

AN EXPOSITION OF
HEBREWS



Tim James

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HEBREWS

An Exposition of The Epistle of Hebrews as Delivered in A
Series of Messages to the Congregation of Sequoyah Sovereign
Grace Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

by
Tim James

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FOREWORD

In this excellent exposition written by Pastor Tim James, the reader will discover that the book of Hebrews is a vast spiritual goldmine. I suppose if a tally were taken of all my messages of nearly five decades, a good many of them were from the book of Hebrews. The chief reason for my esteem of this Epistle is that the Holy Spirit uses the writer (as Tim says, presumably Paul) to set forth the great Prophet, Priest and King of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ and His effectual sacrifice that answered all the demands of a holy God and redeemed His people. In addition, another reason for my fascination with Hebrews is that it shows more fully than any other New Testament book that in Christ and His High Priestly ministry is to be found the fulfillment of the types, shadows and pictures of the priesthood and the offerings of the Old Testament.

The inspired writer of Hebrews, without introduction or greeting, immediately sets before us that One to whom all the Old Testament pointed. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Word by whom God speaks to men and through whom we speak to God. Tim reminds us that Hebrews sets forth Christ as being better than the angels, the prophets and the priests of the Old Testament, and His sacrifice fully accomplished the salvation of God's people. The New Covenant, Tim points out, is more excellent than the Old and Jesus Christ is not only the Message of the New, but the Messenger of it as well. With clarity and simplicity, Tim sets forth the superiority of Christ and the power of His once-for-all sacrifice that "*perfected forever them that are sanctified*" (Hebrews 10:14). In a very methodical manner, Tim instructs the reader that the New Covenant

exceeds the Old which has been done away with.

Another thing to which Tim directs our attention is that while the main subject of Hebrews is the excellence and supremacy of Christ, there is an underlying theme. This letter is a warning to the Hebrews (and all others) who forsake the gospel of free grace and return to the law as either a refuge for salvation or even as a rule of life. If a person professes to believe the gospel of Christ and then goes back to a legalistic system, such a treasonous act means that person, as Tim says, “will have no part in the world to come, where a man, *the Man*, the Messiah rules with His people.”

As our brother works his way through this Epistle, the reader will appreciate that he avoids technical and deep theological jargon and writes instead in an easy-to-read manner. In fact, while reading this manuscript, I found the book to be not only an accurate exposition, but a very good devotional book that blessed me as the author continually keeps the focus upon Christ and His substitutionary, justice-satisfying work of redemption.

I have known Pastor Tim James since the early 1970's; we have been and continue to be very close friends. It is my honor to write this foreword and I whole-heartedly recommend this work to anyone who has an interest in studying the book of Hebrews. I give thanks to the Lord for the diligent study Tim has put forth in preparing his notes and making them available for the benefit of others. This labor of love was originally designed for instructing the saints of God in Sequoyah Baptist Church of Cherokee, NC who are privileged to sit under Tim's ministry. I am persuaded this work will also be of great benefit to everyone who reads it. This is a book that will instruct the mind and warm the heart in the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished redemption. This book will bless you and also warn you not to forsake the glorious gospel of God. Finally,

this will admonish you to continue “*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2), a statement about which Tim writes the following. “This passage is the bulls-eye of the target that the writer erected in the first chapter of this blessed book. The guided missile of faith has finally struck its mark. That mark is the object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jim Byrd, Pastor
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INTRODUCTION

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.

Hebrews 1:1-2

Like the books of Galatians and Colossians, the book of Hebrews deals with the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. This epistle develops and declares more fully the reason why the believer is not under the Old Covenant and must never return to it. The subject is the same as in our previous studies and is, indeed, the theme and central subject of all of the Holy Scriptures. Hebrews is a revelation of Christ, and He is the reason why the believer is never to return to the Law.

Even though the terms “Old Covenant” and “Old Testament” mean the same thing, Hebrews makes it clear that the Old Covenant has been set aside as a means of approach to God. However, that portion of the Bible commonly called “The Old Testament” is still of great use in the declaration of the New Covenant.

Hebrews was written early in the history of the Church, probably prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. Most historians put the date around AD 50. Because of this, we see that the dissolution of the Jewish religion discussed and proven by Hebrews had no correlation to that fateful event when Rome destroyed the physical elements of the Jewish faith. We know from the Gospels and from the remainder of the New Testament that Old Covenant Judaism ceased with the coming, life, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. With such words as

“Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days,” and “behold the Lamb of God,” the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and the consequent setting aside of the Jewish religion was imminent just as had been prophesied.

When Caiaphas rent his garment to show his disdain for Christ, he unknowingly removed himself from the office of High Priest. In that act of indignation against Christ, he rent the representation of righteousness and revealed the attitude of religion without Christ: Such Christ-less religion has no representative before God and the best it has to offer God is a damaged righteousness. This does not mean that the Old Covenant was useless, but that, by design, it was deficient to do anything other than point to, picture, and typify Christ in one form or another. In its proper place, its value in God’s purpose should never be diminished, and by the same token, its value in God’s purpose should never go beyond its particular design.

Christ is the fulfillment and, thus, the abrogation of the Old Covenant. Therefore, He is the mediator of the New Covenant in His blood, that is, in His death. With this fulfillment and dissolution of the Old Covenant, modern, practicing Jews have no basis for approaching God under that covenant—especially under that covenant. They have no tribal identity, no priesthood, no altar, and no sacrifice, all of which were absolute necessities in the worship of God under the covenant that they claim to embrace. This epistle declares the fact that the Old Covenant has been put away (Heb. 10:9¹).

One unique aspect of the book of Hebrews is that it addresses the High Priesthood of Christ. The High Priest was the central figure in Old Covenant worship. He always came from the family of Aaron of the tribe of Levi and was the singular representative of the people in the presence God. He

¹ **Heb. 10:9;** Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

alone entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:11-12¹). He alone wore the garment with the names of the tribes on the breastplate and shoulder ouches. The book of Hebrews declares that the *acceptable* High Priest did not come from the Tribe of Levi but the tribe of Judah, signifying that the true and effectual representation of the people did not stand in the Old Covenant but in the New (Heb. 7:12-14²).

The author of this book is the subject of conjecture. Whoever it is did not sign his name to it. Though my opinion is of no value whatsoever, I have always felt that Paul penned this epistle. Some have put the authorship in the hands of Apollos, Luke, Barnabas, Clement of Rome or even Priscilla. Whoever it was, God saw fit to leave his name out of the credits. Perhaps, this too is a revelation that the book is singularly about the Son of God. In order to avoid having to use the phrase, "The writer of the book of Hebrews," multiple times, I will attribute the authorship of the book to Paul.

This book was written to converted Jews. Some say it was written to a particular group of converted Jews who met in a particular place.

What significance does Hebrews have for the Gentile who was not converted from Judaism but rather from Paganism? Its significance lies in the use of the word Jew in the New Testament. There, "Jew" refers not only to the natural people chosen by God but also to all who practice a religion devoid of Christ. The significance is that whether Jew or Gentile by birth,

¹ **Heb. 9:11-12;** 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; 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.

² **Heb. 7:12-14;** For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

the believer is not to return to the old haunts of his former religion, because it has been put away.

Hebrews is also significant because much of what goes under the name of Christianity resides in and operates under the tenets handed down on Sinai rather than on the tenets of the gospel. The gospel-believer is not allowed to return to his former, deadly religion, if he is, indeed, a believer. The believer's conversion to Christ is the putting away of everything that preceded his belief in Christ as his only hope, counting it all to be utterly useless (John 16:8-11; Phil 3:4-7¹). Everything counted on in one's former religion is now to be completely discounted in his life and standing before God.

Sometimes writers spend a great deal of time setting up the subject that they will eventually address. They, as it were, unfold their subject slowly in order to give weight to their highest theme. Paul wastes no time in getting to the subject of this epistle. He jumps in with both feet in the first 2 verses of the book. He immediately distinguishes the manner in which God speaks to His people. The prophets and fathers of old are not set aside but they are distinguished as merely the way or the means of God's revelation to His people. Today, God speaks *in* the Person *about* Whom He spoke to the fathers by the prophets (1 Pet. 1:9-12²). This epistle relies heavily on Old Testament

¹ **Joh. 16:8-11**; And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. **Phil. 3:4-7**; Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

² **1 Pet. 1:9-12**; Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and

Scriptures, but not in order to bring men under the Old Covenant. Rather it employs the Old Testament to show that all the prophets gave witness to Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy (Daniel 9:24¹). God spoke to the fathers by prophets about the *One* in and through Whom He speaks today.

Christ is the mediator of a better covenant and He is better than anything in that Old Covenant and He is the testimony of the Old Testament. This is the theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. Christ is better. He is preeminent.

the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

¹ **Daniel 9:24;** Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

THE MESSAGE, THE MESSENGER

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.

Hebrews 1:1-2

As we have seen previously, this blessed book is a book of distinction. From the very beginning, Paul lays out a scheme by which He will contrast Christ with the prophets and with every element of the Old Covenant. By doing so He sets forth the glory of Christ as exceeding the best of God's creatures and exceeding the capabilities of all the Law as it refers to the priesthood as well as the various sacrifices, rites and ceremonies.

In the first two verses, our Lord is declared in two supreme capacities: Prophet (Messenger) and Son (Message). He is first declared to be the supreme Prophet. In contrasting Him to the prophets under the Old Covenant, there is no diminishment of the value of those prophets. Our Lord, Himself, spoke of their value (John 5:39¹). They all spoke of our Lord and they all served as types of the One who would perfectly fulfill and complete their office (Deut. 18:18-19; John 1:21; John 6:14; Acts 3:22-23²). Our Lord is that Prophet—*the* Prophet. He is the

¹ **John 5:39**; Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

² **Deut. 18:18-19**; I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. **John 1:21**; And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. **John 6:14**; Then those men, when they had seen the miracle

one who declares the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 17:6-8¹).

With the words “these last days,” the prophets that operated under the Old Covenant are subjugated to the singular Prophet of the New Covenant. “These last days” signifies the end of the first covenant and the establishment of the second. They do not signify the end of the usefulness of the Old Testament but rather the unveiling of it and the declaration of what it testified to. This is seen in that, in this book, Paul uses the Old Testament extensively in proclaiming the superiority and glory of Jesus Christ. The prophets were messengers of God in the Old Testament and they typified *the* Messenger of the Covenant promised in the last book of the Old Testament and revealed in the New (Mal. 3:1²).

In the Malachi passage we are told of two messengers. The first one mentioned is John the Baptist (Isa. 40 :3; John 1:23; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:7-14³). John played a very unique role in the

that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. **Acts 3:22-23**; For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

¹ **Matt. 11:27**; And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. **John 1:18**; No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. **17:6-8**; I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

² **Mal. 3:1**; Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

³ **Isa. 40:3**; The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. **Joh. 1:23**; And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. **Mal. 4:5**; Behold, I

process of revelation. He, as it were, spans the gap between Malachi and Matthew. He was the last Old Testament prophet and the first New Testament Gospel preacher. He was prophesied to prophesy of Christ, and he both prophesied of Him and preached Him. He was, indeed, more than a prophet. He was a messenger of both the Old and New Covenants and Testaments. He was Elijah the prophet and John the preacher.

John was *a* messenger. The second messenger mentioned in Malachi 3:1 is *the* Messenger of the Covenant. This is seen in the words of God in verse 2 of our text. In these last days, God has spoken by His Son, or *by Son* or *in Son*. This means several things. First this means that the Son of God came to reveal the New Covenant. He came to show what the Old Testament had promised in type and shadow. The New Covenant is simply the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This New Covenant revelation is preserved for us in the New Testament, which is the full and final disclosure of the Gospel. Secondly Christ came to put the New Covenant in place (Jer. 31:33-34; Gal. 4:4-5¹). Thirdly

will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. **Mat. 11:7-14**; And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

¹ **Jer. 31:33-34**; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. **Gal. 4:4-5**; But

Christ came to enable or enforce the New Covenant. This New Covenant is the New Covenant in His blood (1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:14-18¹). All this leads to one conclusion: The voice we are to hear and heed is the One that speaks from heaven. God the Father said, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased” (Heb. 12:25).

This inaugurating of the New Covenant is the reinstatement of God's people to a single language. In Genesis, the Lord confounded the language of men because they were endeavoring to build a tower to reach God. They were trying to do what is impossible to do in the flesh. The Lord took away their singular language and confused their efforts. Now, in the end of time, He has brought His people back to speak the same language, the one spiritual language, the language of Son (Zeph. 3).

This brings us to the second meaning of this text: Christ, the Son of God, is not only the *messenger* of the New Covenant, He is the *message*. He is the word of life (1 John 1:1-2; 5:20²).

when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

¹ **1 Cor. 11:25**; After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. **Heb. 9:14-18**; 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? 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. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

² **1 John 1:1-2**; That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) **1 John 5:20**; And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding,

Everything done in the church is to flow from this central, singular message. The music, means, and method must all fall into place as sub-headings to this great subject. Religion today substitutes these things (music, means and method) for the Gospel, saying that the Gospel is insufficient to do the job by itself. Religion says that people are more interested in singing and gifts and entertainment and that this interest gives them a higher plane of life and a deeper spiritual experience. That false and deadly notion changes nothing. The message of God is Christ. The doctrine of the Apostles was Christ and Him crucified. The song and the heart of the believer is Christ. The message of the Gospel preacher is Christ. The means of mortifying the deeds of the flesh is looking to Christ. He is all to the believer because He is all to the Father. This is declared in the following description of Christ (Heb.1:3¹).

Over fifty years ago, A.D. Muse said that this was a religious and hell-bound generation. Fifty years of new ideas and technology have only increased the zeal and ability of religion to seek some new thing. Their desire is nothing new (Acts 17:21²). It's the same old religion with much more efficient toys and inventions. The church is in the minority in human terms, but she will prevail because she speaks the right language, the only language by which God speaks. Nothing but the Gospel will do, and nothing but the Gospel is permitted (Gal. 1:8-9; 6:14³).

that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

¹ **Heb. 1:3;** 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;

² **Acts 17:2;** (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.

³ **Gal. 1:8-9;** But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. **6:14**; But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

THE MESSAGE

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.

Hebrews 1:2-3

In the last chapter, we looked at the messenger and the message of God. Jesus Christ is that messenger and that message from God. He is the singular, manifest language of the New Covenant and is the complete fulfillment of all prophecies, types, shadows, and pictures found in the writing composed under the Old Covenant. In this passage, the message is opened up and is declared in a manner that is definitive of what it is to declare the Gospel. Martin Lloyd Jones said that he loved the Gospel because it set all things in order and put things in their proper place.

If, indeed, this is the language of God, if this is the message that God has for the revelation of Himself, if this is how God has spoken unto us “in Son,” then this is the measure, the gauge, the barometer that sets the standard and specifications of what it is to speak the language of God. The things declared are so precise and unchallengeable that it would seem impossible for anyone to find difficulty with them. Yet, when the majority of today's preachers and today's religious folk confront these truths, they seek to explain them away or pronounce that they are mysterious or confusing. There is nothing confusing about these things. They are plain and simple. Therefore, to charge

God with making them confusing is to attribute to God what is actually an attribute of Satan (1 Cor. 14:33; 1 Peter 2:6¹).

What is the language of God concerning His Son? How does God the Father preach the Gospel? What is the divine outline inspired by God, Himself? Our heavenly Father gives us a six point outline of the definitive language He speaks.

The first point is this: Christ Jesus is the sole proprietor and possessor of the universe and all that is in it (v. 2). In the prophecy of Jacob concerning Christ, he spoke of Him as Shiloh. One of the meanings of that name is “to whom it belongs.” God has appointed Christ heir of all things. It is easy for us to fathom this when we think of our Lord in His deity. But this language speaks not to Christ's divinity but rather to His humanity. As God, all things belonged to Christ by divine right. As a man, He was given all this by the Father (John 3:35²). This also is indicative of the fact that Christ and His people are inseparable—that He, His work, and His people are one. The riches of His glory and all that this entails concerning this world, the universe, and the world to come is Christ's inheritance, and likewise, is the inheritance of all His people (Eph. 1:18; Romans 8:15-17; Gal. 3:29³). It is, indeed, good news, this Gospel, because it is the affirmation that the believer

¹ **1 Cor. 14:33**, For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. **1 Peter 2:6**, Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

² **John 3:35** The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

³ **Eph. 1:18**; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, **Romans 8:15-17**; For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. **Gal. 3:29**; And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

has all things because all things have been given to the Son of God in whom God is well pleased. The Gospel is not preached where Christ is not proclaimed the possessor of all things.

