew? We can discover that for the best by examining where that name "Hebrew" is mentioned in the Bible for the first time. Since that first time a word is mentioned in the Word of God usually represents the right meaning. We find the word "Hebrew" for the first time in Gen.14:

- "And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelled in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram."(Gen.14:13)

With this "Hebrew" and the word "Hebrews" we will continue next time.

Part 2 follows DV

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Walking Worthy (chapter 2)

The last time we ended with the conclusion that a certain attitude of faith, a right disposition is needed to inherit certain things in life. The things Paul really wants to tell the Hebrews concern Israel, and those things could have been fulfilled in Acts, if Israel had come to faith as a people, but will now be fulfilled under the new covenant. And in fact this is what Paul wanted to tell to his listeners in Hebrews 5. He wants to tell them that they themselves will be priests after the order of Melchisedec. To them quite a lot is at stake. They, those Hebrews have to fulfil this. But then you should become a real Hebrew.

The Hebrew Abraham

When we look into the Word where the word "Hebrew" is mentioned for the first time, we find it in Gen.14:13, where Abraham is called a Hebrew:

- "And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelled in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram."(Gen.14:13)

Why is Abraham called a Hebrew here? And what is the meaning of the name "Hebrew"? We find: Hebrews or Hebertes, Eberites, Hebreians and "Habiu" or "Habiri"; Hebrew עבריים of עבריים, For Hebrew we also find: 'Ivrim', 'Ivriyyim Tiberian' 'Ibrîm', 'ibriyyîm'. It means that Hebrews are descendants of the biblical Abram. And the Hebrew עברי (Ibrî) means "crossing". The Hebrews were called "Ibri over", which so to say means that it concerns people who came from the other side of the River, people who eventually lived within a large area which seen from the east was across the River. And when the Bible mentions the River, always the river Euphrates is meant.

So actually Hebrew means: "He, who comes from across". And perhaps more comprehensively translated: "He, who has crossed the River" So crossed from across the River. Well, that took quite a while with Abraham. He was indeed called in Ur of the Chaldees, in Genesis, but it took a very long time of his life, before he really became a Hebrew. For he was called and set off with his father Therah, and took his whole family with him.

They went on a journey and travelled actually hundreds of kilometres, in total he travelled 1000 kilometre, and he stopped in Haran.

And if we look at old maps (see next page), and if you leave Ur of the Chaldees, and you go on a journey and you travel all the way to Haran, you still have not crossed a single river. You are still walking on the side of that river. That is the river Euphrates which you have followed for 1000 km without crossing it. And perhaps it was hard for Abraham to cross that River, to really go to the land Canaan in faith, and to arrive there between Bethel and

Ai.

This is what we experience in our lives too, that it is very hard for us, we hear the calling of God, and perhaps we want to follow it too, but when will we really become Hebrews? When will we indeed cross that "River" in faith? When are we willing to leave all the old things behind and really go onward in the way the Lord wants us to go and in which He will lead us? At which we otherwise have a big lead on Abraham, since through faith we may **indeed** know where our path leads. But for us it is as for Abraham, going in faith!



It is wonderful to read the history of Abraham (Abram at first) once again (Gen.11:27- Gen.12:9).

Abram means "exalted father", and Abraham means "father of many peoples".

Abram was called when he still lived in Ur of the Chaldees:

- “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelled in Charran, and said to him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelled in Charran: and from there, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein you now dwell.”(Acts 7:2-4)

So Abram was called when he still lived in Ur of the Chaldees, but Abram was called once again when he still lived in Haran:

- “Now the LORD had said to Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you: And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.”(Gen.12:1-5)

When we try to imagine ourselves in the situation and living conditions of Abram and his family, we come to the following:

- First Abraham traveled from Ur to Haran where he sticks for longer (probably years).
- In Haran, Abraham is called for the second time to go to the promised land. (Gen.12:1-5)

And actually this shows us, that Abram (or his father) probably found it hard to travel from Ur to Canaan at once. And when we look back, it is not so surprising. For Abram was a human being too. He lived with his family in one of the most fertile areas of the earth in Mesopotamia, in the area where once roughly the garden of Eden has been. Thanks to archaeology we can form a quite accurate picture of it. The Bible mentions that the patriarch came from Ur, a city in the district Babel. Countless archaeological finds tell how the situation in big cities as Ur was around that period. Cities as Ur, Babel and Akkad had developed a sophisticated culture around 3000 BC, which is more than 1000 years before Abram is dated.

Ur of the Chaldees

It could be interesting to investigate where Abram really came from. Through several excavations and archaeological finds a lot has become clear. I want to get straight away that such findings are completely unnecessary to demonstrate the truth of God’s Word, but sometimes they give us some insight in the past.

This way we can gain quite a good image of Ur, how the city has looked through the ages.

Close to Ur is Al-Ubaid (or Obeid) which already in the very early history, around 6000 – 3800 BC had an important settlement. From these period boats of clay have been found which prove the fact that people were sailing the river and perhaps the coast as well. Semiprecious stones originating from India lead us to suspect trade over a great distance.

The oldest layer of Ur (about 4000 BC) is completely covered in a thick layer of clay, coming from a flood which destructed the city. (probably the Flood of Gen.6 and Gen.7). Anyway, the Mesopotamian history was crossed by disastrous floods. In and under this layer of clay human remains have been found, pictures of goddesses and painted pots.

On top of this layer of clay is a deposit of five and a half metres thick which contains remains of the early urban period (about 3400 to 2900 BC). In this layer countless kilns have been found, as well as rough clay pots for measuring amounts of food.

Several pictures have been found of the War of Ur (Standard of Ur, about 2600 BC British Museum) on clay tablets with Sumerian cuneiform script (\pm 2400 BC). During this period Ur at first had to leave the lead to Uruk and Kish.

An archive of several hundreds of texts on clay tablets from about 2650 BC, shows a social stratification, professional specialisation, and the economic power of a big organisation, which employs personnel, supplies rations and land and has the disposal of a good administration.

From about 2650 BC the city of Ur was, under Mesannipadda and his dynasty, for a period of time the most important and flourishing city of Sumer. This is shown by the royal tombs which were established in Ur in this period of time.

