

The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

**A Devotional Exposition of the Book of Hebrews --
The Holiness Epistle**

By Blake E. Jones

The Heartbeat of Hebrews

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Preface

While pastoring my first church, another minister and I were both called to counsel a very disturbed young lady. She was pitifully entangled in a cult-like following that taught some very strange and absurd prophecies supposedly based on the book of Revelation. I recall with some dubious humour, that while we endeavoured to help this girl out of her wretched confusion, my pastor friend made a rather bold declaration. He announced that he was an authority on the book of Revelation or at least on its prophetic content. I make no such claim with regard to the study at hand and the epistle of Hebrews.

However, I join the ranks of the burning hearts as I wend my way down the trails of truth found in this majestic book. I lean afresh on my great Priest of the Highest Order as, through His Spirit, He conducts me on this quest. The blessed Holy Spirit is my instructor and I am His pupil. May I be faithful to Him and the Scripture He has inspired.

Imploring the help of such a wonderful Guide, I step out to commence this devotional exposition. And yet I must humbly acknowledge that in my humanity, and with my acute limitations, my way may be very faltering, my perception somewhat clouded and my vision painfully nearsighted. All of this I lay before my great Tutor.

My only prayer is that truth will burn in your heart as it has in mine and that we will be able to look back over this exposition, together, knowing that God has "opened to us the Scriptures".

End Notes

The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Introduction

The Epistle to the Hebrews, as a part of the inspired and inerrant Word, was conceived in the heart of God, birthed through a human author and transmitted to us as a full, eloquent and impassioned classic. To read it is to be intrigued; to study it is to find a fire kindled within one's bosom; and further searching will bring the soul to full blaze.

The opening verses set the tone, foundation and cornerstone for this book in the person of Jesus Christ. He who is the transcendent Prophet and Priest is worthy of man's highest loyalty and devotion, and holds unparalleled credentials to be man's glorious Saviour and Sanctifier. In brief, Hebrews is an unfolding documentary on who Christ is, what He has accomplished and what He thus offers to humanity.

Hebrews 7:25, stands out as the logician's answer and triumphal pronouncement. Here the key verse declares, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them". The one word "able" wraps up all that Christ can provide through the deity of His person, the merits of His passion and the power of His perpetual intercession. In this unquestionable ability of Jesus, there is salvation from the worst of sins and from the deepest stains of sin's depravity. It is a cure and remedy for the farthest extent of the malady of sin. This is the throbbing pulse of Hebrews.

G. D. Watson feels that the book of Hebrews "stands out pre-eminently above all the other epistles in one particular feature, and that is, it is crowded with arguments and illustrations from the Old Testament to prove Christian perfection".¹ It is noted by Orten Wiley that "the symbolism used in this Epistle is not concerned primarily with what we call conversion, for it is not addressed to men in their sins, urging them to accept pardon through faith in Christ, but to those who are already Christians. It is concerned with the second stage of crisis in the work of salvation, the entrance of the sons of God into the fullness of the new covenant."²

The letter is directed to a people who seem to be drawn back to the law and Moses; back to an inferior system; back to the shadows and silhouettes of an old covenant. They had endured a "great fight of affliction" (10:32) after their inception into the faith of Jesus Christ. However, they lack the grounding of soul rest as believers. Somewhere in their being is an unsettled, uneasy nature that would cloud the verities of Christ and His claims. Dear Hebrews, don't give up all you have gained in the Son of God. Don't go back to an old and unprofitable system. Go forward in Christ. He is your life! He is able to care for that unsettled spirit that drags its feet against spiritual progress and is bent on wandering when backward glances are taken.

Who are these dear people to whom this "word of exhortation" (13:22) is written? It seems very evident that they are converts out of Judaism and thus Hebrews as the title expresses. They are not being taught Old Testament doctrine but rather taught "from" Old Testament dogma. They are presumed acquainted with Mosaic rituals and systems; especially that of the priesthood. To them the worthies of faith are not unknown and unfamiliar, but rather, the writer lists them as if they were "old acquaintances". These are surely Hebrews who have embraced the Christ of the New Covenant.

The harder question to answer is, "Where are these believers?" Scholars are not all in agreement as to their geographic location when this letter is directed to them. The second last sentence is a salutation from the people of Italy. Is the writer in Italy and sending greetings from the Christians who surround him? Or is the writer in some other place and now, writing back, he mentions a displaced group of Italian believers who had been former residents of Italy? Some feel that Hebrew Christians in Judea were being addressed by this letter, and others that it was sent to Hebrew Christians in or near

Rome.

The perennial question and quandary of the Book of Hebrews, however, is related to its authorship. Who wrote this great epistle? Let us first note some facts that seem to be evident from the writer's correspondence. Without question, this person is profoundly convinced of the authority and pre-eminence of Christ. He has a yearning heart for Hebrew people and may possibly feel a kindred spirit in his own claim to Hebrew lineage. This writer possesses a unique and clear understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures, as if he had been steeped in them for a lifetime. This author is familiar with "Brother Timothy" as are the recipients of this letter. Finally, it is noted that the writer is schooled and graced with a "high Greek" style that sets him apart in his literary manner.

For many people, though the Scripture does not ascribe the authorship to any name, Paul is the indisputable writer. The Authorized Version ascribes the epistle to him in its title caption. Some have worked at great length to compare word phrases in Hebrews to statements made in other epistles that Paul wrote. On the other hand, the manner and formation of argument is claimed by many to carry no Pauline flavour. His style of Greek, in the epistles confirmed to be his own, is different from the style of the book of Hebrews. To me that seems rather conclusive though certainly not final. It has been conjectured that perhaps someone else wrote for Paul and used their own Greek style, but again, that is only a guess.

Barnabas is another name offered for study in this regard. He was a Levite and thus fills the quest for Old Testament proficiency. His home was Cyprus where this "high Greek" was their mark and name. Further, Mr. Barclay notes that "Barnabas is called a son of consolation; the Greek word is paraklesis; and the Letter to the Hebrews calls itself a word of paraklesis (13:22), a word of exhortation or consolatio."³ Could this colaborer of Paul's have written this profound epistle?

Martin Luther, in a passing remark while preaching from Corinthians, attributed the book of Hebrews to Apollos. Apollos was a Jew who came to Ephesus during Aquilla and Priscilla's stay in that city. He was an "eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). He taught with fervency but knew only the baptism of John. This precious lay couple, Mr. and Mrs. Aquilla, took him to themselves (probably to their home) and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:28). His Alexandrian background would explain his proficient manner and style of Greek writing.

However, since the Scripture is silent here, as intrigued as we may be by these possibilities, we must say with Origen, "Who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews, only God knows for certain".⁴

To our glad hearts we clasp this inspired book. It is none other than God speaking to us through a prepared human instrument. Its words are to be heeded and its doctrine of heart cleansing to be experienced in this life.

End Notes

1. G. D. Watson, Pure Gold, (Shoals, Indiana: Old Paths Tract Society, 1987) p. 11.
2. H. Orten Wiley, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1959) p. 13.
3. William Barclay, The Letter to the Hebrews, (Philadephia: The Westminster Press, 1957) p. xxii.
4. Barclay, p. xxi.

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Chapter 1

HEBREWS CHAPTER I

Christ, The Supreme Prophet (1:1-3)

1. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the brightness of [his] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Without so much as a hint of salutatory greetings, the author plunges into this regal discourse to the Hebrews. Our attention is at once focused on the high and lofty One. The faithful God who has so perfectly planned and prescribed the way of salvation has declared His purpose to us through His Son. This ultimate revelation has not come through a faltering, human prophet, but by the God-Prophet, Jesus Christ. Marcus Dods has compared those of the Old Testament to "men listening to a clock striking, always getting nearer the truth but obliged to wait till the whole was heard".¹ Now we are privileged to have heard the whole story as it is embodied in, declared by, and proven through the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God.

However, the implication is very clear. The Son far transcends all of the former prophets. He is of a different class entirely. He possesses a "transcendent glory in three basic relationships"² according to Raymond Pollard's threefold trilogy of the glorious distinctives of Christ.

I. Christ's Relation To The Universe

First, we understand that our heavenly Messenger surpasses the prophets in His relation to the universe. He is the Creator "by whom also He (God) made the worlds" (v. 2). John proclaimed that "all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). No prophet could have ever claimed such power or expertise. This blessed Son spoke and worlds appeared, stars began to twinkle and birds began to sing.

The great Creator is also the Sustainer of the Universe, "upholding all things by the word of His power" (v. 3). Mr. Pollard writes, "By Him the materials were called into being and arranged in comely order. By Him also they are preserved from running into confusion, or reverting back to nothing."³ In Colossians 1:17 we discover that "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist". This simply means that Christ is holding things together by His powerful word. Peter echoes the same truth saying, "By the word of God the heavens were of old" and "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire" (II Peter 3:5,7). The smallest atom is being sustained by Jesus. Dr. Dale Yocum has so aptly underscored this by describing the nucleus of the atom. There we find positively charged protons that naturally tend to repel one another and push apart. What keeps that nucleus intact? It is Christ our Sustainer who is holding the tiniest atom together as well as our vast universe.

In Christ's connection to the universe, He is also its Possessor; for God has appointed Him "heir of all things" (v. 2). The term "heir" is to be understood "in relation to the possession, as marking the fullness of right, resting upon a personal connection, and not, as implying a passing away and a succession" according to Mr. Westcott.⁴ Jesus holds full right to all things for He is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the redeeming Possessor. Oh, what glory is invested in our Saviour as He sits Sovereign of the Universe.

II. Christ's Relation to the Father

Our second consideration is the transcendent glory of Christ in relation to God the Father. He is the Son (v. 2). What an exalted place Jesus holds. The Jews understood the deep implications of our Lord's claim to be the Son of God. It threw them into a frenzy for they perceived divinity to be wrapped up in the claim --and so it was! The point is simply that the Divine One has come to communicate with humanity. All He is and all He has said is to be given reverent attention and worship.

The Son is the Manifestation of God, "the brightness of His glory" (v.3). If we were called upon to explain the splendour of our God's great glory, I suppose that most of us would give an impressive list of lofty adjectives. Perhaps we would suggest descriptions such as regal, awesome, unapproachable, eternal and dazzling. Actually, the author declares that it is the Son, Jesus Christ, who is the brightness (radiance, N.A.S.) of God's glory. It is He who radiates and personifies the bright effulgence of God. Little wonder then, that John the Revelator tells us that the heavenly "city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). Just as light rays streaming from the sun reveal the sun itself, so Christ is the radiance of unapproachable light. Adam Clarke helps to explain this when he writes that "Christ is thus of the same essence with the Father, yet He is a distinct person from the Father; as the splendour of the sun, though of the same essence, is distinct from the sun itself, though each is essential to the other".⁵ Therefore Jesus plainly says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

As we move on in verse three, the Son is further shown to be the Counterpart of God, the copy, the duplicate, the "express image of His person" (v. 3). As such Mr. Lenski states, "The Son is God in essence and has every divine attribute".⁶ Not only is He outwardly demonstrating God's glory, but Christ's very being is "the exact representation of His (God's) nature" (N.A.S). What clearer statement could be made as to Christ's divinity and the fact that He is coeternal with the Father?

III. Christ's Relation to the Church

Finally, we see the great glory of the Son in His wonderful relationship to the church. He is the church's Prophet --the God-Prophet. God has "spoken unto us by His Son" (v. 2). What an honour is ours; what a privilege. God has spoken! The eternal Word has condescended to speak to spiritual wreckage called humanity. His message has pointed man back to a yearning God. The Father sent Him to bear that message. Glory to God.

This heavenly Prophet did not stop with just an announcement of God's mercy, but proceeded, on behalf of the sinners of Adam's race, to act as our Priest. "He ...Himself purged our sins" (v. 3) when He offered His own body as the sacrifice of Calvary. Expiation has been provided through the blood sacrifice of Divinity. Purification for our tainted nature was made available in this purging. Westcott notes that "Christ Himself, in His own Person, made the purification: He did not make it as something distinct from Himself, simply provided by His power".⁷ He is the church's Priest and its perfect sacrifice. Hallelujah to the Lamb!

Having satisfied the justice of Almighty God, the Son "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High" (v. 3). This sitting in glory certainly leads us to envision a King on his throne. The church claims Christ as its Head and King. As we proceed in the epistle to the Hebrews, a warm welcome is made to us to enter this throne room of God's presence. Oh, that the church of Jesus Christ would know afresh the transcendent glory of the Heavenly Prophet, Priest and King.

Oh, that we would fall on our faces before Him and proclaim Him Lord and King of our lives. He is worthy for He far surpasses any messenger that our globe has ever welcomed.

Our regal God-Prophet has spoken; and His relation to the universe, to God the Father, and to the church has placed His message as the message of all messages, the revelation of all revelations and the proclamation of all proclamations. To follow any added revelation is to embrace the spurious. To revert to Judaism and the Old Testament prophets is like living in a dark room with a flickering candle when, in fact, the shutters could be thrown open allowing the glory of the noonday sun to pour in.

The heart-warming story has been told of a native who heard of Jesus for the first time at a mission station. However, when he got back to his distant home, he had forgotten the wonderful name of the Supreme One. What a loss he felt. Thus, he walked the weary miles back to the missionary. "Please tell me His name again," was the substance of his earnest inquiry. Oh that our world might know that name that is above all names --the name Jesus Christ.

Christ, Superior To The Angels (1:4-14)

To the Jewish intelligence, the angels were in a class next to God. Therefore if Christ the Son is "so much better than the angels" (v. 4), it naturally must be concluded that He is God. The theme of the remainder of this chapter is that Jesus is far superior to the angels in general, as well as to any particular rank of archangels. This superiority is demonstrated in five distinct qualifications.

I. Christ, Superior by Name (1:4,5)

4. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Angelic beings are not being belittled or demoted in this discourse, and yet, Michael himself does not bear the lofty title of "Son". There is but one "only begotten Son" and He is with God and He is God. The first question in verse five is taken from the Old Testament and applies to the Messiah and not to angels. The quotation is drawn from Psalm 2:7 where Mr. Lenski notes that "the everlasting King Himself ...quotes Yahweh as having said to Him: 'Son of mine art Thou'".⁸ In Acts 4:24-28 the apostles certify that this Psalm is Messianic in nature.

The second question in verse 5 is taken from II Samuel 7:14 where Solomon is being addressed. However, the 16th verse points to another Son, an eternal Solomon, whose "throne shall be established for ever". The application, simply stated, is that never has God directed a statement of Sonship to an angel. Only Christ bears the name, Son, and in that name is deity, lordship, sovereignty, and majesty. The angels bear an excellent name, but this name by far excels theirs.

II. Christ, Superior by Worship (1:6)

6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

At Christ's first advent, the angels sang over the Judean hillsides their songs of worship and adoration. They were merely the heralds of the great Messiah's birth. However, a very different occasion is being spoken of here as Psalm 97:7, the basis for this verse, suggests. The term "first begotten" is understood differently by various scholars. Some feel it has reference to the place of prominence that was enjoyed by the firstborn son of a Jewish family, and thus bespeaks pre-eminence and not time or even birth order. On the other hand, others understand "first begotten" to apply to the

resurrection of Christ as the forerunner of a great host who have died in faith and await the resurrection of their body. At any rate, Christ the resurrected Lord is to appear "again" and at that occasion, the second advent, God the Father has given command that the angels are to worship Him. This very act of worship verifies the superiority of the One being revered.

III. Christ, Superior by Office (1:7-9)

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son [he saith], Thy throne, O God, [is] for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness [is] the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, [even] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Here is a beautiful lesson in contrasts. On the one hand angels fill the role or office of messengers and executives of the divine will. In antithesis to these heavenly servants, we see the Son occupying His throne and holding a sceptre of righteousness. This combination of throne and sceptre sets forth the dignity and authority of our Lord. Verse 9 recalls the inaugural anointing of the Old Testament kings and pictures the Father anointing the Son as the King of Righteousness. What a contrast is painted for us as again Christ is beyond question the superior One and very God Himself.

IV. Christ, Superior by Character (1:10-12)

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:
11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

In one grand sweep from creation to the creation's destruction, we are shown the glorious immutability of Jesus Christ. He is today the same as He was when He "laid the foundations of the earth" and laid out the heavens, including angelic beings. He has not diminished in strength or character. He is still, and always will be, a lover of righteousness and a hater of iniquity. On the other hand, we learn from the Scriptures that the angels were given a probationary period in which some of them chose to embrace rebellion and evil. Following their choice, they were fixed in an unchanging position as either good or evil. However, we can cling to One who has been unchanging in His holy character for all eternity.

Adam Clarke made an interesting note in regard to the wearing out of our world and the actual etymology of the word "world". He propounds that "our word 'world' is a contraction of 'wear old'; a term by which our ancestors expressed the sentiment contained in this verse".⁹ Why, oh why, do we hang on so feverishly to the material things around us that will decay, wear old, and someday all be folded up and changed? May the clasp of our soul be on the hand of the Unchanging One.

V. Christ, Superior by Victory (1:13,14)

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

A rhetorical question sums up this section with a resounding "no" understood as the answer. Never has God spoken to an angel with such a celebrated pronouncement of victory. Verse 13 refers back to Psalm 110:1 where "the LORD" (Yahweh, the self-existent One) speaks these words to the "Lord" (Adonai, the sovereign Master). This is

understood as the Father talking to the Son. The Father seats Christ, for He has victoriously accomplished His work as Redeemer of lost mankind. This is not merely a passive arrangement. Mr. Lenski points out that "this sitting is the exercise of power and authority".¹⁰ He is seated until someday a grand display of His triumph over sin, death, hell and the devil is exhibited before a trembling world. Ancient kings who succeeded in battle placed their foot on the neck of the displaced ruler as a mark of their victory. Jesus, too, will someday return riding a stomping steed and all of His enemies will be placed under His feet.

Further argument is not necessary to verify the superiority of Christ to the angels. Their highest function is to serve their Creator and "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (v. 14). In apposition to Jesus, they appear far inferior even though they are heavenly beings in a class above humanity.

In looking back over this opening chapter of Hebrews, Mr. Lenski notes "that verses 4-14 are the Old Testament exposition and elaboration of verses 1-3. To believe Jesus means only to believe the Old Testament prophecies."¹¹ Gazing up the path of unfolding truth, we discover that chapter one has laid a perfect foundation for the key verse of this epistle --chapter 7, verse 25. It is the transcendent Son who is able to save to the uttermost; and why is He thus able? First, because He is the supreme Prophet; and second, because He is superior even to angels. As such, Christ is none other than God Himself and well able to accomplish this wonderful salvation.

It seems that a great emphasis should be placed on this transcending Son in the church world. After all, who else is left to honour if the highest One is ignored. Adapted from the Presbyterian Journal comes a pithy observation:

The Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco recently added a distinguished Jewish rabbi, Abraham L. Feinberg, to its staff as full time counsellor.

When reporters asked the rabbi, "Isn't it difficult for you to work in obviously Christian surroundings?" he replied, "Not at all, because in this church Christ is never emphasized!" In commenting on the appointment, the pastor said, "It is a great step forward into the ecumenical movement!"

When any church ceases to make Christ preminent and proclaim Him as the only way to God, it ceases to be a New Testament Christian church, and has no heart-transforming Gospel to offer to a morally corrupt and spiritually confused world. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).¹²

End Notes

1. Quoted in Charles Carter, The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972) Vol. VI, p. 32.

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3. Pollard, p. 5.

4. B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952) p. 8.

5. Adam Clarke, Clarke's Commentary, (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press) Vol. VI, p.687.

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10. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966) p. 61.
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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 2

HEBREWS CHAPTER II

An Earnest Exhortation (2:1-4)

It has been truly said that the work of the Holy Spirit is to point to Christ. Surely chapter one has been an example of this as the Blessed Inspirer of Scripture declared the pre-eminence of the Saviour-Son. It should not come to us as a surprise then, that there breaks in here a keen warning from the yearning heart of God. Oh, that Christ would be heeded. Oh, that men might not so easily slip away from their moorings and be lost.

I. The Subtlety of Drifting (2:1)

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.

Since the message of salvation that has been given to us is God's message, delivered and secured by His Son, we are not dealing with the mere whim of man. "More earnest heed" must be given to this gospel; heed to embrace it as our lifeline and heed to never carelessly let it slip from us. "The idea is not that of simple forgetfulness, but of being swept along past the sure anchorage which is within reach", says Mr. Westcott, for "we are all continuously exposed to the action of currents of opinions, habit, action, which tend to carry us away from the position which we ought to maintain".¹ Stop, Reader Friend, and examine the shoreline for landmarks of truth lest you drift on by them. Do you today embrace the message of Christ as wholeheartedly as in years gone by?

Duane Maxey shares the following warning:

"I read of...when Perry's expedition was traveling across an ice-flow toward the North Pole, they traveled for some time, thinking that they were making progress northward. But, to their dismay, when they finally reckoned their position by the polestar, they discovered that the entire ice-flow had been drifting south! Had they thought to read their position by the polestar, instead of judging their position by that beneath, before, behind, and around them, they would have discovered their drift earlier! What a perfect picture of what happens to entire holiness denominations. They begin to drift in relationship to our spiritual "PoleStar," Jesus Christ. But, because they are all together in a group, and take their eyes off of Jesus, they measure their progress by unscriptural, unreliable methods, and they fail to detect their subtle, but often fatal, drift away from Christ and toward the world and hell!"²

II. The Danger of Drifting (2:2-4)

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard [him];

4 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?

If even the words spoken by angels demanded strict obedience from the hearer, how would anyone expect to escape the consequences of neglecting "so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord"? What an awful thing to fall into the hands of a God who has been carelessly ignored. This whole concept is given added weight by the fact that God has miraculously authenticated the message of those who carried on Christ's ministry.

McCartney declares that "more drift out of Christian life than fall out...In life there are treacherous currents which get the soul in their grip and slowly, but surely, carry it toward the shores of ruin and wreck. Every drift ends in a wreck. When one awakens to the fact that he has been drifting, that there is not the same moral resistance, not the same eager purpose to know the truth and to do it, then is the time to put the trumpet to the lips."³

III. The Unreasonableness of Drifting (2:3)

The great salvation that Christ preached embodies all that the atonement provided. First, it offers a judicial pardon from acts of sin; and second, a cleansing from the nature or element of inherited sin. It is thus, "the answer to every human problem", as Orten Wiley states it.⁴ How many have struggled through life without help, without hope and without salvation, only to find themselves dashed on the rocks of eternal despair and doom -and all this because they rejected the solution. They drifted right past the Saviour and His safe harbour of salvation. It is brutish and unthinkable to ignore the claims of a dying Saviour and to neglect the anchor of the vessel of our souls.

May we not be caught up in the subtle, dangerous and unreasonable drift. A. F. Harper has drawn the following picture for us:

"Uncertainty in our relationship to God comes most often when we grow content or careless. This uncertainty is God's way of protecting us from carelessly drifting away from the presence of His Holy Spirit. Spiritual uncertainty is like the silent red light on the instrument panel of an automobile. It flashes its warning to tell us that the oil is low and there is imminent danger to the motor. The Bible tells us that we must pay close attention to God's silent warning lest we drift away from all that He has given to us in this 'so great salvation'."⁵

The Accomplishments of the Incarnation (2:5-18)

Introduction (2:5-9)

5. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing [that is] not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Following the impassioned exhortation in the opening of chapter 2, the writer flashes our attention back to the angels; but only as a springboard into the great doctrine of the incarnation of Christ. The rank or classification of the angels has already been shown to be far inferior to that of Christ. Now we see man ranked "a little lower than the angels"; yet "crowned with glory and honour" in relation to the natural world. Whatever glory Adam knew in subjecting creation under his feet before the fall, is not here the crucial point. Nor is the potent consideration the future honour of those who will someday reign as kings with Christ. The case of mankind in its fallen state is the problem at hand.

A quotation is given from Psalm 8:4-6 in which we are made to know that God is first, mindful of man and second, set on visiting him. The picture before us is that of a miserable, frail, sinful, meritless, wretch of humanity caught in the grips of mortality and eternal perdition. What a contrast to the devilish teaching of the new age movement that claims a measure of deity for all of us. This orphaned waif, sitting in the squalor of his terminal disease called sin, has reason to look up with hope and expectancy. The One who made the heavens, the moon and the stars has a plan for him and will personally make His appearance to effect that plan. But what a condescension! Surely Zacheus must have felt a measure of the wonder of this when Jesus told him that He was going to Zacheus' home.

In all this discussion, then, "we see Jesus"! He stands out in His incarnation, "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." Phillipians 2:5-8 provides a wonderful commentary on Christ's self-humbling that made Him "in the likeness of men". Josh McDowell writes, "Jesus was the God-man. He was just as much man as if he had never been God and just as much God as if he had never been man".⁶ Christ stands out, too, because through His accomplishments, God has crowned Him "with glory and honour" and "highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

In the remaining verses of chapter 2, Jesus is identified, in His relationship to the believer, through His accomplishments as the incarnate Son of God. These six glorious aspects could never have been realized outside of the wonder of Emmanuel in visible, human form. Oh the soul thrilling message of God-incarnate --God, in human flesh.

I. Jesus, the Captain of Our Salvation (2:10)

10. For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

The underlying purpose for God's visit "in fashion as a man", was that He might "taste death for every man". That was the only way to bring "many sons unto glory". Dr. Dale Yocum states that "God was not at all taken by surprise when man sinned and fell. Before it ever happened, He anticipated that possibility and fully prepared a plan of recovery."⁷ Christ tasted death and suffered for us by appointment. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the Greek there is an article preceding the word "death" in verse 9, and the word "suffering" in verse 10. Jesus tasted "the death" and "the suffering" for the fallen of Adam's race. The ultimate, the very limit of justice, was satisfied in the sacrificial death of Christ. It was the Godhead's plan, even before " the foundation of the world", that the Leader, the Prince, the Captain and Author of Salvation would thus suffer to make redemption's plan valid and operable.

To the faint-hearted Jew and to any anxious believer, the message is clear and assuring. Jesus is the only One upon Whom you can trust for salvation; and if you cling to Him in faith and obedience, He will lead you safely to glory.

II. Jesus, Our Sanctifier (2:11a)

11a For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [are] all of one:

Just as the "great salvation" encompasses the whole scope of the atonement's provisions, so too, the word "sanctify" embodies more than a simple setting apart unto God. Jesus is the Sanctifier in view of the fact that His blood has

purchased expiation for sins as well as cleansing "from all sin" (I John 1:7). Wiley says, "The 'sanctified' are those who have received the atonement, which in its fullness includes the forgiveness of sins, the impartation of the new life in regeneration; the purification of the heart and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in entire sanctification; and in the resurrection of the just, the glorification of His people with Himself".⁸ Therefore, God offers something more than a "bandage" to cover the "sore of sin"; His design is to effect a cure for sin and sinning. Paul, writing to Timothy, expresses it in these words: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart" (II Timothy 1:5). The teaching of sanctification is not limited to a positional theology, but is opening to us the grand will of God that our condition may be changed. Our hearts may be made pure in this life. Otherwise, God's command that we "be holy" (a condition) would be a taunting teaser; and this God would not do! The happy realization here is the oneness that Christ and the sanctified believer enjoy. In His High Priestly prayer, Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His followers and included in that petition the request that "they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21).