The second point of this divine outline is that Christ is the Creator (v. 2). The words “by whom” make this statement all the more blessed. This not only suggests that the triune Godhead was involved together in creation but that there was an exclusivity in the action of Christ (John 1:1-3¹). He is heir of all things because He created all things. The Father created all things by and through the Son. Colossians 1:16 sheds some light on this truth. All things were created by Christ and for Christ. Everything that is, is for Him—for His glory and for His use. All things are explicitly for His work of redemption. This universe, this planet, this world is the stage upon which Christ exhibits why it was created in the first place. Clearly intimated is Divine intent. Christ was appointed heir of it all, so He created it all. Isaiah said that he declared the end from the beginning, and Christ is the beginning and the end. The language of God declares that the world was made by Christ and for Christ.

The third point of this divine outline is God the Father's proclamation that His Son is *God* in all His effulgent glory (v. 3). This declaration is assurance that Christ was not merely an agent of creation but the very power and deity that accomplished it. The language here speaks of “shining out” (Ps. 50:2; 2 Cor. 4:6²). Christ is divinity in glorious display (John

¹ **John 1:1-3**; In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

² **Ps. 50:2**; Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. **2 Cor. 4:6**; For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1:14¹). This establishes in no uncertain terms that if someone is to know God, he must know Christ. Paul describes Him as the “image of the invisible God.” This language is indescribable because the One described is incomprehensible.

The fourth point of this divine outline is God's declaration of the sovereignty of His Son (v. 3). Notice the word “and.” This is a divine distinctive. From beginning to end, all that is declared is vitally connected. The Gospel is one thing. All of its aspects are interdependent upon one another. Who Christ is cannot be separated from what He is doing and has done. These things are united with the word “and.” In all that precedes and all that follows we can be assured that He is personally controlling it all. He reigns over all people, places, and things that He has created and inherited. When the Father speaks of Christ, He declares His sovereignty.

The fifth point of this divine outline is what is often called “the heart of the Gospel” (v. 3). God declares that His Son (and this is absolutely necessary to the declaration of the Gospel) actually “purged our sins.” Lest anyone think that this is a cooperative effort between man and God, the word “himself” lays every such notion to rest. Christ is the sole owner of the redemption of His people. He did it all and did it alone. All the sins of all the elect were purged by the blood of Christ. The word “when” assures us that this is a point of fact. Purging actually took place (Heb. 9:12, 26²).

The sixth and final point of the language of God is the declaration that Christ gloriously finished the work (v.3). The

¹ **John 1:14;** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

² **Heb. 9:12, 26; 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. **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.

proof of this fact is that He sits in excellent repose at the right hand of God in merited glory for finishing the work, for perfecting the saints by His perfect offering (Heb. 10:12-17¹). This is the language of God.

¹ **Heb. 10:12-17**; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

THE SON OF GOD

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?

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

Hebrews 1:4-6

In this passage, our God sets forth His Son not only as different from the angels but far superior to them in every way. It is good to remember that Paul is writing to the Hebrew believers and is dealing with their perception and, in this case, obsession with unseen things. Many Hebrews felt that angels were overtly and intimately involved with the affairs of men. Many had begun to worship angels or at least their perception of them. Some even felt that Jesus Christ was a special kind of angel manifested among men. Though Christ is the Angel of the Covenant, that description of Him is isolated to His capacity as messenger. As we have seen, God has already covered this description of Christ, declaring Him to be both the message and messenger. This idea that Christ was some kind of special angel would render Christ a created being, perhaps superior to the other angels and men, but in no measure deity. The Jehovah's Witnesses and other Unitarians hold that Christ was this sort of superior Angel. Though our God has already declared the deity of His Son (Heb. 1:2-3¹), He now deals specifically with the

¹ Heb. 1:2-3; 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; who

superiority of Christ to the angels with respect to Christ's deity.

Verse 4 is a further defining of the majesty of Christ declared in vv. 2-3. It specifically deals with the excellency of the name of Christ that is far above the name of any angel. The words “being made” does not suggest that Christ is a created being but rather avers that Christ glowingly and gloriously appeared or was manifested. The language does not depict a recent origin but rather a pre-existing state of being, an eternal state of being. The excellency, the superiority of Christ to that of the angels lies in the fact that He is their Creator and is, therefore, preeminent in reference to them. This superiority has to do with His name, and the words that God employs to express that name have to do with inheritance. The name that Christ has inherited is far above any other (Eph. 1:21¹). In this particular instance, the word “name” has to do with status and the particular name given (Son) confers on Christ the status of the firstborn Son of a Monarch.

In the world of men, the firstborn son of a king has special status. He is, in fact, heir to the throne; his inheritance is that he will be the king. The analogy drawn here is that Christ inherits the throne of majesty because He is the Son of God. Unlike any created being, Jesus Christ is intrinsically deity, and this is something that no angel, other than a fallen one, would ever even aspire to. Included with this declaration is the warning that none should ever diminish the status of Christ. To compare Him with an angel or an angel with Him is an offense to God. This is what the Hebrews were in danger of doing. The status of Christ must never be diminished lest we incur the anger of God, His

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.

¹ **Eph. 1:21**; Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Father (John 5:23¹). Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God.

In verse 5 the Lord inspires a divine question. He asks the Hebrews, based on their knowledge of the Word of God, if there was any record of God ever saying to any angel, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” The reference is to Psalm 2:7² (Acts 13:33; Heb. 5:5³). In Psalm 2, this is recorded as the decree of the Most High God, Jehovah-God Himself. This places great weight and gravity on the words spoken. The omnipotent, unchangeable God has decreed it, and therefore, it can never be turned back nor can it ever be questioned.

The word “begotten” further distinguishes Christ from the angels. Whatever or whoever begets, begets in its likeness. A dog cannot beget a gopher and a gopher cannot beget an ape. If Christ is begotten of God then He is not an angel, He is *God* in very essence. This phrase of Psalm 2 is used in three ways in the New Testament. First, it refers to Christ’s eternality and deity (John 1:14, 18; Col. 1:15⁴). Second, it is used to describe His incarnate estate—His appearance in time (Romans 8:29⁵). Third, it speaks of His resurrection (Acts 13:33, Col. 1:18; Rev.

¹ **John 5:23**; That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

² **Psalm 2:7**; I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

³ **Acts 13:33**; God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. **Heb. 5:5**; 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.

⁴ **John 1:14**; And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 18; No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. **Col. 1:15**; Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

⁵ **Romans 8:29**; For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

1:5¹). Christ is also the Son of God as Solomon was the son of David. The Lord uses 2 Samuel 7:14² as a reference to the fact that God never said this to any angel and for proof that this is a revealed relationship. The words “I will be to *Him* a father” means that at a point in time this relationship will be openly declared (Matt. 3:17³).

Finally, the last nail in the coffin of those who might equate Christ with the angels is that God asserts that the angels, themselves—all of them—worship Christ (v. 6). Angels never allow themselves to be worshipped (Rev. 19:10; 22:9⁴). However, Christ is worthy of worship and so the angels worship Him (Luke 2:9-14⁵).

¹ **Acts 13:33**; God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. **Col. 1:18**; And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. **Rev. 1:5**; And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

² **2 Samuel 7:14**; I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.

³ **Matt. 3:17**; And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

⁴ **Rev. 19:10**; And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. **22:9**; Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

⁵ **Luke 2:9-14**; And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. *this shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

In this passage our Lord settles the matter of the worship of angels. It is not permitted (Col. 2:18⁶). Only God is to be worshipped. Since Christ is to be worshipped, it must be that He is God. Thus far, Christ is seen as superior to the prophets, the Old Testament messengers and message, and now, the angels. The Hebrews believers are being shown that everything they held to under the Old covenant is completely subservient to Christ.

⁶ **Col. 2:18;** Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

CHRIST, THE KING

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.

Hebrews 1:7-9

The apostle continues to compare Christ to all that the Hebrew believer had held in high esteem. Whether prophet, messengers, message, or angels, Paul has not diminished any. Rather he has shown that each of them was subservient and pointed to a greater. Christ is that Prophet; Christ is the Messenger; Christ is the message; and Christ is greater than the angels as the Creator is greater than the creature, as the begotten is greater than the created, as the Son is greater than the servant. In this passage, as well as throughout the remainder of the chapter, our Lord is further set in contrast to the angels. The theme of this particular section is that Christ is superior to the angels as the King is superior to his ministers and servants who serve the kingdom at the behest of their monarch.

The initial contrast defines the difference that has already been stated. The difference is between that of a begotten Son and a created servant. In verse 7, Paul refers to a Psalm that depicts the creative glory of God as he describes the status and station of the angels (v. 7; Psalm 104:1-5¹). This Psalm sets the

¹ **Psalm 104:1-5**; Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a

angels clearly in the realm of created beings and created things. Verse 7 of our text begins with the word “and” which reveals that the angels worship Christ. They worship Him because He is their Creator (Col. 1:16¹).

The angels are created, but they do not belong to the material world. They are spirits and, therefore, invisible, and they serve a specific function in the economy of God. Verse 14 declares that they are ministering “spirits” who do the bidding of their Lord, working invisibly on behalf of those whom God has purposed to save. The poetic language employed by God to describe these beings assures that they are servants and that they inhabit the spiritual realm. These unseen creatures are described “angels” who are “spirits” and “ministers” who are as “flames of fire.” There is an allusion to the natural elements of wind and fire. Both can serve to be destructive as well as helpful. Angels are spirits and thus operate spiritually and invisibly like the wind (John 3:8²). This poetic reference defines the nature of the service of angels to their Creator. They exist, endowed with power, to do exactly that which the Master instructs them to do (Ps. 103:20-21³). We see then, that as servants and ministers, they are made such and that they worship the LORD.

In this text the apostle reveals that the angels are subservient to Christ in yet another capacity. The angels also worship Christ

curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

¹ **Col. 1:16**; For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

² **John 3:8**; The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

³ **Ps. 103:20-21**; Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

because He is their King, their high Potentate, and their glorious Despot. What God says to His Son in verse 8¹ is one of those passages that bless me every time I read it. To me this is exquisite language, language that is almost too glorious for human lips to utter. This is God speaking honorably, even worshipfully of His Son. In these few words our Lord is described in His deity, His royalty, His eternity, and His personal and substitutionary character. This description also declares the contrast between what God says of His angels and what He says of His Son. The angels are ministers, but His Son is King. Paul quotes from Psalm 45, which, according to the first verse, is a song that indicts a good matter of things he made touching “the King.” That Psalm is a Maschil, that is, a song designed to be rehearsed and repeated to give instruction. The proper subject of study for the people of God is Christ. He said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.”

Would we “learn” of Christ? Then our journey—our quest—must begin here at the beginning; “in the beginning God.” The words “Son” and “God” declare the deity of Christ. All that he has done hangs on the fact of His deity. If he is not God, then He, indeed, fits the description given of Him by false religion—an empty, dependent, diminutive deity. The confidence of the heart of the *believer* is that He who has undertaken the salvation of his soul in none other than *God Himself*.

As God, He resided in absolute sovereignty as depicted by the throne. This throne is the throne of God the Father and God the Son (1:3; Rev. 22:1-3²). This is the vision of Isaiah (Isaiah

¹ **verse 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.

² **Rev. 22:1-3;** And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his

6:1-5¹). That this speaks of Christ cannot be questioned (compare Isa. 6:10 with John 12:39-41²). This throne is the eternal throne and thus the inhabitant of it has always occupied it (2 Sam. 7:16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jer. 17:12; Luke 1:32-33³).

Our education continues with the knowledge of the singular manner in which anyone is accepted into this kingdom. This scepter is indicative of acceptance (Esther 5:2-3⁴). This scepter

servants shall serve him.

¹ **Isaiah 6:1-5**; In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

² **Isa. 6:10**; Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. **John 12:39-41**; Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

³ **2 Sam. 7:16**; And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. **Isaiah 9:6-7**; For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. **Jer. 17:12**; A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. **Luke 1:32-33**; He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

⁴ **Esther 5:2-3**; And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt

is righteousness and is the only way that we can be accepted in the presence of the King (2 Cor. 5:21¹). This is also indicative of the fact that our Lord is righteous in all that He is and does. Be it comfort or calamity, our Lord acts righteously (Gen. 18:25; Is. 45:18-19; Romans 9:14²).

Finally, our education culminates in the knowledge that Christ, the Son of God, the message and the messenger, the sovereign God, the King enthroned is worthy because of His glorious qualifications (v. 9). He is entitled to such glorious accolades because He possesses such glorious attributes. He is anointed above His fellows because He is superior to them all. He is better because He is holy. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity. This is the King—your King enthroned above all because He is above all (Eph. 1:20-21³).

One man said that Christ is the epitome of all academic endeavors. For the archeologist He is the Ancient of Days; for the botanist He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley; for the astronomer He is the Sun of Righteousness, the Bright and Morning Star; for the horticulturist He is the Vine, for the geologist he is the Rock; for the geneticist he is the Seed of

thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

¹ **2 Cor. 5:21**; For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

² **Gen. 18:25**; That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? **Isa. 45:18-19**; For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. **Romans 9:14**; What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

³ **Eph. 1:20-21**; Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

Woman and for the theologian He is God. For the believer He is *all* and *in all*.

CREATOR. CONQUEROR. SOVEREIGN.

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.

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?

Hebrews 1:10-14

In these last few verses of Chapter 1, the apostle is summarizing what he has stated thus far concerning the superiority of Christ and His preeminence in all things. Again, Paul applies to the Old Testament and a Psalm of David (Ps. 110).

In that Psalm, David is privy to a conversation between the Father and the Son in the counsels of eternity. In that conversation, our God gives His Son a seat at His right hand. That Psalm expressively proclaims the dignity and glory of the Son of God and asserts, in no uncertain terms, His sovereign majesty. This is also part of the continuing distinction made between the Old Covenant, which has been set aside, and the Old Testament, which is still a viable tool in the declaration of the Gospel of Christ.

In employing this Psalm, the Word first presents Christ in His deity as Creator. This relates back to the last phrase of verse 2 “by whom he also made the worlds.” Declaring Christ to be

Creator, separates Him from all that is created and avers His deity. If He is God, then He is the Creator. If He is the Creator, then He is God.

In this passage (vv. 10-12), several aspects of the deity of Christ are declared. He is first set forth as the divine originator of all that is in the material world (v. 10). He did this in the beginning because He was not only present in the beginning, but the word beginning is also used to define His being (Rev. 1:8¹). This phrase particularly denotes Christ as God the Creator (Gen. 1:1, Isaiah 46:9-10; John 1:1-3²). There can be no question that the “foundation of the earth” is relative to His eternal sovereignty in the matter of salvation, beginning with eternal election (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3-4³). The phrase “the works of thy hands” is likewise tied in with salvation, as is foundation, creation, and beginning (1 Cor. 3:11; John 17:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:10⁴). The creation recorded in the Old

¹ **Rev 1:8**; I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

² **Gen. 1:1**; In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. **Isaiah 46:9-10**; Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. **John 1:1-3**; In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

³ **2 Thess. 2:13**; But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. **Eph. 1:3-4**; Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

⁴ **1 Cor. 3:11**; For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **John 17:4**; I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. **2 Cor. 5:17**; Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. **Col. 3:10**; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

Testament is a picture of the new creation in Christ, and in both type and substance, Christ is Creator. So, the Creator of the worlds is the Christ of the cross and the Christ of the cross is Creator of the worlds. The One who upholds all things by the word of His power is the same blessed One who purged our sins. There can be no greater source of assurance and encouragement than the knowledge that the Creator of all things is the Savior of our souls. As the Old Creation involved the temporal, visible world, the New Creation involves the spiritual, invisible world of faith, hope, knowledge, and things which cannot be touched or handled by man (Col. 1:16¹).

All things in the material world were made to ultimately be dissolved, but that which is spiritual is eternal because Christ is eternal and unchangeable (vv. 11-12). Here, the dissolution of the Old Creation is a harbinger of the dissolution of the Old Covenant, which Christ fulfilled and set aside by the sacrifice of Himself (10:9²). This, too, teaches of the deity of Christ and the sureness of the salvation that He accomplished (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:12b; 13:8³). Christ is the Ancient of Days and His “years shall not fail.”