During his excavations of these tombs the English archaeologist Woolly discovered many skeletons of members of the royal household who had committed suicide to serve their master or mistress in the hereafter. The ladies-in-waiting were adorned with jewels of gold and lapis lazuli. There were body-guards as well. The last of these graves must possibly be attributed to the first of the three real dynastic periods of the city of Ur. There was a heavy terrace wall around parts of Ur. About 2334 the first dynasty came to an end.

During the second dynasty, of which little is known, the power rested on the Semitic monarchs of Akkad and thereafter with the Guti.

And now we find ourselves around the time in which Abram lived in Ur:

The third dynasty: With Ur-Nammu of Ur around 2112 BC once again a bloom started for Ur under the third dynasty of Ur. This lasted till 2004 BC. At this time the culture of the nation reached an extremely high level and the remains give evidence of a period of great wealth. Society was largely organised **around the temple**. Stepped pyramids called "ziggurats" were build to worship the gods, especially Nanna the lunar deity. Agriculture was at a high level and thanks to a well organised irrigation system big harvests were

brought in.

In the north there was a quarter devoted to the lunar deity Nanna, the ruler of the gods of the city. Here stood the ziggurat which was built around 2200 BC.

Around the ziggurat a number of important buildings was situated. The palace Echsursanga dates back to the third dynasty of Ur and was the royal palace of Ur-Nammu and Schulgi. The Egipar was a shrine devoted to the idol Ningal and is built in the third dynasty as well.

A "ziggurat" (Babylonian: ziququrrat, "building on an elevated area") is a temple mount from ancient Mesopotamia and Persia (Iran) shaped like a terraced pyramid of successive diminishing levels.

The earliest examples of ziggurats date from the Ubeid period in the 4th millennium BC, and the last date from the 6th century BC.

The ziggurats seem to show that Sumerians used to worship their gods on mountaintops.



Ziggurat of Ur, reconstructed

Around 535 BC the history of Ur comes to an end as it were. During these period of Persian rule Ur bleeds dry. A record from 316 BC is the last dated object from which we can deduce that the city was still inhabited. The neighbouring city of Uruk was still populated and was known for its astronomy, but Ur was only inhabited by wandering nomads who visited it now and again to pitch a temporary camp there.

Halfway the 19th century AD (around 1850 AD) the ziggurat of the lunar deity Nanna there was as good as intact. In those days it was known as Tell al-Muqayyar (the stepped hill). In 1853 the British consul (looking for treasuries) had the stepped tower pulled down. In the end he found a clay cylinder with inscriptions. At first this was found unimportant. Subsequently, the Arabs used the clay tiles of the ziggurat as building material.

During the First World War (1914-1918) one of the British officers (who worked for the British Museum in peacetime and was now marching to Bagdad) begged to take a good look at the ruins and already forgotten clay roll. Which was obviously done.

Now it became clear that the discovered ziggurat belonged to the city of Ur and that the Babylonian ruler Nabonid had the ziggurat restored around 550 BC. Even more texts in cuneiform writing confirmed the facts above, that Ur was once one of the most important cities of Sumer. Archaeologists found clay tablets with contracts, bills and scientific systems.

Ze hadden een zestigtallig rekensysteem, en tijdrekeningen verdeeld in jaren en minuten. The clay tablets show all kind of literary traditions, stories about gods, legends and folk tales. According to the clay tablets there was permanent demand for delicacies: all kind of fish, soft and hard roe and preserved locusts. The cities in Mesopotamia traded in an enormous range of products: honey, wines, rare oils, metals, building materials, cedar wood from the Lebanon, exotic fabrics, perfumes, precious stones, ivory and everything of exceptional quality.

In 1922 an archaeological expedition led by Leonard Woolley came to Ur and started systematically excavations of the tell (a hill with a settlement underneath). Here Woolley dug from 1922 to 1934. He excavated the royal cemetery too. Most graves had already been desecrated, except the burial chamber of queen Puabi, who was buried with 23 servants who wore a lot of jewellery. The queen herself had precious grave goods of gold, lapis lazuli, agate and chalcedony. King Mesilim of Kish wore a golden helmet (as thin as paper) and a golden dagger with a hilt of lapis lazuli. The best known find of the excavations is a bull's head of driven gold, decorated with blue lapis lazuli. It was a decoration on a harp.

About 200 m to the south of the ziggurat the oldest structures of Ur were excavated. It were the royal tombs of Ur which date from 2600-2500 BC. They were a part of a cemetery with about 2000 graves. Some of these royal graves were not yet plundered and precious gifts were found. Close to the cemetery the monumental grave complexes of the kings of the third dynasty were found. In the south of the city a large part of the living city of this time could be excavated. Most of the houses were rather small and had an inner court yard. There were several alleys, but there are no indications that a street plan was being used.

[I have considered to shorten this long explanation, but since I found it quite interesting to know the world Abraham came from, I left it this way, Bert]

In that city Abraham lived with his family. Nowhere in the notes of the archaeologist we find some kind of sign that the God of Adam, God the Creator was still worshipped, but a lot of evidence of idolatry was found. In such a city with temples for idols, Abraham lived. It is very special that the Lord from such a city had one man, Abraham, in mind, to have two peoples born from him, one people with an earthly destiny (Gen.13:16), and one people with a heavenly destiny (Gen.15: 5). **God's plan was settled, it would for sure be fulfilled!**

And actually Abraham was just like Paul grabbed by the collar to obey God in what He had in mind for him. We clearly learn that God is in control. Abraham believed in God and choose to obey Him, but behind it God was in complete control. Abraham was led by God and stood under His protection. For we read:

- "And **I took** your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

(Joshua 24:3)

- “You are the LORD the God, who did choose Abram, and brought **him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees**, and gave him the name of Abraham” (Neh.9:7)

Abraham might have had some trouble to convince his father. For Abraham had to conform to the will of his father according to the hierarchy at that time, and so he had to convince his father to go to that unknown country, which the Lord would show them. Abraham depended on the approval of his father Terach.