III. Jesus, Our Brother (2:11b-13)

11b For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

What a wonder that Jesus would so condescend to identify Himself with the believer in the kinship of brotherhood. Verse 13 suggests that this identification is so complete that Jesus Himself, like the believer, has placed His trust in the Father. Oh, what a magnanimous role the Superior One has assumed.

In his preaching, Rev. Gremillion has proposed that were Jesus to step up to one of His followers today in a visible form, He would throw His arm around the shoulder of that wondering mortal and ask, "How is it going, Brother?" --all of this before the awe-struck human could fling himself at Deity's feet in worship and adoration.

Can we begin to grasp the depth of riches and practical comfort to be found in this loving and fraternal title? Can we not cry out for our Big Brother to come to our rescue in times of sore temptation and spiritual fights? Can we not say, "I'm going to tell my Big Brother on you", when the devil acts the part of the bully? Oh, what a thrill! Jesus "is not ashamed" to call us brethren!

IV. Jesus, Our Deliverer (2:14,15)

14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Christ, in His divine, eternal form could not taste death. Consequently, one of the reasons for His incarnation was that He might step through the gates of death. Outside of assuming flesh and blood, this was impossible.

Death has come to us as part and parcel with the inherited, fallen nature; and so "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3a). The "sin" that God condemned is the nature of sin, or the sin principle. In light of this, Wiley declares that, "Christ, as enduring death for sin, acknowledged the righteous judgment of God and secured for us the promise of deliverance: (1) from death as a penalty for our own transgressions, (2) from our own sinful nature as a life in the flesh, and (3) from the fear by which Satan held us in bondage. This He did by destroying or bringing to nought the power of Satan over death."⁹ Were it not for our great

Deliverer, man would be hopelessly lost and powerless to deliver himself, or free himself from sin's perdition. Our daily prayer should be one of thankfulness for the emancipation proclamation of Christ on the cross when He cried, "It is finished".

V. Jesus, Our High Priest (2:16,17)

16 For verily he took not on [him the nature of] angels; but he took on [him] the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

The role of the high priest was to intercede for man before God. He was man's go-between, man's advocate. Christ's credentials for priesthood included the fact of His humanity, coupled with the truth of His divinity. As God, the sinless One, He could offer sacrifice for others and suffer vicariously. Otherwise, His death would have merely atoned for His own sins and would offer no substitutionary merit.

In His priestly role, Jesus has brought back together God and fallen man who have been estranged since the fall. However, this is not saying that Christ had to "twist God's arm" to effect reconciliation. That is a wrong concept even though, "God is angry with the wicked every day". This was God's plan to bring man back to Himself, for we read in II Corinthians 5:19 that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself". What a melting and heart warming drama!

So it was, then, that Jesus came to become our priestly mediator or advocate; but as priest He must have a sacrifice to offer. This offering was Himself. Scripture has brought this out in another way by declaring that we have been redeemed through Christ who was "made unto us...redemption" (I Cor.1:30). Through the incarnate Son we have been bought back, but He Himself was the ransom price to rescue Satan's hostages. He was the perfect sacrifice, the ultimate ransom.

"How can our praises find end?" we would ask with the songwriter. How can we do less than fall at Jesus' feet and cry, "My Lord and my God!" What a price has been paid in order that a full salvation might be experienced by mankind to the very uttermost of his need.

VI. Jesus, Our Helper (2:18)

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The sixth beauty of the incarnation of Christ is His ensuing ability to truly empathize with believers. He knows the pressure of temptation and its allurements. Having experienced all of this, He is able, now, to intercede for us and to offer help. Knowing our predicament personally, Jesus can offer succour or aid, that perfectly matches our need. All of this because He has walked where we walk.

The help of God may come to us in innumerable and varied ways. It may be strength to face the battle; courage to go on; faith to believe; wisdom to discern; knowledge to perceive God's working; love to see others for what God can make them; forgiveness to match the hurts of life; comfort while basking in God's presence; rest of spirit; peace of mind or any work of the Holy Spirit that is tailored to our circumstances, our personality, our spiritual condition and even our limited insight and spiritual understanding.

In his book entitled, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Mr. Lawrence shares this gracious insight with us:

"The King, full of mercy and goodness,...embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the key of His treasures; He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand ways, and

treats me in all respects as His favourite... My most useful method is this simple attention, and such a general passionate regard to God, to whom I find myself often attached with greater sweetness and delight than that of an infant at the mother's breast; so that, if I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there."¹⁰

Chapter 1 made clear Christ's deity and thus His pre-eminent power, glory and majesty. Now, chapter 2 has shown the wonder of Christ's willing condescension to wrap His deity in humanity, in order to identify with us. We have seen the results of the incarnation in a sixfold relationship to the believer.

End Notes

1. B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952) p. 37.
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8. H. Orten Wiley, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1959) p. 92.
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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 3

HEBREWS CHAPTER III

One Greater than Moses (3:1-6)

The Call to Consider (3:1,2)

1. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses [was faithful] in all his house.

W. E. Vine aptly opens this segment of Scripture for us with a simple overview that suggests the sensitive subject at hand. He points out that "the Hebrews had an esteem for Moses almost amounting to veneration, and the writer has shown that he is not disparaging Moses, but that a greater than Moses is here, and this in the various ways mentioned in these six verses".¹ Yes, this is a tender issue for the Hebrews, but an issue that must be broached, nonetheless.

With inspired carefulness, we are first directed to linger in reflection and thoughtfulness on the faithfulness of our Apostle and High Priest. Christ's faithfulness is suggestive of the like characteristic exemplified by Moses. Here is a gracious commendation given to the Hebrew people's hero of the Old Testament, and an acknowledgement of God's pronouncement in Numbers

12:7. Now, with this polished and polite introduction, the fact of Faithful Jesus being greater than faithful Moses is unfolded in verses 3-6.

I. Jesus, the Builder, not the House (3:3,4)

3 For this [man] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

4 For every house is builded by some [man]; but he that built all things [is] God.

In these verses the writer presents the figure of a house and a builder. The house may be understood as the people of Israel, or more specifically, the people of faith. Moses was a faithful part of that building, or design. However, he was not the designer. God was the Architect and the Builder; and since Christ has already been shown to be divine, Robert Tuck notes that "Christ was really the Founder of the house in which Moses was an official".²

In the same line, Moses was faithful to administer and proclaim the law of God and to lead the people God-ward, but the law was of God's making.

II. Jesus, the Son, not the Servant (3:5,6)

5 And Moses verily [was] faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

6 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 unto the end.

In the house of Israel, Moses is named as a servant. However, this term does not imply a slave but one who has chosen, of his own free will, to serve. In contrast to this picture of servanthood, Christ is the Son, the Owner, the Master of this house. Because of this, we find two graphic prepositions used in these verses; one is "in" and the other "over". Moses was faithful "in" this house, but Christ was faithful "over" His own house. What a world of difference.

The line is being drawn more and more clearly. Christ is greater than their revered Moses. If you please, Christ is Moses' Boss, his Master, the One to whom Moses is accountable.

III. Jesus, the Fulfilment, not the Type (3:5,6)

Orten Wiley, looking back to the Old Testament structure and rituals, has said that "the Mosaic dispensation was typical of, and witnessed to, both the person and work of Jesus in the gospel age".³ In John 5:46, Jesus declared to the Hebrews of His day, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of Me". Moses ministered in a system of spiritual pictures, figures, or types that were "a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after".

Jesus had come as the fulfilment of those clouded or dim figures. He brought it all to light and meaningful perception. All that Moses had taught and administered was merely a shadow of Christ, the cross, Calvary and the great salvation that it purchased.

The value of these three truths is shown by Charles Carter in that "to accept Christ's superiority to Moses automatically forced the honest mind to recognize that Christ and Christianity had superseded Moses, the law and the Jewish nation".⁴

What a joy is ours to be a part of the great fulfilment and not to be merely grasping at shadows and types. We have the Builder, the Master of the house, to love and worship. How privileged we are to live in the "New Testament House".

The Call to Faithfulness (3:1, 6-19)

Wonderful examples of faithfulness have already been cited in the persons of Jesus and Moses. From this basis, we who are part of Christ's house are called to remain in the embrace of Christian faith. This warning seems to be directed to Hebrews who are looking backward to a system of shadows and types. Oh, that they would not regress and turn their backs on the Divine Son who has brought light and life to a religion of anticipation.

The danger of departure must necessarily preclude that there has been an arrival. It is in this light that we will consider the call to faithfulness.

I. The Fact of a Definite Arrival (3:1)

1. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

In verse one, there is no room for questioning the state of those to whom the call for faithfulness is delivered. These are not adherents to Judaism who are now considering the claims of Christianity. No! Clearly these descendants of Abraham

have already become "partakers of the heavenly calling" and in the words of Adam Clarke they have "already embraced the Gospel and have been brought into a state of salvation".⁵ There has been a point of definite arrival in this privilege of participating in Christ's house.

So much of current religious thinking lacks the ring and the clarity of a positive assurance of personal salvation. The church is trusted; a moral life is accredited; a loving God is anticipated; and yet, it leaves nothing but a hope-so religion. There must be a time of definite arrival in the knowledge and witness of the Spirit "that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). This inner confidence comes only when, as contrite sinners, we abandon every other hope and place our full weight on the mercy of God and the merit of Christ's shed blood. Merely signing a card, shaking the preacher's hand or joining the church is not to be equated with, or considered the same as, a clear cut, definite praying-through experience in divine grace. You can really know that you have passed from death to life. This is the moment of definite arrival that you can point back to with delight and assurance.

I fear that many people have not been honestly shown the way to heaven and will someday find themselves outside the company of the redeemed. How sad indeed! There must be a true encounter with the Saviour.

II. The Possibility of a Dreadful Departure (3:6b-12)

7. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in [their] heart; and they have not known my ways.

11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Let us note that a very small word, with a very large significance, is used in verse 6 to show that our place in Christ's house is conditional. That tiny word "if" totally eliminates the claim of unconditional security, or "once in grace always in grace", doctrines. The Christian's security, as Richard Taylor notes, "is not in past experience but in present experience, not in feeble but in triumphant faith, not in a grim and glum clinging to the Christian hope but in a vibrant possession that is on the offensive rather than the defensive".⁶

The example of the Israelites, who had safely left Egypt under the miraculous hand of God and then rebelled at Kadesh, is cited as a warning to these Hebrews. There was the dreadful possibility that after entering membership in Christ's house, they might now harden their hearts, rebel and walk out of this great salvation. What a heart wrenching disaster that would be, for Judaism now had nothing to offer since the God-Prophet, the Eternal High Priest had come!

It is often propounded that Christian sonship is irrevocable and though a relationship and rewards can be lost, salvation is beyond the choice of man's will after he is saved. We are told that we can never "unbecome" the son of our earthly parents and that it is the same in spiritual sonship. This argument does not hold true, however, for I did not have any choice in becoming a son of my parents. But when I got saved it was by my choice, an act of my will, that I repented and found mercy and adoption in Christ. By an act of that same will, salvation can be forfeited when I wilfully transgress the law of God and violate my love covenant with God.

The writer flashes before these people, and before us also, a caution in regard to the sinful nature that still lurks in the heart of the unsanctified believer. This defiled streak is in its very essence rebellion and enmity against God. It is hatred toward God! It is an "evil heart of unbelief". Regarding this, Adam Clarke says, "He who begins to give the least way to sin is in danger of final apostasy; the best remedy against this is to get the evil heart removed, as one murderer in the house is more to be dreaded than ten without".⁷ This evil heart is bent on departure, while the believer's desire is to remain. A civil war ensues within the life of the Christian until he is entirely sanctified or, dreadful as it may be, until he departs the household of faith.

III. The Call to Deliberate Perseverance (3:13-19)

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? [was it] not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Three directives are given that should shape the Christian's personal disposition and attitude to spiritual light. However, prior to this, we are encouraged to "exhort one another daily" lest we grow calloused to truth and become deceived by sin. We need the prodding of fellow believers in a world where the philosophy and demeanour of the unbelieving ones tends to rub off on us, if we do not stay very sensitive to the checks of the Holy Spirit. Not only do we need exhortation because of the outside world, but sin in the heart of the unsanctified Christian is so tricky and deceptive. It struggles to postpone or bypass its own crucifixion. It deceives by playing dead, promising good behaviour and a million other ploys, but it is a liar as is its father the devil. Let us not grow silent on the call to holiness of heart and life, but exhort one another "while it is called today".

The first personal admonition to faithfulness brings our attention back to the basis of our faith that truth, or that One, that we embraced confidently at the outset of our Christian walk. In the writer's statement of condition (verse 14), we understand the plea to "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end". Hold on to your utter dependence on Christ. Without it you are a homeless wanderer, a destitute pauper, a lonely waif and a hell bound soul.

On the heels of the plea to hang on, comes a further word to those of Christ's house. Simply clinging to the past is not enough. We must hear from God today. Give heed to His voice and do not content yourself with the memory, however glorious, of a definite arrival in the past.

Now, with holding and hearing, harden not your heart as new light is shed on your path. Do not stiffen against what God commands you to do. Make a deliberate choice to remain submitted and pliable in God's hands. Don't balk, like the provoking Israelites, at every turn in the path. That very nature that balks and grumbles at the will of God needs to be dealt with. This evil heart of unbelief is not "a rejection of orthodoxy, necessarily, but a subtle wavering of confidence in the integrity of God",⁸ says Richard S. Taylor. You cannot mature gradually out of this problem; it must be remedied by God Himself. There are no older saints who are testifying to having grown out of the nature of sin or matured into the grace of heart cleansing.

Oh, the danger of the heart of unbelief subtly hardening to God's intended rest of heart cleansing. You see, "unbelief is the child, not of the head, but of the heart", expounds F.B. Myer. "If unbelief were the creature of our intellect, we must needs meet it there with argument; but since it is the product of a wrong state of heart, of an evil heart, we must meet it there."⁹

These Hebrew Christians are in danger of forfeiting their own promised rest, or Canaan rest of soul "by dragging their feet", Richard Taylor says. He goes on to state that "refusal at their Kadesh will be as disastrous as the refusal of their forefathers--indeed infinitely more so"¹⁰ for Kadesh represents the place where we either submit our will and nature to God or turn around and wander in the wilderness of refused light.

Reader, perseverance involves two grand themes; the keeping power of God, and the deliberate watchfulness and submission of the soul. Dr. H. E. Jessop probes our too often complacent spirits as he suggests that "all of this brings us to the solemnizing thought of our personal responsibility for the continuation of our own spiritual experience. As the Scriptures are carefully studied, it will be seen that while they are rich in their declarations of divine keeping power, they are also searching in their demands upon the believing soul, calling for watchfulness and faithfulness on the human side."¹¹

Be sure in your faithfulness, that your heart is not fighting the privilege of heart cleansing. Persevere until you experience it. Then, persevere in its added aid to growth and fruitfulness.

Two Frogs

Two frogs fell into a can of cream
Or so I've heard it told
The sides of the can were shiny and steep,
The cream was deep and cold,

"Oh, what's the use?" said No. 1,
"tis fate no help's around
Good-bye, my friend! Good-bye, sad world!"
And weeping still, he drowned.

But No. 2 of sterner stuff,
Kept paddling, which was wise,
Then while he wiped his creamy face
And dried his creamy eyes.

"I'll swim awhile, at least," he thought
This cream I still can tread
"It wouldn't really help the world
If one more frog was dead."

An hour or two he kicked and swam
Not once he stopped to mutter,
But kicked and swam, and swam and kicked,
Then hopped out, via butter.¹²

End Notes

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 4

HEBREWS CHAPTER IV

Rest in a New Dimension (4:1-16)

If ever the call to rest, as found in this chapter, was appropriate and timely, it is today. Our generation is in a mad frenzy to find the rest of fulfilment and satisfaction and yet the quest seems never to reach its goal. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Outside of this Gospel Rest from the guilt and burden of sin, mankind will never experience what it craves for in the deep recesses of its soul.

However, a rest of a different dimension is being referred to in this fourth chapter of Hebrews. This is a rest that is available to the "people of God". John Wesley felt that the writer was pointing to heaven's rest and the glorious cessation of spiritual warfare. On the other hand, it is very common for adherents to the doctrine of entire sanctification to understand this as the rest of a cleansed heart. An interesting note is made in The Wesley Bible in relation to these two teaching. "These two views, eternal rest and entire sanctification, are complementary, and there is some justification for both of them in the text of Hebrews."¹ It is on the "second rest" of Holiness that our study will major.

As a believer walks in the light and grows in the grace of God, he will begin to sense a conviction of need. Note, this is not a conviction of guilt but rather an awareness of an inner lack. Doubts arise that are not holy. There is inner turmoil between a rebellious nature and a will that is choosing God. The heart cries out, "There must be something more than this," and there is! It is not the Gospel Rest of peace from guilt that is needed, for that is a current reality. It is the "second rest" or the rest of entire sanctification for which the heart hungers. For the Christian, this is a rest in a new dimension.

As we examine this chapter, we will dissect it along its vivid lines of formation that begin with the words "let us". The writer yearns to carry these Hebrews along with him to a place and experience in the relationship of rest. They desperately need this to shore up their sagging resolve.

I. Let us Fear (4:1-10)

1. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard [it].

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh [day] on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this [place] again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in

because of unbelief:

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God [did] from his.

Here is the call of alarm. Too many are willing to ignore the "evil heart of unbelief" and thus disregard and scorn the promise of rest from the malady of this spiritual condition. Adam Clarke calls out this alarm when he declares that "every believer in Christ is in danger of apostasy, while any remains of the evil heart of unbelief are found in him. It is therefore the highest wisdom of genuine Christians to look to God for the complete purification of their souls; this they cannot have too soon, and for this they cannot be too much in earnest."² The wilderness wandering Israelites missed their land of rest. Let us, with reverence for God's promises and His provisions, fear lest we curtail His purpose in our spiritual development.

How sad that most accept the fact of God's ability to cleanse the heart from sin, yet they feel that this is not accomplished until the moment of death. In regard to this, an old minister once said, "Sin is the child of the devil, and death is the child of sin. This makes death the devil's grandchild. Now who would ever expect the devil's grandchild to sanctify any Christian."³ And to this may we add another question? What faith does this doctrine require? Death would accomplish the task, faith or no faith. Yet verse two clearly states that faith must be mixed with God's promised provision. The Israelites failed to appropriate faith to God's promise of Canaan and they forfeited their inheritance. Entire sanctification cannot be attained outside of faith in the blood and finished work of Christ.

Verse eight speaks of Joshua's leadership in bringing Israel into their land of promised rest. However, this was only a type, an object lesson, that demonstrated a rest yet to come. Thus, in later years, David called for the obedience of faith even though they were already living in the land of Canaan. It is, therefore, to be concluded that there was a spiritual rest, a rest of faith, being held out to the people of God.

Verse ten sets forth a beautiful parallel based upon the completed work of Christ on the cross. Just as Christ could call, "It is finished" knowing that God's justice had been satisfied, so the Christian can enter into a cessation of his own works. This is not a call to monastic living nor a plea for any sort of isolationism. It is a death to one's will, self and plans, and a life lived in harmony with God's will. It is a rest accomplished within the heart of the totally consecrated soul. "In this sanctified life the Holy Spirit takes the place of the sin principle,"⁴ says Dr. Dale Yocum. Now, to do the will of the Father is the Christian's highest pleasure. It is God living through us. "No greater mistake can be made in regard to holy living," says Isaac M. See, "than that we do the living."⁵ Oh what a glorious privilege of divine rest. The old conflict and warfare is over. The rebellious nature that fought for its own way and either stormed, seethed, or pouted when denied, has been removed and the sanctified soul rests in God.

Can we wonder that we are called upon to stand in fear, lest we miss such a relationship with the Eternal? Why should we retain a spirit or nature that forever wants to go back to the Egypt of a sinful life? What kind of sense is there in failing to deal with so dangerous a rebel in the heart? "Let us therefore fear."

II. Let us Labour (4:11-13)

11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

12 For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The "rest of holiness" must be pursued with great earnestness and personal fervour. A. W. Tozer writes, "The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted.

Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain."⁶ R. A. Torrey declared that "no man ever got this blessing who felt he could get along without it."⁷ How singularly God has been pleased to bless those longing, hungry hearts who would not let Him go unless He bless them.

With this plea for the Hebrew Christians to diligently labour to know heart holiness and ultimately heaven's rest still warm in his mind, the writer clinches his call with two regal verses on the power of God's searching Word. It is like radar that can track your thoughts. It is like x-ray that can expose your soul. It has laser qualities that can pinpoint your intentions and motives. As we labour to find the "second rest", God, through His Word and the agency of the Holy Spirit, will uncover the need of our hearts. Before God we stand naked and open to His searching eye. Your sinful nature may be hidden to others but it has not been missed by God. Well He knows the pride, the bitterness, the envy, the self-will and malice of your heart. He has felt the grit and rancour of your soul. He know that you were born with a nature that is rotten to the core and thoroughly tainted by the bent of sin. His living, powerful word is well able to target your need, and at the same time point to the only remedy for the sin disease.

Do not attempt to sidestep the proddings of the Holy Spirit and the keen Word of God. Yield to them and earnestly, diligently seek the rest of a clean heart.

III. Let us Hold Fast (4:14-15)

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin.

About this time, in the intensity of the writer's exhortation, the devil would delight to suggest to these believers that they might as well just 'throw in the towel'. "Its no use," he might say, "you already know the evil doubts and murmurings of your heart." Just when victory is around the corner, the enemy seems to be so adept at flooding the soul with despair.

God is not unaware of Satan's tricks and his blasts. Thus, the Holy Spirit inspires these words, "Let us hold fast our profession". Don't give up, but go on. Do not let go of what God has done for you. Cling to it. More precisely, cling to Jesus and your profession of His saving power. Refuse to give up one inch of territory you have gained through grace. Christ will not fail you now! "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Heb. 10:35).

IV. Let us Come Boldly (4:16)

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

When a person has truly felt the deep need of his soul, there certainly can be no brash approach to the throne. The word "boldly" carries none of this sentiment. What it does suggest is an open, confident and assured access into the presence of God. You see, what God offers does not necessitate an arm twisting session to receive. Our slowness to receive the blessing is not indicative of God's reluctance, but rather of our imperfect search and surrender. The One on the throne is our Father, so may we not come with child-like confidence?

An interesting illustration is shared by Dr. Wesley Duewel. Queen Elizabeth was to attend a church service in India. Of course, Dr. Duewel was briefed beforehand as to proper manners in the presence of royalty. He was told, "You must never speak first; wait until you are spoken to. You never ask royalty anything; you answer royalty. In your first reply, you must add the words, 'Your Majesty'."⁸ What a glorious privilege has been afforded us by the great Majesty on high when He says, "Ask and it shall be given you" (Matt. 7:7). What an honour to be able to confidently enter His presence and pour out our soul's anguish.

Dr. H. C. Morrison writes of his conversion as if it were a court scenario. I believe his beautiful imagery and able description of Christ's intercession and the Father's love, will help us to grasp better the import of the verse at hand.

"In the midst of his wonderful address my attorney, instead of addressing the judge as "Your Honour," said, "My Father." This shot through me. I saw that if the judge had appointed his own son to plead for me it was more than likely that he would heed his pleadings and show me mercy. Men were weeping all over the courthouse. I had both hands full of the skirts of the coat of my lawyer; the policeman had laid aside his cap, had gotten out his handkerchief, and had buried his face in a flood of tears. It was a powerful moment in my trial; my attorney had reached his climax. He exclaimed, "My father, this child for whom I plead is none other than my brother." I saw at once that if the judge was the father of my attorney, and the attorney was my brother, then the judge was my father also. I could restrain myself no longer. I gave a great cry of joy, leaped out of the dock, rushed up into the judge's stand and flung myself upon his bosom. He embraced me with a long, tender pressure that seemed to make me through and through a new creature. Folding me in his arms he stood up and said, "Rejoice with me, for my son who was dead is alive, who was lost is found." The entire crowd in the courthouse broke into tears and laughter. The people embraced each other; they all seemed to want to shake hands with me. They congratulated my attorney, and we laughed, and wept, and shouted together."⁹

Granted, Dr. Morrison is not writing about the experience of entering the "second rest"; but, well he expresses the kind of assurance our hearts may feel in our Father's throne room. Farther in the epistle, the writer will disclose the basis for such a confident entrance when we are searching for this new dimension of rest.

In concluding these admonitions to enter into rest, let us note Orten Wiley's comments.

"It is a present, personal, spiritual, and practical experience of rest in God and is marked by the following characteristics. (1) It is a rest for the People of God. It is not for sinners, but the rich heritage of every true child of God... (2) It is a rest of faith. By this we mean a full reliance upon God through the redemptive work of Christ. It is perfect rest in a finished atonement... (3) It is a rest from sin. This therefore is a removal of the conflict between the flesh or carnal mind and the Spirit... (4) It is a continuous rest in God through the atoning work of Christ...With such high privileges afforded us, is it any wonder that the writer urges us to give all diligence to enter into this rest?"¹⁰

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 5

HEBREWS CHAPTER V

The Priesthood of Christ (5:1-10)

"Deep down in the heart of men there is a strong and instinctive demand for a priest, to be daysman and mediator, to lay one hand on man, and the other on God; and to go between both."¹ So writes F. B. Meyer.

This majestic subject of the priesthood of Christ has already been introduced to us in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. Jesus has passed into the heavens and yet is intimately involved in our earthly needs and concerns. What a glorious proclamation! No wonder the writer calls Jesus a GREAT High Priest. For Jesus to enjoy the splendour of heaven's glory, the grandeur of heaven's delights and the rich fellowship of the Father and Holy Spirit; and yet "be touched with the feelings of our infirmities", is a miracle of love and wonder indeed.

My heart melts before my great High Priest as I worship Him. He knows the feebleness of my frame. He knows the limitations of my mind and insight. He sees my leaning side and knows where I need support. All of this has touched the Lord. It has called forth a "fellow-feeling"² as Strong suggests in his explanations of the Greek. Christ has been through this realm of humanity and well He understands what it means to be a man. He was very God and very man. Now I can come to Him for help. Ralph Earle helps us with this explanation: "The Greek word for 'help'

(v.16) suggests 'running at the cry of'. When we cry out in any time of need, our great High Priest comes quickly to help us 'in the nick of time'.³ Thank God for "nick of time help"!

The Psalmist sang of God's "tender mercies". These are mercies that are easily bent in our direction. What glorious offers are made to us in the opening parts of this discussion of Christ's priestly role. How could anyone contemplate turning their back on such a One? Judaism's priests and ceremonies are but cold shadows since the glorious "Sun" has come.

