

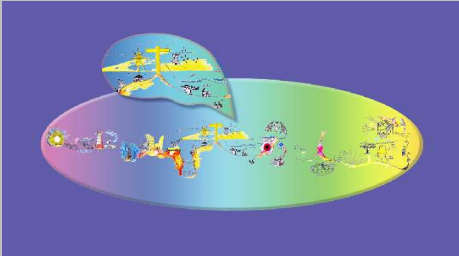
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We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 A DOOR TO APOSTASY 】

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord. See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no-one is sexually immoral or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned. "The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "One more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God accountably with reverence and awe, for our "God" is a consuming fire." HEBREW 12:14-29.

The Epistle to the Hebrews Chapter 12 starts with an exhortation to the Jewish Christians to endure faith in Christ and resist the temptation to turn back to Judaism (the ancient religious system) or to Judaize the gospel. It also culminates in the fifth and last warning against apostasy in the epistle. The epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E., at a time when Jewish Christians were being subjected to severe persecutions, leading many to contemplate reverting back to their old religious system. This also meant that a crunch time had come for them to completely separate themselves from the old system that God no longer recognised and thus, to act upon their faithfulness to the Lord Christ alone. Although the converts' temptation to attempt to reform the old system or to establish a new system is understandable, the author simply exhorted them to get out of a religious system and instead, directly enter the presence of God through Christ: ***'Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased'*** (Heb.13:12-16). In the preceding chapter, the author explored a record of men of faith in human history, making an emphatic point that it is faith in God's Word alone that justifies man before God and thus men have been saved by faith throughout all ages.

The opening verse of Hebrews 11 is the author's proper appreciation of faith: ***'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.'*** All those Old Testament men of God, having taken God in His Word, i.e., having trusted in what their natural senses could not comprehend, triumphed over the corrupt nature of the world. Being keenly aware of the imminence of the judgment that was to fall upon Jerusalem, and upon non-believers and unfaithful Jewish Christians, the author of the epistle directed the readers' attention to the numerous Old Testament saints who bore testimony to the power of faith. The exhortations were in fact messages of encouragement to those who were under trial and who were almost tempted to drift away from the steadfast faith in Christ: ***'Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.'*** ***'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'*** ***'Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.'*** ***'Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?...God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.'*** The author is certain that discipline and punishment are divine methods to educate and instruct God's true children. If a backslider would continue to be disobedient and persistent in self-will, he or she will be dealt with by God's ever chastening hand as His loving rod. On the other hand, it is a solemn truth that only judgment is reserved for the apostate and those who oppose God. The many sufferings, misery and struggle that characterise Christian lives may be taken as evidence of one's status as God's true sons. God patiently teaches us of our feebleness, unworthiness and powerlessness through difficulty so that we will be humbled to wholeheartedly trust in God alone, the source of salvation, in all our ways.

In the first paragraph of the warning section from Hebrews Chapter 12 (the fifth warning in the whole epistle to the Hebrews) quoted at the beginning of this letter, the author stresses two things; to live in peace with all men, and to be holy because God is holy. If any Christian fails to live in peace with others and in holiness towards God, he or she would betray their profession and expose his or her non-regenerated godless nature. The Old Testament figure Esau is used as a reminder of a godless person, who put priority in his own physical gratification rather than in spiritual blessing from God. When he bitterly sought to recoup his folly with tears and pleading, it was too late to reverse what had already divinely been declared. It is simply because ***'God's gifts and his call are irrevocable'*** (Ro.11:29). Esau's example directs us to a stern warning that once a God-given inheritance has been deliberately rejected, there can be no further opportunity of regaining it and such a man will permanently be left condemned. As such a man could cause perversity and be a defiling influence too all around him, the whole community is warned to be watchful lest any of the Christian congregation should be injured.