Abraham must have convinced his father, witness Gen 11:31, where we read:

- “And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran, and dwelled there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.” (Gen.11:31-32)

From the above text we may conclude that led by father Terach the whole family left Ur. It is quite unusual to read that “He (Terach) made them leave Ur of the Chaldees to go to the nation of Canaan”, while Terach never arrived in Canaan. It is not mentioned to us why the family got stuck in Haran. Yet, we read that they were well off in Haran, and Terach and his family found the same prosperous circumstances as mentioned above where it concerns Ur, witness what we read about that in the Bible:

- “**Haran**, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, were your merchants. These were your merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and brodered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among your merchandise. The ships of Tarshish did sing of you in your market: and you were replenished, and made very glorious in the middle of the seas.” (Ez.27:23-25).

Abram himself did good business in Haran too, as we can read in the Word, for when Abraham, after his father’s death, finally leaves Haran, we read:

- “So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, **and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran**; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.” (Gen.12:4-5) So Abraham had gathered “substance and souls” in Haran.

Through Faith

So Abraham answered God’s call to leave his land, tribe and family. But what brought him to this choice? When we read the very parts discussing this history, everything shows this

was obedience through faith.

First we read about Terach:

- “And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran, and dwelled there.” (Gen.11:31) This must have been preceded by faith too.

Then we read:

- “So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken to him...”No questions, no objections, or anything like that, **Abraham simply went.** Then we read in Acts 7:4:
- “**Then came he out** of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelled in Charran: and from there, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein you now dwell.”Again no questions or any objections.

And in Hebrews:

- “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.”(Hebr.11:8).

And later on in Abraham’s live:

- “**By faith** Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.” (Hebr.11:17)

But the most wonderful thing is what God Himself says about Abraham:

- “For **I know him**, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring on Abraham that which he has spoken of him.”(Gen.18:19)

God knows His people. And God reaches His destiny with Abraham. Furthermore all these texts show, that Abraham left Ur and later Haran in obedience. Yet this obedience was preceded by faith. To Abraham, faith was the thriving force.

Abraham walked worthy of his call! O indeed, he made mistakes, but his faith was counted him to righteousness!

The faith that worked centuries ago in Abraham, still works today. We are in a similar position as Abraham. We are called too, to go to an unknown (heavenly) nation. We do not know what it will look like and have, to humanly standards, no evidence of its existence. But Paul says to us: “Be followers together of me.” (Phil 3:17). That takes a conviction as the believer Abraham had.

That is why we ask the question: What about us? Have we already crossed the River? More of that DV the next time, as we continue with the Letter to the Hebrews.

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Walking Worthy (chapter 3)

Hebrew

The last time we saw that "Hebrew" means: "He, who comes from across". And perhaps more comprehensively translated: "He, who has crossed the River", so crossed from across the River. Abram only became a Hebrew when he actually crossed the River Euphrates to the unknown country God was going to show him. That takes faith and courage.

We only become "Hebrews" if we too cross such a "river" in faith, and in faith go on with only God's Word as a light upon our path. In real terms this means that "crossing", though it is a big leap in faith, is only just the beginning. For then we have to go and **walk** in that "land" we received through grace. At which we do not trust in our own "ability", but in complete dependence on the Lord continue our way, **leaving** all human load **behind**, actually leaving the world behind.

We cross that river and lay ourselves in God's hands, and we stand in our heavenly Canaan, which is in the heavenly places to the members of the Body of Christ. And that is what we will do literally, standing and walking through faith. And by walking we may discover what spiritual blessings we received in that "promised land". And in Abraham's life this took quite a while. He had to say a lot of farewell to all kind of things.

And when he is finally in the land, it is not easy to stay in the land Canaan, for when it becomes a little hard, he immediately flees to Egypt. In Egypt, in the world, with Farao – which is an image of Satan – he passes himself off as someone else. Then he lies about his wife and then it still takes quite a while, but the world (Farao) did throw him out, because he does not belong there. And then he returns to Canaan and is called, the "Hebrew" in Genesis 14.

In this there is a great lesson for us too. Take a look at the Lord's promises, which He made to Abraham:

- "Now the LORD had said to Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I **will** show you: And **I will make of you a great nation**, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and **you shall** be a blessing: And **I will** bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you **shall** all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen.12:1-3)

Great promises were made to Abraham. But also promises that demand a **persevering faith**. For when a bad famine struck the land Canaan, Abraham left for Egypt. (Col.12:10). And that was exactly where he was not supposed to be.

"But" Abraham probably said **to himself**, "In Egypt there is food, and here I starve to death." And next we see in the continuation of the history (Gen.12:11-20) that through trusting in his own strength, he piles one slip on another. But eventually God makes sure Abraham returns to his place in Canaan.

And we too have received great promises of the Lord, on which we may (must) stand. And for us too, it takes a persevering faith. For, brothers and sisters, God really does what He says and promises. And He has given us a great armour (Ef.6), to really be, as beloved children, God's followers, and to **walk** in His love, a sweet smelling smell for God.(Ef.5:1-2).

But in fact we were discussing the Letter to the Hebrews. After all, Paul was writing to the Hebrews. He is calling those Hebrews to be sure to **walk worthy**, in accordance with all that was proclaimed to them for quite some time.

And what was actually wrong with these Hebrews here? He writes to the Hebrews, he writes to the Jewish people, which are the Hebrews, who speak the Hebrew language. But are they really Hebrews up to the standard, we have discussed before?

No, they are not, because they have known the Saviour for a long time, they have known Christ for a long time, have known the Messiah, but they have become dull in hearing.

- "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebr.5:11-14)

You can only really say something to someone, if that person will actually stand in that faith, so when that person really "crosses that river", arrives in the land "Canaan", and really pitches his tent there too, and than finally gets the same attitude in faith as Abraham, that you really become an Abraham, not Abram, but Abraham, and that you start living through faith, and that you go on to completeness, to fulness of age:

- "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." (Hebr.6:1)

Hearing

- "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of **hearing**." (Hebr.5:11)

Yes, that word "hearing" we have seen before in the letter to the Hebrews, because in what were they dull in this hearing? Had Israel not often been dull in hearing?