I. The Duties of Priests (5:1-3)

1. For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things [pertaining] to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

In the Old Testament setting, priests, though they belonged to the tribe of Levi, were actually only part of the rank and file of humanity. They possessed no magic or supernatural characteristics. They were "taken from among men" and were "compassed with infirmity". Thus their duty was to represent men to God, offer gifts and sacrifices before the Lord and deal compassionately with the ignorant and wayward. Readily we can see that Christ has more than filled these duties

when He offered Himself as the Supreme sacrifice for sinners. Gentleness and compassion seemed to be the hallmark of His ministry. Ralph Earle makes the following interesting observation for us:

"Twelve times in the Synoptic Gospels we are told that He was moved with compassion or had compassion on the people. But since the verb is in the aorist tense in ten of the twelve instances it may well be translated: 'He was gripped with compassion'. This was Jesus' instant reaction to human need whenever He found it. And we may be sure that He still reacts and responds in exactly the same way today. As our compassionate High Priest, he feels gently towards us in all our trials and tribulations."⁴

The earthly priest, because he too came to God as a sinner, had to offer sacrifices for his own sin. His position and role looked forward to a greater Priest who would come "without sin" (4:15). When Jesus died for mankind, not one drop of His blood was shed for His own sin. He was sinless. Never had an evil passion risen within His bosom. Never had He felt the movement of the sinful nature within His heart. Not once had a thought of sinful lust been savoured in His mind as a sweet morsel. Not once had a word crossed the threshold of His mouth that brought the frowning disapproval of His Heavenly Father. Never had His hands been involved in a crime of any sort or magnitude. He did not bear the nature of sin and He had never committed an act of sin. Without argument, the Priesthood of Christ far surpassed the priesthood of Aaron.

II. The Call of the Priest (5:4-6)

4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as [was] Aaron.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

6 As he saith also in another [place], Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

The call to the priesthood was a noble and honourable calling. It was certainly not to be considered lightly or approached carelessly. Aaron had been "called by God" to fill this place. However, as we have already noticed, Aaron was chosen out of the rank and file of common man.

Our great High Priest bears two distinctions. First, He was not set apart out of the run of common, sinful humanity. He is God Himself. He is the surpassing One of the earlier chapters. Second, He too has been called by God. This call is of fathomless magnitude. We must note first that it was received from the very One who had declared that Jesus was His Son. Also, we learn that this call did not have a time limit on it for Christ has been made a Priest "forever".

III. The Sufferings of Our Priest (5:7-10)

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

One can scarcely read these verses without being pressed by a moving reverence and a holy awe. Again, Mr. Earle notes that though the book of Hebrews "expresses in the strongest possible terms the deity of Jesus", it "also states most

startlingly the full extent of His humanity. Christ was no actor on the stage of life; He lived life in all its terrible, tragic reality."⁵ Can we not feel with Jesus, at least in a small, small way, the emotions of Gethsemane and the pangs of Calvary? Without doubt, we are far too limited to grasp a fraction of Christ's vicarious suffering. Yet, can we call ourselves Christians and partake of the Lord's Supper with no appreciation for the toll of sin's weight, the horror of sin's grief and the agony of God's separation? Read verse seven again. What a list of freighted words: prayers, supplications, strong crying, tears, death and feared.

This whole heart-rending passion was for the help and salvation of unlovely humanity. By it Jesus has become the author, or "cause"⁶ as Adam Clarke states it, of our salvation.

Thank God for an eternal, gentle, accessible, approved High Priest who has dealt with both our sinful record and our deep-seated sin nature.

Spiritual Stalemate (5:11-14)

As one reads through this fifth chapter, the swing of mood and the change of attention is most dramatic. It is almost as if the spiritual condition and the danger of these Hebrews grips the writer's heart afresh when he realizes that, due to their immaturity and spiritual stagnation, he cannot progress with the subject at hand as he would like. He is moved to warn, to startle and to plead with them that they might be awakened from their sleepy state.

I. Cold Molasses (5:11)

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

These Hebrew Christians are described as being dull of hearing. The word "dull" suggests slow, lazy sluggishness. Even when they hear truth, they are like cold molasses in their response. The word translated "dull" comes from another Greek word meaning "illegitimate". In their spiritual stupor, these people act as if what they have been taught does not apply to them; as if they have no rightful privilege to what they are hearing.

Mr. Clarke says, "Your souls do not keep pace with the doctrines and exhortations delivered to you". He goes on to describe them as people who "have the road laid down plainly before them, how to proceed specified, and the blessings to be obtained enumerated, and yet make no exertions to get on, but are always learning, and never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth."⁷

In an age when any amount of spirituality is supposedly enough, how careful we must be not to lay off the oars of spiritual pursuit and drift in the cold of a sluggish spirit. We are in danger of contenting ourselves with the mechanics of religion without a growing, vital relationship blossoming in our souls. How many plainly see their own glaring deficiencies, their anemic love for God, their haphazard fervour and yet continue in their dull condition. All the while, worldly priorities claim a greater hold and a stronger grip. Prayer meeting attendance drops off and soon they are missing from the Sunday evening service as well. A flippant, careless attitude is soon to overtake them as they grow increasingly calloused to truth and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They act as if they have all eternity to seek a pure heart and the blessed infilling of the Holy Spirit. They seem not to sense the dangers of the nature on board!

It is the very nature of the carnal principle to postpone and procrastinate its own death blow. Thus, its very presence breeds a dull, sluggish attitude. In Romans 6:1 Paul asks if we should continue in "the sin" (as the original states it) in order that there might be an abounding of grace. The answer is a resounding negative. There is no need to postpone the crucifixion of this body of sin and go on carrying an unnecessary weight and hinderance with us.

May the hunger for cleansing overcome this spirit of lethargy in these dear Hebrews. May they soon move forward into

the work of grace that is their rightful inheritance through the death of Jesus Christ.

II. Retainers (5:12a)

12a For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God;

In many educational circles, children no longer fail, they are simply retained. Our study points to a group of people who were still in kindergarten when they should have been the teachers. They were in need of hearing the ABC's of God's divine oracles. The pull back to old Judaism left them in a spiritual fog.

Many decry the lack of deeper preaching in our day. Yet, there are retainers in the churches by the dozens who are not up to date in following the light they already have. They are content to sit on the sidelines and be a spectator when, in fact, God calls them to be an active, vital, living part of His orchestra. Our religious world needs the clear call of Holiness preaching, but how many church members have never been clear in their justified state or have lost grace from their hearts?

There are others who want to step into leadership and influential, teaching positions in the church but they are not mature enough in grace for such offices. They need to grow in grace and knowledge. In the case of some who wish to be youth leaders, consistent spiritual pursuit has not marked the individual's life. Oh, that they would die out to themselves and sin so that they might be not only set apart for God but also sanctified wholly.

III. Bottle Suckers (5:12b-14)

12b and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk [is] unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Here is a very graphic picture. Imagine your pastor, sitting on the platform as the music fills the sanctuary before the service begins. There, to your horror, he whips out a baby bottle from his suit pocket, and commences to suck while he waits. Shocked? Yes. Actually, flabbergasted would be a better word. But no less graphic is the word picture before us in the Scripture. These people should be the preachers, but they are still in, or have regressed into, the bottle stage.

Spiritually, they are back in the nursery instead of on the platform. They are back on milk when they should have been chewing and digesting roast beef.

Dr. Dale Yocum has made the succinct observation that "one of the most baneful aspects of carnality" is its tendency "to stunt spiritual growth and perpetuate babyhood".⁸ May it not just be endured and suppressed, but dear Hebrews, go on, go on!

End Notes

ENDNOTES for Chapter V

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3. Ralph Earle, Ed., *Exploring the New Testament*, (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1955) p. 380.
4. Earle, p. 380.
5. Ibid, p. 381.
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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 6

HEBREWS CHAPTER VI

The Foundation of Christian Experience and Doctrine (6:1-3)

Bishop J. P. Taylor, in his picturesque style of writing, points out that the Hebrew people were "so far from advancing that they were in danger of falling away, so it would be necessary to lay the foundation of repentance again and learn the first principles anew. They were not young babes anymore, but old dwarfs that looked like babes...The apostle calls them on to Christian perfection." 1 The foundational teaching and principles must again be built upon.

We have all seen building projects where the excavation has been done and the basement blocks laid, but no superstructure ever rises. It is a haunting illustration of unfinished business and disappointment. The Hebrew Christians were living on the foundation level. Let us review the writer's list of basic doctrines and then proceed to the call to perfection.

I. Foundational Blocks of Repentance and Faith (6:1)

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

The sinner is "dead in trespasses and sins" and all of his works, efforts and attempts at attaining Godliness accomplish nothing. They buy him no favour. They merit him no admission to heaven. The message of Good News offers mercy in Jesus Christ if he will but turn around, confess his guilt, and throw himself on the mercy of God. This is repentance and faith. How simple the offer is, and yet how often it is overlooked because of its simplistic beauty and man's foolish pride. Dear Hebrews, do not be bewitched into apostatizing from such a matchless offer.

Many people have grasped the first block of repentance but failed to join faith with it. In their broken-hearted despair they confess and confess but never realize the joy of pardon. Some need to be willing to let God forgive them and give up the notion that God needs to make them suffer for their sins. In a sense, they need to be willing to forgive themselves! They must be willing not only to surrender to God's verdict of guilty, but also to His pronouncement of pardon. It is right at this point that man must place his full weight on the promises and Person of Jesus Christ for faith to be activated and fruitful.

II. The Foundation Blocks of Baptism and Laying on of Hands (6:2a)

2a Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands,

One of the rudiments of the Christian doctrine is a public confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Christian baptism is one expression of this kind of acknowledgement. Baptism is an outward testimony of the actuality of an inward work. Thus, for the new convert, it is an early co-operation with the commands of Christ.

Baptism is first of all, a badge. It is a mark of identification that the Christian puts on to declare the side on which he stands. This beautiful ceremony, whether in a muddy river or in an ornate church baptistry, is the Christian's pledge of

allegiance for forthcoming days. It is his pledge of aligning with the name and cause of Jesus Christ. It is his promise to follow Christ and shape his life around Biblical principles. Thus, it is a badge of identification and allegiance.

Secondly, baptism is a brand. It is God's brand on His man or woman. It is a fulfilment of His directive and thus a God-appointed brand of belonging to Him. What a privilege to be able to bear His brand; to belong to the family of God.

Finally, baptism is a blessing. It is certainly a blessing from the standpoint of obedience and personal testimony. However, more than that, it has been thought that baptism may be an avenue or means of grace to the candidate. If a proper attitude is embraced during this public act of testimony, God's presence may attend and seal the moment with His blessing. The laying on of hands seemed to be a privilege of the apostolic era and, yet, still today, as Wiley notes, it marks "the candidate as the object for whom earnest prayer was made".²

III. The Foundation Blocks of the Doctrine of the Resurrection and Judgment (6:2b)

2b and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Here is a tenet of Christianity of profound magnitude and, yet, of basic and primary concern. Jesus Christ died and rose again, and because of this we who die in faith will also be raised to immortality. What a glorious confidence blooms in the heart of a new believer.

Alongside this hope, we understand the message of God's day of judgment. There will come a day when all will stand before the Lord to give an account of their deeds. Those whose trust and faith is in Christ and His blood will be forever privileged to enjoy the bliss of God's immediate presence. Those who have rejected the message of salvation, and have failed to humble themselves before the Lord of all the earth, will be separated from God and cast into hell for ever and ever. This is eternal judgment.

These are the rudimentary doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ. As profound and clear as they are, they are not meant to be the end of all things. They are a basis upon which to build. May God help us to get on with the building!

Go On, Lest You Go Back (6:1-12)

As we have proceeded through these first chapters of Hebrews, the intensity of the writer's plea for the Hebrew people's sanctification has been growing. There is a lurking danger in their unsettled heart of unbelief. They are still lingering in the introductory course when they ought to be the teachers. They are basement Christians in need of actively progressing. This is the author's cry. Dr. Alexander Smellie says, "The Authorized Version renders it, 'Let us go on'. The Revised Version renders it, 'Let us press on'. Bishop Westcott, in his commentary on the Epistle, prefers to render it, 'Let us be borne on'. Put them together, and they speak to us of three dangers which beset us as we look to the perfection in front. There is the danger of sinking into discouragement. And there is the danger of supposing that we are left alone."³

I. The Call to Perfection (6:1-3)

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; ... 3 And this will we do, if God permit.

The call to perfection, or maturity, is at first glance a pursuit totally initiated on our part. Although it is true that we must put ourselves into growth, it is not a one-sided proposition. There is a wonderful and profitable influence being wrought upon our lives by the blessed Third Person of the Trinity. In the life of the unsanctified follower of Christ, He is leading toward adulthood and the grace of Christian perfection. Again, from the flow of previous chapters, we must recognize that this call to perfection is a call to go on to the Canaan rest. It is not the perfection of head, service and ability; that

only comes with the glorious reality of resurrection glorification. Thus, in this sense, Paul could say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phil. 3:12). It should be noted that in this same chapter of Philipians, Paul makes claim to another perfection in verse 15. In commenting on this verse and in relation to the discussion at hand in the book of Hebrews, I am indebted to H. Orton Wiley for these remarks:

"Here he (Paul) is speaking of Christian adulthood and that stability of character and purpose which holds him steady in his desire to attain the more remote perfection found only in the resurrection of the redeemed... Christian perfection therefore means the attainment of the goal of adulthood as it is recognized in the present gospel dispensation. In a spiritual sense this does not so much involve the element of time as the entering into the fullness of the new covenant provided through the blood of Jesus and administered by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Adulthood thus has not only a chronological but also a legal aspect; it is accomplished, not by growth alone, but by a divine pronouncement."⁴

If we simply submit to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives, His careful and timely ministry will bring us to the maturing of grace unto grace. Ralph Earle gives such practical advice in the following paragraphs that it merits its lengthy addition.

"The verb 'let us press on' is in the passive voice. Literally it means 'let us be borne on to perfection'. The significance of this is well pointed out by Wescott: 'The thought is not primarily of personal effort..., but of personal surrender to an active influence'. That is the main secret of being sanctified. So often seekers struggle at the altar of prayer, pleading earnestly with God to sanctify them wholly. We are never sanctified at the time of our greatest struggle but always at the moment of our complete surrender. No amount of pleading will substitute for the total abandonment of ourselves to the will of God. Unreserved submission to His will is the price of being sanctified. We cannot bargain with God. It is useless to attempt any compromise. His terms are always unconditional surrender. When we meet those terms we find perfect peace, and not until then. We cannot sanctify ourselves by our own efforts. But we can yield to the Spirit of God and let Him sanctify us wholly. And then we must keep on yielding ourselves to Him throughout life, that by Him we may be 'borne on to perfection' more and more in our daily living. For this verse certainly refers to the continuation as well as the crisis. It is a constant 'call to perfection' as long as we live."⁵

Thus, Christian perfection is certainly not a faultless or angelic condition. Our head is still painfully liable to make wrong judgments and hasty conclusions. Our service to Christ is regretfully limited and often seems to be so frail. Yet, our heart can rejoice in the fact that God sees the innermost motive and desire of our being. J. A. Wood defines Christian perfection by saying, "Negatively, it is the state of grace which excludes all sin from the heart. Positively, it is the possession of pure love to God."⁶

This perfection of our love is a crisis experience that follows a clear assurance of salvation. It is a cleansing or riddance of a nature that is "enmity against God" and basically hates God and His authority. However, this second work of grace it not the grand finale! We are not in heaven yet. There are worlds of growth in this wonderful grace of God's rest. According to Dr. Yocum, "there is a perfection of maturity that is progressive; but here is a crisis act of God, which brings an immediate perfection of heart to love and obey Him".⁷

The conclusion of this theme is well stated in I. C. Holland's writings. "We must recognize that in New Testament teaching perfection also refers to the ultimate goal, perfect love in this life, and after the resurrection, a perfection from our human frailties."⁸

II. The Peril of Apostasy (6:4-8)

4 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,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [him] to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers [is] rejected, and [is] nigh unto cursing; whose end [is] to be burned.

A chilling warning is given here lest any fall away from the grace of God and reject the only offers of mercy mankind can hope to enjoy. This is certainly not teaching that a backslider cannot be reclaimed. It is saying that as long as, or while, the backslider continues to reject Christ and His out-stretched hand, it is impossible to renew him to the grace and fellowship of the redeemed. To abandon, or apostatize from, the doctrines of Christ leaves no other sacrifice for sin; no other hope, no other salvation. All is dark, desperate, dismal despair.

These verses leave no question as to the credibility of the teaching of unconditional eternal security. Some erroneously claim that once you are a child of God, you may lose fellowship with Him, but you can never forfeit your sonship. However, in truth, you may have been enlightened; you may have "tasted the heavenly gift"; you may have been made a "partaker of the Holy Ghost"; but you can fall away and lose all hope of heaven if you choose lawlessness and rebel against the God who saved you. Sonship in the spiritual kingdom is uniquely different from sonship in the natural realm. You must, by an act of your will, surrender to God and His claims on your soul in order to become a son of God. However, when you were conceived and born to your natural parents, there was no act of your will involved. You took the parents God gave you. In the spiritual realm, the same kind of an act of the will that brought you to your knees in humble contrition, can also make a moral and volitional choice to break away from God. Thus, salvation is conditional upon a continued submission to the will of God and obedience to His directives.

A host of preachers have preached people into heaven simply because at some point in their history they had made a profession of faith. The sad truth is that myriads of those still forms died in wickedness and rebellion. They did not go to heaven unless in their dying moments they begged God for mercy and believed again in His forgiving love. Verses seven and eight underscore this plain fact. If a plant brings forth fruit that is useful and beneficial, we cultivate and protect it. If it just brings forth thorns and briers, we cut it down and burn it. How much clearer does Scripture have to be before men will accept what it says? Ezekiel cries out this same truth with all its stark reality. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abomination that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24). No wonder then that Peter says, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (II Peter 2:20 & 21).

What a warning! Be on your guard

III. A Personal Endearment and Encouragement (6:9-12)

9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

10 For God [is] not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The writer is saying that though he has been dealing frankly with the danger of apostasy, he is expecting better things of these Hebrews. They have demonstrated their love for Jesus, and God has not been unmindful of that fact. Now, they must go on. They dare not give up now. They must fight off this sluggish, lazy, sleepy lethargy lest hypothermia overcome their spirits. They needed to hear A. W. Tozer's clarion call: "Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking".⁹ With lucid perception, Mr. Tozer expounds on what may seem contradictory to some. "To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart".¹⁰ Oh, God, keep our hearts on fire!

The Haven of Hope (6:11-20)

After the dark portrayal of apostasy in the earlier parts of this chapter, we conclude in the warm haven of hope. Sick hearts abound all around us because hope has been lost. What would it be to live without hope? It seems that the number one worry of today's youth is no longer a nuclear holocaust as it was a few years ago, but now it is the fear of futility, the nagging haunt of hopelessness.

I. The Assurance of Hope (6:11)

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Rev. John Wesley, who himself found the richness of a personal, inner, warming assurance of acceptance in the beloved, writes this glowing treatise:

"The full assurance of faith relates to present pardon; the full assurance of hope, to future glory: the former is the highest degree of Divine evidence that God is reconciled to me in the Son of His love; the latter is the same degree of Divine evidence, wrought in the soul by the same immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, of persevering grace, and of eternal glory. So much as faith every moment beholds with open face, so much and no more, does hope see to all eternity. But this assurance of faith and hope is not an opinion, not a bare construction of Scripture, but is given immediately by the power of the Holy Ghost, and what none can have for another, but for himself only."¹¹

Oh the warmth and vitality of this God-inspired, Spirit-given, assurance of hope. Job declared, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another". (Job 19:25 & 26 NKJV) Hallelujah for such a "rock-ribbed" (Dr. Yocum's word) assurance of hope!

II. The Refuge of Hope (6:12-18)

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation [is] to them an end of all strife.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed [it] by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which [it was] impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Someone has said, "Promises, promises, and all of them mine". We might say, "Promises, promises, and all of them unquestionably true". God has sworn by Himself to encourage our feeble faith in what He proclaims. Now, with all unchangeable promises, we have "strong consolation" as we flee to the refuge of hope.

The sinner may run to this refuge from condemnation and judgement. The Christian knows the gracious harbour of this confidence. Satan may try to resurrect the past and parade former sins before the mind of the forgiven soul, but the Christian dwells in the refuge and harbour of hope. First, the promises declare his sins to be forgiven, forgotten and removed. Second, the assurance of faith and hope, the witness of the Spirit, agrees that it is so. Oh, my friend, what a refuge.

III. The Anchor of Hope (6:19&20)

19 Which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, [even] Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

It was my privilege to grow up in Goderich, Ontario, a harbour town along the shores of Lake Huron. I have watched the sunset from the top of the cliff upon which the lighthouse stood, and many nights I have fallen asleep with the fog horn blaring its warning into the night. Down at the harbour the great piers reached like long fingers out in the lake toward the great break walls between which the ships would enter. Jutting out of those reinforced cement piers were steel abutments filled with concrete. They made fine seats on which interested onlookers could rest while they watched the harbour activity. But they were more than seats appropriately placed. These unmoveable protrusions were actually anchoring pilings or bollards. Strong cables were drawn out from the sides of the ships and looped securely to these pilings.

Imagine a ship tossing on high waters, braving a screaming storm with its massive anchor firmly settled on the sea bed below; but the writer has a greater picture in mind. In these verses the struggling, groaning, creaking vessel's anchor has actually been drawn out through the churning waters to the calm harbour of its destination and is securely fastened to unmovable pilings there.

The great Captain of our Salvation, Who was made "perfect through sufferings" (2:10), has braved the angry tempest of sin, death and hell and safely arrived in the fair haven of God's presence. But, praise be to the Captain, He did not flee for His own welfare. He suffered to place the anchor "both sure and steadfast". He was our "forerunner" and solidly anchored the soul of believing mariners to the pilings of the throne, the place where God dwells. Hallelujah, that anchor will never drift. John Bunyon, who so sorely needed the anchor of hope during his imprisonment for the cause of Christ, has declared, "Faith lays hold of that end of the promise that is next to us, to wit, as it is in the Bible; hope lays hold of that end of the promise that is fastened to the mercy-seat. For the promise is like a mighty cable that is fastened by one end to a ship, and by the other to the anchor. This faith and hope, getting hold of both ends of the promise, they carry it safely away".¹²

Corrie ten Boom shares her story of confinement in Ravensbruck, the woman's death camp. She possessed a Bible that seemed to be her life-line to hope and sanity. Miraculously, God intervened so that her Bible was not discovered during the gruelling inspections of German guards. In a short time, she was holding secret Bible Studies "for an ever-growing group of believers, and Barracks 28 became know throughout the camp as 'the crazy place, where they hope'."¹³

Struggling seaman, can you feel the strain of that taut cable? Keep winching it in. It can stand the pull and the anchor is sure. Hold on to your Captain by faith. Hope on!

End Notes

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 7

HEBREWS CHAPTER VII

The Order of Melchisedec (7:1-10)

The study of Melchisedec has certainly raised a host of questions, and intrigued scholars. Most likely it has baffled many a casual reader and left some of these verses as merely words to be hurried over. The basic meaning, however, is not as obscure as it may seem on the surface. In fact, the gist of chapter seven is really a heart warming message that is freighted with devotion and worship. May the Lord bless it to our hearts and intellects.

I. Melchisedec, The Man (7:1-3)

1. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

No doubt, the age old question is, "Who was this obscure man of the Old Testament named Melchisedec?" Many and varied answers have been given through history with no certain conclusion. Some have suggested that he was God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit in human form. Enoch is another name given to answer this question. Luther agreed with still others that probably Melchisedec was Shem, the son of Noah. The latter conjecture is based on Shem's longevity that allowed for his life to overlap the life of Abraham by 150 years. Though such a consideration bears interest and possibility, it seems inconclusive to me from the following standpoint. Verse three has clearly defined Melchisedec's lack of known parentage, birth, length of life and posterity. Since none of these particulars was known, at least to the mainstream of Jewish thought, and certainly not to the writer of Hebrews, it seems dubious to me that Melchisedec could actually be Shem. It is strange, indeed, that Jewish tradition and thought would not have perpetuated the fact if Shem were actually the case in point.

At any rate, there are some facts that we do know from the Scriptures, even though there are very few references to this great man. The name 'Melchisedec' means 'king of righteousness' and certainly is a gracious title. It would seem to imply someone of high character, noble actions and equitable dealings. Another title given to this man is 'King of Salem'. Probably this is referring to Jerusalem. Thus, we see a king of the City of Peace who is honourable and righteous. To this high position of king, we must also add that of the office of priest. It must be remembered that this is a pre-Levitical setting and the aged father was the priest of his family. Those who believe this to be Shem, feel that he filled this role because of his great age and patriarchal standing.

The sole appearance the Scriptures share of Melchisedec is found in Genesis chapter 14, when, after a successful battle, Abraham is met by him. This King of Salem brought bread and wine to Abraham and, very likely, sufficient for those in his care. Here Melchisedec pronounces a blessing, saying, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand" (Gen. 14:19&20). Following this blessing, it is recorded that Abram gave tithes of all to Priest Melchisedec.

In so short a perusal of facts, we have exhausted the scriptural record of this man. It is left to us now to discover the

import of the Melchisedecian order.

II. The High Order of Melchisedec (7:4-10)

4 Now consider how great this man [was], unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he [receiveth them], of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

Prerequisite to the inspired writer's doctrinal treatise of the high order of Melchisedec, there must be a keen awareness of current Jewish appreciation for the Levitical order of priests. As twentieth century Gentiles, our grasp of Jewish feeling and intensity is, no doubt, stunted and limited at its best. Imagine the reverence that a Levitical priest would receive of his fellow man. Attempt to grasp the awe with which one would acknowledge the High Priest who had stepped into the very Holy of Holies one who has stood in God's immediate presence and Shekinah glory. Veneration and wistful longing must have filled the being of many Jews, as they thought of the awesome privileges of those who were descendants of Aaron. These were the ones to whom tithes were paid. They were the Levitical order of priests, an order of no average, or common, calibre.

To this nationwide respect for the priesthood, we must couple a fanatical attachment to the Father of Judaism. "We be the children of Abraham" is the chant of Jewish zealots. It was a time when it seemed that true worship of God had been replaced with a vehement partisan spirit and a radical claim on national roots. No doubt, we have all seen instances when an individual's love for God has become a thing of the past; and in their effort to cover up their loss and fill the void, they have become rabid adherents or proponents of some special contrivance, issue or attack campaign. Perhaps this brings us closer to the once God-centered, now humanistic, zeal of Jewish passion. In this heat of nationalistic fervour, Abraham and the Levitical Priesthood rise as blazing suns.

The writer to the Hebrews moves into verse four with a clear and unmistakable declaration of an ordination that supersedes that of their highest heroes. The arguments are gracious, yet very lucid.