Next Christ is declared to be the Conqueror. As Creator, He is also far above His creation, which has already been asserted in that He is greater than the angels. The phrase quoted from Psalm 110 has to do with Christ ruling in the midst of His enemies (Ps. 110; 1-2⁴). This is not merely a declaration of the

¹ **Col. 1:16**; Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

² **Heb. 10:9**; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

³ **Mal. 3:6**; For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. **Heb. 1:12b**; and thy years shall not fail. **13:8**; But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

⁴ **Ps. 110:1-2**; A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD

fact that Christ is Lord over all but that He exercises His sovereignty in the midst of His enemies. His enemies think that they are governing their own lives, but all the while, He is ruling and directing and manipulating their every move. In fact, while history is the playing out the grand scheme of salvation, part of that salvation is the herding, if you will, of all the enemies of Christ under His feet. He rules as He who conquers and is yet to conquer. This is especially precious to the church as she is surrounded by enemies on every side. While she undergoes the bile and vitriol of the hatred of the world, her enemies are one by one being brought to their ruin. They may seem, at any given time, to run the show, but they are actually programmed like lemmings to take their place of defeat under the foot of the Almighty Jesus Christ.

The final thing referred to concerning Christ's superiority over the angels is that they are, once again, declared to be His servants. Their servitude is said to be *particular*. They minister to the elect. The Bible only gives glimpses of the invisible ministries of the angels. Little is known of this invisible world. However, the Word of God often gives a generic truth to show the magnitude and the breadth of a given thing. For example, in the Old Testament, sins were often categorized. There were sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of ignorance, unknown sins, sins of jealousy, and sins of suspicion. For each, a particular sin offering was made. In the New Testament, all of those sins, in fact *all sins*, are included in the generic word "our". Christ died for "our" sins. They are too vast to categorize so God declares them, whatever they are, as "our" sins, and they are, therefore, *all* forgiven. It is in the same kind of language that what the angels do for the elect is declared. They are sent forth to minister. In that capacity, whether

shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

rescuing, comforting, shielding, or avenging, they do minister. At this moment, they are ministering to us and they will minister to us as long as we exist. This is a sweet comfort for the believer. Whether asleep or awake, working or resting, the guardian angels are ministering. "To Christ be the glory, great things he has done."

SO GREAT SALVATION

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.

2, For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence 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?

Hebrews 2:1-4

With the word “therefore,” Paul continues to show the superiority of Christ to all creation, especially the angels. “Therefore” refers us to what has been spoken concerning the excellency of Christ and brings us to the contrast of what was spoken by the angels (the Law) and what was spoken by Christ (the Gospel). The Gospel far exceeds the Law, is superior to the Law, and is the singular thing that the believer is to attend to (2 Cor. 3:6-13¹).

¹ **2 Cor. 3:6-13**; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that

It is important to remember that Paul is admonishing and warning the Hebrew believers against returning, in any way, to the former covenant. The words of verse 3 are not a generic phrase, though they have been often used to scare men to walk down the aisle during many revival invitations. These words are specific to the Law and the Gospel and are spoken to believers who are perhaps leaning toward incorporating the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. Though it is impossible for a believer to fully return to the law as a way of life, it is yet possible for a believer to toy with the idea and, by that, begin to look to the Law and find personal merit in their life. It is very possible for a nominal professor of Christ to return to the Law. The numerous times that these things are declared in the New Testament assure us that the problem and the threat of doing this are real. We would like to think of ourselves as being above this, but our horrible bent toward self-righteousness (which is of the Law) is evidence enough to make the warnings and admonitions reasonable and necessary (v. 1; Heb. 3:12-13¹).

Having set forth Christ as the messenger and message of God, and having specifically declared His superiority to angels in every capacity, in this chapter, Paul shows the basic reason why the Lord has inspired him to so fully cover the superiority of Christ to the angels. It boils down to the basic and first thing that the Word of God is profitable for—making us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:16²). Paul is asserting that the gospel (i.e., the doctrine of Christ) is to be the singular pursuit of the

the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

¹ **Heb. 3:12-13**; Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

² **2 Tim. 3:16**; All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

believer because 1) the gospel was spoken by Christ, Himself, 2) was confirmed by those that heard Him, and 3) was witnessed by God, Himself, who authenticated it by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost by His sovereign will. Our Lord used practically the same proofs to proclaim who He was (John 5:32-33, 36, 37, 39¹).

Contrasting the gospel to the Law, Paul states that the believer understands that there was a severe consequence for disobedience to the laws and principles of the Old Covenant, but there is a far greater punishment for those who do not obey the gospel, who profess faith yet turn again to the beggarly elements of the world (vv. 2-3; 2 Pet. 2:20-22²). This theme is repeated in similar language throughout this epistle (Heb. 10:26-31³). With such severe language, Paul sets forth the

¹ **John 5:32-33**; There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. **36-37**; But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. **39**; Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

² **2 Pet. 2:20-22**; 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. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

³ **Heb. 10:26-31**; For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 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? 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. It is a fearful thing to

gospel as not only superior to the Law, but as exclusive from the Law and as the only doctrine to be pursued and employed by the believer.

Though many commentators spend time explaining or trying to explain how angels were used in “speaking the word,” the “how” is not the important thing. The mere fact that they were the ones who spoke the Law is the important issue, and this scripture makes that clear. (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19¹). The issue being addressed is that *what* they spoke (the Law) is not the Gospel and is, therefore, not what the believer is to adhere to (John 1:17²). What they spoke still has value as the Old Testament (type, shadow, picture) and carried dire consequence for disobedience as the Old Covenant. But, as Christ is greater than the angels, so His *doctrine* is greater than theirs.

Paul gives two reasons for the superiority of the Gospel to the Law: its effectiveness and its messenger. The gospel’s effectiveness is intimated in the descriptive language that is used to describe the doctrine of Christ: it is called “so great salvation.” What an honor is placed on the doctrine of Christ! Again, this is contrasting terminology, specifically pointing out the stark difference between the Gospel and the Law. Salvation is found in the Gospel whereas it is *not* found in the Law (Heb. 10:1-5³). The singular sin-purging sacrifice of Christ saved His

fall into the hands of the living God.

¹ **Acts 7:53**; Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. **Gal. 3:19**; Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

² **John 1:17**; For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

³ **Heb. 10:1-5**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when

people in contrast to the many ineffective sacrifices of the Old Covenant by which no sin was ever remitted. In contrast to the Law, the Gospel is “so great salvation.” Such salvation is neglected at one's own peril and deserving of greater punishment than disobeying the law.

The superior messenger of the Gospel is revealed by the fact that it was the Lord Himself, not the angels, who first spoke it. A thing spoken by the author of it carries great weight, and if the Lord is that author, nothing can be compared to the gravity of what is spoken. Even the word spoken by angels pales by contrast (Heb. 12:24-29¹).

The second reason given for the believer's singular pursuit of the Gospel is that they who *heard Him* confirmed it to us. This is a direct reference to the power of the preached Word. The Word of Christ needs no confirmation; yet those who preached it (the apostles) did, indeed, confirm it. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and the confirmation of it is that God gives men faith to believe it, and thus that faith is evidence and substance of its verity (1 Cor. 1:21; Heb. 11:1²).

The third reason given for the believer's singular pursuit of the gospel is that God bore witness to it by signs and wonders.

he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

¹ **Heb. 12:24-29**; And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. 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: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 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. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

² **1 Cor. 1:21**; For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. **Heb. 11:1**; Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

These words are particular to Christ and His apostles. The giving of signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost was exclusive to this time of transition from the Old Covenant to the New. The message of the Gospel preached by Christ and the apostles was attended by these visible things for the singular purpose of authenticating the message and giving credence that what was taken from the Old Testament was truly understood only as the Gospel and only by the Gospel only (Acts 3:11-16¹ consider the surroundings). These were given by God's sovereign will and served the purpose for which they were designed. This authentication continued until the New Testament was completed and then ceased to exist for lack and want or need.

For the believer, especially the one who is in danger of returning to the law on any level, the message is clear: There is nothing but woe for anyone who neglects so great salvation. There are dire consequences for anyone who does not center all of salvation and doctrine in Christ alone.

¹ **Acts 3:11-16**; And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

THE MAN, CHRIST JESUS

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

Hebrews 2:5

The remainder of this chapter concerns the superiority of Christ over angels in that He is a man. Thus far, we have seen that He is superior as messenger and message, as Son, as Creator, as King and as God. All these things are presented as revealed in the Gospel of substitution, wherein this glorious Person is declared to have “by Himself purged our sins.” This chapter deals with the only way by which God could save His people: He must become a man so that He can suffer death. The thought itself is beyond human comprehension.

Verse 5 starts out with the premise of Christ's superiority over angels, and the reference concerns who the world is in subjection to. There is an interesting description of the realm that is in subjection to Christ. Paul refers to it as “the world to come, whereof we speak.” This is a very distinctive and poetic phrase and it has several applications.

First of all, this is, to a great degree, the description of the mindset of the child of God. Throughout the ages, the believer has been one who looks for a better world, who thinks in terms of a world to come. The concept of hospitals began during the great plague in Europe when Christians came out in droves, risking their lives to care for the sick. To them, they were not risking their lives; their actions simply revealed that they were looking for another world and if they were removed from this one, it did not matter. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. Paul spoke of being absent from the body and present with the Lord. The Revelation speaks of those who

love not their life unto death. No matter what prophetic scheme one may embrace, there is no doubt that the believer looks for a place “wherein dwelleth righteousness”—to a world other than this one.

There is more implied in this phrase than merely the future state of things. In Jewish writings, this “world to come” was often referred to as the time of the Messiah. The Greek translation of the words “the everlasting Father” in Isaiah 9:6 is “the Father of the Age.” This refers to the time that we call the gospel age that began at the incarnation and will end with the second coming. There is no doubt that Paul was speaking of the present time when he used this phrase because he was dealing with prevailing issues that faced the Hebrew believer of that time as well as this time. Perhaps Paul used the phrase because the Hebrew believers would know that he was speaking of the time of the Messiah. There is no doubt that the phrase is isolated to a period of time and that it involves both of these things. *Now* and *the future* is the time of the Messiah.

It stands to reason that Paul is speaking in terms that address more than a span of time because he refers to the present as the “world to come.” Paul is distinguishing between the natural and the spiritual. We live, as believers, in the “world to come.” Our Lord said that His people were in the world but not of the world. In another place, He said that His kingdom was not of this world. The world that Paul refers to in this passage refers to the world that operates as a universe of faith through grace. It differs from the original world where the first Adam was given dominion over all and all was brought in subjection to him. That world ended in failure when the one given dominion plunged it into sin by his disobedience. But this “world to come” is given into the hands of the last Adam. All things are brought into subjection to Him (1 Cor. 15:21-28¹). This world to come

¹ 1 Cor. 15:21-28; For after that in the wisdom of God the world by

cannot fail and has been plunged into everlasting righteousness by His obedience (Romans 5:19¹). This “world to come” is the realm of Him who is the express image of God and upholds all things by the word of His power. This is the realm of the God-Man-King (Isaiah 42:1-4²).

Remember the context. Paul is addressing the superiority of Christ to the angels so this phrase is used to reveal that God has not put the “world to come” under subjection to the angels but rather to *the* man, Christ Jesus. This at least suggests that the other world was in subjection to angels, not in the sense of sovereignty, but as operators under direction of God, the sovereign. Angels, both elect and fallen are employed to serve (minister to) those who are heirs of salvation. The evil angels are certainly allowed to have some sway over the world (Eph. 2:2-3³). But they are not ruling in the “world to come.” There,

wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

¹ **Romans 5:19**; For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

² **Isaiah 42:1-4**; Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

³ **Eph. 2:2-3**; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of

in that world, Christ and his church are said to rule (Rev. 5:10; Isa. 32:1; Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:3¹). The church does not rule in the natural world, but she does rule in “the world to come.” The natural world is ruled and controlled by Christ as rightful Lord over all. The spiritual world is ruled by Christ the man and the man in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19²). Only the spiritual man knows of this world to come and that by spiritual revelation in the new birth (1 Cor. 2:10-12³).

Religion is enamored with the things of this world, not with the “world to come.” The gist and thrust of religion in this day is the establishment of God’s kingdom in this world. Because of this, a great part of what religious men do has to do with enhancement of the flesh and embracing a visible universe that has nothing to do with the “world to come.” The trappings of religion have to do with this world. Health, wealth, and happiness are declared to be the “be all and end all” of religion. These are the openly declared objectives of today’s religion. Those who reside in “the world to come” openly and unashamedly speak of another city and things that pertain to

the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

¹ **Rev. 5:10**; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. **Isa. 32:1**; Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. **Matt. 19:28**; And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. **1 Cor. 6:3**; Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

² **2 Cor. 5:19**; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

³ **1 Cor. 2:10-12**; But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

eternity, none of which are found or desired in this world.

Thus, with these words, the apostle sets forth two great principles. First, the man Christ Jesus is greater than the angels. Second, the warning to the Hebrew believers, the underlying theme of this book, is clear: To profess to believe the Gospel and then return to the old world is to have no part in the “world to come”, where a man, *the Man*, the *Messiah* rules with His people and to whom even the angels are subject. The “world to come” is the world of the Christ and His people and is, in no way, of this world.

A LITTLE LOWER

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.

Hebrews 2:6-9

These verses continue the theme of “the world to come” and, again, rather than expressly dealing with the future estate of glory, they concern the difference or the distinction between the natural and the spiritual realm. There is no doubt that these verses are about Christ in His humanity. Using the words of David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, Paul employs language that can and is applied to Adam as the crown of God's creation and to Christ as the true crown of humanity, being God in human form and designated for a singular purpose.

Concerning man in this world, the question is, ”Knowing the fact that man is a creature, why would the perfect and holy God have a special interest in him or, for that matter, any interest at all?” David's reference is to man's insignificance when set in comparison to the rest of the vast universe. This statement is born of both a realization of how far man has fallen and a thankful heart that in spite of this, God regards man.

What is man? This is the question that occupies the world. Regardless of culture, race, philosophy or religion, the world has wrestled and toyed with this question throughout the ages. The answer to this question determines the manner in which one lives in this world. The wisdom of the world usually relegates this question to the pseudo-science of evolution. With man being just a higher rank in the animal kingdom, there is no true expectation of him acting in a manner that is vastly different from those who are lower on the scale. Fallen man has, in many ways (in fact, in all ways), fallen to a lower estate than the beasts of the earth. The natural instincts of animals cause them to fear their Creator. Man has deluded himself to believe that he holds a place equal to or greater than his Creator and the depths of his depravity seem to know no bounds. If man is just a higher rank of animal, any idea or expectation of non-animal behavior is considerably lowered. Man bears the image of God, and unlike animals, he is responsible to and accountable to God. If man is a mere animal, then his life doctrine is survival of the fittest. If, however, man is the offspring of God, then his purpose is to love, fear, and worship his Maker.

The Bible gives an entirely different view of man than that of religion and society (v. 7). God made man. He made him a little lower than the angels. Some have interpreted this to mean that man is made to be less than God. The best interpretation regards time or duration. Man was made a little lower than the angels or is inferior to the angels for a time or for a while until the introduction of the “world to come”, the time of Christ, the last Adam. This refers to the Gospel Age as well as the new heaven and the new earth but primarily deals with the time of Christ in His humanity on this earth. His time here introduced and established the “world to come.” God made man and crowned Him with glory (above the beasts and elements of the world). God man made man and glorified him to be caretaker of

the world that He had made. God put all things under Adam's dominion in the sense that he was responsible for the upkeep of the world that God placed under his care. The fall has caused men to destroy the world and to ruin all that they touch. The mandate of responsibility has not, however, changed, though sin has made men unable to accomplish it. Even in his fallen state, man still bears some image of His Maker (James 3:9¹).

However, this description of the first man is not Paul's end point. He speaks of Christ and "the world to come." Verse 8 refers to the fact that man, though designed to have dominion, has not realized that estate in the world. However, in Christ, in the world to come, man has realized his purpose (Col. 3:10; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10²).