- "Why (as the Holy Ghost said, **Today if you will hear his voice**, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Why I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not

known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end; While it is said, **To day if you will hear his voice.** harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: however, not all that came out of Egypt by Moses." (Hebr.3:7-16)

Yes, "Today, if you will hear his voice", what is this hearing? It is mentioned even twice in the text above. But we must realise, it concerns only saved people here. They are all saved people, Paul is speaking to. They all know the Saviour, but they have become dull in hearing, they have become a bit lazy in that listening.

In Hebr.3 it is about Israelites who were led out of Egypt by the Lord. They are all saved people too, saved by the Lord. They are saved! They are saved from death by the blood of the lamb which they had brushed on their doorposts. Saved from slavery too!

But what do we read about these saved people? That they had hardened their hearts, although they saw the works of God's hands! And what was the consequence? What happened to the Israelites, to these saved people?

- "Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swore to give to your fathers. **Save Caleb** the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he has trodden on, and to his children, because he has **wholly followed** the LORD. Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, You also shall not go in thither. But **Joshua** the son of Nun, which stands before you, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to **inherit** it. Moreover your little ones, which you said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and to them will I give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea." (Deut.1:35-40)

You do remember what happened when after two years Israel stood in front of the land, of which the Lord had said He would give them that land and that they would live there in peace. They did not trust it and sent 12 spies to size up the situation. And when they returned 10 were of the opinion that it was impossible that they would ever arrive in the land. Only a "small remnant", two out of twelve, Joshua and Caleb, trusted in the Lord.

As a result, all those saved people (over 600,000 aged 20 years and up) died in the desert. **They missed their inheritance.** "Joshua, the son of Nun, which stands before you, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to **inherit** it." (Deut.1:38) I would like to emphasize this. God had an inheritance in mind for His people. A land flowing with milk and honey. And when the people would serve Him, they could live in

peace in that land, and no famine would afflict them. But the people saved from Egypt did not inherit! As a result of unbelief!

In this there is a great lesson for us too. The parts of the Body of Christ have great promises too, we too may enter the "land", but we too must walk in that land, and "put our feet" on everything the Lord wants to give us. (Jos.1:3). If we do not and will not walk, we will not receive the promised spiritual blessings either.

When Israel later, after crossing the River Jordan had hung around Jericho, they never could have received the promised land. They had to go and "walk" through faith in that land.

And actually Paul says the same to his listeners in Hebr.3:

- "**To day if you will hear his voice**, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." (Hebr.3:7-8)

And again:

- "**To day if you will hear his voice**, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." (Hebr.3:15)

But Paul says even more in the text above, we read:

- "Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end; While it is said, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." (Hebr.3:12-15).

It is quite something what Paul says here. He speaks to **the brother**, in this respect to the brothers belonging to the congregation of First-borns, which was among others established in the period of Acts, and he says to those **believers** that they must take care that there is no evil heart of unbelief in them. Paul also says they have to exhort one another by encouraging each other. For they have been made partakers of Christ, **IF they hold steadfast to the end**, for that is what is actually written.

And about "that end" of the congregation of First-borns we read in 1Thes.4, where we read that the believers, belonging to the congregation of first-borns will enter the grave at the end of their lives, or if they are still alive at the return of the Lord will be caught up together with the passed brothers and sisters to meet the Lord in the air and then appear on earth with Him.

- "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout**, with **the voice** of the archangel, and with the **trump** of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to **meet** the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1Thess.4:15-17).

Actually Paul says: "Do not act like your forefathers and do not become dull in hearing, but

listen!" And Paul continues:

- "For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." (Hebr.5:12)

For the time – because they had known the Lord for a very long time – they ought to be teachers a long time ago, but they need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. Yes, they had known the Lord for a good while and for the time they actually had to be **fathers** in the faith, **adults** in faith. But they were not, they were spiritual babies in faith, and that was not right in their lives.

About that **hearing**, and that they had become dull in hearing, we read in Hebr.4 too:

- "For to us was the gospel preached, as well as to them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that **heard** it." (Hebr.4:2)

They did hear, but they did not believe, that is the problem. Being dull in hearing in this text actually means: they are under preaching, they do hear the Word, but the Word that is preached is useless to them. Why? Because it does not go together with faith. They listen, but it is not followed by faith, it does not land in their hearts! That is the problem. And this is what we must read in respect to what Paul says in Hebr.2:1:

- "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

That is the risk, if you do not pay enough attention to it, if you become lazy, dull, if you will not stand or remain in the faith, when you, like Abraham, not really stand on your promises, **you will move** to "Egypt" when difficulties come. You will seek refuge in the world and not trust in the Lord!

No, we have to pay attention to what we have heard, lest we do not drive off. And that is what Hebrews is about, for Hebrews is in fact one admonition:

- "And I beseech you, brothers, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter to you in few words." (Hebr.13:22).

So it is a word of admonition. It is about not driving off. It is about not becoming dull.

- "For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebr.5:12-14).

Well, that is a considerable amount of things. Actually, this whole enumeration of verse 12 up to verse 14, all those verses, and actually that shows us, where being dull in hearing leads to in practice.

There is no progress, no progress whatsoever, no spiritual progress in their lives. And how must they become king-priests? For that is what God has in mind for them by the end of Acts, that is what it eventually has to come to, and this way it will come to nothing. When their situation stays like this, God couldn't possibly give it to them, even if they are called to it. Peter teaches the same, which we can read in his letter:

- "Why the rather, brothers, give diligence to **make** your calling and election **sure**: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Petr.1:10-11)

Actually Peter calls: "Listen, people, you have to understand the calling for your life. And you have to **make** your calling **sure, go and stand** in your calling and **walk worthy** of your calling, otherwise that calling will go by." As a matter of fact that goes for every calling. Here we speak about the Letter to the Hebrews and the Letter of Peter, and it concerns the calling of the congregation of first-borns, but exactly the same goes for us, for the calling of the Body of Christ. We will come back to that extensively.