First, we are shown Abraham's acknowledgement of Melchisedec's greatness when he paid tithes to him. In fact, the interesting observation is made that, "Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (v. 9&10). The unborn descendants paid, through Abraham's action, to one greater than themselves. Clearly then, Melchisedec didn't come from their descent, that being the Aaronic or Levitical line. He was higher in rank.

The second argument is grounded on a simple maxim, "The less is blessed of the better".

(v.7) Melchisedec blessed Abraham, their "Father", and thus was pre-eminent over him and his posterity. Argument number three points out that Levitical priests die and are replaced. Theirs is but a temporal or passing order. However, the

Scriptures are silent in regard to Melchisedec's death and the passing of his office to another. In that sense, "he liveth" and "abideth a priest continually".

What an impact this must have had on Hebrew thinking. There is an order of priests that far surpasses their revered patriarch and priestly system. In comparison, theirs is a claim on the elementary.

III. The Need of Another Priest of the Order of Melchisedec (7:11)

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 crying lack of the Levitical priesthood has been plainly declared. It has not brought perfection or the completing of the purpose of God for mankind. It was unable to bring about the spiritual goal that God intended for His creation called humanity. The purpose or intention of the divine arrangement is "charity out of a pure heart" (I Tim. 1:5). This the law could not effect for "law cannot secure character", writes J. Gregroy Mantle. "It cannot give willing hearts and devoted service."¹ Adam Clarke continues this thought when he says, "This perfection never came, and never could come, by the Levitical law; it was the shadow of good things to come, but was not the substance. It represented a perfect system, but was imperfect in itself."²

Oh, for the substance of a real remedy and not just the empty pill bottle waiting to be filled. Charles Carter writes, "Sin separates man from the Holy God. Only by the removal of sin can man be restored to fellowship with God in His holiness. The prime purpose of the priesthood was to bring man near to God and keep him there. This could only be accomplished through an adequate remedy for sin that would enable man to maintain a constant and unobstructed fellowship with God."³

The law was so deficient. It was administered by priests who needed to offer sacrifices for their own sins before attempting to be a go-between for the people. The sacrifices that they offered were absolutely powerless to perform any spiritual service since it was "not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (10:4) What was offered was a grasp by faith on a better priest and a better sacrifice that had intrinsic power and merit; One who would come under the auspices of a higher order.

Christ, A Priest of the Highest Order (7:12-28)

Chapter six concluded with the trumpeting proclamation that our Christ belongs to the highest order of all priestly systems, that being the order of Melchisedec. Verses 1-11 of chapter seven have established the superiority of this priestly line and the need for another priest to come belonging to this highest of orders. How our hearts should warm to the glorious message that the following verses unfold. Happily, a Priest of the higher order has come and fulfilled all that the law and its system lacked.

In the following verses, we will see the unfolding of Christ's credentials to stand as the High Priest of the Melchisedecian Order. "Withal Christ stands incomparably superior to Abraham and Judaism by reason of the fact that His High Priesthood is the reality of which Melchisedec's was but the shadow cast upon earth for a little time in advance of Christ's appearance among men as the God-man --and as man's eternal High Priest."⁴ So states Charles Carter.

I. The Credential of Non-Levitical Roots (7:12-14)

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

14 For [it is] evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

As backward as it may sound, having proof of belonging to the tribe of Levi is a detriment, not a plus, when reviewing credentials for priesthood in the line of Melchisedec. To claim lineage back to Aaron would place one under the line of lesser priests, an inferior system and an imperfect law. Though to these Hebrews such a proof of heritage would rank extremely high and prestigious, in this discussion the point is that a Priest has come of a much higher rank and order a rank and order that is definitely not Levitical.

Jesus Christ, by virtue of belonging to the tribe of Judah according to His earthly parentage, holds claim to a priesthood that is not related to the regular Old Testament order. If He were of the tribe of Levi, it could be argued that He was merely an ordinary priest, as were the many others who had served in Judaistic worship. Thus, though this is no proof of Christ's lofty priestly role in the highest of orders, it does become a complimentary ingredient.

II. The Credential of an Endless Life (7:15-17)

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

"Though the rocks may crumble into dust; the stars smolder into cinders; the sun burn itself to ashes; the moon clot and curdle as blood; oceans weep themselves into deserts; mountains, heavy with age, be uprooted and overturned; and everything visible, tangible, audible, material, and temporal fade as a flower and pass as a dream, the strong Son of God, our High Priest and Saviour, will abide forever, unchanged. Time will never put a wrinkle on His eternal brow. Age will never stoop His shoulders of omnipotence, nor make His stately steppings lag with age. Decay will never corrupt His garments of purity, and the years will never dim omniscient vision nor pluck one strand of hair from His holy head.

Everything may change but He never!"⁵

These are the words of Raymond Pollard as he expresses the unchangeableness of Christ's perpetuity. The Hebrew writer has declared that Christ is the same and His "years shall not fail" (1:12). The significance of an endless life cannot be overlooked in procuring a place in the Melchisedecian Order. You see, neither Melchisedec's birth nor death was known, making him a fleeting shadow of what he actually typified in the Priest-King who was to come.

No successor would ever have to be sought since an endless life made Jesus a priest forever. He is immortal and His priestly role will never be forced to retire or to be passed on to another. As such, He holds claim on the pinnacle of priestly positions the High Priest of the Order of Melchisedec.

III. The Credential of the Oath of God (7:15-22)

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope [did]; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath [he was made priest]:

21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will

not repent, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

Jesus Christ has not entered the priesthood merely by tribal birth or on the strength of the name of His earthly forefathers. That would not necessarily imply anything of priestly character or wisdom. Eli's sons demonstrated that fact very well in their immoral and wicked practices while they were also stationed as priests. Jesus bears one extremely notable credential in the fact that "the LORD", the self-existent One, the great 'I Am', "has sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Psalm 110:4).

It might be said that Jesus holds a very creditable certificate of credentials. His was not a mail order degree. He did not forge the signatures on His papers of priestly claim. His was not 'under the table' licensing far, far from it. The eternal God of the Universe, who perfectly judges character and capability, has, Himself, declared with an oath that Jesus is a priest of the Highest Order.

Old Testament priests were never placed in office by an oath, but in the annals of eternity, God held a swearing in ceremony when He declared Christ to be a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Today, Jesus is still in office and operates under a "better hope ...by which we draw nigh unto God". According to the oath of God, there will never be a search under way for a successor, for Christ is a priest "forever".

IV. The Credential of Suretyship (7:22)

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

No doubt many have waxed eloquent in expressing how Jesus would pay man's bail and get him out of trouble ...so he need not worry, his salvation is unconditionally secure and he will come out of his rebellion and sin "smelling like a rose". But, it just isn't so. You will note that Jesus has not been made man's surety but, rather, the surety of, or the pledge of, a better testament. "A surety for the most part pledges himself that something will be: but here the Ascended Christ witnesses that something is: the assurance is not simply of the future but of that which is present though unseen," notes Westcott. "It must be noticed that Christ is not said here to be a surety for man to God, but a surety of a covenant of God with man."⁶

E. W. Roy makes this clear conclusion: "The Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses were not established by an oath; therefore, God could freely change or abolish according to His divine will and pleasure. Through and by all this, Christ was made a surety or bail, guaranteeing the benefits of the New Covenant to all who meet divine terms."⁷ Jesus will "come good for" the marked blessings promised under this New Testament. He pledges Himself to "make good", a way whereby man can draw nigh to God himself without going through an earthly priest or mediator. He made Himself surety for this glorious privilege under a new and better covenant; and without question, it cost Him His life-blood to effect.

Dear Reader, Jesus is the surety of an open access to the throne room of heaven and the mercy seat for your unsaved friends and loved ones, no matter how far they have gone in sin. They may have turned away from the way of God and trampled underfoot the blood of Christ, yet He waits to "come good for" the blessings of unmerited favour when they plead for mercy and grace. He is presently pleading His blood in their behalf as the paid pledge whereby justice has been appeased and mercy may be granted. Praise the Lord. I worship the Christ Who was, and is, surety of God's redemptive plan for me. That is credential enough for me to fall down in love and adoration at His feet and cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

V. The Credential of an Unchanging Priesthood (7:23-24)

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this [man], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

It surely seems that everything around us is in a state of flux. Moral values are changing along with the desperate lifestyle that accompanies those changes. People whom you once felt would never make major shifts in their beliefs and stands, are becoming a source of heartache and disappointment. Movements and denominations are adjusting their statements of faith and moving from their moorings and foundational roots. Political changes sweep our globe at an unprecedented speed. I'm sure, that to those who have lived through most of this century, it must seem that change is zapping our society like lightning.

I am happy to announce that, though changing winds are swirling all around us till we feel lost and dizzy, there is One Who is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (13:8). It is our Lord Jesus Christ. Because He is eternal and unchanging throughout eternity, He offers an unchangeable priesthood. Note the words of Dr. F. B. Meyer:

"There never was a beginning to the priestliness of our Saviour's heart. There is no date in heaven's calendar for the uprising within Him of mercy and pity, and of the intention to stand as the Advocate and Intercessor for our race. Before the mountains were brought forth or the heavens and earth were made, there was already in His thoughts the germ of the marvellous drama which is slowly unfolding before the gaze of the universe. He was Priest, as well as the Lamb slain, from before the foundation of the world. Love is eternal. Sacrifice is one of the root principles of the being of God. Priesthood is part of the texture of the nature of the second Person in the adorable Trinity. There need be no fear, therefore, that He will ever desert His office, or lay it aside for some other purpose; or cease to have compassion on the ignorant and erring, the tempted and fallen."⁸

I think one can readily perceive Christ's eligibility to highest orders when His unchanging priesthood is contemplated. What He offers today as our High Priest, "touched with the feelings of our infirmities", He will always extend to us in His unchanging priesthood.

VI. The Credential of Ability (7:25a)

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,

Here is the great text of the book of Hebrews! This is, in my estimation, the key verse of this regal discourse. As we have noted, Christ stands superior to Old Testament prophets, higher than the angels, greater than Moses, and peerless in the priesthood for he totally outranks the Levitical priests. All of this has been developed in the preceding chapters and has laid a perfect groundwork, foundation and legal argument for this bold declaration of Christ's ability. May we not pass too quickly over a pronouncement that the fact of Christ's pre-eminence has been pointing toward. Were Christ not the powerful, sinless, divine, sacrificial, substitutionary High Priest, and yes, the very Son of God, this statement of unfathomable ability would be a mockery and blasphemous. But, thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, it is a veritable reality. Our Jesus is the Able One. If anything ought to stand out on a resume of credentials, surely it would be just such a blazing note of ability and accomplishment as we see here.

These Hebrew believers who are feeling rather unsure of themselves and their doctrinal affiliation need not worry for one moment. The Christ whom they have espoused is the Champion of Judaism; the Champion of Christianity; the Champion of spiritual accomplishments and the Champion of their own personal, spiritual deficiencies. Go back? Go back to what? There is nothing to go back to but the shadow, the empty glove, the form, the type. Stay by your Champion!

The bold announcement found in this verse is that Jesus is able to "save, deliver, protect, heal, preserve, or make whole"⁹ (Strong) to the very uttermost those who "come unto God by Him". Strong tells us that "uttermost" is from a combination of two words: one meaning "all, any, every, the whole, all manner of, always, daily, as many as, thoroughly";¹⁰ and the other meaning "to set out for a definite goal, the point aimed at as a limit, the conclusion, termination, result, end, finally,

uttermost".¹¹ When these words are compounded we have a powerful expression of Christ's saving ability.

First, we might understand that salvation is for the "guttermost" as some have expressed it. It matters not how deep in sin one has gone, there is saving deliverance extended to them through Jesus Christ. Every vile and sinful act, every expression of sin's rottenness has been borne to the cross where Jesus became our propitiation, satisfying the justice of God so that mercy, rather than anger, might be shown to the penitent.

To the happy thrill of the believer, it may also be understood that our great Priest is well able to preserve and protect through all the perils of our pilgrim pathway. Until we reach the termination of this Christian journey and the goal of heaven, Christ can safely lead us if we will walk along beside Him and not pull away from His hand. Whatever the trial or rugged temptation, there is offered here a wonderful consolation of perfect succour to match the very limit of what Satan may throw our way. Hell cannot hatch, in it's heinous hatred, any ploy or vicious trick but what Christ's protection and power far surpasses it's poisonous heckle. Further, the verse teaches the power of Christ to make the believer every whit whole, even to the very limit of sin's stain upon his nature. One of my favourite Bible expositors, the late Dr. Dale Yocum, first brought this to my attention in his preaching. He so clearly explained that Christ can save us not only to the very limit of time's duration, but also to the very limit of the moral crippling of humanity's fall. He writes the following in his book entitled *The Holy Way*: "Is salvation from sin perfect and complete while the nature of sin remains within the heart of man? The only answer consistent with Heb. 7:25 is 'no'. A perfect, complete salvation must be salvation from all sin!"¹²

W. B. Godbey brings a beautiful touch to this discussion of the word "uttermost" in these words:

"The inspired writer of this wonderful Epistle made that word under the leadership of the Holy Ghost. It most indubitably and forever sweeps away all possible cavil as to the great scriptural doctrine of Christian perfection. The Holy Ghost ransacked the most beautiful and forcible language in the world, culled out the two strongest words, and put them together, in order to reveal this glorious truth of Christian perfection. To doubt it in the least or lay the slightest restriction on it is to impeach the veracity of the Holy Ghost."¹³

Let us note some further quotations. The Pulpit Commentary states that an uttermost salvation "is deliverance from sin; not merely from the punishment of sin, but from its guilt, its pollution, and its power".¹⁴ E. W. Roy writes, "His death upon the cross provided salvation...and He is as sufficiently able to heal the soul of the malady of sin as He was to make glad the hearts of those healed in body during His earthly ministry. He is able to pardon sinners, forgive their transgressions, purge their hearts, and make them pure. His is an "uttermost" salvation from the depths of sin to the heights of holiness".¹⁵ In *Handfuls on Purpose* we read, "This is a great word. If a redeemed soul has not yet fully entered into his possessions in Christ, and in consequence is not living the life of victory and communion of Beulah land, he has not yet been saved 'to the uttermost'".¹⁶

I suppose that studying this verse would not be complete without mentioning W. J. Kirkpatrick's famous song and its verse:

"Saved to the uttermost! Cheerfully sing Loud hallelujahs to Jesus, my King. Ransomed and pardoned, redeemed by His blood, Cleansed from unrighteousness glory to God!"¹⁷

The cleansing this songwriter refers to is the possibility of entire sanctification. The Bible deals with committed sins with judicial terms such as pardon and forgive; however, the full salvation expressed in the word 'uttermost' is brought about through cleansing or purifying, words that do not carry a judicial overtone.

VII. The Credential of His Continuing Intercession (7:25b)

25. seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

This great credential of ability is blended beautifully with the precious intercession of Christ on our behalf. How can we begin to grasp the ongoing intercession of Christ? How can we fathom its depth and detail? How can we adequately worship such an able yet infinitely caring God and Priest? This unflinching pleading stands as part of His certificate of standing. Never does Jesus have to rest from His work or step out of the "temple" just to get away from it all. No, He is constantly in intercessory fellowship with the Father in order that we might enjoy an uttermost salvation. Thus, it appears from our study, that Jesus is interceding for sinners who need to be rescued from their bonds of sin in all of its miserable outgrowth. He is pleading the merit of His blood in behalf of believers who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" and long to be pure. He is intimately involved in praying for those who are battling with the devil's snares and sniper attacks. Thanks be unto God.

Dr. Wesley Duewel writes:

"I agree with Andrew Murray that every blessing we receive from God, every answer to prayer, bears this divine stamp upon it: 'Through Christ's Intercession'. Christ is not sitting passively in blissful royal dignity, unmoved, while you intercede. No! Never! You intercede because He intercedes. The Holy Spirit conveys to you the heartbeat of Jesus. You feel but the faintest burden of concern as compared with the infinite concern that Jesus feels for you and with you....He is prevailing today on Heaven's throne--not only by His presence and because of His wounds at Calvary, but through His continuing holy pleading, His intercession. Not till Satan is cast into the lake of fire, the warfare with sin is forever over, and the last lost sheep is in the fold will Jesus cease to prevail in intercessory burden for our world."¹⁸

VIII. The Credential of His Holy Person (7:26-28)

26 For such an high priest became us, [who is] holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, [maketh] the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Here is cause for jubilant ecstasy as we contemplate our Priest of the Highest Order. Our Saviour could not have died a vicarious, substitutionary death if He first had to be forgiven of guilt. He would have been dying for His own sins and not for the sins of the world. This, then, stands as a credential to the noble, high priesthood. Other priests were sinners who first had to offer sacrifices for their own sins. But Christ was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" and thus perfectly eligible for this office.

Imagine for a moment how hopeless and meaningless life would be if there had been one small flaw in the character of Christ...one moment of yielding to sin...one fleeting rebellion against the will of the Father. We would never have had an high priest who could have brought us to God. We would be forever doomed, whatever system of religious rights and practices we might have practiced. All would have been dismal destitution. May we stop and give praise to the Son of God for His holy character and, then, for His condescension to die in our place as He, the Priest, offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God in our behalf. Thank You, Lord Jesus!

Here we stand looking back over this impressive list of credentials. Jesus has filled the requirements perfectly and is my Priest of the Highest Order. There is only one such priest. Melchisedec was but a fleeting shadow of the coming Christ.

Shadows are not the real substance; but Jesus was, in reality, all that the obscure Old Testament figure had typified and much, much more. Heaven alone will begin to really disclose to our feeble intellects the glorious credentials Christ bears as our Great High Priest.

End Notes

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 8

HEBREWS CHAPTER VIII

Under A New Administrative Covenant (8:1-13)

This chapter is the summary, or perhaps the grand pronouncement, of the writer's efforts of previous chapters. It may well be considered a combination of these two agendas and should be closely tied in to the grand theme of Christ's pre-eminent priesthood. However, we are moving from the fact of His great character and eminent qualities, to the new ministry He initiated. We are looking beyond now, to the new covenant that Jesus administers as High Priest. What an inaugural event the angels must have witnessed, when Jesus rose from the dead. He lead "captivity captive" by capturing death and its binding hostility, and then ascended to Heaven's throne room. He had finished the work of redemption and was ready to put into action a brand new covenant.

I. The Commission of a New Minister (8:1-6)

1. Now of the things which we have spoken [this is] the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore [it is] of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

6. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

It seems to me when the writer uses the phrase "such an high priest", he is not merely consolidating the facts of his presentation, but he is expressing an ardent adoration and worship that springs forth from within his spirit. No doubt, we lose much of the writer's feeling and expression by simply reading what has been handed down to us. How often, if the Hebrew writer were speaking to us, would his voice and passion have gripped us and drawn us closer, not to him, but to the throbbing heart of "such an high priest". Oh, God, may our devotion glow with fresh ardor and thrill in this day of cool hearts and dull worship! Thank You, Father, for our majestic, glorious, enthralling High Priest.

It is interesting to note that in these verses there is no argument offered to support the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That seems to be understood as an established, unquestioned fact needing no discussion. We are simply brought to the fact of His personal presence in the heavens. This ascended Lord, now sits "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on High". Does He sit inactive and passive? Clearly, the answer is "no". Neither the title "high priest" nor "minister"

suggests less than an active, vibrant profession. Jesus has "set down" in the sense that His redemptive work is finished. He has borne man's guilt, crimes, and rebellion in His death on the cross and thus has supplied:

1. the vicarious substitution for condemned man,
2. the ransom price to free kidnapped humanity from the evil one,
3. the requirement of the "shedding of blood" for the remission of sin,
4. the satisfaction of justice for sin that a Holy God and a holy government requires,
5. the fulfilment of the sacrificial system's long look,
6. the ultimate victory over God's arch enemy,
7. the breaking of death's suffocating grip,
8. the access we need into the presence of God.
9. the powerful affirmation of resurrection glory and,
10. the promise of His definite return.

His redemptive work was accomplished to perfection. Jesus had perfectly fulfilled the will of His Father. Thus, God placed Him in the highest position of honour, at His right hand, with the highest name of honour, and with the highest work of honour, the ministry and mediation of the new covenant.

Jesus Christ, the Minister of the new covenant, does not carry out His priestly functions in an earthly tabernacle pitched by man. Rather, He ministers in a sanctuary that God has pitched. Whatever unknowns that may involve in our limited understanding of the heavenly precincts, we are to envision Christ serving in the very Holy of Holies of God's presence. Jesus does not make one yearly entry on the Day of Atonement as the earthly high priests did, but every day is the Day of Atonement under the commission of this new Minister. Thus it is that this priest of the highest order ministers daily in the very Shekinah of God's visible glory the Heavenly Holy of Holies, the true tabernacle itself.

Since Levitical priests had gifts to offer in their symbolic role, it remains that Christ, whom they foreshadowed, must also offer something before the presence of the Almighty. The presentation that Jesus makes is that of His own blood on the great mercy seat. That does not mean Jesus is constantly sacrificing Himself for the sins of men; but that His shed blood remains as if He had been crucified today. On the basis of the merit and meaning of this blood of a sinless One, Christ mediates for mankind before God.

What a substantial ministry is performed by the Minister of the New Covenant. Mr. Carter notes that this is a "very subtle way of saying that the Levitical priesthood was dependent upon the reality of Christ's High Priesthood for its very existence, since it was but a shadow of His. However, it also implies that if men have come to the real, they have no further need of the shadow that it casts."¹ What a glorious Minister stands commissioned before God. It is Christ, the very Priest that cast the first shadowy impression that Levitical priests haltingly personified.

II. The Faulting of the Old Covenant (8:7-9)

7 For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault

with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 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, saith the Lord.

For our study, we first need to observe God's covenant with His people in the Old Testament. Leviticus 26:3-13 is an extensive lay-out of God's promises if the Israelites would keep His laws. Another impressive list is given in Deuteronomy 28:1-14 where the blessings of diligent observance are contrasted to the curses which are pronounced in the second half of the chapter.

"Under the old covenant God promised to bless the people and they promised to obey His laws. But their promise, while sincere, did not reckon with their inner lawlessness of nature. As in a democracy, laws without the support of the populace can not be successfully enforced, so law without the support of the heart will not be obeyed. The old covenant proved to be formal and external, because the laws were engraved on tables of stone instead of on the fleshly tables of the heart. Conscience compelled a verbal agreement, for the people knew what they ought to do; but at too many points the standards of the law ran counter to their strong inner desires and propensities."²

These insightful words of R. S. Taylor set before us the crying imperfection of the Old Testament provision. "It was faulty because it was limited"³, notes I. C. Holland. We should understand that this is not a criticism of God's initial covenant with His people. This is merely an observation of the Lord's lead-in program. It had its purpose and it realized its goal. It was the elementary and tangible lesson to pave the way and usher in a new and better covenant. It lacked grace to help men perform, and thus, over and over, the covenant was broken and violated by the people of Israel. "It had no power to enable men to perform the obedience which they had promised; and it could not do away with the sins which followed the disobedience of the covenant vows", states Mr. Wiley. "It was inadequate, and while divinely given, it was not God's ultimate purpose for men."⁴

Mr. Carter's comparison of the covenants may benefit our understanding of God's purpose in ushering in a better administration.

"In the first place, the old covenant was external and disciplinary (Gal. 3:24). The new is internal and gracious. The old was compulsion. The new is impulsion. The old promised. The new fulfilled the promise. The old directed. The new delivers. The old was a shadow of the new cast before. The new is the reality that cast that shadow. The old was temporary, dispensational. The new is eternal timeless. The old was preparatory. The new is final."⁵

Orten Wiley's comparison adds further insight as we wrap up this division.

"1. The first was temporary...the second is the final and enduring expression of the grace of God.

2. The old covenant was national...the new covenant deals with the individual.

3. The former covenant had reference to material things and was based upon secular promises. The new covenant is spiritual, for material things cannot satisfy the souls of men.

4. The Mosaic covenant ...could give neither the power nor the disposition to obey the commands...In the new covenant the law of God is written within, and...gives the disposition to obedience within the heart.

5. The former covenant could not...take away sin...The new covenant was established by Christ, who "once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (9:26).

6. The old covenant was limited to the sons of Abraham after the flesh; the new covenant is universal in its scope."⁶

While this is the general pattern, or the norm, for Old Testament religion, it must be accepted that some lived beyond their time in their close and intimate walk with the Lord. (Our danger is not living beyond our time, but spiritually behind it.) Perhaps to unduly stress the Old Covenant's external nature fails to reckon with some measure of inner reality. Dr. Allan Brown notes that God required Old Testament believers to love Him with their whole heart. Thus, an inner quality must, of necessity, be present. In David's prayer for forgiveness, He asks for a restoration of joy, which clearly marks that which is inward. Since faith was the criteria for approval before God, it seems that some measure of internal religion must have been present. The point is, however, that Old Testament system was wrapped in external ceremonies, rituals, object lessons and visible proofs of Divine favour. It was fraught with outward observances and temporal blessings that were not to be carried over into the glorious beauty of a new covenant when the Holy Spirit would indwell the believer by faith.

Thus, with the blazing glory of a better covenant, better promises and a better hope, the old covenant fades into history and is no longer needed. Some want to resurrect a health, wealth and prosperity gospel that smacks of the old covenant, but have they missed the inner glow of the spiritual covenant and relationship with Jesus Christ? In an analogy used by Dr. Wingrove Taylor in his preaching, they are to be pitied as men still carrying flashlights around when the noonday sun is shining in its full brilliance.

III. The Blessings under the New Administration (8:10-13)

10 For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith 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:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new [covenant], he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old [is] ready to vanish away.

How wonderful it is to be looking at this new covenant from the Calvary-side of this glorious administration. Peter writes that the prophets "enquired and searched diligently" into this salvation and "prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (I Peter 1:10). Likely Jeremiah strained to see this covenant when God revealed to him what the Hebrew writer has copied from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Ezekial's heart must have mused over the contemplation of inspiration as he declared for God,

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them ...and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses" (Ezekial 36:25-27).