In the second paragraph of the fifth warning passage, a sharp contrast between the two covenants; the Sinaitic- and the New- Covenants is drawn. Although the Israelites boldly but readily made a declaration to observe the commandments in order to enter God's blessing under the Old Covenant, the

stern reality was that even mere beasts were instantly victimised owing to man's sin and that even Moses resigned himself to trembling at the thought of drawing near to God under such a commandment that ***"If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned."***

In contrast to this fearful Old-Covenant, under the New Covenant all those who believe in Jesus Christ are able to enter God's blessing, entirely based on Christ's atoning death on the cross. There are various privileges under the New Covenant. (1) Mount Zion: Christians are approaching Mount Zion (the mount of grace), and not Mount Sinai (the mount of law). (2) The heavenly Jerusalem: Christian's portion is not to be in this world but to reign with Christ from the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, the New Jerusalem as Christ's bride. (3) Thousands upon thousands of angels: Christians will be joyfully and blessedly associated with the entire gathering of elect angels of God. (4) The church of the firstborn (plural in the original Greek): Christians will join Christ (the firstborn) as the entire church (the church of the firstborn ones). (5) The judge of all men: Christians will stand in God's holy presence as the completely forgiven. (6) The spirits of righteous men made perfect: Christians will be mingled with those Hebrew saints whose spirits would continually be conscious and alive in the presence of God. (7) Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant: Compared with the mediator Moses in the Old Testament time, Christ is the infallible mediator, the Son of God who enabled us sinners to be reconciled to God the Father. (8) The sprinkled blood that speaks a better sacrifice than the blood of Abel: The first martyr Abel cried from the ground for vengeance, whereas Christ not merely died as a martyr but His blood was shed for the remission of sins of many. Christ's perfect redemption completely settled man's sin question.

The third and last paragraph of the warning passage speaks of a solemn warning of the danger of turning away from the revelation from heaven, i.e., a warning of refusing Christ Himself. If God severely judged those Israelites who refused the revelation given in the Old Covenant at Sinai, how can Christians escape His judgment if they refuse God's grace in Christ, once the final revelation was spoken, as the declared in the opening verse of Hebrews: ***'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.'*** The same God whose voice shook the earth by the earthly manifestation at Sinai has declared in prophecy to shake not only the earth but also the heavens once more in order that ***'what cannot be shaken may remain.'*** The declaration means that the present transient and temporal order will pass and the eternal order alone will stand after being revealed with His consuming fire. Christians are to be destined to belong to this eternal order. However, only those who live a holy life will remain and see the Lord, ***'receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.'***

In the last chapter of Hebrews the author calls two essential things by which Christians should be characterised; brotherly practical love for each other, i.e., "philadelphia" in the Greek word and hospitality to strangers, including visiting the persecuted Christians in need, offering accommodation to those fleeing from persecution and also maintaining fellowship with their fellow Christians in prison in a loving manner, as the Old Testament saints showed hospitality to everyone, consequently to even angels without knowing it. The biblical (Hebrew) way of love, different from the Greek way, starts with a decision of the will, which then goes on to affect the person's action and then feeling. Our decision to be obedient to God's Word naturally leads us to brotherly love "philadelphia" and eventually to deeper godly love from our hearts, "agape," as Peter explored: ***'Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart' (1Pe.1:22)***. At the time when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, many leaders were already imprisoned for the sake of Christ and no-one knew when his or her own turn would come. Most of the apostolic company had already been called home to heaven or worked abroad or were about to be martyred. The period covered by the epistle is thought to be somewhere between 60 and 70 C.E., during which Judaism was permitted by the Romans while the Christian faith was illegal. Under such circumstances, in the midst of increasing pressure and terrible opposition to Jewish Christians, the only way to maintain their identity with Christ was to go outside the camp of Judaism. It meant a complete separation from the ancient system. In a while, a time would come when there would be no sacred city, no temple, no sacrifice in Jewish altars and no Jewish priesthood. Acknowledging the time correctly, by abiding in biblical truth, Jewish Christians had to stand firm in Christ. (1) First, they should not have fallen back into Judaism, for a false sense of peace and security of compromise. Even a small step forward to compromising on biblical truth, influenced by false teachings and Jewish ceremonial food