If we understand that calling, and it is wonderful if we learn to understand that, but it is especially necessary to become obedient, that you answer that call, that you say: Yes Lord, and respond, but then you have to **make** your calling **sure**. And then you have to run the whole race, the whole racetrack. You have to **run** for the prize of the high calling of God. That goes for us too. Because if we do not run, then in fact Christ, if you do not make sure the calling, He cannot bring you in the position He would like you in. In that you have to rely on Him, not on your own strength, but on His strength. Then you have to become a Hebrew. Standing in the faith. In belief crossing the "river", to arrive in the "promised land". In our case the heavenly places.

This means that we ought to walk in the land, in these blessing, which the Lord offers us. **Walking worthy of the call** with which you are called! And then the Lord Himself promises to give us where "we put our feet", or expressed otherwise: Then the Lord gives us opened eyes of our hearts, and we will be rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (Coll.2:7).

Part 4 follows DV Bert Boersma February 2012

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Walking Worthy (chapter 4)

Dull in Hearing

We will continue with what Paul wrote to the Hebrews. Actually Paul wants to hold a mirror up to their faces. For what was actually wrong with these Hebrews here? Are they really Hebrews up to the standard? Have they really crossed that river, and have they taken their steps in the land, and do they now live in "the promised land"? No, actually not, for they have known the Saviour for a long time, the Christ, the Messiah, but they have become **dull** in hearing.

"Of whom we have many things to say", Paul says in Hebr.5:11. Well, you might have a lot to tell, but if the other does not want to listen, then it does not come across. You can only tell something to someone if that listener is on the same wavelength, if that listener really has the desire to know more. And Paul could only really talk to these Hebrews, if they would really stand in that faith, so really cross that river, enter the land Canaan, and really pitch their tents there. And then finally get the same attitude of faith as Abraham, that they really become an Abraham, not Abram, but Abraham, and that they are going to live through faith, and that they go on to completeness. Hebr.6:1:

- "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God."

"Go on to Perfection", it says in AKJV in Hebr.6:1. In GNBE it says "Let us go forward, then, to mature teaching." But they did not hear it, that is the problem, when one becomes dull of hearing, it means (Hebr.5:11), that they are indeed under preaching, they do hear the Word, but the Word of preaching is useless to them, because it is not accompanied by faith. They listen to it, but it is not followed by faith, then no walk can follow it either. And that is the problem. And in the same way we must read Hebr.2:1, where Paul says:

- "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

That is a risk for us too that we slip, if we pay too little attention, if we become dull of hearing. Yes, if we will not stand or remain in the faith. No, we have to pay attention to what we have heard, lest we do not drive off. And that is what whole Hebrews is about, for Hebrews actually is one admonition.

- "And I beseech you, brothers, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter to you in few words." (Hebr.13:22).

So it is a word of exhortation for the Hebrews, instructive for us. It is about not driving off. It is about us not becoming dull.

- "For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you

again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is **unskillful** in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebr.5:12-14)

That is quite something what Paul mentions here in this text. It shows where being dull of hearing leads to, and what it means in practice. There is no progress, no progress whatsoever, no spiritual growth in their lives, and if these Hebrews must become king-priests, for that is what God eventually has in mind for them, it is good for nothing this way. Then God could not possibly give them what He really would like to give them, even if they are being called to it.

Peter teaches this too, we can read it in that letter too, which teaches: "Listen, people, you have to understand the calling for your life." But you must make sure of that calling, confirm it too, otherwise that calling will pass you by:

- "Why the rather, brothers, **give diligence** to **make** your calling and election **sure**: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."(2 Petr.1:10-11).

This is what Peter said to those believing Israelites. Peter says to those believers that they **have to give diligence** to make their calling and election sure, for if they do these things they will generously enjoy the blessings set apart for them in heaven. For it concerns the heavenly calling for the congregation of first-borns. And Peter thinks this is so important, that he will keep on repeating this exhortation:

- "Why I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things." (2 Petr.1:12).

And brothers and sisters, I believe it is alright to have such an attitude, to put each other these things in remembrance, and to exhort each other to walk worthy of our calling. For I believe **this goes for every calling**. For the calling of the Body of Christ too. Every calling must be confirmed by a personal walk, coming from the mind of **Fil.2:5**. "Let this mind be in you....." For me this is the heart of God's Word. And that part in Fil.2 goes deep, it is about a walk, in which we diminish and He increases, at which we are willing to leave old things behind, to go on in the new blessings that God wants to give us.

If we understand **that calling**, and it is wonderful if you learn to understand this, and it is also wonderful if you become obedient. If you answer that call, if you say Yes, Lord, and respond to it. But then you must make it sure. And then you have to run the whole race, the whole racetrack. You have to **run** for the prize of the high calling of God. That goes for us too. Because if we do not run, then in fact Christ, if you do not make sure the calling, He cannot bring you in the position He would like you in. In that you have to rely on Him, not on your own abilities, but on His strength. Then you have to become a Hebrew, just like

here in the Letter to the Hebrews. **Go and stand in the faith.** In our case the heavenly places.

But here, with these Hebrews there was no progress in their lives. For the time they ought to be teachers, but they had need again of the teaching of the first principles of the oracles of God.

Secondly it is said: "You have need of milk and no strong meat." (Hebr.5:12)

Well, then you are spiritually a baby. If you cannot take the strong meat, if you think really fast that it is very hard, and actually take no attitude whatsoever, like, as for me, it is not that necessary. If you react that way, you actually show who you are. In fact you are a spiritual baby.

Paul says the same in a previous letter, which he wrote to the Corinthians. That is in a different connection, but that does not really matter, it is about the same thing. The text in Corinthians shows us, that for the time they ought to have grown much farther:

- "And I, brothers, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, even as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for till now you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal."(1Kor.3:1-3).

Yes, the flesh always stands in the way of spiritual growth. That was the case with the Corinthians, and it is the same with the Hebrews, and if we are not careful it goes for our lives too. Then that preacher (Paul) cannot give him that strong meat. That is the problem, there are indeed preachers, but they cannot hand them/us that strong meat, for well, he would speak over the heads, so he must go back to "the first principles" of the gospel.

Now what are the first principles of the oracles of God?

- "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; **not laying again the foundation (1) of repentance from dead works (2), and of faith toward God (3), Of the doctrine of baptisms (4), and of laying on of hands (5), and of resurrection of the dead (6), and of eternal judgment.(7)**" (Hebr.6:1-2).