A. The New Administration's Purpose Inner, Heartfelt Religion (vs. 10)

In the verses at hand, there are great benefits named for us to enjoy since the old covenant has vanished away. It appears that the goal of this new covenant is for an inner, personal, relationship with God, for its laws are "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (II Cor. 3:3). The import of this can not be too highly stressed. This is the beacon call of inner religion. So much, even in our day of better promises,

lacks the warm throb of vital religion. There are religious creeds, membership vows, church rituals and traditions, norms of behaviour and status quo expectancies, but what are these more than Old Testament religion? Many, many are the people who even claim the new birth, but their lives have not manifested the reality of God's laws written within. They lack the life-changing verity of being a new creature in Christ Jesus. They have a form but deny the power thereof. They need to find the know-so assurance of acceptance in the beloved, and the captivation of love that draws them to holy living and personal devotion to Jesus Christ. Vic Reasoner states, "While chronologically we are under the new age of the Spirit, it is possible experientially to still be under Old Testament religion. This was a theme of John Fletcher's ministry. Concerning the new covenant he exclaimed, "What a privilege! And how many nominal Christians live below it; yea, below the privileges of the very heathens".⁷

There is wrapped up in this blessing of the better covenant, all that the work of the Holy Spirit can accomplish in the soul of the believer. Inner religion is a change from death unto life, such that man stands before God, just as if he had never sinned. Right living is placed on his account. No wonder God says, "I will be their God and they shall be my people". The basis for that affinity is found in this initial sanctification which sets the Christian apart as belonging especially to God, since the Holy Spirit has come as the giver of life. The Holy Spirit's presence must, without doubt, bring God's holy design as directives to one's innermost being, for God the Holy Spirit cannot deny Himself. In a growing understanding of Scripture and the things of God, more and more of these laws become apparent to the new convert, and in love and devotion, he follows their dictates. However, there is more that the Third Person of the Trinity designs to accomplish within man's soul. The rival nature, or principle of evil, continues to war against those laws written in the believer's heart. In the better promises, there is the glorious design of God to cleanse and purify the soul until a holy law stands without the contagion of enmity from within. Again, in the words of R. S. Taylor, "A holiness which is merely outward and formal cannot satisfy either God or man. There must be not only complete conformity to but affinity with the laws of God, in the very secret springs of man's being. Then the covenant will be kept; and best of all, kept joyfully."⁸

B. The New Administration's Plan Personal Access and Acquaintance

(vs.11)

Prior to the inception of the better covenant, man must approach God through an earthly go-between, namely the priest. As was stated in chapter 7, verse 19, "the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God." Note that, "We draw nigh to God". "Personal, direct fellowship with God: this is the crowning blessing of the new covenant, to which the Epistle to the Hebrews very specially points the way",⁹ writes Andrew Murray. How I worship the Lord for the high privilege of approaching "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" through the merit of my great High Priest. Here is the message of verse eleven, where the honour of knowing God is expressed.

C. The New Administration's Platform Mercy and Grace (vs.12)

Finally, verse 12 sets forth God's method of administering this unfathomable covenant. Where the Old Testament propounded "death without mercy", the new covenant offers mercy to the unlovely and the unlikely. Thank God for being born in the dispensation of grace when the offers of mercy are extended freely to broken mankind. It is the Christian's happy testimony that God remember's his sins and iniquities no more. That is tantamount to saying that they are no longer accounted for; the ledger is empty; the records show no unrighteous deeds under the believer's name. In the courts of Heaven, under the blessings of the merciful administrative covenant, through the satisfying merit of Christ's blood, the believer's criminal record of infractions and crimes against a holy God has been wiped clean and the case declared closed. It does not mean that part of God's omniscience has been blocked out, but rather that such a complete pardon has been granted that it is as if I had never sinned. Glory be to Jesus Christ, forever and ever, world without end!

What a grand administration has been set before us in this chapter. What unthinkable folly it would be to go back to the stiff and cold corpse of an old and lifeless administration. The cross, which separates the two covenants, effected the

death of the first and the life-giving power of the second. Sad to say, but there are some who, after knowing the blessings of the better covenant, have dragged their feet, rejected light, failed to obey, and broken from the New Administration. They are no longer under the shadow of the cross, and the blood of Christ no longer covers them since they have entered willing rebellion. They are trampling underfoot the blood of the covenant and counting it an unholy thing. They have lost their first love and need to "do their first works over". I think one most miserable outcome is the person who still wants to retain some form of outer religion, after the loss of heartfelt reality within his heart. He may fiercely claim, and harshly impose, his external standards to cover up the lack within his soul. He is miserable, struggling to look good, powerless in the gospel, a stumbling block to others, outside of the blood covenant and without eternal life in his soul. Oh, that these Hebrews would see that going back to Judaism would be embracing the cold corpse of what is past. It would be spiritually powerless and an unsatisfying disappointment. They would be grasping for what had "vanished away". Dear Reader, are you living in the power of the Gospel? Are you living this side of the cross experientially? Do you know the inner thrill and throb of vital religion? Do you love God with all your heart, until you serve Him because you love Him or are you living merely an external form? The "Door" is open for you to approach the presence of God.

Today, as I have worked on this chapter dealing with a new administrative covenant, the 42nd president of the United States has taken his oath of office. For the next four years, Americans will discover the leadership of a new administration under a change in political parties.

With the rending of the temple vail, and the subsequent ascension of Christ, a new spiritual administration was inaugurated that brought in a glorious agenda of grace. Thank God there is not one covenant promise which has not been kept. Oh, the glory of the angel band as it strikes up the celestial "Hail to the Chief" and sings "Holy, Holy, Holy" to the great Minister of the New Administration.

End Notes

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 9

HEBREWS CHAPTER IX

The Old Testament Tabernacle and Ministry (9:1-10)

I. The Tabernacle Pattern (9:1-5)

1 Then verily the first [covenant] had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein [was] the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein [was] the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

The pattern of the tabernacle set apart two enclosures that were separated by what the writer calls the second veil. The Holy Place was in daily use and housed most of the holy furniture. The table of shewbread on the right held twelve loaves called the "bread of Presence". On the left was the golden candlestick which was used to light the sanctuary at night. Just before the veil was the altar of incense from which the sweet fragrance arose. This seemed to represent the prayers of God's people which filtered into the presence of the Holy God. Beyond the veil was the "Holiest of All" --God's dwelling place. Here the ark of the covenant was placed and its cover, called the mercy seat. The writer of Hebrews mentions a "golden censer" as part of the furnishings of this cube-like room. Some feel that it was the censer used yearly by the high priest and left just within the veil so that he might grasp it by simply reaching under the curtain. Others are convinced that it was the altar of incense to which reference is made. These suggest that the fact of it being before the mercy seat is all that is really being stated.

An interesting note is made in the book entitled, Exploring the Old Testament, and reads as follows: "The furniture in the entire Tabernacle was arranged in the form of a cross, which seemed to cast its shadow backward through the veil".¹

II. The Tabernacle Ministry (9:6-7)

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service [of God].

7 But into the second [went] the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and [for] the errors of the people:

Even though the tabernacle service was elementary in the sense that it was to give way to the better covenant and true heavenly ministry; it was, none the less, a most hallowed and sacred performance. It drew its sacredness from the fact that God had ordained it, and from the glory of what it prefigured of the heavenly sanctuary. Thus it was that the priest went daily into the Holy Place to perform the daily ministrations. Once every year, the high priest entered through the veil into the very Holy of Holies. Note the Scripture's emphasis on the phrase "not without blood". This was the priest's "pass" into the Shekinah presence of God. To enter otherwise would have been death. This blood was a sin offering for the sins of the

priest and the people that he represented.

III. The Holy Spirit Expresses Significance (9:8-10)

8. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which [was] a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 [Which stood] only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed [on them] until the time of reformation.

Dear Hebrews, can you not see that the Old Testament system was not God's final plan for His people? Do you not recognize that it did not give the common man access to God? The Holy Spirit "was showing us that we could not truly come to God through the old sacrifices. The way to God is through Christ."² The whole system could not make man "perfect, as pertaining to the conscience". For the most part, there did not seem to be a clear, assuring witness of forgiveness. To what extent their faith grasped the sacrificial death of a future Lamb, we do not know. Yet, there had to be a certain level of faith involved to participate in such a ministry, otherwise it would be cast off as a pretentious and useless superstition. By faith, the Jews obediently carried out these "carnal ordinances" expecting expiation for their sins. It was, however, only in the fact of Christ's coming and the shedding of His blood, that their faith found fruition.

This series of washings, offerings, gifts and sacrifices was obligatory until the time of the "reformation" as the King James version translates it. Adam Clark suggests that this means the "time of rectifying...the Gospel dispensation, under which everything is set straight; everything referred to its proper purpose and end; ...the spiritual nature of God's worship taught, and grace promised to purify the heart; so that, through the power of the eternal Spirit, all that was wrong in the soul is rectified; the affection, passions, and appetites purified; the understanding enlightened; the judgement corrected; the will refined; in a word, all things made new."³ Mr. Lenski translates this reformation the "period of the right order"⁴ at which time the Old Testament ministry of ceremonies and rituals would no longer be binding.

The Blood of the Testator (9:11-28)

The Christian religion has been ridiculed and scorned as a bloody religion. It must be clearly understood, however, that we are not merely stressing the gory, stomach turning part of this; but the merit of One's death blood, in our place, as our substitute. "Although references to the shed blood of Jesus Christ are graphic descriptions of His death, one must wonder why the Good News for Modern Man (Today's English Version) substituted the word "death" for "blood" thirty-eight times in the New Testament. Was it to avoid the reproach of having a "bloody religion"?⁵ asks Vic Reasoner. To the Christian, the blood of Jesus Christ is a most hallowed thing and calls forth a great and solemn veneration. No doubt, in this supposedly sophisticated, learned, and cultured day, the blood of Christ has been too well ignored and too little extolled in preaching, in teaching and in practical evangelical application and worship.

I. Better Blood (9:11-14)

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [for us].

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

At the very outset of this study, it should be recognized that the blood of "goats and calves" does not possess any redemptive merit and can in no way expiate sin's guilt and punishment. If that were not so, then perhaps Satanic rituals of cat killing, human sacrifice, and drinking blood might offer some hope. That is as absurd as it is horrifying. The blood of an animal or a human is powerless to win favour before God. No human could sacrifice himself and expect that, having bled to death, he would find appeasement before God.

Old Testament sacrificial blood did not offer pardon to the penitent by virtue of the efficacy of that animal blood. As has been discussed under verses 8 - 10, it was their obedience in faith that wrought merit to the shedding of blood. That faith, whatever their minds grasped of the future Saviour, was founded in God's provision. God provided a sacrificial covenant that actually found its strength in a future event; that being the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. So it was, as we were told in Bible School, "the New was in the Old concealed and the Old was in the New revealed".

Verse 13 presents the inferior statement of contrast. The blood and ashes of animals provided, at least, a ceremonial purification for physical or fleshly defilement. All of this ceremony only set the stage for the enormous, contradistinction between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ.

Because our Saviour was the spotless, sinless Son of God, His blood could be shed without involving a hint of personal judgement or just retribution. In short, Jesus was not getting what He deserved. His blood claims merit by the very fact that it is divine blood. Thus, it can accomplish what otherwise would have been a futile speculation.

The blood of Christ can perform an inner spiritual purging. It can deal, first of all, with the conscience or awareness of guilt and pending condemnation. The conscience of a burdened, convicted, guilty soul can be set at ease and, as far as eternal damnation and the wrath of God are concerned, it can be wiped clean. This we call being "saved". Keeping God's law is not merely the observance of rules upon rules with no inner compulsion of power to obedient adherence. That is Old Testament religion. Some laws were tenaciously and fiercely clung to, while others seemed to be out of the grasp of willing, heartfelt obedience. What was adhered to was merely "dead works" that lacked the power of Holy Ghost enabling. They lacked the power of the Gospel. John makes this clear when he writes, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3) We now serve our great Emancipator because we love Him. This is New Testament religion! Beyond this, the blood of Christ can cleanse the heart from the consciousness of sin. That is a purging from the defilement that brought us to sinful deeds and a burdened conscience in the first place. Where the conviction of need and the consciousness of defilement reigns, the Holy Spirit can apply the blood of Christ to effect a perfect purifying of the soul.

Who, but those who have not tasted the "good things to come" of verse 11, could deny that the blood of Jesus is "better" blood?

II. Testament Blood (9:15-17)

15. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 For where a testament [is], there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament [is] of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

First, it should be noted that the word translated "testament" in these verses is the same word we have been noticing earlier translated as "covenant". It appears that with reference to the death of the covenant maker, we are now using "testament" to aid our grasp.

No will or testament is valid and able to be enforced until the death of the will (or covenant) maker. A promise had been made to human kind, that better things were in store involving moral, spiritual verities. None of that could be accomplished, however, until Jesus shed His blood and died as the will maker or testator. Thus we understand that Christ's death validated His will and testament as efficacious, meritorious and supernaturally powerful. To us, it opened our inheritance in the Gospel. A beautiful inclusion is made in verse 15 that speaks volumes, both of the great mercy of God and also of the immensity of His power and the broad scope of this testament blood. It is clearly stated that, in the death and shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, sins committed beforehand by Old Testament people of faith were amply pardoned and atoned for since their embracing of the old covenant, in faithful obedience, had reached forward to Christ's testament blood. Adam Clarke says, "The death of Jesus had respect to all the time antecedent to it, as well as to all the time afterward till the conclusion of the world".⁶

III. Dedicatory Blood (9:18-23)

18 Whereupon neither the first [testament] was dedicated without blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

20 Saying, This [is] the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23. [It was] therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The access to God's presence, the pass into the Holy of Holies, was blood. It was used to set apart and purify the tabernacle, its vessels and furnishings and the priest that was approaching God's glory. Blood must be shed for sins to be remitted.

When the true and real system came into fruition, blood was the basis upon which the heavenly sanctuary was opened to sinful man. This time, however, animal blood would not do. It would be meaningless and obnoxious. It was with better blood, testament blood, that a way into God's presence was dedicated and a pass offered to repentant sinners to come and come confidently. More will be seen of this in the next chapter.

IV. Consummating Blood (9:24-26)

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The sacrificial death of Christ consummated all the blood sacrifices of all time. It was the perfect completion of atonement offerings and the very crown of thousands upon thousands of previous blood gifts. It was also the final sacrifice, for never again would it be necessary for Jesus to die. His blood was final, conclusive and consummate.

To the fact of its finality, verse 26 points out that the blood of Christ is effectual in making a final death stroke to sin. Not only can sin's guilt and record be "put away", but sin, the nature itself, can be given a death blow in the heart of the believer. As Dr. Yocum put it in his preaching, this was no mere "bandage" for the sin problem; this was God's plan from 'the foundation of the world' to provide a cure, a remedy for sin.

V. Promising Blood (9:27-28)

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Through the blood of Jesus Christ, salvation can replace the judgement of God's wrath. For those who have embraced by faith the grace offered through Christ's sacrificial death, He will "appear the second time" to claim His own. The writer is saying that when our Lord returns, it will not be to make another offering for sin. No, it will be "apart from sin" (NKJ) that he comes; and this time to usher in final salvation of those who have embraced the promise of His blood.

With Mrs. C. H. Morris we would sing:

"Hallelujah for the Blood, for the sin cleansing fountain,
For the Lamb has been slain, and the ransom price paid.
Fully cancelled was the debt when on Calvary's mountain
All the sins of this world upon Jesus were laid.

Hallelujah for the Blood! Sing for joy all ye nations,
And rejoice that the work of redemption is done.
Here is pardon free for all, and a perfect salvation
Thro' the sin-cleansing blood of the Crucified One.

Hallelujah for the Blood! Hallelujah forever!
We shall sing it anew in the kingdom of God,
Where the anthems of delight shall be silent, no, never,
Evermore hallelujah for Christ and the Blood.

There was no arm to save, there was no eye to pity,
Until Jesus, our Saviour, from glory came down.
He was mighty to save; He was strong to deliver.
He has brought us salvation, a robe and a crown.
Hallelujah, hallelujah! Sing the triumphant strain.
Hallelujah for the Blood, and the Lamb that was slain."⁷

End Notes

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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 10

HEBREWS CHAPTER X

The Recapitulation (10:1-18)

- 1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.
- 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
- 3 But in those [sacrifices there is] a remembrance again [made] of sins every year.
- 4 For [it is] not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.
- 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
- 6 In burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin thou hast had no pleasure.
- 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.
- 8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and [offering] for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure [therein]; which are offered by the law;
- 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
- 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all].
- 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:
- 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;
- 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
- 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.
- 15 [Whereof] the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,
- 16 This [is] the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts,

and in their minds will I write them;

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

18 Now where remission of these [is, there is] no more offering for sin.

In much of this division, the writer seems to be recapping what has gone before of the ministry of Christ under a new covenant. Clearly stated is God's lack of "pleasure" in the old system of sacrifices and rituals which could not take away sin. In contrast is implied God's pleasure with Christ's sacrifice. Perhaps the word "satisfaction" would better describe God's attitude in this situation. Christ's blood satisfied the demands of holy justice.

A beautiful conversation seems to be going on in the heavenly world at the time of Christ's incarnation. Realizing the demands of justice for a sinless substitute to suffer, Jesus speaks of the body that God prepared for Him in order that He might enter humanity and suffer vicariously. Note especially the grand submission of the Second Person of the Trinity when He says, "Lo I come to do Thy will, oh God". Such sublime condescension of the glorious God and Creator of the universe is beyond our poor intellect's grasp. That God should take my punishment is unthinkable; yet I believe it!

No further sacrifice or shedding of blood is necessary. Christ's one sacrifice has terminated all blood offerings and totally obliterated any meaning in a continued earthly priesthood or sacrificial system. Along with that, it has made a perfect and lasting provision for any who "come to God by Christ Jesus". Verse 14 declares that perfect sanctification is offered in His one sacrifice. Richard S. Taylor suggests that "to be perfected forever is not to be made unconditionally established and secure in this 'sanctification'. The phrase simply declares, in the strongest language possible, that all who, from time to time, are sanctified are sanctified perfectly by means of this one offering."¹

The Way into the Throne Room (10:19-22)

I. Access by the Blood (10:19)

19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

With a reverent heart and an awed mind, I begin this discussion of access into the very throne room of the Almighty. The writer is still drawing from the Old Testament tabernacle and thus calls the place that is opened to us "the holiest", the very Holy of Holies. This is the most sacred place that knew no careless or profane visitor. It was lighted only by the glory of God's presence and was a place of death without a blood offering. In all, the throne room is the very presence of God our Father, our Maker and our Judge. Just imagine the guarded step, the muffled stride, the tight lips and respectful demeanour of one approaching an earthly potentate's office or throne. But they are only another human being, a created one. We are studying here no common access to an earthly king, but a way into the presence of God. What due respect and careful thoughtfulness ought to mark our pursuit of God. I once read of a gentleman who waited silently in prayer for some time before he finally said one word, "God". Again he waited as his heart contemplated the One he was approaching. Too often we bluster into prayer without any regard for the Majesty to Whom we are talking.

Let me hurry on to add another side to this glorious approach and declare that, as exalted and beyond compare as is our God, yet you and I can come to Him with great confidence. The King James Version has translated this, "boldness", as it applies to a child's uninhibited entrance into his father's room or study; not as it applies to a rough, demanding, loud, crude and brazen attitude. I do not need to come sneaking in to God; nor must I come on some long and painful 'hands and knees' journey over rocks and glass to obtain His notice. No, through the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for me, I come into the throne room with great confidence in the love and concern of my Heavenly Father. This may come as a slow revelation to anyone who has had an abusive, earthly parent; but it is all true none-the-less. Glory be to God. As I come reverently in the name of Jesus, I find that the blood of Christ has already opened a way, or entrance, into the

presence of God.

A few days ago, as I prayed, I imagined Jesus standing at the door of the throne room and holding the door open for me to enter. Can I fathom such a privilege with my frail intellect? Yet, I experience the wonder and reality of it. As I prayed, it seemed to me that, if my Father's hand was big enough to span the universe, He was surely big enough to hold me on His lap. There, in His presence, I whispered to Him the things that were on my heart. Oh, the strong and safe retreat there is in God's presence. All that we enjoy in ready access to the Father, and the honour of knowing Him, has been made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ. This must be stressed. The way into the throne room of God is the blood way! Money can't buy a way in; suffering cannot earn a way in; good deeds will never merit entrance; it is the blood way.

II. The New, Living and Consecrated Way (10:20)

20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

A. The New Way

The word "new" is found only this one time in the Scriptures and carries the thought of "recently slain, fresh". "It does not so much convey the idea that it is new in the sense that it had never existed before, as new in the sense that it is recent, or fresh,"² notes Mr. Barnes. Old Testament sacrificial blood congealed and lost its usefulness in sprinkling, and thus did not remain "new". The blood of Jesus Christ is continually and perpetually fresh and efficacious in its merit and power. As far as the value of the blood of the Perfect Lamb is concerned, it is as freshly flowing now as if Christ had been slain today. Luther said, "It seems but yesterday that Jesus died on the cross".³ In his famous song, "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood", William Cowper beautifully expresses the continual merit of the blood.

"Thou dying Lamb, Thy precious blood, Shall never lose its power Till all the ransomed Church of God Are saved to sin no more."⁴

Dear Christian friend, it was through the perpetually fresh blood of Christ that you entered the Holiest of All in prayer this morning.

B. The Living Way

It is a wonderful joy to be a part of something throbbing with life and vitality. Imagine embracing faith in a dead Buddha or Confucius or another historical figure. What an exercise in futility it would be to attempt access to God through a memory or mere fact of the past. This is not the Christian's lot, for we can approach the Presence of God through a living way. The blood way is a living way, for it is hosted by a living Saviour. Jesus is our resurrected Lord. He was dead but is alive again and because He lives, He offers to mankind a life-giving means of approach.

Thomas was struggling with Jesus' announcement that He was going away and His further declaration, "whither I go ye know, and the way ye know". The distraught disciple said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Note Jesus' blessed reply: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." (John 14:4-6) To cap this concept, the words of Dr. Richard Lenski thrill my heart when he says that this is "a way that is itself active and bears those who step upon it".⁵ That reminds me of an escalator that carries you up to another level. This living way, will bear us into the presence of God if we will put our full weight upon it in faith, surrender and obedience.

C. The Consecrated Way

The blood way into God's presence is a "consecrated, dedicated or inaugurated" route. All of this suggests a ribbon cutting ceremony on the great inaugural day. That day of days, when the new and living way was consecrated, was none other than the day of Christ's death. On the cross, Jesus finished the plan to provide access to God and open up the Holy of Holies. You will remember that the great veil of the temple rent without human intervention. Perhaps, that might be considered the visible ribbon cutting on this great day. But, in actuality, a much better veil was being rent that day; for it was "through the veil, that is His flesh" that Christ dedicated the great means of approach. This awesome ceremony was attended by a few rough soldiers, some loyal followers and a ridiculing, mocking group of unbelievers. There were no dignitaries or kings to witness the consecration of an unheard of offer. Even God Himself had turned away as Christ bore the sins, and the rottenness of sin's festering sore for all mankind. Oh, day of days!

"The means for entrance into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle was the great curtain that hung before it; the means for entrance into the heavenly Sanctuary is Jesus' flesh...As the veil in the tabernacle was the only means of entrance to the inner sanctuary, so Jesus' flesh is the only means of entrance to the Sanctuary of heaven. In other words, without Jesus' flesh, apart from that, there exists no means by which we may go into the heavenly Sanctuary, may get into saving communion with God."⁶

This is the concise conclusion of Mr. Lenski, and a very apt word picture for us.

Since Christ's flesh is the veil, do we push Jesus aside as we endeavour to come to God? No, we come through, or believing in, the death and broken body of Christ. Must we wear bells and a rope lest we die in the presence of the Holy One? No, we may enter freely and with a great trust. Is there some tangible blood that I must carry to the place of prayer like an Old Testament priest? No, I enter on the fresh and living merit of the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for one and for all.

III. The Call to Draw Near (10:21-22)

21 And [having] an high priest over the house of God;

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

So, Friend, step in. Why hesitate any longer? Come on, step in. This is the writer's clarion call when he urges us to "draw near". How slow man is to enter. How reluctant many seem in coming to their only hope and help. How heavy the step of some who should be coming home. Of this throne room privilege, someone has said, "Here we see that child of God at home." May our spirits linger there longer through the day. May we live more in the presence of God.

Four guidelines are suggested in this exhortation to take advantage of our Christian privilege. We are told that our coming should be with a true heart, marking the sincerity of saints of the Old Covenant. This can be no pretence of piety or show of religion, but an honest approach to God. With this, must be coupled faith; the full assurance that God "is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him". The third point bespeaks the appropriation of the blood of Jesus in our own hearts. As believers, we have received the assurance of acceptance in our very consciousness, so that no longer does guilt weigh us down. As we have noted earlier, there is also cleansing from sin, such that our spirit's sense of defilement is purged away. It is "brethren" (vs.19) who are being addressed in these verses; those who have had the blood applied to their hearts. Notice, finally, that they must continue to live outwardly in an exemplary manner, that their "body's" actions and deportment not hinder their approach. May we give careful attention to the wisdom of Orten Wiley:

"The whole life, outward as well as inward, is to be lived in the presence of God. Perhaps this explains why some who have sought so earnestly to enter into the holiest have failed; they have some idol of the heart which has not been cast down, or it may be some bodily practice which has not been brought under the sprinkling of the Blood. Perhaps we have not yet fully realized how our eating and drinking, the manner in which we dress or conduct ourselves in public and social

life, our daily duties, and our season of recreation affect our spiritual lives. These things wisely used under the illumination of the Spirit are a source of spiritual blessing; used wrongly or to excess, they steal our fire, dampen our enthusiasm, and chill our ardor."⁷

We understand that some things are proper and other things are very unsuitable in approaching an earthly ruler. Blue jeans, a week's growth of whiskers, muddy shoes, and hidden contraband are not acceptable. Just so, some things are not justifiable in entering heaven's throne room. Some things will hinder or dampen our approach and other things will totally block it. We would do well to examine our bodies under the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit. As we come near the throne room in our attempt to pray, the Spirit's detector may sound an alarm that alerts us of hindrances in our lives. Are we carrying illegal images on our minds from things we have chosen to view? Have we spoken truth with our mouth? Do we need to make an apology for some hasty or harsh word? Have our ears been listening to and encouraging gossip? What have our hands done that might be offensive to God? Where have our feet taken us? Are our bodies clean from immoral acts, ruinous habits, careless sloth? Whatever will block us from entering the throne room, will also keep us out of heaven. If there is a problem to which the Holy Spirit alerts you, then hurry and bring it to the blood of Christ. Never fail to live in ready access of the throne room!

Some Bible scholars agree, that in the flow of the author's content, there is an urging to go on into the grace of entire sanctification found in these verses. They see this as a call into the holiest of Christian experience. Orten Wiley, Adam Clarke, Dale Yocum and Andrew Murray have espoused this opinion. Mr. Murray says, "It is a call to all lukewarm, half-hearted Christians, no longer to remain in the outer court of the tabernacle, content with the hope that their sins are pardoned...It is a call to all doubting, thirsting believers, who long for a better life than they have yet known, to cast aside their doubts, and to believe that this is what Christ has indeed done and brought within the reach of each one of us."⁸

Pastoral Admonitions (10:23-25)

I. Faithful Continuance (10:23)

23 Let us hold fast the profession of [our] faith without wavering; (for he [is] faithful that promised;)

It is the pastor's ardent desire that his people be faithful to Jesus Christ. John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 3:4). In this time of undisciplined "go by feeling" living, we must uphold the need for diligent faithfulness. It seems that it is in the areas of prayer, matters of personal convictions, and obedience in what others may consider insignificant, that the real heart of holding fast is developed. We need:

1. a warm devotion to Jesus Christ,
2. a solid determination to follow Him,
3. a keen discretion of surrounding perils,
4. a humble dependence on the help of the Holy Spirit,
5. a marked direction to our lives and goals and
6. a growing discipline of personal and social living.