The full realization of this is met only in and by the second man, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The words "a little lower than the angels" are given their full meaning in verse 9. They speak of the humanity and the humiliation of Christ. He was made a man so He could suffer death. He who is greater than the angels in every respect was made lower than them, for a little while, for the sole purpose of substitution. This is why He came (John 12:27³). The emphasis on the death of Christ is paramount to understanding the Gospel. It is the central theme

¹ **James 3:9**; Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

² **Col. 3:10**; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. **Rev. 1:5-6**; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. **Rev. 5:9-10**; And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

³ **John 12:27**; Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

of the Gospel. It is reasonable and understandable that those who hold man as merely a higher form of beast discount the mission of Christ altogether. But in this day, religion has also sought to discount the mission of Christ. They have majored on His life and His miracles and have made His suffering at the hands of men the example of what salvation is. They even make these physical sufferings to be salvation. The death of Christ is attributed to the hands of men and considered by many in religion even to be a mistake. Christ came to suffer death and did so for the sin of the elect. This fact cannot be sanitized or changed. He was made sin for His people. He died, “the righteous for the unrighteous,” to bring us to God. He gave His life a ransom for many. Paul defines the Gospel as Christ and Him crucified. Baptism and the Lord's Table are both about Christ's death.

He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. (The word “man” (v. 9) is not in the original text. The identity of those for whom Christ died is explained in the context that follows.) This language is very important. He was not killed by man. He was not killed when He endured the punishment of eternal hell at the hands of His Father. He came through that alive. No one killed Him. He, by the grace of God (John 10:15-18¹), tasted, *tasted*, death. This was a voluntary action as one would take food to his lips. He tasted it and therefore proved He had power over it. He came to taste death. He was made a little lower than the angels to taste death.

This glorious death established the world to come—a world wherein dwelleth righteousness.

¹ **John 10:15-18**; As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

THEIR SALVATION

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.

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.

11, For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: 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.

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.

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.

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

Hebrews 2:9-18

We will look at these verses in more detail in the next lesson, but in this lesson we will consider them in an overview and seek to answer a single question: For whom did

Christ taste death?

If you hold that Christ died for every man, you are in the majority what is commonly called Christendom. The notion of universal atonement (that is, an atonement made with the intention to save all men), is the prevailing view among those who profess Christianity in this day. In fact, this view holds such prominence in Christendom that there are many who are not even aware that some professed Christians hold a different view. Jerry Fallwell was one of the prominent leaders of Fundamentalist Christianity in the United States during the latter part of the 20th Century. Shortly before he went to meet his Maker in May of 2007, he addressed a group of over 1800 prospective students at Liberty University, where he was the chancellor. In his address, he referred to the theology of Liberty University saying, “We are not into particular love or limited atonement. As a matter of fact, we consider it heresy.” The previous year one of his professors said “Calvinists are worse than Muslims.” These statements were made against the doctrine of limited atonement, sometimes called particular redemption. They reiterated the generally accepted belief that Christ suffered and tasted death for every man and woman who has ever lived or will ever live.

John Owen, a Puritan of the 17th century, defended the Biblical doctrine of Limited Atonement in his famous treatise, “The Death of Death in the Death of Christ.” In his treatise, he put forward the argument:

God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either

- (1) all the sins of all men, or
- (2) all the sins of some men, or
- (3) some sins of all men.

Owen went on to draw some conclusions based on of these three possibilities. I will express his thoughts in my own words:

If Christ paid for all the sins of all men, then we must accept as true one of two things: We must accept that all men will, in the end, be saved, or we must accept that the payment that Christ made does not really have anything to do with salvation. Were there not many already in hell paying for their sins at the very same time Christ was on the cross paying for those same sins? Furthermore, have there not been many more since that time who have gone to hell to pay for their sins even though Christ presumably already paid for them? And will there not be many more who will sometime in the future go to hell and spend eternity there paying for sins that Christ supposedly already paid for on Calvary? And would that not prove that the death of Christ does not really save from sin? If it is argued that some whose sins were paid for will yet perish because of unbelief, then we must ask whether unbelief is a sin. If it is not a sin, why do they have to pay for it? If it is a sin, then it must have been paid for by Christ's death and the sin of unbelief should not prevent their enjoyment of the fruits of Christ's death (salvation) any more than any of their other sins.

If Christ paid for some of the sins of all men, then no one would be saved or even could be saved because God must punish all sins, and those sins that Christ did not pay for would still put men in Hell.

If Christ paid for all the sins of some men, then those for whose sins He died (God's elect) will most certainly be saved and what He did could truly bear the title of salvation.

So those who believe in a universal love of God and a universal intent in Christ's atonement are left with this question: If God loves all men and Christ died for all men and there are men suffering eternal punishment (whom God loved and Christ died for) then what does the love of God and the death of Christ

have to do with salvation at all?

The last phrase of verse nine is one of the big guns used to support the universal love of God and the universal intent of Christ's death. But, the word "man" is not in the original text. The Greek language often used what is called the "substantive use of the adjective." In such cases, an adjective is written, but the noun it is supposed to modify is not written because the context makes it obvious what the noun is. We sometimes use this grammatical form in the English language with such sentences as, "When you have a choice between a paved road and a gravel road, take the paved." The last word is an adjective but no noun is written for we already know that the kind of road one should take is the issue at hand. So, verse 9 would better read "He tasted death for every," leaving the question of "every what?" to be illuminated by the context (vv. 10-18). The context clearly declares for whom Christ died or tasted death.

The first thing that should be noticed is that the driving engine of the entire matter of substitution is the grace of God. This effectively removes the salvation of men from the hands of men (Romans 11:5-6; Eph. 2:8-9; Ex. 33:18-19; Titus 3:5¹). If man could do or did do anything in the matter of the salvation of his soul, then no part of it may be attributed to the unmerited favor of Almighty God.

Secondly, notice that this salvation, this substitutionary

¹ **Rom. 11:5-6**; Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. **Eph. 2:8-9**; For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. **Ex. 33:18-19**; And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. **Titus 3:5**; Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

death of Christ, is something that is becoming to God and His glory. This is another way of saying that this death of Christ glorified God in all His attributes. This death declares God to be righteous and to be just in justifying sinners (Romans 3; 24-26).

Thirdly, notice that the salvation wrought by this glorious death is said to be the possession of someone. It is called “their salvation” (v. 10). It was not called a salvation that was merely available to them or merely offered to them. Rather, even though they had no knowledge of their salvation until they heard the Gospel, it was nonetheless already theirs because, it had already been accomplished for them. The Good News of the Gospel has nothing to do with possibilities or probabilities. The Gospel does not address what a person can, by his will or decision, appropriate. The Gospel is a declaration that salvation has already been accomplished for those for whom Christ died (Eph. 1:13; Matt. 11:25-27; 13:10-11¹).

Fourthly, notice the familial relationships. He tasted death for “sons” (v. 10; 1 John 3:1-2; Eph. 1; 4²), “brethren” (v. 11),

¹ **Eph. 1:13**; In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise. **Matt. 11:25-27**; At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. **13:10-11**; And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

² **1 John 3:1-2**; Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. **Eph. 1:4**; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

“the sanctified” (v. 11; 1 Cor. 1:30¹), “my brethren” (v. 12; John 1:12-13²), “the church” (v. 11; Eph. 5:25-26³ comp. v. 11), “the children which God hath given me” (v. 13; John 6:37-39; John 17:2; John 6:45; Is. 54:13⁴), “children” (v. 14), “seed of Abraham” (v. 15; Gal 3:29; 4:28⁵), “His brethren, the people” (v. 17; Isa. 53:8⁶). The substitutionary death of Christ was for the *family* of God, the *brothers* of Christ, the *church* of God, the *children* of God and the *people* of God. These descriptions reveal for whom it was that Christ tasted death.

Christ the Lord was made a little lower than (for a little while) the angels for the suffering of death and was crowned with glory because of the absolute success of that death. He, as the representative man, died the death due His elect, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring them to God. He, being the perfect man, suffered perfectly, and in doing so, perfected

¹ **1 Cor. 1:30**; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

² **John 1:12-13**; But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

³ **Eph. 5:25-26**; Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

⁴ **John 6:37-39**; All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. **John 17:2**; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. **John 6:45**; It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. **Isa. 54:13**; And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

⁵ **Gal 3:29**; And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. **4:28**; Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

⁶ **Isa. 53:8**; He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

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all for whom He died (Heb. 10:14¹). Being a man—the representative man—He was the perfect One to suffer perfectly and thus to be qualified to be the captain or champion of their salvation (v. 10).

Christ finished salvation. His death answered the Law's demand and satisfied the inflexible justice of the thrice holy God. If Christ had failed to any degree in this mission of mercy, then there would be nothing about Him that would move us to worship Him. The Gospel is the declaration of a complete and perfect work accomplished by Him who cannot fail, who reigns supreme as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Isaiah 52:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Matt. 1:21; Isa. 53:10-11²).

¹ **Heb. 10:14**; For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

² **Isaiah 52:7**; How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! **2 Timothy 1:9**; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. **Matt. 1:21**; And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. **Isa. 53:10-11**; Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

GLORY THROUGH SUFFERING

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.

11, For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: 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.

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.

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

Hebrews 2:10-16

In verse 9 we see that our Lord was made, for a little while, lower than the angels for the suffering of death. What follows in verses 10-16 is the proclamation of the intent, purpose, and result accomplished by God in the suffering of Christ.

The substitutionary death of Christ was a perfect success. It would not be becoming to God that what He designed would be anything other than a perfect success. This is the first thing set before us in verse 10. All this (Christ being made a little lower than the angels) was fitting (becoming) to the person and character of God the Father. For this to be so, it must be for God and by God and glorifying to God. The participle phrase “in

bringing” is the same kind of thought found in verse 3 of chapter 1¹. There, the word “when,” following the description of Christ, denotes a finished work. The work of purging our sins occurred at a particular “when” in the past, indicating that the work is done, the sins are already purged. The same principle can be applied to the phrase in 2:10, “in bringing many sons to glory.” The Greek tense translated “bringing,” does not suggest an ongoing event but a singular, point-in-time event. The work of bringing many sons to glory cannot fail for it has already been done. The means by which God the Father brought many sons to glory is the suffering of death by His Son, the man Christ Jesus, and in as much as the suffering and death of Christ was a singular, point-in-time event, so was the “bringing of many sons to glory.” It is not as though the suffering of Christ will succeed; it already has! There is no suggestion that the “many sons” will not be brought to glory, or that there is even any possibility of such a thing. The means by which God brought many sons to glory is the suffering of death by His Son, the man Christ Jesus.

The last phrase is not a description of Christ's personal perfection as a human being, but rather is a declaration of the fact that a perfect salvation requires a flawless and complete suffering. Christ could not be a savior without suffering. More than personal perfection was required. A perfect person suffering perfectly makes a perfect savior.

Christ being referred to as the Captain of the salvation of the “many sons” alludes again to a finished work, a complete and successful work. Paul uses a military theme here and the picture he is drawing is that of a champion of the people returning from the battle bruised yet leading all His troops home in absolute glory and victory. The possibility of one of the God’s sons not being brought to glory is nil for the work of their captain was so

¹ **Heb. 1:3b**; when he had by himself purged our sins.

great and perfect that all His brethren, God's sons, have been brought to glory. Their champion, their captain, suffered perfectly for them, took every arrow of the enemy for them and came home from the fray with honors, having lost none of the sons.

The word sanctified in verse 11 must be understood in its context. Though the believer is sanctified (made holy) in Christ and regarded as holy in Christ, the primary meaning of this word is to be set apart for the purpose of God. The matter of the believer being made holy is set forth in chapter 10. It is important to note that in both cases, here (separation) and in chapter 10 (making holy), sanctification is accomplished by the suffering of death by Christ. What this verse is teaching is that the death of Christ (the suffering by which He was "made perfect") and those for whom He suffered death are both of God and both are separated for the purpose of God in salvation. The person and work of Christ are inseparable. So vital and real is this fact that Christ is not embarrassed to call them His brothers. Salvation is of the Lord. This salvation was never in the hands of men. It was never in the hands of the many sons. Their perfect Savior and their being the designated recipients of the salvation wrought are of God, for whom are all things and by whom are all things.

These sanctified ones are in union with Christ. The language of verses 12-13 declares this to be so. Paul quotes from Psalm 22, which is that great Psalm of the cross. By this, he brings together again the theme of Christ and His work. The unity of the brethren with Christ is that unity born of the substitutionary work of Christ. This also intimates a truth later presented in verse 14, namely, that Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, that is, in the likeness of those who were already His brethren. His death did not make them His brethren. They did not become brethren because He died for them; He died for

them because they were His brethren.

This familial relationship with the Father and their elder Brother is an eternal relationship. He came and suffered for His family. This is further iterated by the quote from Isaiah 8:17-18¹ declaring that Christ, as a man, joined Himself to all who believe by declaring that He trusted the Father from the womb as would all those whom God had given to Him before time began (John 10:29; 17:2; Eph. 1:4-5²).

Verses 14-15 declare the success of the deliverance of these brethren. Christ's suffering was toward God, by God, and for God, and the beneficiaries of it are clearly named. He became a man because His brethren, His children, were men. They did not become His children because He became a man. They were men, so for Him to be the perfect suffering champion and captain of their salvation, He must also partake of the same nature as them. He became a man so He could die. By that death he destroyed the works of the devil (1 John 3:8³).

When this speaks of the Devil as having “power of death” it does not speak in the sense that he has usurped the power from God (Ps. 90:3; Job 2:6; 12:10⁴). Rather, it refers to the realm in

¹ **Isaiah 8:17-18**; And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

² **John 10:29**; My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. **17:2**; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. **Eph. 1:4-5**; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

³ **1 John 3:8**; He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

⁴ **Ps. 90:3**; Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. **Job 2:6**; And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. **Job 12:10**; In whose hand is the soul of every

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which he has power to operate—the realm of darkness and death. This power is not his own nor did he take it from God. Rather, God gave him limited and controlled power in this realm, and, for a time, he exercises this power over the elect, the children, the brethren of Christ. But Christ's death put an end to that and removed from the Devil the right to rule, thus effectively destroying him. The word translated “destroy” means to render inoperative or to make of no effect. Satan’s person was not destroyed, but his power over God’s people was destroyed. The devil and his “power of death” were destroyed, that is, made powerless by the removal of the fear of death. The fear of death was removed by the substitutionary death of Christ. Those who died in Christ have neither cause nor warrant to fear what they have already vicariously experienced in Christ. If I have died and have lived to tell about it, then the fear of death has no power over me.

Again, in verse 16, the particular nature of His death is declared. The literal reading of this is “He did not take hold of angels in substitution, but rather He took hold of the seed of Abraham” (Is. 49:16; John 10:28). The security of the sons, the brethren, the children, the church has always been absolute. Our Lord came into this world having taken hold of the seed of Abraham, to suffer and die for them (Gal. 3:29; 4:28).

Verse 16 is the introduction of another aspect of Christ as the representative Man. It belongs with verses 17 and 18 and in the next lesson we will look at Christ the High Priest and see another for the Jewish believer to esteem Christ, a reason for esteem realized only in Him who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.

living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

OUR HIGH PRIEST

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.

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

Hebrews 2:16-18

This final portion of chapter 2 sets forth the Lord as the faithful High Priest. Verse 16 sets up what follows and continues in chapter 3 with a contrast between Moses and Christ. Three things found in verse 16 are important to note as we consider our Lord in His capacity as our High Priest.

First, our Lord is considered in the state of His representative humanity. This is vitally connected to His substitutionary work. Secondly, the High Priest represents His people in a covenant relationship. This is what it means when it declares that Christ took hold of the seed of Abraham. Thirdly, this fact designates that the covenant in which He represents His people is the covenant of grace pictured by the covenant that the Lord made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3¹). To the Hebrews, this was a new thing, and it is described as such in this book. It is, however, the eternal covenant, and just as the covenant with Abraham preceded the covenant of Sinai, so the covenant of

¹ **Gen. 12:1-3**; Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

grace preceded the covenant of works. So, Christ, our High Priest, our covenant head, and our representative, operates in the spiritual realm, the realm of the covenant of grace.

What follows is the revelation of a fact that that has already been established but is now cast in a different light. It has been established that our Lord took on the form of humanity to suffer and die for His brethren, the many sons that God has brought to glory. The work he performed for us, the payment of the price of redemption, was between Him and God the Father. Having accomplished that work, and thus, destroying the Devil and freeing us from the power and bondage of death, His representation now takes the capacity of personal intercessor and mediator. As He died for us, He lives to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2¹). He is a representative High Priest.