These seven points, those are the first principles of the oracles of God. Further Paul says in Hebr.5:13:

- "For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."

That is quite a statement, yet it is true. A baby, an infant, a newborn child does not know the right preaching. He might think he is very spiritual, and very devout, but if he is in a situation in which he is not grown spiritually, he does not know the right preaching. Those Hebrews know nothing of that High-priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. They are not aware of what it means to be a king-priest in the future. Actually they do not know anything of that calling, where Paul is speaking about and what Peter is speaking about, that is the problem.

And how is that in our time? Do present-day believers know the right preaching? Do present-day believers know the secret of which Paul is writing in his late letters? Do the believers have knowledge of the calling of the Body of Christ? Do they know what it meant to follow Paul? Forgive me these questions, but it is very important for the present-day believers to distinguish these things.

Paul continues:

- "But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebr.5:14).

Practicing their Senses

The strong meat is for those who are full of age. You can only, so to say, consume the strong meat once you are an adult. That word "full of age" is actually quite beautiful, since in Greek it is the word "teleio". In all, "teleio" is used in all kind of declensions in the Letter to the Hebrews about 24 times. In the word "teleio", the word "telos", we find the word "tele", and that Greek word we know too. Anyway, we know a lot of Greek words in our Dutch language.

Think about our **television** at home, and our **telephone**. These words can all be traced back to that same word. The word **telescope** or the word **telegram** too. And all these words with "tele" in fact indicate that something is made really close.

If you watch the moon through a telescope it seems as if you could touch the moon. If you had a very powerful telescope it might seem as if you could take the moon. And if you use the telephone to call someone it seems as if that person is standing right beside me. Even though he might be on the other side of the earth.

Television makes you see what is going on on the other side of the earth. That is what "tele" actually means. Bring something which is very far away really close. **And it is this what an adult in the faith does.** The believers make really close what in fact is really far away, which influences his choices in the here and now. And that is constantly the case with the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. If you see all those heroes of faith over there, one after the other, you could conclude, that they have all made a choice through faith, which was far in the future.

And Moses what did he do? He did not want to pass himself off as Farao's son. Why not? He paid attention to revenge. That revenge was very far away, but for Moses it was really close. And all riches of Egypt were beautiful, all pomp and circumstance, but in fact he considered the slander of Christ even greater richness, and more delightful than all riches of Egypt.

You can see this with all faith heroes, it is all indicated, which made them live as righteous people, as justified through faith. And through faith it is emphasized, how they were mature

in faith, and that they so to say see "tele" as final goal. For that is enclosed in the word "telos", the final goal, the end, the final destiny. They saw the destiny of their calling, and brought that nearby. And if you bring that closer, it becomes more of a reality, and then you give and live out of it. And that is what the faith heroes did. And that is what a mature person does out of faith. That is that strong meat.

- "Those who by reason of use have their senses exercised." (Hebr.5:14b).

They have exercised their senses. What senses have you exercised? Two things, you can **hear** very well, that is how it started: "Because you have become dull in hearing."

An adult can **hear** incredibly **well**, and he can **see** enormously **well** too. Those are the senses he exercises, hearing, spiritual hearing of God's Word and on the other hand see it, **in faith seeing in the future**, and bring that closer. And learning to live from that hope offered to you by the call.

What does it say further?

- "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (hebr.5:14b).

We have to be careful with this "good and evil". It is not about discerning moral good and moral evil. Here the Greek uses a different word for "good" than the word that is usually used in the contrast between good and evil. No, here it has to do with that hearing. An adult in faith can hear very well, and can discern very well. He has exercised his senses **to discern** – emphasized in preaching – what is good and what is evil, so what is good and what is not. A baby cannot discern. Occasionally it does not see what is poison, what is evil, what is absolutely wrong in preaching, what is a bright idea of the enemy, for he does not discover it. He does not see a difference. A little toddler, a little baby puts everything in his mouth, it does not see the difference between a bottle of lemonade and a bottle of all-purpose cleaner. And that goes for spiritual babies too.

But an adult has exercised his senses, he can hear very well, and if he listens to preaching, he knows one thing, he knows very well what is good and what is not. Well, that baby does not. That is the problem. They do not know the right preaching. So, it was not all too well here, with these Hebrews. There was no spiritual progress, they were still spiritual babies, they do not know the right preaching, they were far from being mature, they were negligent in faith, and they have no distinction whatsoever.

Well, what if you have to write to those Hebrews in such a way. But Paul does put his finger on the problem. And what does he say?

- "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, **let us go on to perfection.**" (Hebr.6:1).

The perfection, in the original text it says "teleioteta", which is again a word with "**tele**" as a base, it has to do with final destination once again. It is translated as "perfection", which means something is made full, and it is translated as "mature" too, which means full-

grown. We must go on to that maturity.

The word "full of age" of Hebr.5:14, where it says: "but strong meat belongs to them that are of full age," in the original text has "teleion" too, so you could translate it as "perfection", and you could translate it as "full of age" too. Let us concentrate on perfection. And what did they actually have to do?

Well, everything that had to do with Christ, in the past, before His cross, where they lingered with emphasis on the Gospels, where their baby days were rooted, they had to leave that alone. Not give it up, but leave it be, and then go on, concentrating on the fullness of age. Actually, it has to do with Hebr.2:3, for in fact that might be the text which causes us to understand Hebr.6:1, for it says:

- "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebr.2:3-4)

This verse "How shall we escape", is often interpreted as if it goes for **unbelieving** Hebrews. But no, it is spoken **against believers**, Jews, who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah. And then it says, then Paul says: "How shall we escape"

How do you, who is becoming dull in hearing, and who is still a spiritual baby, think to escape? "If we neglect so great salvation", and then, attached to it: "which at first began to be spoken by the Lord", in the period of the Gospels, in the days of the Gospels, and what the four Gospels are filled with, "and was confirmed to us by them that heard it", and when was that? Those are the apostles in Acts. "God also bearing them witness". While God bears them witness, both with signs and wonders. For it is still Christ, who does it. Christ did it in the days of the Gospels, but Christ went beyond in the preaching, namely in Hebrews, through His servants, and in Acts He bore "witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

So, we must, as Paul speaks to the Hebrews: "You must go on to perfection, concentrating on perfection, not being negligent, but go on!