Oh, that these Hebrews would not shed their faith in Jesus Christ. A great reward awaits them if they will be true, "for He is faithful that promised".

II. Considerate Inter-personal Relationships (10:24)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

I remember Dr. Dale Yocum saying that if our one-another relationships were what they ought to be, we would be in the midst of revival. How often has the Holy Spirit been grieved by God's people in their lack of consideration for one another. We are the ones who should be demonstrating to the world the beauty of brotherly love and tender compassion. I wonder, in the light of this 24th verse, how much responsibility do we carry for the spiritual well being of other Christians? What will the judgement reveal?

Some are returning to modern churches that have long since lost the glory. Preachers and preacher's wives are leaving what they once taught and practiced, and promoting a growing fog of confusion for young people. We can point a bony finger at these who have not been faithful, but that is not the whole story! In too many cases, there has been unnecessary suspicion, verbal campaigns of slander, cruel and cutting harshness, stiff and unbending leadership, miserable smearing of reputations, failure to make apologies, hounding phone calls, nasty letters, and cold shoulders. Where, may I ask, is Christian consideration in the lives and attitudes of these who call themselves by the name of Christ?

Perhaps consideration should begin with a real soul searching of our own spirituality and relationship to the Holy One. If we want to be a blessing to others, then we need to be well blessed ourselves. "You may be able to compel people to maintain certain minimum standards by stressing duty, but the highest moral and spiritual achievements depend not upon a push but a pull", says Reinhold Niebuhr. "People must be charmed into righteousness."⁹ Could it be that this attractive, pulling charm of a godly character, life and attitude might be what is meant by the writer's call to "provoke". It is a holy graciousness and encouragement that arouses the best in fellow believers. It is an inspiring example that lifts others to higher pursuits of godliness. This type of consideration should be ethical, reasonable and sweetly sanctified. Military starch and bark will not make it in this kind of sweet reasonableness. Gossip will provoke to disgust rather than to love. Sunday smiles and handshakes will be lifeless unless there is warm consideration for the needs of others through the week. The saintly John Fletcher asked himself each night "what he had done for the souls and bodies of God's dear saints".¹⁰

May we not be holy in name only but in our "charming" love for God and each other.

III. Regular Church Attendance (10:25a)

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is];

Although Christianity is a very personal relationship with Christ, it has, none-the-less, much to do with the united body of Christ. For our own benefit, and for the mutual benefit of the local congregation, we are urged, yea, commanded to continue assembling together as believers. In such an arrangement, there is accountability, balance, blessing, insight and the promise of Christ's presence. We need one another for a complete working together of the body functions.

Mr. Lenski has aptly noted that failure to gather together "is more than just carelessness; it is the beginning of apostasy."¹¹ This very issue has become, in many lives, the thermometer of their love for Christ. First prayermeeting is crowded out and then the Sunday evening service. It is not long, if steps are not taken to awaken spiritual sensibilities, until mutual worship is a thing of the past. What a toll such behaviour takes on the individual and his family. When pleasure and business take a higher place than the Lord, trouble is in sight. From whatever motive such a failure arises, it is a signal of spiritual regression, a dangerous example, a breaking of this directive and disappointing to the Lord.

Yes, many claim they can best worship alone in their living room or in the woods, but they need to be challenged to answer honestly some probing questions. How much do they really worship? Our homes are filled with distractions and

diversions. Our minds will offer us enough trouble in the best of circumstances. How soon do they distort truth; taking one part and ignoring the other, losing Biblical balance and becoming a law unto themselves? Hermit type Christians, self-taught, and misguided, are like tires with a dangerous bulge on the side. They may soon blow out. How often do they come from their "single assembly" with a sense of the melting presence of God? How often are they lifted in prayer? Do they not feel the lack of edification of other believers? Do they not sense their responsibility to encourage the saints? Upon what authority can they violate God's command?

To the dear shut-ins and invalids of God's great family, may the Lord add to them what they are forced to miss in united worship and fellowship. May God strengthen and support the working force of Christians who, on the afternoon shift, miss so many revival services and prayermeetings. Some of the men in my congregation pay their co-workers to trade to day shift at revival times.

Church hoppers who share a service with one congregation one Sunday, another church the next, and so on, need to see clearly the responsibility of considerate edification. They do not realize that the example of consistency, and being able to be counted on, is a higher principle than simply whether or not they are members of a local church.

IV. Sharing Words of Encouragement (10:25b)

10b but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Barnabas, the exhorter, is one of my favourite Bible characters. His life and, apparently, his gifts were built upon the grace of encouragement, affirmation, confirmation and exhortation. These are beautiful traits in any congregation. Some new converts have been force fed until they choked to death. Thank God for the fathers and mothers in Israel who nurture and pray for Zion's young.

Here is a word of caution for the pastor of the flock. Exhortation is not a tyrannical barrage of ministerial power and privilege. If the purpose is to gain personal adherents, then true exhortation has been lost. If a personal gripe is being aired, then get out of the pulpit.

The "teaching-priest", the pastor-evangelist, has one main goal; that being to lead men and women, boys and girls, to the very presence of God and to teach and affirm holy living in their daily lives. When a rebuke is necessary, it should be done at the right place, with the right ones present, and in a right attitude. Pastoring should involve far more feeding than fleecing. Find it in this verse!

The worship service that shares public involvement and personal testimonies presents a wonderful opportunity to fulfil this text. Those with the gift of exhortation may urge the careless or sluggish ones on to greater heights in Christ. At times, warnings and broken-hearted lamentations may be expressed by the parishioner-exhorter. However, care needs to be taken that the pastor's role is not being usurped, and that a non-critical spirit is shown. Some people who have claimed the unction of the Holy Spirit were merely showing their true colours, putting a damper on the service, and being a great hinderance to young people and new converts. Exhortation is not to be understood as man's privilege to take the role of the Holy Spirit upon himself. Rev. C. K. Carlisle taught us to be wary of those claiming, "God told me...". May our services be graced by considerate, loving words of exhortation for the purpose of edification and encouragement.

The vestibule service also holds untold opportunities to fulfil this admonition. By that, I mean that valuable ministry does not just take place in the sanctuary during the set hour of worship. By no means! The time following the church service may be the true expression of the spirit of exhortation in some instances. There, in the church foyer, a gracious saint may ask a young person if they have the victory. The saints of yesteryears did that. They were establishing accountability at the same time as they were affirming and encouraging the object of their loving concern. A strong hug and the whispered words, "I'm praying for you; be encouraged", may offer tangible meaning to a hurting brother or sister in Christ. This is no time to lose the heart of true exhortation and miss the opportunity to bond and blend together. If people can not find

loving care in the church, they'll find mutual camaraderie, as poor as it is, at the bar, the night club or some other place of ill repute.

I really like the way Chuck Swindoll sums this all up:

"Marbles or grapes, which will it be? Every congregation has a choice. You can choose to be a bag of marbles... independent, hard, loud, unmarked, and unaffected by others. Or you can be a bag of grapes...fragrant, soft, blending, mingling, flowing into one another's lives. Marbles are made to be counted and kept. Grapes are made to be bruised and used. Marbles will scar and clank. Grapes yield and cling."¹²

For those who have spent time in the throne room of God's presence and found the comfort of their heavenly Father, it should come natural to "yield and cling". Each of these pastoral admonitions will find establishing grace in the presence of God. Our grip on faithfulness will tighten; our gracious considerateness will blossom; we will want to be in the house of worship regularly; and encouragement will flow from us for we have been encouraged by the Lord.

A Solemn and Stunning Warning (10:26-31)

I. Man's only Hope (10:26-27)

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

No one who has been illuminated by the truth should ever, for a moment, expect to find salvation outside of Jesus Christ. There is no other sacrifice. If these Hebrew people could have gone back to Old Testament sacrifices and blood offerings now, it would have done them absolutely no good. To do so now would have been turning their back on Christ.

This is not to say that a backslider cannot come back to God and be restored among the blood-washed. Nor is it suggesting that one who has long rejected the truth of redemption is beyond hope. Nevertheless, it is saying that willful transgression will negate the continued coverage of the soul in the saving blood of Christ. The backslider will find no other source of hope or pardon aside from Jesus Christ. Unless he returns, in broken confession and humble repentance, he can expect nothing but fearful "judgement and fiery indignation". It may be that the subject of hell is no longer popular and palatable to "itching ears" but that has not changed God's judgment. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, and the only way to do so is through the sacrifice of the Son of God.

II. Punishment under Moses' Law (10:28)

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

A gripping story is told in Numbers 15:32-36. In previous verses it had been declared that defiant disobedience was to be dealt with by death. Here, a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day and was apprehended and held until God made the man's sentence clear. When God spoke, the verdict was stoning outside of the camp.

The Scripture mentions such a penalty for cursing and for 'sassing' parents. Imagine the thuds of stones, the shrieks of pain and the gasps for breath as the condemned dies for breaking the law of Moses. A second chance? No! An offer of appeasement? No! Nothing but death without mercy.

III. A Greater Crime (10:29)

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Where the offer of mercy is great, the crime of rejecting it is greater. Rebelliously strutting over the offers of grace and the blood of Christ, with a stiff, defiant and sullen sneer, is asking for "sorer punishment". And so is simply doing nothing about the offer of mercy! It is not just rejecting a gift or an offer, it is rejecting God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. So, in this graphic verse, to turn one's back on the salvation offered in the New Covenant is tantamount to stomping on Christ, spitting on the blood and slapping the Holy Spirit in the face. The blessed condescending Saviour has already suffered immeasurably at the hands of sinners for the very sins that are here referred to, yet mercy is held out still. The shed blood that is now valued as useless by these, was spilt as an appeasement for their very attitude of insolence. Jesus had returned to heaven in order that He might send another Comforter to the very individual who is turning a cold shoulder to Him. For these, what is sorer punishment but the second death; beyond the reach of hope, help or God? Hell may not have popular, theological endorsement, but the Scripture has not changed its proclamation of a punishment sorer than what was experienced in the Old Testament.

IV. God's Threat (10:30-31)

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

31 [It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Somehow God has become a soft, old, doting grandfather in the eyes of many today; and it cannot be thought that such a God would ever punish a poor, little human being. But God is no "wimp"! As a holy God, He is not fooled by sin, nor does He fool around with it.

It is the preacher's call to warn the people of a God of vengeance and, at the same time, not to leave them in despair. There is hope if the backslider will come back to Christ and the blood of the covenant. There is yet hope of a blessed influence reaching out from their life through the power of Jesus Christ. However, if they refuse this offer of mercy, there is no other alternative; there is nothing to offer them but the vengeance of an Almighty God; and they have nothing to offer others but a blighted influence that is leading them hell-ward.

You've Come Too Far to Turn Back Now! (10:32-39)

I. Picture former Persecutions (10:32-34)

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

These dear Hebrew believers have not come through easy street! They have struggled through some rugged circumstances that grew out of their Christian profession. They have been made spectacles by the treatment they received. They have been afflicted and lost their earthly goods. They are worthy of a warm endorsement by the writer since, during his own imprisonment, they had endeared themselves to him. Perhaps their identifying with him had cost them dearly.

Yet, through it all, they kept an eye for treasures in heaven that could not be spoiled.

Reader, are you tested and tempted to give up in the battle you are facing? Take a quick glance backward and recall the victories of the past. Recount the times when ample grace was meted to you and God came to your rescue right on time. Remember that "God seldom comes early, but He is always on time". As you look back, you will see you've "come too far to turn back now".

II. Persevere for the Prize (10:35-37)

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

It has been said that "God does not pay all His bills on Friday night". This is true in the sense that unbelievers are usually not cut off immediately for their rebellion and defiance of God. Often, pay is not handed out in this life and it seems that they go on hale and haughty in their pride and self-sufficiency. But a payday will come!

As true as this is for the stiff and unbending sinner, just so, it is a positive verity for God's people. There is a payday coming. It will all be worthwhile. There will be no disappointment in the final reward. Oh, the glory awaiting in response even to a "cup of cold water" that has been given for Jesus' sake. Christian Friend, don't give up! Hang on to everything God has done for you. Yield nothing to the trick and taunt of your enemy. Resist him. Fight back. Refuse to give in. You won't be sorry!

In our day of "instant everything", we need to develop Christian patience and perseverance. We must not yield to the desire for instant gratification, instant relief, and instant reward. Be faithful; Christ will be true to His promise to return for His own.

III. Progress by Faith (10:38-39)

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Christianity is not always a mountain-top experience of overflowing joy, exuberance and heavenly glory. Probably, if that were the case, we would be useless blimps with no spiritual muscle or stamina. Sometimes we must simply be faithful and obedient, feelings or no feelings. Richard Taylor has said that "the soul must learn to keep itself committed to God and 'trust when it cannot trace'".¹³ For both the saved and the entirely sanctified persons, there will be times when faith is the only thing to which they can cling. But hold on; soon light will dawn again. In the case of many conscientious hearts, this has proven to be a real struggle. They feel no particular assurance of the smile of God. They conclude that they must have sinned somewhere; and thus they throw up their hands in despair. This is not right. It is not pleasing to the Lord; it is disaster to the ongoing growth of stability in their personal lives; and it is devastating to their character. A wise comment is given by C. D. Hansen when he notes that "faithfulness is a mark of character. If a man is unfaithful, he mars his character, thereby losing his own sense of self-respect as well as losing the respect of others."¹⁴ If you know God has saved you and you are following Him, then refuse to back down for the devil. If you know God has cleansed your heart, then walk on by faith. You've come too far to quit now!

End Notes

1. Quoted in Ray Crooks, Ed., *Adult Teacher's Insights, Studies in Hebrew*, (Overland Park, Kansas: Herald and Banner Press, 1992) Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 70.
2. Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1972) p. 1306.
3. Luther, source not known.
4. Cowper, *Praise and Worship Hymnal*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Lillenas Publishing Co., n.d.) p. 87.
5. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966) p. 344.
6. Lenski, p. 345.
7. H. Orten Wiley, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1959) p. 340.
8. Andrew Murray, *The Holiest of All*, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.) pp. 353-354.
9. Quoted in Charles R. Swindoll, *The Quest for Character*, (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1987) p. 146.
10. John Fletcher, article in *The Gospel for Youth*, (n.d.) n.p.
11. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966) p. 354.
12. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Quest for Character*, (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1987) p. 144.
13. Richard S. Taylor, *Preaching Holiness Today*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1987) p. 234.
14. Quoted in Ray Crooks, Ed., *Adult Teacher's Insights-Marks of a Christian*, (Overland Park, KS: Herald and Banner Press, 1992) Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 71.

The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 11

HEBREWS CHAPTER XI

Faith--What is It? (11:1-3)

The presentation of this chapter is not a new or novel concept in this epistle. It has been the essence of faith that has laid the basic foundation for this whole epistle. Jesus cannot be seen for He has returned to His Father. All along, there has been a call to a deeper commitment to the One Who is invisible. In the previous chapter, the writer pled with them to continue steadfast for "the just shall live by faith". Chapter 11 is a rehearsal of Old Testament saints who put their full trust in what they could not see.

I. The Meaning of Faith

"John Paton, the pioneer missionary to the New Hebrides Islands, was once translating the New Testament into the language of the islanders. He could find no word, however, to translate 'faith'. One day, after long hours of hard work, he slumped in his chair exhausted. 'I'm so tired,' said Paton, 'I feel like resting all my weight on this chair.' Instantly, he sat straight up and yelled, 'Praise God, I've got my word.' That is it. Faith means putting all your weight upon God. It is complete trust and commitment."¹ With this practical help of Terry Pollard's to get a grasp on the meaning of "faith", we set out on this chapter's discussion. Dr. Ralph Earle notes that "faith is far more than intellectual assent. It is moral commitment. It is the personal surrender of one's will to God's will. Without the element of submission there is no real faith. There is no such thing as trust without obedience."²

It may be well to note that Christ asked if He would find faith on the earth when He returned. Yes, we put our trust in jet mechanics and airline pilots; we yield to the surgeons knife and skill with a measure of faith; but how much evangelical faith do we really find? How often do we find faith that really works? This type of faith, that yields to the will and directives of God and Scripture, is certainly in the minority. Oh yes, many claim to be believers but where is the moral commitment, the submission, the life? Dr. S. I. Emery said, "Faith alone saves, but faith that saves is not alone".³

The faith that is being spoken of in Scripture is a trust based solely in the Triune God. We Christians may be accused of being "blind believers" but this is not so. Division III entitled "The Evidence of Faith" will help to establish that fact.

II. The Substance of Faith (11:1a)

1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,

I like the word "substance". It sounds like something you can really sink your teeth into. Things I am hoping for, I cannot see nor yet touch, but faith allows me to get my hands on them. No, my physical hands do not hold them, but faith grants me a solid basis upon which to expect fulfilment.

Faith is not merely positive thinking nor an exercise in imagery projection. Much of that is motivated by selfishness and based on humanistic levels of performance. Bible faith is based solely upon the Lord and the verities of His Word. Unless

the ground of our expectations rests squarely upon Him, faith is not in action. Reader, God is substantial enough for you to lay your footings and foundation of faith in Him. This is no call for pessimism and negative thinking; faith holds a substance far beyond the grasp of mere positive thinkers because faith implies GOD! He gives rock-ribbed substance to trust. No wonder, then, that you can put your full weight on Him.

A. Maclaren helps to put this in perspective by elaborating on the faith of Noah.

"When Noah walked the earth and saw his contemporaries busy with buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, how fantastic and unreal their work must have seemed to him when behind them he saw blazing a vision, which he alone of all that multitude believed. Do not let us fancy that we have faith if these near trifles are to us the great realities, and the distance is dim, and unsubstantial, and doubtful, hidden in mist and forgotten...Surely, surely there is something wrong in men who call themselves believers in God and His Word, to whom the things seen and temporal are all or nearly all-important, and the trifles an inch from their eyes are big enough to shut out heaven and all its stars."⁴

III. The Evidence of Faith (11:1b)

1b. the evidence of things not seen.

There is something of the divine wrapped up in faith in an unexplainable proof or conviction of reality. John Wesley suggests that "it implies both a supernatural evidence of God, and the things of God; a kind of spiritual light exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural sight or perception thereof".⁵ There are times in earnest prayer that God seems to make clear to the soul that the answer is on the way and further prayer would be strangely out of order.

This word "evidence", carries some of the flavour of the word "substance" but with a richer and deeper assurance of what is, as yet, unseen. I thrill at the story of the Moffat's faith though it seemed their labour was accomplishing nothing. When these faithful, but seemingly fruitless, missionaries were asked what gift they would like sent to them, Mary asked for a communion set. That was faith at work! No doubt she was holding to a solid substance of what she hoped for, and sensed a firm evidence that she would soon see souls saved. So it was that, before long, six heathens came to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour and plans were made to hold a communion service. The day before the service was scheduled to take place, the communion set arrived. Thank God for men and women of faith!

IV. The Approval of Faith (11:2)

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Verse eight makes it unquestionably clear that faith is a necessity to please God. Here in verse 2, God confirms His approval of people of faith. How the heart of God must warm and thrill when men place their full weight on who He is and on what He has said. You, too, can have just such an approving report given by the Lord. Remember, it is not faith in yourself, but faith in Him.

V. The Practice of Faith (11:3)

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

There is a faith that looks back and believes what is now impossible to visibly reproduce and thus scientifically prove. We believe that God spoke and worlds began to spin, stars began to twinkle, birds appeared and flowers suddenly were blooming where no plants had been. We did not see this happen, but God said it did, and we believe. We did not see

Jesus, hear Him preach, stand in awe of His miracles, watch Him die on Calvary or behold scarred hands of His resurrected body; yet we believe. It is as real, by faith, as if we had been there. This is not mere propaganda, this is a God-substantiated faith. When man will believe truth, God will confirm its veracity.

Just as surely as there is a faith that holds past truth as though it were a present unfolding, so there is a faith that reaches out to the future and believes that which is still to come as if it were being presently experienced. We have never seen heaven, but in the maturing Christian it is becoming more and more real every day.

Abraham was promised a son when, not only was it still a future accomplishment, it was also a physical impossibility. Abraham was an old man and his wife was past child-bearing years. Paul declares that Abraham "was strong in faith, giving God the glory" (Rom. 4:20). Marilyn Baker points out the practical side of this faith with these striking comments: "The secret of Abraham's strong faith is ... he praised God even before the blessing happened. Most people are more concerned in 'saving face' than exercising faith. Can you imagine a childless old man praising God for an unconceived son? Too often we delay our praises until we're holding the baby!"⁶ What are you waiting for before you will praise the Lord?

Dr. Dale Yocum said that "praise is the highest form of faith". Dr. Wesley Duewel makes the following note in his book, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*:

"Huegel tells of a pastor who longed for new awakening in his church. He convened a week's meetings of nothing but praise. At first the people did not understand and kept asking and begging God for things. But the pastor kept explaining that he wanted nothing but praise. By Wednesday the service began to change. Thursday saw much praise, and even more was evident on Friday. By Sunday 'a new day had dawned. Sunday was a day such as the church had never seen. It was a genuine revival. God's glory filled the temple. Believers returned to their first love. Hearts were melted....It was wonderful. Praise had done it.'...Huegel...said that often when prayer does not bring the answer, adding praise will lead to victory. He states, 'There is power in praise which prayer does not have. Of course, the distinction between the two is artificial....The highest expression of faith is not prayer in its ordinary sense of petition, but prayer in its sublimest expression of praise.'"⁷

Why not start praising God for what He is going to do and you will find your faith taking on new substance. At the same time, you will have blessed your heavenly Father.

Worthies of Faith (11:4-23)

"The present cannot be severed from the past without jeopardizing the future. The church has a family tree, and it would be as fatal to cut the tree down for fire-wood, as to sleep self-complacently in its shadow. Some ignore the past as if they were 'the first that ever burst into this silent sea,' and created something worth recording. While it might be an indication of religious madness to dwell among the tombs, an occasional visit to the cemetery of the past for a fresh glance at the monuments of heroes 'who being dead yet speak', should stimulate to deep devotion and high endeavour... The richer our inheritance the deeper in debt we are."⁸

These are the words of one of my favourite authors, a former Free Methodist bishop, J. P. Taylor. With this introduction, we step into what has been called "The Westminster Abbey of Faith". May we be spurred on to greater faith and fuller obedience as we study these "of whom the world was not worthy".

I. Abel Faith that Justifies (11:4)

4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

The age old desire to "call the shots" has here been recalled. Cain presented an offering of fruits and vegetables and thus bypassed the blood sacrifice. His gift was rejected by God as unsatisfactory, whereas Abel's blood sacrifice marked not only obedience, but faith in the provision of God. Again, we should note that true faith is demonstrated by obedience. Actually, it should be understood that Cain's offering was an affirmation of his "God awareness", whereas Abel's was an admission of his own sin and an expression of his faith in God's atoning provision. Though this righteous man has been dead for nearly 6,000 years, still he speaks to us as an exhorter to the proper type of obedient faith.

The response of the Almighty to Abel was a counting of him as righteous. Righteousness was placed on his account in place of his sins. Thus, by faith, he was made right with God.

II. Enoch Faith that Pleases (11:5-6)

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

It appears that Enoch's life of faith was that which brought him recognition. The fact that it pleased the Lord, is especially highlighted. It seems to me that it was this beautiful trust in God that led to his translation. What further involvement faith played in Enoch's translation, we are not told. This man who "walked with God" (Gen. 5:24), never had to die, as we understand death. God simply gave him a "pass" into the glory world. Rev. James Keaton said that God and Enoch were out walking when the Lord said, "Enoch, why don't you come and spend the day with me?" Enoch accepted the offer to visit heaven for the day and night has never come. Reader, what is in store for those who please God in this day? Enoch has no advantage of special privilege. You, too, can anticipate gracious, spiritual help as you earnestly and diligently seek God. Only heaven will reveal all that awaits those who have pleased the Lord.

III. Noah Faith that Moves into Action (11:7)

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Some creation scientists have suggested that, prior to the flood, the earth might have been watered by heavy mists rather than by rains. If this is so, Noah had never seen rain and the warning of a flood was all the more phenomenal. The writer here states that this man of God was warned "of things not seen as yet". The notable fact, however, is his believing what God said, even though he had never seen such an act of judgement. The ship building operation was utter madness outside of faith; but God had spoken. Whether or not Noah understood the method of destruction was not the point. God had uttered His decree and Noah accepted it at face value. For this, Noah was the recipient of a righteous account before God.

IV. Abraham Faith plus Nothing (11:8-12)

8 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 whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as [in] a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, [so many] as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of [them], and embraced [them], and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that [country] from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better [country], that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten [son],

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God [was] able to raise [him] up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

We stand in awe as we stroll through this hall of fame. These are giants of faith! Imagine striking out for a destination unknown; talk about pioneers, these are the pioneers of faith. For Abraham, the Ur of the Chaldees was his familiar homeland. God spoke to him and promised to give him a new land for his inheritance. Consider that long and wearisome journey to Canaan. Ponder the questions that must have left Abraham and Sarah's heads spinning. Undoubtedly, there were doubts that attacked their resolve and fought with their grasp of faith. They could have turned around and gone back to their native land. Yet, God was making a man; more than that, God was making a nation; and through that nation God was going to introduce to planet Earth the God-man, Jesus Christ.

It appears that, although, Abraham was certainly wealthy enough to establish a home like the Canaanites around him, yet he chose to live as a nomad, a traveller, a pilgrim; "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". He choose a tent to live in though he was a man of means. Does our faith express itself in any form of sacrifice for the cause and promotion of the Kingdom of Christ? Must we live in luxury while the work of evangelism suffers for lack of funds and personnel in areas where the harvest of souls is ripe and the soil so productive? What does this selfishness say about our faith; about our real citizenship; about our devotion? Are we so content with life that we are not looking for a "better country"?

Mr. Finney said, "There are many professors who are willing to do almost anything in religion, that does not require self-denial....They will not willingly suffer reproach for the name of Christ. Nor will they deny themselves the luxuries of life, to save a world from hell....Oh, how soon such professors will be in hell!...They only give of their surplus wealth; and perhaps that poor woman who puts in her mite has exercised more self-denial than they have in giving thousands."⁹

It is sad that "Christianity" has become so near-sighted and lost its long look of faith. We would do well to examine whether Christianity can exist without a deep faith that shapes our purpose, goals and patterns. Faith affected Abraham, and in turn it blessed the world.