Verse 17 declares that it was necessary for Him to become our High Priest in all things that pertain to godliness and life. If we were to be saved, it was necessary for Him to become like us—to lay hold of the seed of Abraham. He represents us as our High Priest. Two of His attributes are said to be specifically employed in this Priesthood.

First, He is faithful. This is the assurance that all that He has undertaken to do, He will do. This effectually removes from our hands anything pertaining to our reconciliation to God. It is not now nor has it ever been that our reconciliation to God was accomplished by our faithfulness. Christ alone effectually and

¹ **Heb. 7:25**; 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. **Rom. 8:34**; Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. **1 John 2:1-2**; My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

eternally accomplished that matter (Col. 1:19-20¹). Our reconciliation is sure because He is faithful (Mal. 3:6; Ps. 89:28-34; 2 Tim. 2:13²).

Secondly, He is merciful. He is a merciful High Priest. This is not only a revelation of His glory; it is also a declaration of the condition of those for whom He intercedes. Only sinners need mercy. To those who felt that they were not sinners, our Lord said, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (1 Tim. 1:15³). In bringing many sons to glory, He came, took hold of the seed of Abraham, and was made perfect through suffering in order to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Isa. 53:8; Matt. 1:21⁴). He was made lower than the angels for a little while to suffer death. As High Priest, He was offering, offerer, and the offended. Every son, every brother, every child was and is a sinner. Our merciful and faithful High Priest fully met our sinfulness head on and made reconciliation.

That being the case, the Lord, having suffered as a human

¹ **Col. 1:19-20**; For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

² **Mal. 3:6**; For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. **Ps. 89:28-34**; My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. **2 Tim. 2:13**; If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

³ **1 Tim. 1:15**; This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

⁴ **Isa. 53:8**; He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. **Matt. 1:21**; And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

being, is able to deal with us, help us, and aid us as we suffer temptations in this life. The word “tempted” is better rendered “tested” in the sense of trials. Temptations are twofold in the word of God. When they are designed to bring one up, to educate and help they are called testings or trials. When they are designed to bring one down, they are called temptations. Our Lord did not suffer temptations. The nature of a temptation, in order for it to be a temptation, must find purchase in the one being tempted. For a thing to tempt me, there must be something in me or about me to respond to the temptation. That thing is sin. Our Lord was without sin, so when temptations are applied to Him, it means testing or trial. Satan is said to have tempted the Lord, but our Lord said, “he found nothing in me” (John 14:30). Satan tried to tempt but found nothing in Christ that would respond, so his “temptation” was only a trial or testing. When Christ is said to have “been tempted in all points like as we” it means that there is not a trial or test that we face that He has not suffered. The things that we are tempted with cannot be applied to Christ. He knew no sin. Temptation has to do with response to sinful desire (James 1:13- 15¹).

Because our Lord, as a human being, suffered every possible test that humanity might endure, He is able to comfort (succor) us when we are tested. This is good news for poor sinners who cannot seem to do anything but wilt under trials. We are tested and tried in order to bring us up (1 Pet. 1:5-7²).

¹ **James 1:13- 15**; Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

² **1 Pet. 1:5-7**; Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

There is no avoiding or escaping trials until they have done what they were designed to do (James 1:2-5¹).

The believer knows that no matter how painful the trial, God has made a way of escape. This escape is not an escape from the trial, itself, but knowing that here is an escape, the believer is given the means by which he is enabled to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13²). What is that way of escape that enables us to bear up under the trial? It is Christ, the Way (Heb. 12:1-2; 2:18³). Our text, in no way, suggests a freedom from trials or that they will not run their appointed course. Rather, our Lord comforts us as we suffer and is able to do so because He has already been through the same thing (2 Cor. 1:3-5⁴). He not only suffered death for us, He suffered life for us and is, even now, touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high

¹ **James 1:2-5**; My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

² **1 Cor. 10:13**; There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

³ **Heb. 12:1-2**; Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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. **Heb. 2:18**; For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

⁴ **2 Cor. 1:3-5**; Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

CONSIDER

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.

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.

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.

Hebrews 3:1-6

We believers, who have this book in its entirety, are graced to see the glory of Christ on every page of it. He is declared for who He is and His work is explained and proclaimed throughout this book. Such was not the case to those to whom this epistle was written. Paul's task was to take the things that had been everything to the Jew and show them to be merely pictures and types whose substance was found and met only in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen thus far that this is a book of comparison and contrast as Paul takes the old and holds it up to the light of the new. In this chapter he takes the singular character of one of the great heroes of the Hebrews and contrasts him with the Son of God.

He is still speaking in terms of the humanity of Christ, having declared His deity and showed that this Man was

superior to all the things held dear to the Jew. He once again draws attention to Christ in His assumption of two powerful and important human offices: Apostle and High Priest. Paul returns to the theme of Christ's faithfulness in the office of High Priest (2:17). In order to contrast the Old and the New, Paul distinguishes between the difference of being a member of a house and being the builder of the house, the latter far exceeding the former in glory.

As Apostle, our Lord has already been distinguished as both a superior message and messenger compared to the law and the prophets. As High Priest, He laid hold of the seed of Abraham and, rather than atoning for sin once a year, He put away the sins of His people with a single, atoning sacrifice and, thus, brought all His sons to glory. By His substitution—His death—He put an end to death, destroyed the devil, and delivered His people from the bondage of the fear of death (2:14-16).

Notice how the people who are beneficiaries of the death Christ suffered are identified. This description of them is a clear declaration of the intent, design, purpose, and success of that glorious vicarious death. With this complete revelation, we need never wonder about the purpose of anything. Knowing that God has done what He pleased and that what He does lasts forever, the purpose of anything can be defined by its end result. Believers are described as holy. They are not personally holy but are holy by association with Christ (1 Cor. 6:11¹). They are set apart for the use and glory of God and made holy by the death-suffering of Christ. Christ is, in fact, their holiness (1 Cor. 1:30²). They are without sin before the thrice-holy God for Christ is their all in things pertaining to God. They are called

¹ **1 Cor. 6:11**; And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

² **1 Cor. 1:30**; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

brethren. This immediately designates them as the very ones for whom Christ suffered death (2:11-14). They are also described as “partakers of the holy calling.” This is another way of saying that they are the objects of the grace of God, the trophies of the work of Christ. They are called saints. Christ is the Apostle and High priest of their confession (the Gospel they embrace) or their profession (the confidence and assurance of who they believe).

In this passage, the faithfulness this blessed One, our High Priest, is considered. Paul picks up this contrast between Moses and Christ (vv. 2-4). Both were faithful to Him who appointed them to their particular tasks and offices. The distinction being made is that of glory. Moses was faithful in all his house or in the household in which he operated. Moses is not diminished in any degree by this comparison. It is simply that Christ's faithfulness is worthy of greater glory than that of Moses. The same kind of language is employed in contrast of the Law and the Gospel (2 Cor. 3:6-13¹). The distinction is that the glory due Moses was that of a member of the household, whereas the glory due Christ is that of the head of the household. The one functioned within the house that the other built. What is being declared is that the Old Covenant served the New Covenant. All of the Old Testament was the New Testament shrouded in

¹ **2 Cor. 3:6-13**; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.

mystery—in type, picture and shadow. The Eternal Covenant is the House of Christ and Moses was a servant in that house. Moses was a faithful servant in Christ's house and is given the glory a faithful servant deserves. But he who builds the house deserves greater glory than he who serves in the house. There is no small allusion to the fact that Christ is both a human being and is also God (v. 4). Moses was a servant of God and the God he served was the God-man, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and the builder, Maker, and Creator of all things. Verse 5 clearly states that Moses served Christ's house and the service that he rendered was for a “testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.” The Old Covenant served in the house of the New. The Old Testament served in the house of the New. This states in no uncertain terms that the New Covenant was, in reality, the First Covenant, because Moses could not serve in a house that was not already built. Moses' servitude was to the Gospel, later to be revealed in the person and work of the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. This also directs our consideration, not away from Moses, but to the direction of Moses, himself, for obviously he considered the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, in verse six, another subtle distinction is made. After the declaration that the house in which Moses served is the House of the Son of God, Paul's says that we are members of the Son's house. We are not members of Moses' house; we are members with him in the house that Christ built and over which He is head. We do not apply to the Law for righteousness or any aspect of life. We consider Christ. The disclaimer attached to the end of verse 6, the “if” that is inserted does not speak of losing the salvation that a person had nothing to do with gaining. It addresses the central theme of this book, that Christ is superior to the things of the Old Covenant. Remember that Paul is writing to Hebrew professors and is warning that

they are not to return to the beggarly elements of the world, or to seek to incorporate the Old Covenant practices with the faith of the Gospel. To return to the Old Covenant, in any form, is to prove that you are not a member in the house that Christ built. Consider Christ and you will live in the right house.

UNBELIEF

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.

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.

Hebrews 3:7-19

The remainder of this chapter deals with the warning that is declared in verse 6. The issue that Paul is addressing is apostasy. The danger that these Hebrews faced was the result of

unbelief, namely, professing to believe God but refusing to obey Him. Christ as the Son of God and faithful builder of His own house demands and deserves obedience to the Gospel. That blessed Gospel renounces anything other than Christ for the salvation of the soul. There can be no mixture of the Old and New Covenants. True believers live and die in faith. They continue in faith. They overcome the world by faith. Those who do not continue to trust Christ alone but rather return to the beggarly elements of the world—the practices of the Old Covenant—are not true believers. Believing the Gospel is the command of God. Unbelief is disobedience.

To illuminate this fact, Paul takes the Hebrew professors who are standing on the brink, as it were, of leaving the Gospel to territory that is familiar to them. He takes them to the history of their own nation, relating that particular time in the wilderness when the children of Israel became the example of unbelief (1 Cor. 10:6, 11¹). To further attest to the nature of unbelief, he introduces the inspiration of all Scripture. He begins the explanation of verse 6 by declaring that what he is about to say is the word of God (v. 7). After the word “wherefore,” Paul begins a parenthetical phrase designed to tell one specific truth. That truth is found in verse 12. Ignoring the parenthetical phrase for now, the warning runs thus: “Wherefore, Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

¹ **1 Cor. 10:6, 11**; Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Paul words are a quote from Psalm 95. The psalmist's warning is for the professing child of God to not harden his heart against the Gospel. The example he gives of a hardened heart is Israel's refusal to enter the Promised Land. God had destroyed Egypt and delivered His people only to have them refuse His kindness in the land of Promise. They did not believe the true report given by Joshua and Caleb but rather chose the words of the false reports and refused to enter because they feared the giants of the land. But no matter the excuse they gave, it always came down to the same thing. They did not believe God.

In a true sense, those to whom Paul wrote had heard the voice of God. They had been privileged to hear the Gospel preached by a man whom God had sent. They had not heard it spiritually, but they had heard it preached and had claimed to embrace it. They had been privileged to receive the general call of the Gospel and had, in some way, responded, to it. They perhaps agreed with the doctrine and admired the logic but they had never closed with Christ. They were responding to the Gospel in the same manner as those who refused to enter the Promised Land. They responded to what they heard with unbelief. It is not that they believed nothing. They believed in the existence of God. They had no doubt that He was powerful and sovereign even over the great army of Egypt. They knew of deliverance by blood. They experienced a personal view of His power over the elements of the world. Yet when they were brought to the edge of the Promised Land, they refused to enter in. They erred in their heart; they had not known the ways of God (v. 10). These Hebrews who are the target of this epistle are doing likewise, and the result of their unbelief will be the same. They have heard of the Savior and His great work of salvation, yet they remain in unbelief. They need not expect any other action from God than the Israelites received (Jude 5).

The word “Today” gives Paul's words a true urgency and places the necessity of the hearers to come to a verdict about their souls. In effect, they are in immediate danger of gaining the world and losing their souls. It is evident by the words employed that hearing the gospel is not to be trifled with. The command of God is to be immediately obeyed. To not trust Christ is to incur the wrath and displeasure of God (vv. 10-11; John 3:36¹). The analogy is this: If you do not trust Christ, God will not allow you to trust Him. There is a general religious consensus that God is just waiting for someone to believe. But this passage makes it clear that hearing the gospel is not a right but a privilege and a privilege that is not to be toyed with. Now is the day of salvation. “Wherefore, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

Verse 13 makes it clear that the only hope for those who have not believed is a constant rehearsal and a continuous exhortation to believe on Christ. No other remedy is given because no other remedy exists. The only way to keep the heart from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin is an urgent (“while it is called today”) exhortation to look at nothing and no one but Christ. Believers know this and they live to hear the Gospel alone. Verse 14 does not declare a condition that must be met in order to obtain salvation. It is the same kind of distinctive phrase as that of verse 6. This verse does not say that we become partakers of Christ because we remain steadfast. Rather, it says that we remain steadfast because we *are* partakers of Christ. So, steadfastness is not the cause of union with Christ; it is the proof of it. Verses 15-18 are a description of the results of the deceitfulness of sin: It provokes God. It

¹ **John 3:36**; He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

grieves Him and ends in death. It guarantees that one will not enter into the rest of Christ's accomplished peace.

Finally, the deceitfulness of sin is summed up in the same way that all sin is: Men cannot enter in because of the mother of all sin—unbelief. Unbelief hardens the heart and the results are the same today as in the day of provocation. In the face of such a glorious representation of Christ and His work, unbelief becomes the eternal demise of the one whose faith exists in word only.

A REST

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.

Hebrews 4:1-10

Having introduced the fact that unbelief prevented the people of Israel from entering the Promised Land (the rest) and equating that to the danger that unbelief presented to those who heard the Gospel yet hardened their hearts, Paul now picks up the theme of “rest” and sets it forth as the blessing that

unbelief misses. The rest that is addressed in this passage is not the eternal rest of all the saints in glory but rather the present rest of the saints—a rest born of faith in the finished work of Christ. This is not to say that the eternal rest of the saints is not the same as the present rest of the saints: it is. But Paul is addressing the current issue of the danger of hearing the Gospel and returning to the Old Covenant. The eternal rest of the saints cannot be experienced in unbelief. Only believers enter into that rest.

It is important to remember that the concept of rest is not embraced and is not understood by the religion of works. For the Hebrew believer of that day, as well as the believer who has been rescued from free-willism (works religion as expressed in this day), the bent of the flesh is still to labor and work for righteousness. The notion that a believer ceases from his works and rests in the finished work of Christ simply does not compute to multi-tasking, labor-intensive religion. Part of the issue addressed here is that Paul's readers stood in danger of entering system of works and labor for their bread rather than resting and having their needs supplied by God (Phil. 4:19¹).

Paul uses two examples of rest in the Old Testament Scriptures to teach the believer about resting (believing) in Christ. The rest that God entered when He had finished the work of creation is declared to be a picture or an illustration of the rest the believer enters (v. 4). The rest of the Promised Land is the second illustration of the believer's rest for unbelievers were barred from entering the Promised Land. The fulfillment of those types is found in the rest that believers enjoy because they believe that Christ has accomplished or finished all the required work. (v. 10). In these verses, those Old Testament types are tied together with the "rest" found in belief. In this

¹ **Phil. 4:19**; But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

manner, Paul assures the reader that to return to Old Covenant practices after embracing the Gospel is to abandon substance for shadow. Of the three rests that are addressed (the seventh day, The Promised Land, and the rest of faith in Christ), only one remains (vv. 1, 9). The other two, though actual experiences and expressions of rest, have passed away and serve only to illustrate the rest that remains.

These examples are prefaced with the truth of the necessity of faith for entering God's rest (vv. 1-2). Unbelief will cause a person to come short of that blessed rest. The fact that Paul uses the word "Gospel" here is very important. He says that the Gospel was preached to them, to those who observed the Sabbath and those who were given the promise of Canaan. This is very specific. These elements of the Old Covenant were, in fact, the Gospel of Christ. So those who heard of these things and practiced them, yet remained in unbelief, were actually rejecting the Gospel of Christ. In stating it this way, Paul is saying that the Old Testament is a declaration of the Gospel, but it was the Gospel declared only in shadowy illustrations. This same Gospel was revealed fully and plainly only in the accomplished work of Christ. To leave Christ and return to the elements of the Old Covenant reveals unbelief and assures that the rest of God will not be enjoyed.