- "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of **patience**, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back to perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Hebr.10:35-39).

But if you draw back, as the Hebrews to whom he is writing to have done, "how will you escape?" "Then My soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebr.10:38b)

"Escape", well, the word "escape" we have already seen in Hebr.2:3, and we see it again in Hebr.12. And we have spoken extensively about that "hearing", and that "hearing" is a result of something which is spoken. And that speaking (which should be followed by hearing) we also find in Hebr 12:

- "See that you refuse not him that **speaks**. For if they escaped not who refused him that **spoke** on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that **speaks** from heaven: (Hebr.12:25).

Actually we see that Paul points his listeners that they have to make sure to **listen**. And they have to act on it, otherwise their neglect will be counted against them, it will be to their detriment, to their destruction. (Hebr.10:39).

In fact, we read exactly the same in the late letters of Paul:

- "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is **destruction**, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Fil.3:18-19).

Here it is about believers too, who are saved but who do **not hear**, and "walk as enemies of the cross of Christ", which means they do not want to take up the cross of Christ, they do not want to share in the oppression for Christ's sake, in fact they walk unworthy of their call. It also means that they do not allow the circumcision of the heart in themselves, which causes them to put their own flesh in the first place. And that is why it says "Their end is destruction". That does not mean that they are lost, but they will suffer a loss. They will miss their inheritance.

So it is wonderful that we immediately after this read, **in contrast** with the previous, and what goes for them who do follow Paul and are willing to go the path in humiliation, and who do take up the cross of Christ, who hold their own flesh as dead:

- "For **our** conversation **is** in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Fil.3:20).

Part 5 follows DV

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Walking Worthy (chapter 5)

Before we continue our Bible study I would like to say something in reply to a question, I recently received. The question was why I do spend quite some time on the Letter to the Hebrews, while it is actually not written to us. Since the Letter to the Hebrews is written during the days of Acts to the 12 tribes in scattering, and it would not be written to us and not go for us. Only the late letters of Paul really go for us. So far the comment I received.

I do understand this comment and it is partly true. The late letters which Paul wrote after the days of Acts are especially written for them who belong to the Body of Christ. And they are specifically meant to learn from. But when we do a Bible study we discover that God's rules and God's standards were actually the same in every period.

God always demands that people believe in Him and that they also grow in Him through a walk of faith. These are two things. Not only believing, but starting to believe must be followed by a walk in faith. And both these things have different results. Redemption follows believing, and walking in faith is followed by "a reward", which you could also call an inheritance. The redemption came into being through the completed work of Christ on the cross. That is fixed, no one can change it. No one can add to that completed work on the cross. Through redemption someone is born again and a birth can never be made undone. Once someone comes to faith and is redeemed through the blood of Christ, it means saved forever!

But then faith is followed by personal walk. And through that walk you can come in a position valid for that time. That position is not the same in the various periods of the Bible. And it is possible to lose that position. For example by giving up, as Demas did. He fell in love with the present time and left Paul. It became hard on him. He did not want to take up his cross for Christ's sake. That is what it is about in walking. And that is what Paul continuously hammers away at with his listeners. And that is why the Letter to the Hebrews is very important for us, the present-day believers, too. To **learn lessons from** it. That is what we also read in the Word. When we read about Israel, it says:

- "Now all these things happened to them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come." (1Kor.10:11).

And that is why we now continue the Bible study.

How will we/they escape?

The last time we ended reading Hebr.10:35-39, about becoming negligent. But if you draw back, as the Hebrews to whom he is writing to have done, "how will you escape?" "Then My soul has no pleasure in him."

"Escape", the word "escape" is also mentioned in Hebr.12 where Paul again speaks about speaking and hearing:

- " See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven." (Hebr.12:25). "See to it that you do not refuse to listen to Him who is speaking to you. For if they did not escape, because they refused to listen to him who warned them here on earth, how much less can we, if we reject Him who is from heaven?" (Hebr.12:25, Williams)

In fact this text is a little bit peculiar translated in the Williams Bible. There it says "how much less can we". For "how much less", the original text has the Greek word "mallon". In the AKJV this is translated as "much more", which is quite a difference and a much better translation. We find "mallon" 81 times in AKJV and everywhere it is translated with : "much more", for example: Matth.6:26, Matth.7:11 etc.

Where it concerns Hebr.12:25 "much more" comes out better, the Lord made His voice heard through Moses on earth, but it is **much more** when He made His voice heard through Him who is Christ from heaven. And if they (Israel) did not escape, when they refused Him who made His oracle heard on earth, **how much more** we, if we turn away from Him, who speaks from heaven." (Hebr.12:25).

And how does the Lord speak from heaven in the days of Acts? Through His apostles and through the apostle Paul. If you are dull in hearing, and you become so negligent, and you are actually a spiritual baby, and you have heard, but you think it is alright the way it is, and you rest on your laurels, how do you think to escape? If you will not get serious with such a salvation? Do you think you will automatically become a king-priest? That is what Paul says to the Hebrews. And this means, if we do understand, that we learn from it, Paul says to us.

Then what must they do? They have to leave that first teaching concerning Christ, and **go on to perfection** and fullness of age, without **laying again the foundation** (Hebr.6:1). And then we reach the foundation. Who or what is that foundation? And who laid that foundation? In a lot of cases Paul did:

- "According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon." (1Kor.3:10).

Fundamentals (2)

Years ago I bought an old farmhouse. That farmhouse was over 100 years ago built on peat, just like that. That was normal by then. Building on three meters of peat without foundation. I think you can understand what had happened to that farmhouse in those 100 years. It was subsided on all sides. But it was such a beautiful spot, and we really wanted to live there. So we had to lay a new foundation first, so the new house would not subside again.

Me and my wife were very happy when that foundation was laid, it was the basis for the new house.

Now I will try to sketch what the position of the Hebrews was, and how they acted according to Paul. The continuation of this story is fiction, but it shows how foolish people can sometimes be:

- “When the foundation for our new house was laid, we came back the next morning to look at our house and we found out the building workers had removed the foundation, for they thought it better to lay a new foundation. This went on for some time. Ever again removing the foundation and lay a new one.”