Lest we place these heroes on a pinnacle above the grind of daily living, fears, heartaches, disappointments and pain, we should note Abraham's rugged faith tests. The test of offspring to fulfil the promise of God is well outlined in Romans 4:16-22. Even though he was an old man and Sarah was past childbearing age, Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform". Oh, what faith! Faith that puts its full weight on God's promise. As was noted by Rev. Troy Bollens, too often we treat God's promises like ice that we are afraid to step confidently upon. We tip toe around the edge in fear and trembling lest we fall through at any moment. While we gingerly test the ice and wonder about its thickness, others who have either less sense or greater knowledge, drive their vehicles right out on the frozen lake as if it were a parking lot. Often young converts "drive" right out on God's word; and prove its power while we hesitate along the shore. Saint Paul declared that this faith of Abraham's "was imputed to him for righteousness". That is, right living was placed on his account as if he had never sinned.

The blessing of imputed righteousness is not some supposed covering of Christ over the believer, such that God cannot see the person's sins and continued transgressions. No, no, a thousand times, no! There is no Scriptural backing for such supposition. This teaching is belittling to the death of Christ, the merit of the blood, the plan of the Father, the work of a better covenant and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When righteousness is imputed to man, his sins are blotted out and are no longer on the record. Future transgression must be repented of or else it stains the clean record. Unconfessed sin is unforgiven sin; and sins confessed without the intention of obedience in the tomorrows of life, lack the broken-hearted penance that establishes the groundwork for faith. Imputed righteousness is the product of faith, today, just as it was for Abraham. He accepted what God said, in simple trust, for that was the extent of divine revelation to his soul. We accept Christ's death and atoning blood by faith, since we live on this side of God's enlarged revelation to humanity.

Abraham and Sarah must have thrilled beyond recounting when baby Isaac finally arrived. Maybe they felt their tests were finished. Everything would be downhill from that point on; but that was not to be the case. Another test of faith loomed in the horizon for there came a day when God chose to "try" Abraham. The command was to sacrifice this only son, the son of promise. Will this father's heart and its avid love for his son stand the acid test? What of the promise "that in Isaac shall thy seed be called"? But faith won again and Abraham accounted "that God was able to raise him (Isaac) up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure". That's faith! Had he ever heard of such a thing? Probably not, but what is that to faith? And furthermore, what is that to faith when it is based on the promise of the Triune God?

It has been said, "When you have nothing left but God, you will find that He is all you need". Faith plus nothing will still win the day.

V. Isaac to Moses Faith that Looks Beyond (11:20-23)

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, [leaning] upon the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw [he was] a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Isaac, with patriarchal blessing, looked into the future of his offspring. Many years later, Jacob called his sons to him and spoke of what was to come. Joseph, before he died, asked to be carried out of Egypt, and to be buried in his homeland when God released his people from Egyptian tyranny. Amram and Jochabed looked beyond the king's command to

murder Israelitish baby boys, and saw potential in their son. That long look sparked courage and fortitude to violate the king's cruel decree.

Still in the twentieth century, it is faith that enables a look beyond the clutch of religious oppression, over the mountains of materialism, through the fog of compromise and godless ecumenicalism, under the sand castles of foolish evolution and preachers proclaiming Biblical errancy, to the great realities of what God has promised to those who are faithful. There, brighter than the dazzle of religious showmanship and superstars, gleams a crown of righteousness. Sweet songs of the redeemed seem to waft from future oratorios and call the soul to diligence in the midst of the crashing and clanging of self-centred, humanistic society. Friend, get the long look of faith.

Moses Demonstrates a Vital Faith (11:24-27)

It should not come as a surprise to us that people noted for their faith, as were Jochabed and Amram, instill a vibrant faith in their offspring. Even though the Pharaoh had decreed that baby boys of the Israelite families were to be killed, these parents hid their child; then, relying on their God, they laid him in a little water-tight basket and placed him in the river under the supervision of his older sister. Pharaoh's daughter came to the water and discovered baby Moses. He was crying and her lady-heart was touched. She claimed this Hebrew infant and hired its own mother to nurse the child for her. How long Jochabed had Moses in her care we do not know; but in his formative years she instilled within him a clear sense of Hebrew identity and God awareness. How these dear parents must have prayed for their boy after he left their home to live with royalty. Would he be swayed by heathen teaching and practice? Would he worship the Nile River or the true God? Would he reject his humble relatives for the pomp and riches of palace living? Hear them pray, "Oh, God, protect our boy from straying today. Guard his mind. Keep him for Thyself; for we trust him to Thee."

I. Faith that Refuses (11:24)

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Josephus names Pharaoh's daughter, Termuthis, and mentions her adoption of Moses, as her son. An interesting story follows that may possibly bear some truth, though certainly it is not to be guaranteed as anything more than tradition's claim. Josephus states that Termuthis brought Moses before her father and said, "I have brought up a child who is of divine form, and of a generous mind; and as I have received him from the bounty of the river, in a wonderful manner, I thought proper to adopt him for my son, and heir of thy kingdom".¹⁰ The account further states that the king hugged the child and laid his diadem on Moses as a sign of acceptance.

No doubt, in the years that followed, Moses was educated in the best of Egyptian schools and with no limit of resources. What a profound affect all this teaching and high living could have had on young Moses' outlook and demeanour. Josephus also suggests that, as a young adult, Moses lead the Egyptian army in a successful encounter against the Ethiopians which would further establish him as part of Pharaoh's family, not as a Hebrew.

The Scripture declares that whatever prestige and wealth Moses may have been able to claim, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. If, as it appears, it was the announcement of a decision after years of involvement and intermingling with the royal household, very likely it caused the sparks to fly. The point is that this refusal was made on the basis of faith; faith in the God of his people.

No less requirement is made of Christians today. Believing that bearing our cross for Jesus will bring His approval, we must refuse our own ambitions, self-will and sinful habits. Friends and sometimes even some relatives may have to be given up for Jesus. Let it be known that "every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 10:29).

II. Faith that Chooses (11:25)

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Faith must make some deliberate moves. Moses chose suffering instead of pleasure; affliction rather than sin's temporary thrill. It is the eye of faith that sees glory beyond the affliction, and the desirable behind the undesirable. Our society is a "now" society. We live for instant gratification. The lottery is a trick played for instant wealth. The motto for many is "if it feels good do it" and thus the opposite is clearly implied: if it doesn't feel good, don't sweat it.

Moses opted for temporary hardship in order to receive eternal reward. He refused temporary pleasure which would end in eternal woe and destruction. Faith must make the choice if the right decision is to win.

III. Faith that Esteems (11:26)

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Perhaps the evaluating here referred to is nearly identical with what has already been discussed in "Faith that Chooses". Moses weighed his prospects in his heart and mind. He evaluated and accounted things in a mental ledger and, on the fact of faith, he came up with actual credits and debits. In the whole analysis, he believed that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17-18). Moses "counted the cost" and found greater riches in the reproach of Christ than in Egypt's treasures. The friendship of God, the forgiveness of sins, the privilege of prayer, the thrill of communion with the Lord, all of these are treasures we may now enjoy. Add to this, heaven's "weight of glory" and, at once, Egypt's little trinkets, pyramid tombs, and treasures look extremely paltry. On the scales of faith's estimation, earth's allurements and gold are but trifling, insignificant dust, compared to the load of glory that absolutely weighs down the scale's other pan. On the ledger of faith's evaluation, earth's millions add up to a great loss, a negative balance; whereas the reproach of Christ adds up to an inestimable, infinite credit.

The Christian employee who does not work on the Lord's day may lose overtime pay, and sometimes even his job; but he gains greater riches because of his faithfulness. The believer who will not keep what is not rightfully his may be scorned by worldly minded people, but he will be amply rewarded by God.

IV. Faith that Endures (11:27)

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Little do we know, the actual intensity of what Moses was called upon to endure. The impassioned disgust of the royal household, at the time of Moses' refusal to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, probably cannot be exaggerated. At the time of his return to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he again had to endure the wrath of Egypt's highest official. The plagues were a sore spot and a great source of irritation to Pharaoh. Finally, he declared that he did not want to see Moses' face again.

However, there was a strength factor in Moses' life, that the king did not understand. That was faith; and that faith could see more than the visible manifestation of rage on Pharaoh's face. It could behold Him who is invisible. It is the sight of the "fourth Man" in the fire; the glimpse of hillsides that abound with chariots of the Lord; the opened eyes to the Stranger on the road to Emmaus, that keeps God's people going. They hang on, fight on, hold on with an eye for what Stephen saw when, before the angry, gnashing Sanhedrin, he "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of the

God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

Of Whom the World was not Worthy (11:28-40)

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry [land]: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

32. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and [of] Barak, and [of] Samson, and [of] Jephthae; [of] David also, and Samuel, and [of] the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Someday, by the grace of God, I intend to meet those who stood so tall in faith. We have been called upon to sacrifice so little. Our faith is perhaps in greater jeopardy because of the ease of acceptance. But it may not always be so. The seeds of change in religious accommodation are rapidly germinating and growing. Are we preaching a message true and clear enough to establish true faith in the hearts of our parishioners? Where is the call to rugged self-denial and visible separation from the world? What of the church that can not be distinguished from the world? Will Jesus find faith on the earth when He returns?

These faithful worthies died before the glory of the new and better covenant was ushered in. Yet, clearly, they died in faith. However, as part of the great body of believers, they must await the final gathering together of all of that body, before they and Gospel dispensation believers can be glorified or made perfect together.

End Notes

1. Terry Pollard, Ray Crooks, Ed., *Adult Teacher's Insights-Parables of Christ*, (Overland Park, KS: Herald and Banner Press, 1992) Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 47-48.
2. Quoted in Ray Crooks, Ed., *Adult Teacher's Insights-Marks of a Christian*, (Overland Park, KS: Herald and Banner Press, 1992) Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 10.
3. J. Paul Taylor, *Goodly Heritage*, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1960) p. 3.
4. Quoted in Ray Crooks, Ed., *Adult Teacher's Insights, Studies in Hebrews*, (Overland Park, Kansas: Herald and Banner Press, 1992) Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 84-85.
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6. Marilyn Baker, Ray Crooks, Ed., *Opening the Word*, (Overland Park, KS: Herald and Banner Press, 1992) Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 5.
7. Wesley Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1990) pp. 169-170.
8. J. Paul Taylor, *Goodly Heritage*, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1960) p. 3.
9. Charles G. Finney, *Finney on Revival*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, n.d.) p. 22.
10. Flavius Josephus, trans. by William Whiston, *Josephus-Complete Works*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1976) p. 57.

The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 12

HEBREWS CHAPTER XII

The Race (12:1-4)

A common analogy in Scripture compares the Christian life with a race. Paul uses this figure extensively in his epistles. He says, "So run that ye may obtain" (I Cor. 9:24); "Ye did run well, who did hinder you..." (Gal. 5:7); "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14); and "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7). The analogy breaks down at the point of prizes and winners. We all can be a winner in the Christian life and reach the prize of eternal glory.

I. The Grandstand Onlookers (12:1a)

1a Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, After the impressive list of faithful heroes in chapter 11, we cannot but feel that history's winners press us forward, toward the goal. They may not be aware of what is transpiring in our lives, however, being dead they yet speak. Their lives have left us a legacy of faith that spurs us forward to similar strength and purpose.

Maynard Woolworth tells of a time when a circus truck got stuck in a ditch and wreckers were unable to move it. Finally, an elephant was taken out of the circus vehicle and hitched to the front of the truck. It was a show animal and accustomed to the crowds and the grandstand cheers. As the onlookers encouraged and cheered it on, the elephant planted its feet and leaned into the rope harness. Just by flexing its great muscles, it budged the truck that seemed hopelessly stuck. As the crowd urged it on, it ponderously stepped forward, planted its feet and flexed its muscles until, at last, it brought the truck out of the ditch to the cheers of the bystanders.

What little we know of our Godly heritage ought to cheer us forward in this race. The voices of those who died in faith are calling out, "We kept the faith and so can you! You can make it; don't quit; be strong and press on!"

I like to think that the angels, and even my Heavenly Father, lean over the celestial grandstands and call out to me, "Blake, you can do it; 'by the word of your testimony and the blood of the Lamb' you can make it. Come on, Son, come on!"

II. Stripping for the Race (12:1b)

1b let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us],

The writer urges Christian runners to strip themselves of hindering factors that will impede their spiritual progress. First, we are urged to lay off those weights that encumber our lives. We are familiar with ankle weights and loaded wrist bands used to build strength and endurance. They are worn during practice sessions and work-outs, but are never left on for the actual race. When those added burdens are dropped off, the body feels light, nimble and ready to run. For those of us in the North country, it is much like the welcome day when we put on a light wind-breaker or spring jacket after months of wearing our heavy, insulated, winter parka. It feels as though you have no coat on at all. You have laid aside a great weight that is not necessary for spring weather.

Adam Clarke says, "Christians, professing to go to heaven, must throw aside every thing that might hinder them in their Christian race. Whatever weighs down our hearts or affections to earth and sense is to be carefully avoided; for no man, with the love of the world in his heart, can ever reach the kingdom of heaven."¹ What these things might be the writer does not suggest, but the Holy Spirit will be faithful to our individual awareness. For all Christians, these weights may not be the same. God, knowing our weaknesses and our keen affections, may place His finger on a particular area in my life that He does not deal with in yours. It is not sins that we are speaking of here, but earthly things that may divert our attention, hinder our fellowship with God, and possibly cause us to be a spiritual casualty along the track. May we be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and not reject His leadership as merely a foolish notion. These weights might include our business partnerships, our hobby or sports involvement, our friendships, pastimes, reading material or a thousand other possible areas of daily living.

Along with this directive to runners, the call is to get rid of "the sin that so easily besets us". This is not referring to sinful deeds that need to be abandoned. Mr. Vaughan notes that "the reference is not to one particular sin, as being especially dangerous, but to sin itself. The article is generic."² "The sin" is the nature or principle of sin that saps the runner's effectiveness. It is part of the very fiber of his being and is constantly confronting him in his efforts to progress. However hard he may try to ignore its presence, still it faces him at the next bend in the track as if waiting for an opportunity to trip the ready runner. This is not a call to holy living, but a command to holiness of heart. Mr. Fletcher aptly asks, "Is not indwelling sin a clog rather than a spur to the heavenly racer?"³ Certainly, such a directive would not have been given if it were not possible for the blood of Christ to cleanse the soul prior to the moment of death. The Hebrew readers are already believers and initially sanctified, or set apart as belonging to God. It is the work of entire sanctification that they are urged to obtain. This "sin" can be laid aside by confessing its presence to God, yielding self and self will to the great Sanctifier, and trusting the blood of Christ to cleanse the heart for the fullness of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as really as we can "pray through" until we know that faith has taken hold and our sins have been forgiven, so we can definitely reach through in faith and know that the work of purifying has been done in our hearts, and that the Blessed Comforter reigns without a rival. Do not stop with just the witness of the Scripture that God will sanctify you wholly, but press your case through, in earnest desperation, until you know the witness of the Spirit's confirmation and your own soul's inner affirmation of cleansing, perfect rest, and divine love.

III. Patient Running (12:1c)

1c and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

To every runner, wherever he may be on the Christian course, the admonition to "run with patience" is very timely. To the young who are anxious for rapid progress and vivid results, there must be a blend of vision and patient endurance. They should not sacrifice their heaven-inspired vision and fervent involvement in the cause of Christ, but in addition, strive to embrace faithful perseverance and patience. For those who have borne the heat of the day and laboured through life's long years for the One they love, still the message and call for patience is keenly necessary. Some have struggled through many deep disappointments and cruel misunderstandings. Some have faced unexpected opposition, not from the world, 'then they could have borne it'; but from those they held in high and brotherly esteem. Others have suffered through physical and emotional trauma until they feel their spirits are spent and their hopes flattened. Run on, dear Friend. Plod on, though you may feel you cannot take another step. Keep headed in the right direction. Don't defect; for there's nothing behind you. Look up! Look up and see Jesus!

IV. Looking unto Jesus (12:2-4)

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Have you ever been running across a yard and looked back over your shoulder at your pursuers, only to run "smack" into a tree? It is imperative that we keep our eyes on our goal. We must get our eyes off the rugged track we are pursuing; stop looking at the commotion along the sides of the course and focus clearly on "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith".

As I understand it, in karate, when a board or brick is to be broken by a hand strike, the performer does not aim at the surface of the board. Instead, he focuses upon a point on the other side of his challenge and then strikes. Too often, we look at the circumstances and fail to look through to Jesus on the other side.

It seems to be a common, human malady for each to think that he has worse problems than anyone else. But just look about you--how easy you have it; and look at what Jesus went through to provide salvation for you. Let your gaze linger long on His nail scars and wounded side. Gaze until you know that you can go on in His strength. Gaze until you are filled with love that motivates your faint and panting soul. Gaze until faith can grasp the prize in the Person of Jesus Christ. He will be your rich reward. Keep your eyes upon Him. Someday, every hardship will be more than compensated when you see the smile of His face.

Isaac Watts caps our discussion when he asks,

"Must I be carried through the skies on flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face? must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me unto God? Sure I must fight if I would reign, increase my courage Lord, I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word."⁴

A Father's Love that Must, but would Rather Not (12:5-13)

I. Chastening's Proof (12:5-8)

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Many Christians have found great comfort in the fact of divine discipline. It has confirmed to their troubled hearts their own position of sonship; for certainly God would not be correcting them if they did not belong to Him. It is a proof of the Father's love and gracious concern. It hurts Him more than it hurts us, if there is any comparison with a human parent's discipline. Failure to receive chastening would be a cause for alarm. If a child does not bear the father's surname, he is an illegitimate child. Often, along with the man's disrespect for himself and the woman he has defiled, he has no regard for the offspring. He pays little attention to the direction the child goes and offers little in the way of constructive guidance or correction. How different the picture is when a father loves his sons or daughters so much that his love constrains him to correct them effectively. He may have to stop what he is doing to deal immediately with some wayward tendency. He may have to sacrifice his leisure time to establish a proper relationship. He may far rather wish to ignore the problem than deal with his dear child; but love constrains him. He cannot let a seed grow in his beloved child's life that will lead him on the wrong road. He cannot fail to apply discipline in order that the son may learn to discipline himself. It has been said

that before we can practice self discipline, we must be disciplined. As miserable as the whole process may be sometimes, it is a wonderful proof of a parent's deep love.

II. Chastening's Parallel (12:9)

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Surely, even childhood wisdom has taught us that it is best to submit to parental authority. We have been taught to respect our parents and give them honour. This is a basic ingredient in successful living. Young people who have not learned respect are not likely going to make it in the world of business. On top of that, they will find it very difficult to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ. What a disfavour, and sometimes an eternal disfavour, when parents do not expect, command and demand proper respect from their children.

The point being made by the writer in verse 9 is simply that if we have given such respect to our earthly parents, how much more should we yield to the discipline of the great God of the universe. This submission brings life and spiritual well-being. Remember the times when, as a child, you surrendered to the correction of your father, threw your arms around his neck and expressed your love to him. Just so, surrendering to the Lord of our lives will bring a greater bonding to our relationship and a deepening to our devotion. We will find, as He lavishes grace upon us, that which loomed before us as such a difficult mountain will become our joy and delight. Surrender to God's chastenings will bring a new dimension of delight, victory and spiritual fulfilment that we had not known heretofore. Charles Carter helps us understand these verses when he writes, "Man is not saved by the discipline of suffering, but he is seasoned thereby. Thus, the whole outcome depends on the attitude taken in the experience of discipline."⁵ It will make us either bitter or better and we will individually choose which it will be.

It might be added here, as we note the parallels between human correction and divine chastening, that after the Lord corrects us, or makes us back-track and say, "I'm sorry", He blesses our yielded, surrendered spirit. We would do well to always pick up the child we have disciplined and take time to hug him and confirm our love to him. This is modelling God's type of correction.

III. Chastening's Profit (12:10-13)

10 For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

God does not haphazardly chasten His children. He has a definite purpose in mind and it is for our profit that He corrects us. As undesirable as all this is, correction is both a deterrent to evil and a push toward righteousness. There ought to be the profit of godliness, righteousness, motivation and holiness that rises from a correct response to God's dealings. Sad, but it seems that for so many of us, our Heavenly Father has to teach us many lessons over and over. If we could only demonstrate a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's checks and spankings, we would make better spiritual progress and find less cause for "feeble knees" and drooping shoulders.

Pursuing Holiness (12:14-17)

I. Maintaining Peace (12:14a)

14a Follow peace with all [men],

Ralph Earle has laid out a clear outline of verse 14 that may help to introduce the inspired writer's appeal to us. He has suggested that:

- "1. You can't pursue peace with people successfully unless you first make peace with God.
2. You can't maintain peace with God unless you keep on pursuing peace with people.
3. The third proposition is: You can't pursue holiness without getting sanctified wholly.
4. You can't keep sanctified without pursuing holiness all your life."⁶

Much could be said about the endeavour to maintain peace with each other. We are not responsible for the level of tranquility that other people enjoy, but we are responsible for making an honest attempt to heal and mend the misunderstandings and hurts that may arise. This is not a recommendation but a command. Some people want to shout from the housetops the call for holiness, but seem to overlook the directive of diligently following after peace. It is spiritually criminal to make a hobby out of the second half of verse 14 and ignore the first half in life and practice. More harm can be done to the cause of holiness by such actions than can be undone by evangelists and pastors in a lifetime.

Dr. Dale Yocum, in a message he preached at Hobe Sound, Florida, passionately pled for a proper pursuance of peace among God's people. He noted that the Scripture teaches us to go to our brother if we have aught against him. If we feel they have wronged us then we are not to wait for an apology, but go to them in love. Also, the Bible directs that if I believe that my brother has aught against me or he feels that I have done wrong, again, I am to go to him and get things cleared up between us. "Who is to go first, Mr. A. or Mr. B.?" asked Dr. Yocum. "Mr. A. is; and Mr. B. is." The lesson is that I am responsible for following after peace; and you are responsible for the same. Do not leave it to someone else. Diligently seek for peace yourself.

The bulk of our study is going to follow the theme that the writer has been covering in the body of this letter to the Hebrews. Having established Christ's position and "uttermost" ability to save to the very limit of man's need, and to the farthest extent of time, He calls us to an aggressive move toward holiness.

II. Hot Pursuit (12:14a)

14a Follow peace with all [men], and holiness,

One of my cousins worked as a Canadian Mounted Police in an undercover capacity. As you would expect, living as a plain-clothes officer, much of his time was spent keeping his eyes open and gathering information. You see, often his purpose would be to follow a possible suspect and mingle, undetected, without any attempt at making an arrest. That is what might be understood in the English word "follow".

In the church of Jesus Christ, some are in grave danger of merely "following" holiness, keeping their eyes on it, gathering information but never comfortable that they really understand it and never actually pressing into the experience of holiness of heart. Too many are satisfied to let all this be a doctrine that is taught and preached, without enjoying the privilege of a clean heart for themselves.

These somewhat unconcerned individuals stand in grave danger of turning back to the "beggarly elements of the world" and forfeiting their place in grace, just as these Hebrews did. Simply following along with the church is not enough. Just dawdling along at a distance will not do. Peter followed "afar off" and succumbed to the test of his crucial hour.

The original word that is translated "follow" in the King James Version is actually a much stronger word and is very full of intensity and diligence. A much better translation would be "pursue". Probably this can be best illustrated by those who are familiar with hunting using hounds. Allan Langstaff, who hunts raccoons with dogs, fears that someday one of his dogs will tree a raccoon in someone's beautiful, ornamental, yard tree. The dog, in its loud and vigorous pursuit, may approach the tree and literally chew and destroy it. That is hot pursuit!

Again, so often we are content with so little. Grace offers us much more than we pursue. We have heard the message of heart purity, but have we experienced it? Have we made it our clear objective to receive the cleansing experience? Dr. J. B. Chapman was asked if he thought his church would ever lose the message of holiness as a second, definite work of grace. "His reply was, 'No'. But then, with tears streaming down his face, he added: 'The thing I fear is that the time will come when our people will have the theory but not possess the experience'."⁷

III. The Tollgate and the Turnpike (12:14b)

14b and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Richard S. Taylor, preaching at a ministerial meeting, presented the picture of a turnstile as the crisis moment of heart cleansing and the turnpike as the process of growth in the life of holiness. I have changed it to the tollgate and the turnpike.

Our verse at hand calls us to pursue diligently "the sanctification" as a state of holiness that is to be obtained. There is very definitely growth in grace after we are saved and leading up to the experience of entire sanctification, but we cannot grow into, or mature into, holiness. There is a definite moment at which the work is done, by faith in the Sanctifier, Jesus Christ. This is the tollgate. An earthly tollgate suggests a price that will be paid later when an exit is taken from the turnpike. However, this spiritual tollgate marks a price of surrender and commitment that is paid here. The cost to pass the tollgate is death to self, and a plea for cleansing from an inherited nature.

Dr. Taylor taught us that we could expect from this crisis experience, first, a unifying of our heart (freedom from double mindedness); second, a perfecting of love as the master motive of life; and third, a growing spiritual mindedness. Carnal evidences of bitterness, unbelief, rebellion, worldly mindedness, covetousness, etc. will no longer dwell in the sanctified heart.

It should be understood, however, that the tollgate was not meant as a place to park and live. No, it is the entrance to a growing, ongoing pursuit of a holy life. Actually, the Greek tense of the word translated "follow" suggests an ongoing endeavour. Entire sanctification is not a plateau to be attained, upon which the individual sets back and waits for heaven. Too often it has been viewed as an end instead of the entrance to a progress that is not hindered by an inner spiritual drag. The drag was gotten rid of at the tollgate so that we might move forward in a life of holiness.

On the turnpike, there will be a keen, purposeful, striving after continued holy attitudes, holy obedience, holy submission to new and unforeseen demands, holy conversation, and holy deportment. One should not expect that entire sanctification relieves him of all effort in pursuit. The mind, heart and life must still be carefully guarded. For example, apologies will still have to be made. John says that "if we walk in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). The original tense declares that Christ's blood goes on cleansing my heart as I continue in obedience. The pursuit of holy submission and continued yieldedness is the key to keeping one's soul in a sanctified experience.

A perfect heart before God does not mean absolute perfection in head, tongue, judgement, discernment, decision making or service. It was the stamp of Satan's image that was removed in the crisis; not humanity. It was the defilement of an unsubmitive nature that was purged; not our native infirmities. A thousand mistakes are consistent with a holy heart that is housed in a mortal, limited, human body.

Temptation is still going to confront the mind and soul of the sanctified person, but it does not have an echo within the soul. Sin can still be yielded to and the blessings of salvation and holiness forfeited. A clean heart does not take away the power of choice and man's free moral agency. It could be lost; and yet the very nature of sanctification is a boon to the soul, for it promotes consistency.

No matter how long the saint of God has been travelling on the highway of holiness, there will be more growth ahead. Richard Taylor suggested that on this holy turnpike there would be the process of gaining knowledge, a growing ethical sensitivity, added self discipline, increased Christlikeness and new self-understanding. It may be that you have questioned someone's testimony of holiness when, in fact, you should have simply chalked up their supposed lack to the turnpike process. Again, let me stress, sanctifying grace does not mean that one has arrived. God will still be working on the life of that saint. Some may feel that because they have "lined up" to a list of outward requirements or standards, that they have no further need of pursuit; but that is simply not so. The Holy Spirit will be adding new light, bringing new challenges of service and continued calls to obedience. At times, the call to minute areas of obedience, things that seem so insignificant, will effect the greatest boost in this growing process. So, you see, the crisis at the tollgate is not the victory that ends all victories; no, it opens the door that you might go from victory to victory on the "turnpike of holiness".