In verse 3-10 we are shown the meaning of these various rests and what it means to believe and, by faith, to enter the rest wrought by Christ. Reading verse 3 and 4 reveals that the rest that God entered upon the completion of creation was an illustration of the rest that Christ entered when He finished the work of redemption. The principle declared is that the rest is not because of fatigue but because of completion. The rest is entered because there was no work left to be done. For a believer to enter rest by faith is for him to cease from all his own labors because, due to Christ's work, there is nothing left

to do. To resort to a works approach for acceptance with God is to say that Christ did not finish the work.

The use of the six days of God's creative work followed by God's resting assures us that salvation is a work that is entirely accomplished by God. No man would be so boldly audacious as to claim that he had a part in the original creation. To say that one has part in the new creation is equally arrogant. Here we see the wisdom of the Spirit in inspiring Paul use God's work of creation to illustrate the rest entered by faith. One needs faith to embrace both: the truth of God's creation of the universe and the truth of His work of new creation in Christ (Heb. 11:3¹). The new creation is the work of God in Christ. That Christ is Creator has already been established in the first chapter of this epistle (1:3) and is declared throughout the word of God (Isa. 42:5-7; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-18²). The natural creation pictures the spiritual, eternal creation of the body of Christ—believers who have entered God's rest. The message of the first creation was the message of the eternal redemption of the elect. The work “finished from the foundation of the world” is the

¹ **Heb. 11:3**; 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.

² **Isa. 42:5-7**; Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. **John 1:1-3**; In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2, The same was in the beginning with God. 3, All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. **Col. 1:16-18**; For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

language employed to declare the work of Christ (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9¹). Verse 6 also makes it clear that those who observed the Sabbath of old and those who, through unbelief, did not enter the Promised Land make it necessary that there be another group who would enter into another rest. Another rest remained to be entered by faith and some “must” enter.

In vv. 7-8 Paul asserts that the rest that David referred to in Ps. 95 was not the rest of the Promised Land because he spoke of a rest that was not given by Joshua (v. 8 ...margin Joshua and Jesus are the same name.). The person who enters the rest that remains for the people of God enters it for the same reason that God entered rest and in the same manner. The believer—he who enters this rest—ceases from his own labor as God did from His, and he does so because the work is accomplished from the foundation of the world. The only way, then, for a person to enter this rest is by faith, that is, by resting in the completely finished work of Christ (Romans 4:5; Is. 32:17). So, the people of God—those to whom God mixed faith with what they heard—are described as those who believe, cease from their works, and, by faith, enter the rest that Christ accomplished. Because of unbelief, many come short of that rest, but God's people “must” enter in.

¹ **Eph. 1:4**; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. **2 Tim. 1:9**; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

REST DISCLOSED

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.

Hebrews 4:11-13

Paul has established that the “rest” that remains for the people of God is a rest based upon the finished work of Christ, the rest that declares that there is nothing more to be done because there is nothing left to do. He further has established that this rest is entered by belief and entrance is prevented by unbelief. Though many seek to add activities and regulations and restrictions to the matter of faith, the truth is that the only thing that distinguishes one man from another is belief in Christ and that by the grace of God. The amazing aspect of this is that the distinguishing factor is of God alone and is truly known to God and the one to whom he has granted faith. There is no way to positively identify faith. It operates in the spiritual realm and is, in the end, a thing of the heart, the inward man. Granted, faith works by love and faith without works is dead. However, neither love nor works necessarily prove the existence of faith. Faith or belief is the realized entrance into the rest of the people of God.

Verse 11 admonishes the believer to labor (strive, attend with diligence) to enter that rest. This seems an interesting

concept when the rest that remains for the people of God has nothing to do with works. In fact, it is by ceasing from works that we enter this rest, and we enter it for the same reason that God rested from creation—the work is done. What does this word labor imply? It does not have to do with labor in the sense of activity but rather in the sense of attention. It means to attend to this and nothing else. It means to diligently seek, to mind this and nothing else. This labor is a diligent fixation—a single-mindedness. It is called labor because, apart from grace, it is an impossible thing. It is called labor because we are so prone to set our mind on things other than Christ. It is called labor because it is the internal struggle of the believer to rest wholly in the obedience of Christ for all things pertaining to salvation. According to the last part of verse 11, this rest cannot be entered in unbelief. Unbelief is not lack of belief; it is lack of belief in Christ. Unbelief is labor-intensive belief in one's own merits and is manifested by an inability to rest. The example of unbelief is the people of Israel who perished in the wilderness because they would not enter into the land that God had prepared for them. It was only when they were told that they could not enter because of unbelief that they became invigorated to enter in by their own power (Num. 14:39-40¹). They sought to enter in the power of the flesh and by the works of their hands and their carcasses rotted in the wilderness.

Though the words of verse 12 stand as a wonderful declaration of the power of the word of God in general application, they come here as a warning concerning unbelief and are at the same time an admonition to enter into rest. We see this with the first word of verse 12. The word “For”

¹ **Num. 14:39-40**; And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel:and the people mourned greatly. And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

suggests that the word of God is the singular thing upon which both faith and unbelief is judged. If we labor to enter rest, the word of God discerns faith in us, and the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children. The word of God searches our hearts and discloses that we are looking to Christ. The word of God also discerns unbelief and discloses that we have not entered that rest. The language here employed removes the matter of judgment from the hands of men. This discernment takes place in the inward man and is accomplished by the word of God. Soul and spirit, joints and marrow, thoughts and intents are metaphorical tools of language that teach us that this discernment goes on beyond a human being's ability to see. Whether a person has entered this rest or has not entered because of unbelief cannot be discerned. This language effectively removes any measure that man may invent that makes him think he can perceive whether a person is saved or lost. The fact is that, at any given time, a saint may appear to be the worst kind of sinner. David was guilty of adultery, murder, conspiracy and worse, but he was a man after God's own heart. Had we seen him as he lay in the arms of Uriah's wife and judged him by religious standards of faith, we would have made him to be a profligate. We have recorded for us the fact that the word of God discerned that he was a believer.

Verse 13 takes us even further into this glorious truth. Here we see the true nature of this word. Remember that in the first chapter of this epistle, our Lord is said to be the message as well as the messenger. Here again we see the same principle established. The word of verse 12 is personified to become the Word in verse 13 (John 1:1-2, 14¹). Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks on the heart. This wondrous concept

¹ **John 1:1-2, 14;** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God—And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

cannot be explained. The word discerns because nothing is hidden from God. The word discerns because God sees. His word discloses faith or the absence of faith because He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Can there be any greater warrant to faithfully preach the Gospel and to trust the message of it? It removes from us any responsibility for the result such preaching produces. It removes from us our innate bent to judging people by our own ideas of what a Christian might be. It effectively sets our course on a singular path properly equipped with the power of God unto salvation. When the word is preached it does what we cannot do. It enters to the place that is outside our capability to see or affect. It goes where no man has gone before and does what no man can do. It is “quick”, that is, living, active, and vital. It never fails to accomplish its intended purpose. The command is to go in all the world and preach the Gospel because the authority behind it is Christ Himself. The seed of it is Christ Himself (1 Peter 1:23-25¹).

There is great comfort for the believer in this passage of Hebrews. When he hears the word of God, it discerns that he has entered into the rest that remains for the people of God. When the unbeliever hears the word of God it discerns that he has not entered into that rest (2 Cor. 2:14-17²).

¹ **1 Peter 1:23-25**; Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

² **2 Cor. 2:14-17**; Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

REST'S PRIVILEGE

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.

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.

Hebrews 4:14-16

In these verses, Paul is not addressing those who he was particularly addressing in the previous part of this chapter. There he set forth both warning and admonitions concerning those who may profess Christ yet might not have entered rest because of unbelief. The general theme of the entire epistle is to declare the preeminence and singularity of Christ in the matter of salvation. Inspired by the Spirit, Paul achieves this by showing Christ's superiority to all aspects of the Old Covenant and leaving those who would return to the beggarly elements of law and ceremony in a state of guilt.

In this passage he speaks to those who have entered the rest that remains for the people of God. He begins in verse 14 with the words "Seeing then that we have..." This declares that they, as well as he, himself, have (possess) a great high priest. There is no suggestion of the possibility of returning to the old ways, for they have Christ, the great high priest.

There is a two-fold application for revisiting the subject of the high priesthood of Christ. In 2:17¹, Christ was introduced as

¹ 2:17; 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 high priest that made reconciliation for the sins of His people. In 3:1¹, He is the high priest of our confession. Here, He is the high priest that belongs to the believer and is the mediator who has, by his death, saved us and reconciled us to God. This is seen in the words “that is passed into the heavens” (1:3; 8:1; 10:12). Christ is also presented in His humanity (Jesus) as well as his deity (declared to be the Son of God). More than that, as Son of God, He is king (1:8). That thing that was unlawful and impossible under the Old Covenant is proclaimed in this glorious person. Here we have a High Priest who is our King. This is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise intimated in Exodus 28:36; 29:6 and overtly prophesied in Zechariah 6:12-13. We have a great high priest who is our King and our Lord and, in his humanity, is near to us in our trials and tribulations. This, indeed, is a great privilege for those who have entered the sweet rest of His finished work. Seeing that this is our happy and secure estate, we are admonished to hold fast to our profession. This, certainly, is an allusion to those who have, at least, toyed with the idea of returning to the former covenant for acceptance before God. Gladly, returning to the former covenant is not the estate of the believer, seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into heaven, Jesus the Son of God.

Verse 15 is one of those passages of which the very recollection stirs and warms the heart of every believer. There is a demonstrated security in the words employed here. Paul uses a double negation (not, cannot) to set forth a positive absolute. Our high priest not only can be touched but, according to what follows, already has been touched by every trial and test that His elect could possibly suffer. As our representative human being, our dear Lord was tested by Satan, tried by the courts of

¹ 3:1; Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

society, government, and religion, yet without sin. He bore our sorrows and was acquainted with our grief (Is. 63:9). The consideration of being made sin for us made Him sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. There is no measure of the cost of the persecution of His person for He voluntarily became our representative. It is useless to try to plumb the depths of His suffering for us, even to the cruelty of man's hatred exhibited on the cross and finally the humiliation of being made sin for us and undergoing the very wrath of God. Of persecution and humiliation, we will most surely partake, but we will never know anything of the wrath of God. By His death, our high priest forever satisfied God's law and justice, and all that is left for us is mercy and grace. Since this is our happy estate—to have such a one as our mediator and high priest, to know that no trial or test shall come our way that He has not experienced, tasted, and conquered—a magnificent privilege is ours to utilize freely.

Verse 16 is the glorious declaration of the privilege. “Let us therefore” assures us that what has been just been declared is the foundation upon which this privilege is built. This privilege is free access into the grace wherein we stand—free access into the Holy of Holies. We are granted free audience with the King, the Son of God, and our great, compassionate high priest who is enthroned in glory. We are told to come boldly, that is, with boldness and assurance. What is the cause of such boldness? The One who has our interest at heart is the same who finished the work of our salvation, so that, having left nothing undone, and having entered into His rest, we find Him enthroned in sovereign majesty, living to intercede on our behalf. What reason might we give for not attending to this great fountain of mercy and grace?

It is a throne to which we approach, and it must be accorded proper reverence. But I do not see the throne in any restrictive

sense. Rather this seems to be a gathering of the royal court. Only such might be so freely welcome to an audience with the king. These who are bid must have been made suitable to be there (Col. 1:12¹). They must be of royal lineage themselves, born and adopted to it (1 Samuel 2:8; 1 Peter 2:9²). Better yet, these must be members of the royal family, crowned with life and righteousness (Heb. 2:11³). The sense is that these who are bid to come are welcome as a Father welcomes his children when they have need of Him. When they find that their predicament is seemingly more than they are able to bear, they come, as it were, to the One who will never turn them away. For every trial and for every test there is sufficient, even abundant mercy and grace. Notice it does not say that we come to seek mercy and grace but that when we come, we find it. This is the inheritance of the saints in light (Eph. 3:20⁴).

In your greatest trial, at the lowest point of your testing, come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Come when you need it and you will find it.

¹ **Col. 1:12**; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

² **1 Sam. 2:8**; He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. **1 Peter 2:9**; But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

³ **Heb. 2:11**; For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

⁴ **Eph. 3:20**; Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

A QUALIFIED PRIEST

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.

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.

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.

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

Hebrews 5:1-11

Having introduced the subject of the high priesthood of Christ in chapters 2, 3 and 4, Paul now begins to more fully establish the glory of that office by showing that Christ was qualified, suitable, and perfect for that office. In a meticulous opening up of various layers over the next six

chapters, he will unfold the glory of the person who occupies this office. In doing so, he will show the distinction between the Old and New Covenants and, with the illumination of Christ as high priest, will slowly and surely reveal the setting aside of the Old Covenant and the establishing of the New Covenant. In these first 11 verses, Paul introduces several things that he will explain in future chapters. Verse 11 makes it clear that he will open up these things pertaining to this office of our Lord as it relates particularly to our salvation (vv. 11, 9). By this precise and detailed approach, he will cover the subject in such a way as to set forth Christ as our singular and only salvation.

In verses 1-3, Paul presents Christ as a qualified high priest by presenting the role of the high priest. He compares and contrasts Christ to the priesthood of natural men. By comparison, Christ fulfills the role of high priest because he offers gifts and sacrifices to God and has compassion because he has experienced human frailty. We know that Christ offered Himself, therefore, His sacrifice to God far exceeds those sacrifices that issued from the Old Covenant (Heb. 4:16¹). He was without sin. Yet in the offering of a sacrifice, He operated as High Priest just as those of the Old Covenant. Being a man, He was able to sympathize with every trouble that faces His frail, ignorant, and straying children (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15²). In this capacity He is an eminently qualified high priest. But He differs from the high priest of old in that He was perfect humanity. The priests of old had to offer sacrifices for their own

¹ **Heb. 4:16**; Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

² **Heb. 2:17-18**; 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. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. **Heb. 4:15**; 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.

sin before they could offer sacrifices for others, but this was not so in His case (v. 3; Heb. 7:26-27¹).

His second qualification is seen in verses 4-6. Here, He is declared to be the high priest by appointment. Paul is assuring the reader that this office is not attained by one's own choice (v. 4). Just as Aaron of old was appointed to this office, so was Christ. Our Lord did not glorify himself to take this office for Himself; He occupied this office by divine appointment. His priesthood is both legal (since it is appointed by God) and unique. Our Lord's priesthood is unlike the Levitical priesthood of Aaron's descendants, who were made priests by the law of Sinai, in that our Lord's priesthood far preceded the Law. First, He preceded it as eternity precedes time. He is the Son of God—God manifest in human flesh. By stating that Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, Paul puts the priesthood of Christ to be in the time of Abraham, centuries before Sinai (Gen. 14:18-19²). Here, Melchizedek is set forth as a king, (his name means king of righteousness and he was designated as king of Salem (peace), and also a priest. This combination of king and priest in one person is prohibited by the law of Sinai, yet it prophesied of Him who was to come. This prophecy is now fulfilled in Christ as our great high priest. It is particularly of this Melchizedek that Paul has “many things to say” (v. 11).

In verses 7-8 our Lord is shown to be qualified for the office of high priest because He was perfectly diligent in His intercessory work as such. This passage is one of the most

¹ **Heb. 7:26-27**; For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 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.

² **Gen. 14:18-19**; And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.

wondrous portrayals in all of Scripture concerning the humanity of Christ. This relates specifically to His qualification as diligent intercessor, but the words amaze us as they describe the human traits of His person. There can be no question as to His faithfulness and dedication to the office. Diligence was required of the priest, but we see many instances in the Old Testament where the characteristic of diligence could hardly be applied to the high priest. Christ fulfilled the requirement perfectly.

Verse 7 is an account of our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane. In that dark hour, as He faced the fact of being made sin and suffering the penalty that would attend that, He prayed, cried, and wept and made supplication to Him that was able to save Him from death. As a perfect human being, it was perfectly normal for Him to have a perfect aversion to sin and death. A key word here is "able." He knew that His Father had ability to deliver Him, being the sovereign ruler of all. He also knew that though the Father was able, He was not willing. Thus, in the garden, the "amen" of our Lord's prayer was "not my will but thine be done." This phrase does not teach that there was opposition to the will of the Father on the part of Christ. Rather, it shows us what a perfect human will is: a will that is totally submitted to the will of God. Thus, He was heard in that He feared (revered, loved, and worshipped) the God who had purposed from all eternity to save His elect by the substitutionary death of His Son. Thus, we can see that the heart of the prayer of our intercessory high priest was finally and ultimately the salvation of His people for which our high priest dutifully submitted to the will of God. This clarifies the words of verse 8. Though Christ was the Son of God and was ever obedient to His Father, he nevertheless, through suffering the testing of humanity learned (experienced) what it is to obey God as an intercessor, as a mediator, and as a representative of His very human elect. His prayer was answered. The elect were

saved.