You will realize how foolish this story is. But in fact this was what the Hebrews were doing. “Without laying the foundation **again**.” says Paul. Then there are people who say: well we love that simple Gospel. Yes, but they are laying the foundation over and over again, again and again start at the beginning. And that is a very tiresome activity, for you will understand working like this will not get you any further. And usually that is the practice. You cannot get them to move, for they are dull and lazy. That is the problem and was the problem with the Hebrews. “But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.” (1Kor.3:10). They must build upon it. And on which must they build, and how should they build, according to the Word?

- “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1Kor.3:11-15).

Exactly the same we read in Hebrews 6:

- “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft on it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: But that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near to cursing; whose end is to be burned.”(Hebr.6:1-8)

This is a difficult passage which we will examine further in the continuation of this Bible study, since this part 5 is too short to figure it out.

So in Hebrews we find the same as in 1Kor.3. We read in Hebr.6:8 about burning and in 1Kor.3:13 about fire. And we must realize very well brothers and sisters, that it is in these text **absolutely not about some getting lost:**

- In 1Kor.3 we read in verse 12 that there is someone who builds on the foundation, on Christ. Is it possible for such a person to get lost if he believes in the completed work of the Lord on the cross? No, absolutely not, for Christ died for the sins of the entire world, and when a sinner accepts Christ, he/she is born again, and a birth can never be made undone. Then salvation in Christ Jesus is fixed.
- In Heb. 6:4 we read about people, who once were lightened, people who enjoyed the gift from heaven, people who had taken part of the Holy Spirit, and as last the good word of God and have tasted the powers of the ages to come. These are not unbelievers. And for them too it goes that they are saved people.

No, it is about how those people walk **after** they have started to believe. It is about what the individual of 1Kor. and Hebr. 6 builds on the foundation which he/she has built on Christ, that is tested by the Lord, that is tested by fire.

And here it is not about salvation any more, no, it is about works that should follow the salvation. And if these works turn out to be of wood, hay or straw, then they are obviously made by human hands and nothing will remain of it. But if these works turn out to be of gold, silver or precious stone, then these are obviously works which God accomplished through man. And only God's work stands firm!

Pitiful that often we see that people who have started to believe think: Wonderful, we are saved, Christ paid for our sins, it is finished, now we do not have to do anything anymore. People often do not realize that faith should be followed by works. The Word is clear that obviously the believer has to grow from newborn to maturity. And often they do not know how.

When we start working by ourselves, by doing our own works, we know how it ends up. We bring forth works of wood, hay and straw. And we have read that nothing remains of it. That cannot be but right, because in this respect man himself is up to no good. That is why it is written: "There is none that does good, no, not one." (Ps.14:3 and Rom.3:12).

Then how? How do we bring forth good works? That is only possible by letting God have His way in us. By standing in that disposition of Fil.2. There Paul says:

- "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Why God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Fil.2:5-9)

For me, this text is the heart of the Bible. This text shows the great love of Christ. He was God. But out of love for you and me, He took off all His glory, humiliated Himself

completely, to clear the way for you and me. Without that humiliation of Christ we would all have been beyond redemption. And what does our text say now? That that mind of humiliation, which was in Christ Jesus too, that that mind be IN you too. Is that possible? Yes it is, take a look at the apostle Paul, he went that road of humiliation too. Check Fil.3:4-8. He counted everything from his past loss for Christ, and left it behind, all his teachings, all his previous alleged good works etc. That is why Paul has the right to say:

- "Brothers, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an ensample."

Only that way, by leaving all the old things behind, and confidently go on in the new things which the Lord wants to give to us, we can become followers of Paul.

Only that way, by really counting all the old things loss, that mind can take shape in us. And only in that mind God can do His works of gold, silver, precious stones through us.

And what are God's works? What did the Lord Jesus Himself say?

- "Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give to you: for him has God the Father sealed. Then said they to him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent." (Joh.6:27-29).

Yes brothers and sisters, that means that if we trust Him, we not only believe His Word, but secure it in our hearts. And from His Word we will go and walk through His power. That we grow through His Word. Paul says to Timothy and it goes for us too:

- "And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works." (2Tim.3:15-17).

This is quite something. Scripture can make us wise. And everything man thinks out is up to nothing. We could better leave that behind, count it loss. For entire Scripture is God's truth. And only God's Word can teach us. Through God's Word we can refute the wisdom of the world, and only through His Word we are being raised in righteousness. And then the last verse:

- "That the man of God may be perfect (original text = "artios"), thoroughly furnished to all good works (= "exartizo").

In the AKJV it says: "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works." This means that you have to grow up and through God's work, through God's Word in him thoroughly finished as an adult. In this we see that it cannot be our own work, but exclusively God who wants to work in us. And that is only possible when we have that mind that we also find in Paul.

So we can, being busy with the Word, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God. Not by our own power, but by the power of Christ. You do have a task to prepare good works, to stand in those. Those works, which are prepared before the foundation of the world. And if you stand in the faith in that way, the good works will follow automatically. Christ will guide you in these. It is not like: What shall I do for the Lord? No, it is like: what will the Lord do through you. Just open up yourself, and if the works of God become public, then these are not made of wood, hay or straw, which might look beautiful on the outside, very beautiful wooden houses and I do not know what can be build of wood, but once discovered by fire nothing will remain. No, what is precious? That is that gold, silver and those precious stones.

These things we read in Hebr.6, where we read:

- "For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft on it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: But that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near to cursing; whose end is to be burned." (Hebr.6:7-8)

Our heart, which could be the earth where the rain comes on, where the Word falls in, and which drinks, will grow in faith, and thus we will produce fruits by the Word. But when we start to think up our own things, thorns and thistles will come forth, and they will burn just like the wood, hay an straw.

But fortunately it says something more in 1Kor.3:

- "but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

It is not about man suddenly not being saved any more, it is not like that, he is saved. Christ cannot deny Himself. His work on the cross stands firm. He who believes will live! God's grace stands firm.

Part 6 follows DV

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