laws connected with the temple sacrifice was a door to apostasy. Their heart should be established with grace, but not with meats. (2) Secondly, Christians should have been reminded of the fact that their altar and service were heavenly now that Christ had died, had risen and now intercedes for them at the right hand of the Father. (3) Thirdly, all Christians are now holy priests and continually offer to God **‘a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name’**, and also, all Christians are now royal priests and serve others to please God. Thus, Christians participate in priesthood both god-wardly and man-wardly as a “believer-priest” who gives a pastoral care for the blessing of all. (4) Fourthly, Christians show the responsibility of the members of the Lord’s flock by obedience, submission and prayer to leaders. On the other hand, the leader’s responsibility is to keep watch over the flock and to be prepared to give an account of his ministry.

As examined above and in the previous letters, the Epistle to the Hebrews continually gives solemn warnings of apostasy to the believers living in the last days as well. It teaches what we must continue to abide in firmly and perseveringly to the end. The answer is of course, in Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. However, man’s history has witnessed the necessity of such warnings. The danger of apostasy that a Jewish Christian turning back to his old ritualistic form and liturgical systems, i.e., Judaism led by pious emotions, natural sentiments and religious superstitions, posed in those days is still a danger for us today. Man’s carnal nature would have it that even believers that have tasted the abundance of Christ will soon tire of the gospel truth and exchange it for something in accordance with their own taste, ideas and inventions. One of the currently growing and influential movements amongst the Christian circle is the Faith Movement, which some theologians are observing negatively. It would be worth briefly examining a facet of such a controversial movement.

The following is a half true and half untrue teaching supported by Christian triumphalists, who advocate the “prosperity gospel.” Would readers recognise a subtle distortion in their teaching from the biblical truth that the Lord taught? They teach the following: ‘At your new birth something went on *inside* you. Instantaneously! Out from you went that old satanic nature. And into you came the very life and nature of God. God created you a brand new creature, a new creation. The man on the inside—the real you, which is a spirit man—has already *become* a new man in Christ.’ A leader of such the Faith Movement emphasises believers’ positive confession and its commanding power: “ ‘I’ bring my body into subjection to ‘me’. I refuse to walk as mere men. I am changed. I will walk as a spiritual man. ‘I’ (the man on the inside) will dominate my being. Now I have what God says I have. Now! The name of Jesus belongs to me. Whatever I demand in the Name of Jesus, he will do it. I will release the Love nature within me. I am a Love person. I am of good cheer’ (Reference to a leader of the Rhema Church by M. Green, *The Empty Cross of Jesus*, p216). Such Faith Movement teaching is sweeping across the whole world very successfully with its methods of “positive thinking” favourably adopted in the secular world. As the apostle Paul, who was in prison, stated that under whatever circumstances and ways adopted, if the truth is preached he can only be thankful: **‘it is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill...but what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice’ (Phi.1:15-18, Line added)**, the Lord may use some truths taught by such Faith Movement leaders to encourage people, but there may be adverse consequences. The reason why a Faith gospel is spreading so powerfully worldwide may be because it appeals to man’s carnal desires and self-centred emotions.

We need to watch out that we don’t fall into unbiblical extremism, exaggeration and emotional experimentalism. We should firmly be guarded by God’s Word alone and be weary of “Rhema” words (words claimed to be of divine origin) by which a lot of Faith leaders are led. It is said that Martin Luther was “bounded by the Scriptures” to maintain the principles of the Reformation unless he were “convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures or evident reason.” Following such Luther’s stance and also Jesus’ conclusion in the ‘parable of the rich man and Lazarus’ that ‘Moses and the Prophets’, i.e., the whole Hebrew Bible alone is enough to lead sinners to repentance and salvation, the Word should stand above all experience and extra-biblical claims to divine revelation. To put it differently, the Bible alone must be our standard and all new teachings, interpretations, prophecies and supernatural phenomena should be thoroughly examined before blindly accepting them so as to protect the Church from heresy. Fixing our eyes upon Christ, once again we should be alert to the fact that there is so much Christian teaching on victory, success, growth and prosperity around us nowadays, which is somewhat in contrast to the true biblical encouragement of endurance and exhortation of humility.