Verse 9 is the final proof of our Lord's qualification. He is the perfect, complete high priest who obeyed perfectly and is the intercessor, the representative, and the author of eternal salvation for all who will obey Him through the Gospel. His high priestly prayer was his blood intercession for His people. Their salvation reveals His perfect qualification for the office.

Finally, the qualified Priest is more perfectly seen as we further examine this character named Melchizedek. There is much to be said about him that will make us grasp why God called Christ, His Son, “an high priest after the order of Melchisedek (v. 10). Of Christ in relation to Melchizedek, there are “many things to say” (v. 11).

GROWING UP

12, 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; 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.

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,

2, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Hebrews 5:12- 6:2

The words of this passage are of great importance to the understanding of the theme of this book. They deal with shadow and substance, with type and fulfillment. The Hebrews had heard and learned the gospel, but some appeared unable to let go of the practices of the Old Covenant. This does not mean that they were practicing them but that they were unable to finally rest in their true meaning and significance as fulfilled in the person and work of Christ. They were unable to fully accept that all that had been practiced through the history of the Jews had been set aside in Christ by the New Covenant. Upon bringing up Melchizedek, Paul sets about to fully illuminate the high priesthood of Christ and reveals that these Hebrews were not yet ready to receive it in all its glory because they had, as it were, stalled in the elementary teaching of the Old Testament

concerning Christ and were seemingly clinging to the shadow and not the substance. This is the meaning of his words in verse 11. The “hard things” (specifically the dissolution of elements of the Old Covenant) are things that had been taught them but things that they had not fully embraced, because they were dull of hearing. In effect, they had not grown up in Christ, they had remained stagnant. And that is dangerous error (2 Pet. 3:16-18¹).

The reason he gives as evidence of their dullness is found in verse 12. Having been under the Gospel for some time and having heard Paul bring all things to Christ and His obedience, they should be teaching the Old Testament with eyes centered on Christ. But instead of this, they, themselves, needed to be taught again concerning the first principles, or the true meaning, of the oracles (meaning of the Old Testament in reference to Christ) of God. Their dullness is manifested in the fact that they are stuck in a place where they cannot open their mouths and relate what they have learned. They, like the errant Galatians, are not building on the foundation of Christ but are seeking to keep some modicum of allegiance to the principles (elements) of the Old Covenant (Gal. 4:3, 9). Such are in danger of apostasy.

To show their stagnant and static condition, Paul employed some metaphorical and contrasting or distinguishing language. He used milk to indicate where they were and strong meat to indicate where they ought to have been. Concerning the gospel, they were like babies, having not been weaned from the breast. The breast from which they had not been weaned are the things

¹ **2 Pet. 3:16-18**; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

declared in chapter 6:1-2. They had yet to fully realize the rest given in the gospel and were yet seeking to be about the business of incorporating their works into the salvation wrought by Christ alone (Isaiah 28:9-13¹). The strong meat is the gospel, pictured by the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Covenant and fully realized in the gospel. The strong meat is the realization that the Old Covenant served only to reveal Christ, His work, and nothing else. For whatever reason, they held that the elements of the Old Covenant have some validity under the Gospel and should still be practiced.

Such thinking reveals a state of unskillfulness (v. 13). Their lack of skill is clearly defined. They are unskillful in the “word of righteousness.” This is a masterpiece of simplicity. Those who were in trouble were not of the opinion that they did not need righteousness. Their toying with the law revealed that they believed that righteousness was tied up with the law. They believed that they needed the law in order to be righteous. They were babes here. They did not see that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness (Phil. 3:9²). They did not embrace Christ as their righteousness—as the fulfillment of the righteousness of the law in them (Rom. 8:1-4³). The “word of righteousness” is

¹ **Isaiah 28:9-13**; Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

² **Phil. 3:9**; And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

³ **Rom. 8:1-4**; There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the

Christ as He is revealed in His Gospel. In reference to this they are babes in need of weaning when they ought to be teachers of this blessed truth. This strong meat belongs to the mature in Christ (v. 14). Notice the clarity of Paul's argument. First, he points out the problem of not making use of what they had heard. This relates to being stuck and stalemated in the mind. They had not fully left the Old Covenant; therefore, their minds were tied up in things that had served their purpose and now only served to take their eyes off the prize. Notice also that Paul does not mince words. He sets these two things in opposition to one another. This is no small matter. The difference is the distinction between good and evil.

Chapter 6 begins with the word “therefore,” which suggests that Paul is about to, not only identify the problem specifically, but also to address the remedy. The problem was the Jews considering a return to some Old Covenant practices, attempting to incorporate them into New Covenant worship. The remedy was to leave certain things behind and move on to maturity (perfection), and, furthermore, to refuse to return to the practices of the former, immature state.

The things listed in verses 1-2 are often considered to be the foundational tenets of the Christian faith. Yet, the context reveals that, whatever these things are, they were to be left behind. We can be certain Paul would never exhort people to leave behind any of the tenets of the Christian faith, so, “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” as Paul is using the phrase, must refer to something other than the foundational tenets of the Christian faith.

Furthermore, the idea of leaving these principles does not carry with it the idea that they have no importance or purpose

flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

but rather, that they have served their purpose in practice, having been fulfilled. Therefore, since Paul would never advocate leaving behind any tenet of the Christian faith, and since the things to be left behind have already served their purpose, having been fulfilled, it is safe to conclude the “the principles” Paul refers to are matters pertaining to Old Covenant teaching and practice.

So then, “the principles,” are not the New Testament teachings that go by the same names as the specific items Paul lists. Rather, “the principles” refers to what the Hebrews were doing with regard to some Old Covenant practices. Paul told them they were not to lay again the foundation. The foundation Paul referred to was what these principles or elements taught about Christ. Once the substance of these Old Covenant principles was manifest, the practice of them became evil.

Let us note the individual items Paul lists:

Repentance: This refers to Old Testament-style repentance—stopping evil behavior and turning back to the law.

Faith: This is Old Covenant faith which was toward God but was not toward Him as He is revealed in Christ (John 14:1¹).

Baptisms: This did not refer to the New Covenant method of confessing of Christ, but to the numerous washings of the Old Covenant which were fulfilled by Christ in sanctifying Himself for the work of salvation (Heb. 9:10²).

Laying on of hands refers to the High Priest of old symbolically transferring the sins of the people to the sacrifice. This, having been fulfilled by Christ when he made His soul and offering for the sin of the elect, is no longer to be practiced. These things were not to be revisited.

¹ **John 14:1;** Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

² **Heb. 9:10;** Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Resurrection and eternal judgment were tenets of the faith revealed in the Old Testament but only with partial light. The full or mature understanding of them is found only in Christ (John 11:25; Acts 17:31³).

None of these practices were innately evil, but they became evil when they were observed as supplements to the Gospel. As such they were elemental aspects or principles that hindered believers from trusting Christ alone and kept them babes rather than allowing them to mature into grownups.

³ **John 11:25**; Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. **Acts 17:31**; Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW

3, And this will we do, if God permit.

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.

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

Hebrews 6:3-9

This passage of Scripture is fodder for every form of religion that desires to deny the effectual work of Christ in the salvation of the elect. Those who believe that they are responsible for their own salvation invoke verses 4-6 to “prove” that a believer can lose his or her salvation which is to say that salvation is not eternal. This passage does not only “not prove” their notion, but in truth, completely disproves it. However, the subject that is actually being addressed is apostasy, and shows the distinction between those who only profess Christ and those who truly know Him by grace. Remember that Paul is speaking to those who were refusing to stand on what the Old Testament teaches about Christ and, therefore, were not centering the entirety of their salvation upon Christ. Instead, they were

clinging to the rites and ceremonies and priesthood of the Old Covenant as if those things still had something to do with their righteousness before God. They, as it were, had not grown up—had not matured—but were as babes and evil in their handling of the word of God (5:13-14).

Paul begins verse 3 by stating that he intends to leave those things taught in the Old Covenant concerning practice and to grow up in Christ which was the true meaning of those things. He will do this if God permits, which is a statement of the necessity of God teaching this in order for anyone to receive it. If God permits, you will learn this; you will grow in Christ. If He does not you will remain where you are. This seems like an innocuous statement, but in truth, we will see that in the final analysis, the entire matter of salvation and growth, as opposed to stagnation and apostasy, is attributed to what comes from above, and the result is ordained. If God permits, Paul is going to set things in their proper order. He is about to, once and for all, settle what it means to look to Old Covenant practices as necessary to salvation and righteousness before God.

I have entitled this lesson *Impossible to Renew* because this principle is key to understanding vv. 4-6. “Those” described in vv. 4-5 are *true* believers. These are the *elect* of God who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and saved by sovereign grace. Such will and do grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. This knowledge of Christ always results in the acknowledgement of Christ as the theme, substance, and accomplishment of all Old Covenant teaching and practice (Eph. 1:17¹). Those are ordained to life; chosen of God, and will bear fruit (grow up, mature), and their fruit will remain (John 15:5, 16²). Their salvation is eternal, and they shall never perish

¹ **Eph. 1:17**; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

² **John 15:5, 16**; I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in

(John 10:27-39¹). Their salvation is the eternal work of the triune Godhead (2 Tim. 1:9²). Knowing this gives us a foundation from which we can discern the meaning of this passage.

Remembering again that Paul is setting about to distinguish between those who had received Christ as all their salvation and those who had heard the Gospel but it had not been mixed with faith, and because of this, they had left the Gospel for the rudiments of the world. This description of the elect is a lengthy phrase describing the “they” of verse six. It is impossible (v. 4) “if they (who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come) “if they shall fall away (apostatize), it would be impossible to renew them again unto repentance. If they fell

me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. you. 16, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

¹ **John 10:27-39**; My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him. Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand.

² **2 Tim. 1:9**; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

away, then the God who saved them by the blood of Christ and granted them repentance was unable to keep His promise to keep them. His purpose would be disappointed, and His plan thwarted, and all that Christ did would be counted as nothing more than a bold yet unrealized and unprofitable gesture. If they fell away and afterward were renewed to repentance, it would require that Christ be crucified again and shamefully be forced to admit that what He did was of no true value in the salvation of the elect. If Christ's work was of no true value in the salvation of the elect, then the only thing left, if man is to be saved, is for man to resort to the law of ceremony and practice to be found in God's favor. The logical conclusion is clear. Either Christ is our salvation—the entirety of it—or He and His work is nothing and we are the authors of our own eternal life (Gal. 5:1-4; Heb. 10:12-14, 17-18¹). In plain language, the apostle is saying that if you fall away—if you *can* fall away—if you *can* employ the law for righteousness, acceptance, or rule of life in conjunction with Christ, then you were *never* a child of God; you were not among the elect; you were never of the fold (1 Pet. 2:7-8; 1 John 2:19-20; Jude 4²).

¹ **Gal. 5:1-4**; Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. **Heb. 10:12-14**, But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. **17-18**, And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

² **1 Pet. 2:7-8**; Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. **1 John 2:19-20**; They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest

To support, yea prove, that apostates were never the children of God, that they left the truth only in the sense of mental assent, and that all along in their profession without possession they were but dogs and hogs (1 Pet. 2:19-22¹), Paul uses the symbolism of the earth bringing forth fruit from the seed that is in it. Rain is symbolic of the word of God, the gospel, the doctrine of God (Deut. 32:1-4; Isa. 55:10-11²). Both the elect and non-elect in this text had heard this gospel. Those receivers of the gospel in verse 7 are distinguished from those in verse 8 in that the fruit brought forth from those in verse 7 is due to the ground being dressed by the one for whom the fruit is designed (Hosea 14:8³). This ground brings forth fruit because it is prepared, fertile, and blessed ground. The *dressing* is the

that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. **Jude 4**; For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only LORD God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ **1 Pet. 2:19-22**; For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

² **Deut. 32:1-4**; Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. **Isa. 55:10-11**; For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

³ **Hosea 14 :8**; Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

blessing. It is blessed to be dressed. It is the good ground of the parable of the sower as contrasted to the wayside, stony, or thorny ground (Matt. 13:18-23¹). Verse 8 is a description of apostates. The rain falls on ground that has not been dressed but has been left to produce only the effects of cursed ground upon which it fell (Gen. 3:17-19²).

To those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, Paul speaks the blessed words of verse 9. It is impossible for these to fall away. They have received the blessings of God.

¹ **Matt. 13:18-23**; Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

² **Gen. 3:17-19**; And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

BETTER THINGS

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.

Hebrews 6:9-12

In this passage, Paul was assuring those who were trusting the Lord alone for their entire salvation and acceptance before God—those who had left the Old Covenant and were using the word of righteousness correctly, who had grown and were continuing to grow up in Christ—that he is persuaded that they were not among the apostates he wrote of in verses 1-8. He was convinced of better things concerning these whom he addresses now, and the better things that he is persuaded of are the things that accompany salvation. The wording here is subtle but profound. Those apostates mentioned earlier believe that there are things that accompany salvation (practicing the laws and ceremonies of the Old Covenant) but hold that these are necessary for the salvation of the sinner. Here in verse 9, Paul speaks of things that accompany salvation as the result of salvation rather than a prerequisite of salvation. Everyone knows that righteous works accompany salvation. The essential distinction is this: apostates believe that one must do the works in order to be righteous while the true believer does these works

because he is righteous. The apostate believes that his works are the cause of his righteousness while the believer in Christ knows that his works are the result of his righteousness. Christ alone is the believer's righteousness, and by union with Him, the fruit of the Spirit is found (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; John 15:5, 16; Gal. 5:18¹). The works that are produced by the believer are far better things than those produced by the unbeliever, and these works are what persuaded Paul of better things than those he described in verses 1-8.

When he says, “though thus we speak,” he is letting the believer know that the things set forth in the latter part of chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 6 must be declared to all who profess Christ so that every man would examine himself whether he is in the faith. Ultimately, apostasy, as well as true faith, is not a general thing but concerns individuals, therefore, the warnings are spoken to all who profess to know Christ.

The assurance that Paul speaks of—the better things which persuade Him that those to whom he now speaks are true believers—is found in verse 10. He speaks in terms of absolute assurance. He says that that God does not and will not forget your work and labor of love. To add power to this, he declares that God would be unrighteous to do so. If God is righteous to remember their work and labor of love, those things most surely must exist. One cannot remember what does not exist. Paul used the same kind of language to tell those at Thessalonica that he

¹ **Jer. 23:6**; In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. **1 Cor. 1:30**; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. **John 15:5**, I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. **16**; Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. **Gal. 5:18**; But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

was sure that they were the elect of God (1 Thess. 1:4-10²).

Their work, indeed, is expressed in the labor of love. This work and labor of love is singularly motivated. It is love that is manifest toward the Name (The glory) of God. This is either the single incentive for works or the work is altogether false. Love toward God excludes love for self. A man cannot serve two masters, else he will love the one and hate the other. If my works have as a motive the recognition of my own personal merit, my works are not about the glory of His name but the glory of my own name. Since the glory of God is seen in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, the labor of love is primarily realized in the declaration of the glory of God in the substitutionary satisfaction of God by the death of Christ, or in more precise terms, the preaching of the gospel. It is in the gospel,—in the singularity of it, in the proclamation of the only manner in which God is fully honored—that the work and labor of love is manifested. The emphasis, the catalyst of the work and labor of love of the believer is the Name of God.

This work and labor for the Name of God is manifest in the care and feeding of the household of faith. It is revealed (and Paul was persuaded that it was genuine) “in that” the believer has and does minister to the saints. We know that the ministry of the believer to the saints of God is expressed in love. John

² **1 Thess. 1:4-10**; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

said that “we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.” The proof of the love of God in us is that we minister to the saints (Matt. 25:31-40; John 13:34-35; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:14-18¹).