None need expect to enter heaven and "see the Lord" who is not pursuing a proper standing before God. Simply a claim on some experience of the past will not do; for there must be a vital, up-to-date relationship with Christ. Both, those initially sanctified, and those entirely sanctified, must be pursuing a holy life as best they understand it. Adam Clarke has said that "no soul can be fit for heaven that has not suitable dispositions for the place".⁸

It must be understood that a regenerated person is going to go to heaven if he dies even though he may not have received the blessing of heart holiness. This may seem like a contradiction to the plain statement of verse 14. Dr. Dale Yocum clears this for us when he writes the following exceptional explanation:

"No trace of sin whatever can be admitted to that holy place. There must be cleansing from all sin either before death or at death in order for the convert to gain admission to everlasting life in glory. Let it be added immediately that it is not death which provides the cleansing, but the blood of Jesus Christ. A new convert stands in somewhat the same relation to God as a little child who has never discovered his moral responsibility. He is unconditionally covered by the benefits of the atonement until he receives light on his moral accountability. A child of God walks by faith....By faith, if he should suddenly die, the benefits of Christ's atonement would bring him glorification translation into the glorious kingdom of immortality and light. By faith, in such an instance of sudden death, the blood of Christ would provide full cleansing also, so that he could go into the presence of God, purified and made fit for that holy realm."²

Some might think that they could rest on their oars since cleansing can come at the time of death for those who belong to God. This is not the case, however. When a person has sensed conviction of his need, and has realized the provision of Christ to meet that need, he has moved into an accountable realm of responsibility. He should be urged to seek heart cleansing with all diligence, in order to maintain a right relation to God.

IV. The Danger of Rejecting the Call to Holiness (12:15-17)

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you], and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there [be] any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Verses 15 - 17 are emphasizing the need for heart cleansing, lest a most unfortunate outcome fall upon the lives of those who fail to press into this inheritance of believers. There is the frightening possibility of failing or falling from the grace of God. This is the bent of the "evil heart of unbelief" that still resides within the unsanctified soul. The gaze of that nature is certainly not forward in Christ. In fact, though the outward expression of that nature has been removed from the believer's life, still this root of sin dwells in the heart. As is the case with trees that have been cut down, if the root is left one may well expect to find new shoots of the original species growing and producing another tree. It is just the same in the soul and careful diligence must be rendered by the unsanctified person "lest any root of bitterness" sprout up and sinful acts are again an expression of its presence.

It should also be noted that the entirely sanctified individual must also beware lest he allow a wrong attitude or feeling to germinate in his heart from some misunderstanding or hurt. To fail to continue to pursue holiness, in submission of our thoughts and feelings to the control of the Holy Spirit, will open the soul to the germination of bitterness again. It will be a seed from without, and not a root still within, that marks the difference between these cases.

The devil will not rest as long as he has an opportunity to vent his hate and retaliation against God. No one is past Satan's schemes in this life, even if heart holiness is enjoyed as a present state of the soul. Little wonder then, that Jesus urges us to "watch".

It appears that Esau is an example of one who allowed a small thing to cost him the very best in life. Spiritual fornication or unfaithfulness can so often start from a very small deviance. It is not a bank robbery or some heinous crime that removes people from Christ. It is usually a little carelessness here, or a little unyieldedness there, that leads to miserable apostasy. Some feel that too many minors are majored on by preachers. They feel that some of these "little things" are not significant enough to mention. However, Reader, give good heed! It is the small things where real victory is won and true character and faithfulness is developed. One test of your own spirituality is the carefulness by which you handle what may appear to be insignificant directives of the Holy Spirit.

The Contrast (12:18-29)

I. An Ominous Dispensation (12:18-21)

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which [voice] they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, [that] Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

As we approach the conclusion of this majestic epistle, the writer once again issues a clarion call for attention to be paid to what God has said. Due to the physical, visible, and audible nature of Old Testament revelations, man still seems to stand in reverent awe of the God of the former dispensation. The fire, the darkness, and the trumpeting voice of God leave

us trembling at the thought of such a display of divine authority and power. The point is that all this took place on an earthly mountain, not a heavenly setting. This is the writer's basis of argument, from which he underlines the far surpassing responsibility of we who know the glory of access to the heavenly mount.

II. A Glorious Access with Forceful Implications (12:22-24)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than [that of] Abel.

A powerful contrast is pictured for us as we turn from the glimpse of ominous darkness, thundering voices, and trembling servants, to the light and glory of heaven's royal city and noble inhabitants. The beauty of the New Covenant's open door is set before us but not without strong implications of added liability.

III. A Solemn Caution (12:25-29)

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more [shall not] we [escape], if we turn away from him that [speaketh] from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

27 And this [word], Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God [is] a consuming fire.

Since chapter one, the superiority of Christ has been plainly delineated. We have His word and ministry which obligates us to an extent that pre-gospel generations were not indebted. Those who are anticipating lighter treatment are in for an eternal, terrifying revelation.

"Oh," it is argued, "we live under grace and not under the law." Thank God this is so, but it does not mean that God has started to countenance sin. In fact, the old moral law has been given greater force, not less! Jesus' coming, to usher in mercy and grace, actually obligated believers to a higher standard of obedience and conformity to the moral law. Whereas the law declared that it was wrong to commit murder, Jesus strengthened the command to include hatred as a violation of that order. Also, now the lusting look has been added as a breach of the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery". God has not softened His demands in the least, but He has offered greater inner impulsion to live up to His requirements. That is grace at work! The fathomless love of God is seen in the fact that it cost Him His Son's life-blood to put this season of grace into effect.

The modern religious society is almost totally presenting a false notion of God. He is being shown, even by churches and

preachers, to be nothing but a loving, soft, grandfatherly type who never is moved to anger or vengeance. This is a fallacious presentation and is certainly leading many astray. People, who have lived outright sinful lives, are being preached into heaven at their own funerals. Unless they have done some fast repenting that no one knows about, they are not

It seems that we have forgotten that the God of the Old Testament is still the God of the New Testament. The New Administration has not brought in a new Administrator. God did not lose an election and thus move into retirement while another took over. He is still the awesome God of anger, justice and vengeance upon sin and unrepentant sinners. We do people an eternal disfavour by not preaching a balanced message a message of the Holy God who is perfectly loving and merciful, and at the same time the epitome of perfect justice and judgment.

In the present countenancing of sin, we have lost the clarion call of preachers like Jonathon Edwards. He warns,

"O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in! It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in Hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it and ready any moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment...You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty, merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains...O, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for 'Who knoweth the power of God's anger?'"¹⁰

End Notes

1. Adam Clarke, Clarke's Commentary, (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press) Vol. VI, p. 776.
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The Heartbeat of Hebrews

By Blake E. Jones

Chapter 13

HEBREWS CHAPTER XIII

Guidelines for Holy Friendships (13:1-7)

One of the great beauties of holiness is its natural expression of gracious love in everyday living. Holy people should endeavour to cultivate a refinement of character and culture that is befitting the name "Christian". There is a sweet reasonableness, that should exude from the life of the entirely sanctified heart, which will bless friendships. As a child of God, I have cherished friends who are not saved, but closest to my heart are those who share the love of Christ and His great Spirit in their lives. Christian friendship is an invaluable prize in this pilgrim walk. The verses at hand lay out some excellent principles for holy friendships.

It might be noted that in chapter 12, there was the proof of sonship (12:7), the purpose of sonship (12:10-14), and the pact of sonship (12:22-25). Here, in chapter 13, we are discovering the performance of sonship (13:1-7).

I. Maintain Loving Unity (13:1)

1. Let brotherly love continue.

It seems there is never a time that the Christian is not vulnerable to the devil's attacks in the area of his friendships. A slight misunderstanding, a supposed clash, an imagined hurt, a careless word and, soon, if we do not purpose to love, friendship is strained and gasping for survival. Keep your hearts and friendships guarded against intrusions. The writer has already called for a keen pursuance of peace. Maintain unity without the stain of suspicions, evil speaking, gossip, envy, and whatever other blights might destroy the love that ought to demonstrate to the world that we are Christ's disciples.

Too often we do not realize the importance of Christian friendships until some issue has severed the ties. Then we limp along without the lift and sharpening of mutual love. Friendship will mean making apologies, at times, to maintain unity. At times it will involve making concessions to the opinion of others. It seems that the older we get, the more set are our opinions and ideas. Oh, how important it is that we learn to yield and bend a little, in areas that are not moral issues, so that brotherly love may continue.

The wise old adage says that familiarity breeds contempt. The better you get to know your Christian friends, the more careful you will have to be to protect that friendship. You will find that they have some bumps and twists in their personalities. Remember, while you are finding difficult adjustments to make with them, they are discovering the same with you. It may be the thing that irritates you most about your friend is simply a reflection of your own characteristics which you are seeing. So, guard that friendship!

II. Demonstrate Hospitality (13:2)

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

In some circles it certainly would appear that hospitality is a lost art. Friendliness to strangers is extinct and cold formalism is all that lingers in its place. How many times have people lost the blessing of a beautiful and blossoming friendship because they would not put themselves out to entertain a stranger, a visitor at church, or a new person in town. Think what Mary, Martha and Lazarus would have missed had they had not befriended Jesus.

In our day fear of transients, and their use of offered money, is an area of legitimate concern. Probably as families we need to establish guidelines for properly fulfilling our duty to strangers. It is seldom wise to simply hand over money to those crying for help. But that should not stop us from taking food to their homes or caring for other physical needs. May the Lord help us not to turn away one to whom we might minister through some simple material means.

III. Love at All Times (13:3)

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; [and] them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

The wise man said, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17). Don't stoop so low as to simply be a "fair weather friend". How unchristlike such an approach would be. Weep with those who weep, and laugh with those who laugh. Imagine how you would feel if you were the one in bonds or experiencing hardship of some sort. Let us put our lives where our mouths are! Of what good are Sunday's declarations of love without Monday's practical expressions of sympathizing affection?

IV. Keep Friendships Pure (13:4)

4 Marriage [is] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

In this age of broken homes and blighted relationships, we cannot be too careful to maintain respectable and upright relationships among those we count as friends. God has ordained marriage and the home as the basis for society. Outside of marriage, there is no place for what is being called "free love". Friend, it is not "free love" by any stretch of the imagination. This kind of loose and promiscuous living is very, very costly. It costs a man and a woman their respect for one another. It costs respect for oneself. It charges the soul with a great debt of remorse and condemnation. It strikes a crippling blow on the very society in which the individuals choose to participate, and from which they hope to receive benefit. On top of it all, where children are involved, the cost of such activity escalates beyond what we are able to comprehend.

To young people the call is clear. Keep yourself pure for your future spouse. God has grace and help for you if you will set some guidelines and boundaries before you start dating.

Intimacy is blessed and smiled upon by God in the bounds of His definition. Outside of that, judgment can be expected! It behooves Christians to keep their friendships pure. Do not become so attached to another family that you cannot do things on your own. If you sense some improper affection growing within you, for Jesus' sake, for your sake, and for the sake of your family, nip it in the bud. Do whatever is necessary to escape the devil's trap. Be drastic, if need be, but maintain your home.

V. Accept Differences in Social Standing (13:5-6)

5 [Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord [is] my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Happy friendships can grow even across diversified, social standings. Do not allow your heart to become gloomy and dark because of what other people have. On the other hand, do not flaunt a new "toy" or gadget every time your less fortunate friend pays you a visit.

God's people are still proving, over and over, that He is sufficient for every need that may present itself in their lives. Some may be driving new cars while others are trying to rest in God's promise to provide a used "flivver" they can afford. Maintain a proper attitude to your friend, on whichever side of the picture he stands.

The media has set itself as the master proponent of discontent. Billboards, advertisements, magazines, newspapers, catalogues, sales jingles, all militate against a contented and peaceful heart. Let's not be caught in the "give-me" spirit of our age. In our friendships, may the Lord help us to minimize the differences that may exist and promote mutual love and co-operation.

VI. Memorialize Friendships (13:7)

7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation.

Commentators are generally agreed that the rulers being referred to are leaders who have passed the scene of action, and now are a warm memory in the hearts of these believers. Do not forget their work and labours of love, but keep the memory of their devotion and friendship alive in your heart. Let it be a spur to faith and love as you recall their leadership, their admonitions and teaching, and their end which in some cases may have been martyrdom.

It seems to me, that too often in our attempt to serve our present age, we forget the cost that was paid to hand the torch down to us. We walk away from our heritage with no thought or appreciation for the friendship of former pastors, superintendents and denominational presidents. Their friendships need to be memorialized, lest in reaching out to our generation, we sidestep from our founder's faith and tread the old road of social reform, thus having "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:5).

Attachment to Christ (13:8-14)

I. Established in Christ (13:8-9)

8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For [it is] a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

After all that the writer has laid out so plainly, a call is given to leave behind the outward rituals and ceremonies of the Old Testament system. The whole unprofitable arrangement of meats, offerings and sacrifices has been folded up and discarded. It has been replaced by the unchangeable One "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and forever". These dear Hebrews must be rooted in the keeping favour and grace of Christ lest they be drawn away to some "strange doctrine".

It has proven true that those who reject light become extremely vulnerable to winds of false doctrine. Light and truth cannot be disdained without blocking the flow of God's grace. In the lives of many who call themselves Christians, there is a dangerous conflict of spiritual warfare. Often we see them struggle over a particular issue or hear them argue endlessly about some detail; but the real issue at hand is not these areas of dissent. The heart of the problem is in their spirit's fight against the Spirit of God. This is the real battle and all the rest is a sideline or an outgrowth of this unsettling,

miserable conflict.

In order that a believer may be established in grace there must be a yielding to the Holy Spirit's prompting and leadership. Outside of this submission, there can be no establishing or rooting in grace. Stiffen and balk, and you will immediately find that the flow of grace and power is staunch. "You have no power, victory, or authority of your own," notes Wesley Duewel. "All is by grace."¹ Oh for open and yielded hearts that God's mighty, marvellous and magnanimous grace might keep our spirits victorious and vibrant in the subtle storms of strange doctrine.

The writer has expressed the great value of being "established in grace". Mr. Vine helps our grasp as he states that this is a "confirming of the heart by grace" with the added explanation: "to make firm" and to "make secure".² One does not have to observe the church ranks for too long to arrive at the conclusion that the grace of entire sanctification working in the heart of the believer is a wonderful aid to establishment in grace. It firms up the soul, and though it does not rule out backsliding, it certainly does confirm the soul in God.

It has been suggested that the practice of confirmation in some denominations is the remaining shell of the doctrine of entire sanctification.³ How sad it is that so many who profess the name of Christ reject the "firming up" grace that He is so wonderfully able to provide, in the work of entire sanctification.

II. Partakers of Christ's Sanctification (13:10-11)

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

The high glory of the Christian is his humble partaking of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as his own Substitute and Saviour. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper draws this spiritual eating and drinking to our attention. This blessed privilege of partaking of Christ's death by faith as full of merit for our own soul, is not extended to those who refuse Christ and continue in the old system of rituals and rites. Since Jesus has fulfilled all of the tabernacle program, tenacious clinging to the old system negates personal appropriation of Christ's death.

We will note that the Old Testament makes various references to the area outside the camp, and each adds meaning to the Hebrews' writer's enlargement upon this practice. The area outside the camp was the "unclean" place for human refuse (Deut. 23:12-14); it was where the death penalty was to be inflicted upon criminals (Num. 15:35-36); it was dreaded as a place of punishment (Num. 12:14-15); it was the confines of those with disease and physical contagion (Num. 5:2-4); and, finally, it marked the place of transferred defilement for here the sin offering was to be burned (Lev. 4:3-12).

Jesus too, "suffered without the gate". He bore the spiritual uncleanness of humanity; He died as a criminal in our place; He bore the abhorrent contagion of sin's disease which has passed down to every one of Adam's race; He suffered the punishment of justice to effect reconciliation with a Holy God; and He, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God, carried the transferred sins and defilement of sinners to the cross, outside the city of Jerusalem. Can it not be readily seen that Jesus bore not only acts of sin when He died on Calvary, but also the contagious nature of sin that has been passed down since Adam. He died to forgive sinners and also with the high purpose of sanctifying His people. This is the message of the cross! There is a perfect remedy provided in the blood of Christ.

Thus, the believer may come to the "altar", the cross, and by faith partake of the blessings that Jesus died to procure.

III. Embracing Christ's Reproach (13:13-14)

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

In the call to the experience of entire sanctification, we are given the practical admonition to follow Jesus to the place of His death. This might well be called the "death route" to spiritual victory. The pursuit of holiness will lead the seeker to depths of consecration and surrender that he did not experience in seeking forgiveness.

In Romans 6:6 Paul speaks of the crucifixion of our sinful nature in order that it might be destroyed. This is such a verity to him that he declared, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Daniel Steele, commenting on this makes these lucid observations:

"The power of divine grace had nailed him to the cross, but he had sought this very crucifixion, and willingly yielded his hands to the spikes, his side to the spear, and his head to the thorn-crown. The hostility of the self-life to this sudden and violent extinction is the chief hindrance to faith....Jesus indicates that the self-life finds its chief nutriment in the esteem and applause of our fellow-men. It is not by accident that in every age those who have fully consecrated themselves to Christ, and have been entirely sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and have proclaimed this as the privilege and duty of all Christians, have been under a cloud of reproach. Christ has set reproach and persecution as two cherubim at the gate of the Eden of perfect love, to test the consecration, courage, and confidence of all who seek to enter. They who lack any one of these qualities must be excluded from this paradise. Dear seeker of soul-rest, are you willing to have your name cast out as evil, meekly to wear opprobrious nicknames, to be accounted as the filth and offscouring of all things for your testimony to Christ as a perfect Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost? But, say you, is this the indispensable condition? In this age of enlightenment and religious liberty has not the offense of the cross ceased? Nay, verily, except to world-conforming sort of Christians, who keep up a state of peace with the world and a truce with the devil by declaring that they consciously sin every day, and that there is no efficacy in the blood of Christ to cleanse the heart of its depravity, and no power in the Holy Spirit to keep the trusting soul from sinning....Hence total and irreversible self-abandonment is the indispensable condition of that oneness with Christ, that harmony with God, which, in scriptural phrase, is called perfect love."⁴

Ralph Earle aptly states that "sanctification is self-crucifixion. Ultimately, we either let self be crucified and Christ crowned as Lord of all; or, refusing to do this, self is crowned as Lord of all in our lives, and Christ is crucified afresh by our self-will."⁵ We cannot strike the death blow to the sin that has stained the very fiber of our soul, but we can surrender it to Christ to crucify. Carnality will resist the death blow and the reproach of Christ to its last breath, for that is its very nature. It will do anything to postpone and procrastinate the crucifixion, but right here is where our will must choose to press through to victory.

As a help to understanding self-crucifixion, Dr. Dale Yocum comments on three areas of consecration that must be made by the heart of the seeking soul. There must be "the surrender of every human tie to the claim of a higher love--the love of Christ....There is the surrender of all earthly possessions....There is the surrender of self to God."⁶ In other words, I must die to my claims on my family and friends, my possessions or hoped for assets, and my claim on myself. Outside of this, God is unable to strike a death blow to the carnal mind that "is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). This mind or nature in the unsanctified Christian is basically a God-hating principle that cannot be remodelled or retaught. It knows no other response to God than that which the image of Satan has brought to bear upon mankind. It is pride in its raw and defiled form as it defies the authority and lordship of Christ. It is rebellion that cannot find tolerance for the law of God, for it hates the Master of the Universe. This nature has so intricately attached itself to the soul of mankind that only the Holy Spirit, through the power of the blood of Christ, can cleanse, purify, crucify and purge this warp from the believer; and yet not destroy or kill the person. Hallelujah for the power of the blood! Thank God for freedom from the drag of a nature

that hates God!

It must be noted that bearing the reproach of Christ is not merely a part of the crisis experience of entire sanctification; but it is the life and embrace of the sanctified Christian. In fact, it is the call to all who would be followers of Jesus Christ, for He said, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38). Bearing Christ's reproach means to be "excluded from social and religious acceptance. We must forgo the approval of the world and accept the reproach of Jesus if we wish to find that continuing city established by God."⁷

Christian Sacrifices (13:15-19)

I. The Offering of Praise (13:15)

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name.

A high mark of Christians surely ought to be a spirit and attitude of continual praise. This will naturally be expressed in words of praise to our God. We would do well to examine our words of complaint and chronic grumbling.

First, we should cultivate a growing realization of the glory of the cross and the provisions of Christ for our poor, blighted souls. May we see afresh Jesus dying in our place. A lack of praise cannot but incriminate us in our deficiency of spiritual fellowship with the Saviour. The clearer we see our own unworthiness and Christ's great condescension, the more prolific should be our adoration.

Second, it seems to me that we hinder our testimonies by whining and muttering about the weather, the taxes, the inflation, our government leaders and a long list of other peeves. God forgive us for getting caught in the habit of "praiselessness". May we be found continually offering the sacrifice of praise to the Lord.

II. The Offering of Goodwill (13:16)

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). As the benefactors of the New Covenant, we should be reaching out to those around us with both our temporal and spiritual means. A miserly heart and a stingy soul have no place in the worship of the One Who gave His life for us. It seems to be in the economy of the Gospel, and in the plan of the Trinity, to extend benevolence to others. We must espouse this attitude to be pleasing to the Lord. For "whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17)

III. The Offering of Obedience to those in Authority (13:17)

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.

How often has a pastor poured out his soul before God in behalf of his people, and then with trembling heart and a nervous stomach visited a parishioner whose spiritual life is lacking health and vigour. Where there has actually been a falling away in the one being approached, it is not uncommon for the backslider to raise a host of criticisms and complaints, and point at all the supposed hypocrites. These things did not seem to be on his mind when he was in victory and enjoying the presence of the Lord. May those who are prone to wander, receive warning and submit themselves to the ministry of God's servants and the Holy Spirit, as they work together to raise the level of spirituality in the body of Christ.

Preaching is not merely some social lecture without eternal weight. Real preaching is anointed by the Lord, backed by His Word, and aimed toward spiritual profit. Heed it then as coming from one who will someday answer for his message and faithfulness to the Chief Shepherd.

IV. The Offering of Prayer (13:18-19)

18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19 But I beseech [you] the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Prayer is certainly the high privilege of the Christian and a New Testament offering. "Prayer is not begging God to do something which He is loath to do. It is not overcoming reluctance in God. It is enforcing Christ's victory over Satan,"⁸ says Paul Billheimer. Prayer most definitely involves the cross and blood of Christ, for without it we would have no access to the Father. Clearly, then, prayer does belong to the Christian's sacrifices of New Testament performance.

In this fast food age and rapid transit era, we tend to degrade prayer to just quick commands and thoughtless, heartless orders. The MacDonal'd's counter "give-me" has filtered into the church's altar and throne approach, until prayer has lost its beauty as a sacrifice and offering. Sleepy preachers standing behind pulpits, leaning on their Bibles, drone out some list of meaningless "give-me's". Where is the fervency of holy praying that marks it as inspired by the Holy Spirit? E. M. Bounds wrote, "Enflamed desires impassioned, unwearied insistence, delights heaven....heaven is too busy to listen to half-hearted prayers."⁹

An Holiness Benediction (13:20-25)

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23 Know ye that [our] brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25 Grace [be] with you all. Amen.

"Here is the wonderful benediction of the writer to the Hebrews....It will be noticed that this perfection is in the sight of God. It is not a human achievement, but a divine performance in and through the individual. We should also observe that perfection is not something simply attributed to us because of the work of Christ; it is worked in us, and not simply for us. God produces in the heart of the fully sanctified person a supreme desire to do His will. There is no higher motive than to do what 'is well pleasing in His sight'. This does not imply that no mistakes are ever made, but that all the motives and actions are directed in conformity to the will of God."¹⁰

This observation of Dr. Yocum's points out the relationship of Christian perfection and the proper motive for performance of the will of God. Apparently the word translated "perfect" in verse 21 suggests a joint being put back in place. Actually, the unsanctified Christian walks with a spiritual limp until God cleanses his heart and heals him of an inherited, crippling,

spiritual disease.

Mr. Carter makes a very interesting observation when he writes:

"Wherever the title 'God of peace' is used in the New Testament, it is without exception related to the holiness of the believer made perfect in love. It signifies God as the author and giver of peace. The ultimate redemptive purpose was to make peace between God and man, and between man and man, through the destruction of the discordant elements of sin and the perfection of the soul in love. Nowhere is this more explicit than in I Thessalonians 5:23: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.' It is undeniably essential that man be made holy before he is qualified to stand in the presence of the holy God."¹¹

As this great holiness epistle draws to a close, the prominence and pre-eminence of Christ are again underlined. He is the resurrected Lord, the "great Shepherd of the sheep", the One Who shed His blood to provide an everlasting covenant, and the One through Whom God works His good will and purpose in our lives. If we have failed to see Jesus, high and lifted up, we have not caught the message to the Hebrews. If our hearts have not burned with the message of full salvation through Christ, we have totally overlooked the intent of the epistle.

With a full heart and a happy soul, the writer pours out the adoration of his spirit as he cries, "To whom be glory for ever and ever". Glory be to God the Father Who loved twisted humanity enough to take the first step in reconciliation and send His Son to die in our place. We fall in worship as we contemplate the mercy that He extended to us through the propitiation of Jesus. That ever a plan was made for the complete rescue of the human soul, we shall be eternally grateful. God could have aborted the plan for the human race and started again, but He chose to redeem what was lost. He provided for the healing of what had been effaced through the fall.

We raise our hearts in expressing glory to Jesus, the Son of God, Who humbled Himself and came down so very low to wrap Himself in limited flesh and then bear the rejection of His own creation. For me He assumed the criminal's place on the cross and bore the sins I have committed and the rottenness of my sin disease. All that was so repulsive and unholy, He carried as if it were His own; and through His blood opened a way for us to come to God. For the merit of His blood to provide forgiveness and cleansing, we shall forever honour Him, proclaiming, "Worthy, worthy the Lamb".

To the Blessed Holy Spirit, the Inspirer of this Epistle, we bow in humble worship as to Him we offer our heartfelt love. He it is Who has been showing us the way into the throne room of God's presence. He it is Who has been drawing our hearts to holiness and convincing of "sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8). He "is the personal agent who touches us in power, making the inner man every whit whole as the touch of Christ made diseased bodies every whit whole."¹² To Him be everlasting glory and praise for indwelling the believer and instructing him in righteousness.

End Notes

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By Blake E. Jones

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Note: Selections of the A.V. text from the book of Hebrews have been copied from Online Bible computer software. They represent the 1833 Webster Update of the Authorized Version.

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