We know that no believer feels comfortable in declaring that he can prove his own faith by the evidence of love for the brethren. Even John did not point to himself specifically but rather used the collective “we,” showing that this is the work of every believer. James spoke of proving his faith by works but

¹ **Matt. 25:31-40**; When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. **John 13:34-35**; A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. **James 2:14-17**; What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. **1 John 3:14-18**; We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But 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? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

did not point to himself but to Abraham and to Rahab the harlot as examples. In our text, Paul did not refer to himself but to the true Hebrew believers. “Ye” have shown love toward the saints. There are many reasons why the believer does not boast in his own love for God and the saints. First, it is the nature of love, itself, not to concern itself with one who is loving, but rather, is entirely centered on and taken up with the one loved (Phil. 2:1-4¹). Secondly, if a believer does love, he knows that it is a result of God loving him, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:10). He cannot, therefore, boast in His own love but must give all glory to God. Thirdly, works exist in the life, or rather, works are the expressed life of the believer because they are predestinated or ordained by God (Eph. 2:10²). Again, this precludes any boasting. Love is the action of faith (Gal. 5:5-6³).

The desire of Paul was that the Hebrew believer, as well as all believers, would show the same diligence that is born of the full assurance of hope. That full assurance of hope is the expectation of final glory because of the work of Christ. Paul is not saying, “Look to your works,” but rather “look to your hope.” Christ in you is the hope of glory all the way to the end (v. 11). Note in verse 12 that the absence of slothfulness is manifest in following the example of those, who through faith and patience, inherit promise. Here is the source of the works of the believer. They believe God and wait on Him. This is the

¹ **Phil. 2:1-4**; If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

² **Eph. 2:10**; For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

³ **Gal. 5:5-6**; For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

mark of faith (1 Thess. 1:6-7; Heb. 13:7⁴).

⁴ **1 Thess. 1:6-7**; And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. **Heb. 13:7**; 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.

ABRAHAM & CHRIST

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

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.

Hebrews 6:13-20

Having admonished the believers to be followers of those who inherit the promises, Paul picked Abraham as the example of the one to follow (vv. 12-13). There are two very important reasons that the Holy Spirit chose Abraham as the example of one “who through faith and patience, inherited the promise.”

The first reason is partly the theme of this book. The Hebrew believers, at least some of them, were toying with the notion of incorporating the Old Covenant into the worship of

Christ by the New Covenant. Paul takes the believer to Abraham because the covenant that God made with Abraham preceded the covenant of Sinai (Old Covenant). The covenant of Abraham was a covenant of promise as opposed to the Sinai covenant which was conditional and depended on the obedience of those under its authority. The fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham was entirely dependent upon the One who made the promise and was not, in any way, dependent upon the one to whom the promise was made. The blessings of that covenant were the responsibility of God to perform and to bestow. This is clearly seen in the last phrase of verse 13. God swore by His own Person. What greater assurance could a believer have than the promise of God—a promise that He swore to accomplish? (See: Gen. 12:1-3; 22:15-18¹). If an oath among men is sufficient to end strife and doubt as to the intent of the one who swears, how much more shall the oath of God assure the believer that the promised outcome is secure (vv. 16-17)! This sworn promise is, ultimately, the promise of the Messiah, the Christ, who will finish the work of salvation (Isa. 45:23-25; Gal. 3:14-16, 29²). The believer is not to look to Sinai

¹ **Gen. 12:1-3**; Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. **22:15-18**; And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

² **Isa. 45:23-25**; I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of

and the covenant that came from there but is to look to God, who promised the Christ on oath through Abraham.

The second reason that the name of Abraham is employed here is that, above all, Abraham was the person with whom the Jews most identified. Though they loved Moses, their family tree found its roots in Abraham. So, Paul does not direct their attention to Moses, who is synonymous with the Old Covenant, but to Abraham, who received the promise and blessing of God by grace.

Why would God make an oath then swear by Himself? Would His promise be less sure if not accompanied by an oath? God cannot lie, and He cannot change, therefore, His promise is sure. The oath is for us. We are liars, so He speaks to us in the language of liars—the language of oaths. It is condescension on the part of the Lord to assure our frail frames. Because of the weakness of our resolve and the plague of our unbelief, God condescends to assure us that He will keep his promise by swearing that He will keep His promise (v. 17). His oath puts an end to all doubt and strife concerning the employment of the Old Covenant along with the New Covenant. Our salvation is conditioned upon the promise of God. What He has promised, He will perform. The fulfillment of that promise is secure in that it is according to the immutable counsel or purpose of God (Isaiah 46:9-10¹).

Israel be justified, and shall glory. **Gal. 3:14-16**; That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. **29**; And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

¹ **Isaiah 46:9-10**; Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

What are the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie? They are the counsel of God and the oath of God. Because of this glorious fact, the believer has strong consolation, comfort, and assurance that the salvation wrought by Christ is the entire and sure hope of the believer. The believer has fled to the refuge of Christ and has grabbed on to it with a death-grip (laid hold). Our assurance is not based on our feelings or our experience, our personal merit, or even our faith. It is based entirely on the merits, the person and the work of our blessed Savior.

Christ being referred to as the refuge was very relevant to the Hebrew believer. It was designed to take their minds to the cities of refuge which were a great consolation to the Jew. Even the names of the cities speak of Christ (Exo. 21; 13; Num. 35:6, 11, 14; Deut. 21:2, 9; Joshua 20:1-9¹). Kedesh means Holy;

¹ **Exo. 21:13**; And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. **Num. 35:6**, And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. **11**, Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. **14**, Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. **Deut. 21:2**, Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: **9**, So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD. **Joshua 20:1-9**; The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own

Christ is the Holy One. Shechem means shoulder; Christ bore our sins on His mighty shoulders. Hebron means fellowship; Christ is our fellowship with the Father. Bezer means a fortified place; Christ is our stronghold, our Rock and our High Tower. Ramoth means exaltations; Christ is exalted because he accomplished salvation. Golan means manifested; Christ is God manifested in the flesh. Christ is the refuge that gives us great consolation (Luke 2:25-30¹).

The hope set before us is Christ set before us through the preaching of the gospel. He is our hope, and He is our anchor. As our anchor, Christ assures us that we will not drift or be detached from our moorings. Our soul is anchored in Him. This means that Christ in us is the “Hope of Glory” (Col. 1:27²). Christ is enthroned in our hearts by his Spirit (John 17:23, 26³).

house, unto the city from whence he fled. And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

¹ **Luke 2:25-30**; And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

² **Col. 1:27**; To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

³ **John 17:23**: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. **26**; And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

He is the anchor of the soul. This is a very needful place for our Anchor. Though we are assailed by exterior storms—trials, the hatred of the world, the winds of change, the torrents of temptation, and the floods of sorrow that attend all that are the offspring of God—our greatest storms are raging in our inward man. The demons of self-righteousness, pride, indifference, want of recognition, and fear of censure often drive us to despairing even of hope (Lam. 3:17-18¹). The inward war is our true struggle (2 Cor. 10:3-6²). Praise God that when we would raise ourselves in our imaginations against the knowledge (acknowledgement) of God, our Anchor is there within us to keep us from drifting and to bring us again to acknowledge that Christ has accomplished all our salvation and is all our Hope.

The final allusion to our secure estate is the reference to Christ having already obtained the promise as our High Priest. With Christ as the surety and mediator of this New Covenant ratified in His blood and with Christ as the forerunner already entered in, believers have only to follow the One who has already entered. The word “forerunner” means one who comes in advance to a place where the rest are to follow. Believers come into the presence of God with full assurance of faith, because they have full and glorious access (Matt. 27:50-53; Rom. 5:1-2; Heb. 10:12-22; 12:22-24³). He is there; the rest will

¹ **Lam. 3:17-18**; And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

² **2 Cor. 10:3-6**; For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

³ **Matt. 27:50-53**; Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy

follow (John 14:1-3; 17:24⁴).

city, and appeared unto many. **Rom. 5:1-2**; Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **Heb. 10:12-22**; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; 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. **12:22-24**; 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, 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, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

⁴ **John 14:1-3**; Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. **17:24**; Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

MELCHISEDEC

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.

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.

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?

Hebrews 7:1-11

Read Mark 4:33; John 16:12; 2 Peter 3:16¹. In these verses we see that the revelation of Christ was a progressive thing that was not fully realized until the completion of the word of God. In these words of our Lord and Simon Peter, there is the intimation that the things that are to be learned—the things to be revealed by the Spirit—are things that the disciples are not yet ready to hear. Peter's words are spoken in the context of growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. It is the things of Christ that they would be taught, and we have one of those things before us in the recognition and illumination of this character named Melchisedec.

This person whose name means “king of righteousness and king of peace” is a priest of the Most High God. He is a very unique character, first mentioned in Genesis when he appeared to Abraham after the slaughter of the five kings, then in Psalm 110 where he is first connected to Christ, then here in Hebrews he is mentioned in chapter 5:6, 10 and in the last verse of chapter 6. There is a great deal of conjecture about this Melchisedec. Some think that he was a son of Shem. Others think that he was a Canaanite priest and king in the lineage of Ham. Some hold that he was an angel appearing in the form of a man.

Many assert that he was the Christ, a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. This view is generally held because of the phrase “after the order of Melchisedec.” This phrase chafes some because Christ, being God—being the beginning, the Alpha, and the first—cannot be in the order of anyone because that suggests that Christ was made like unto someone else. If

¹ **Mark 4:33**; And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. **John 16:12**; I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. **2 Peter 3:16**; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

the subject were the singularity of Christ in his deity, then this would be a reasonable argument. However, the subject being declared is the preeminence of Christ as High Priest as opposed to the Levitical priesthood. Christ then, in that context, is after the order of Melchisedec *in kind*. His priesthood was not the same kind as that of Levi. In fact, as the theme of this book proves, it was a better priesthood, a priesthood that the priesthood of Levi did not and could not accomplish. Christ is presented in this manner in contrast to Levi. In “this order,” Paul begins in earnest to show the dissolution of the Old Covenant.

Since the High Priest was the central figure in the Old Covenant economy, it is here that the first fusillade must be launched. When Levi is shown to be inferior to Christ, then the entire structure of the old covenant is likewise seen to be inferior. Paul introduces the superiority of Christ by declaring that Melchisedec “blessed” Abraham (v. 1). In the remainder of this chapter, Paul teaches us what it means to say that Melchisedec blessed Abraham. To understand this blessing bestowed is to see the preeminence of Christ.

The first comparison or contrast between the priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Levi is that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. Abraham was the Father of the Hebrews and held in high esteem by all. As we saw before, he was the recipient of the covenant of promise which pictures the covenant of Grace of which Christ was the mediator. Melchisedec receiving tithes from Abraham is, in itself, a revelation of the greatness of this High Priest. To show this fact, Paul addresses the uniqueness of this High Priest (v 3). This description is amazing and certainly points to the glory of Christ. Remember, however, that Paul is asserting a particular point. The uniqueness described lies in the capacity of priest. There has never been but one other priest that could be described as Melchisedec is described here. This

could, in no way, apply to Levi or any other priest of his lineage. Levi was dead as well as all the rest of the priesthood. Their lineage was meticulously catalogued in the Old Testament and so was the place where they were buried. The language employed to describe Melchisedec's priesthood speaks in terms of *eternity*. Whether this is a declaration of a Christophany (appearance of Christ) is not important to the context except as it reveals the true person pictured by Melchisedec. Paul is teaching that the priesthood of Christ, unlike the priesthood of Levi, was eternal.

The greatness of this Melchisedec is seen in the fact that the priesthood of the Old Testament paid tithes to him when Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils. Tithes belonged to the Levitical priesthood. They were given for the support of the ministry of the tabernacle. This was according to the law of Sinai (vv. 4-5). At the time that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, the tribes of Israel did not exist. Moses had not yet appeared on the scene and the law had not been handed down from Sinai. Melchisedec could not have been a descendant of Levi or of that priesthood, yet he blessed Abraham who had received the promises (v. 6). This is no small thing. If Abraham received blessings from Melchisedec then Melchisedec is greater than Abraham (v. 7). Think of the impact of this statement on the Hebrew mind. This is a profound statement but is yet not the place where Paul is headed.

Verse 8 is a plain reference to Christ. The phrase "it is witnessed that he liveth," is a direct reference to Psa. 110:4¹ (Heb. 5:6²). Paul is so fixed on the subject of the preeminence of Christ that Melchisedec seems almost interchangeable with him. The reference is, however, to the difference between the

¹ **Psa. 110:4**; The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

² **Heb. 5:6**; As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ, the former being temporal and the latter being eternal.

The superiority of Christ is seen in vv. 9-10. Though this passage is a beautiful example of imputation, the message is plain. Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec because he was in the loins of Abraham showing that before Levi, before Aaron, there was an eternal and superior and successful High Priest, even Jesus Christ. The proof of this is that the Levitical priesthood paid homage and tithes to Melchisedec. The priesthood of Aaron was subservient to that of Christ.

Verse 11 reveals that Christ as our High Priest accomplished perfection, a thing that the Levitical priesthood could not do and was not designed to do (Heb. 10:1-2¹). If it had been able to perfect the comers, then another priesthood would have been redundant. The fact is that the Aaronic priesthood was redundant, not in the sense of uselessness, but in the sense that, for centuries it repeatedly pointed to an already existent, eternal priesthood, the priesthood of Christ pictured by Melchisedec.

¹ **Heb. 10:1-2**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

A BETTER HOPE (1)

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?

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.

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.

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:)

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

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.

25, 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.

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.

Hebrews 7:11-28

There is a great deal for us in this passage so we will be camping here for a bit. Here, Paul furthered his argument that the Old Covenant was being systematically abolished, or better, *had* been abolished by the accomplishing death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did so by using the Old Testament, the very text in which the Old Covenant was set forth. By employing this tactic, he did a wonderful thing: he assured the believer that the testimony of the Old Testament was the declaration of Christ and His great work in the salvation of the elect as well as being a report of the insufficiency of the former law and priesthood to perfect those who were under it. In no way does this suggest that the Old Covenant was imperfect. It was ordained of God and therefore perfect. Imperfection can be found in the Old Covenant only if one thinks that its purpose was to provide a viable method of obtaining a righteous standing in the sight of God. But that was never its purpose. Its purpose was to make men “know sin.” Therefore, it accomplished precisely what it was intended to do. It perfectly

revealed that any covenant that depended on the obedience of fallen man was sure to fail as far as producing the perfection required by God in the salvation of His people.

The Law (The Ten Commandments and ceremonial observances) was a continual reminder that what was needed for perfection did not reside in an imperfect priesthood offering imperfect sacrifices on imperfect altars, Therefore, the law, by design, could not make the comers thereunto perfect. Likewise, the Ten Commandments, though “holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12¹), were never designed to make a person perfect by obedience to them. They were not given to make a person righteous. Rather, since they were “added because of transgression” (Gal. 3:19²) they were a tenfold declaration that man had already failed and would continue to fail to meet the standard of perfection established by God for acceptance (Lev. 22:21³). Any hope placed in the Law for righteousness is, by design and purpose, meant to fail. Concerning salvation, “a better hope” was necessary, a hope that is sure and eternal and that accomplished salvation, a hope that was perfect and perfecting by design.

Another thing established here in these verses is that the Levitical priesthood and the Law were inseparable. If you read many writers, you will find a large number of them speak of the Law in terms of duality. They separate the Law and the ceremony by referring to the Ten Commandments as the “moral law” and the priesthood and numerous sacrifices as the “ceremonial law.” They do this so they can justify using the Ten

¹ **Rom. 7:12**; Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

² **Gal. 3:19**; Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

³ **Lev. 22:21**; Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD.

Commandments as a binding code for personal obedience which, when obeyed, produces an acceptable righteousness before God. They either aver that the Ten Commandments is a means of justification or a rule of life for the believer. They accomplish this clever little trick by saying that Christ's death fulfilled only the "ceremonial" aspect of the law, but His substitutionary death did not involve fulfilling what they call the "moral law." This moral aspect is left to the sinner's obedience or the believer's obedience for its fulfillment. This reveals not only a gross misunderstanding and misuse of the law but also a suspect confidence in personal merit. First, not only is the word "moral" never attached to the word "Law" in Scripture, the word "moral" is not found on any page of holy writ.

The Ten Commandments are not a moral thermometer or a moral gauge to be enlisted to produce righteousness (morality). They are an indictment, accusation, and proof of the total and glaring unrighteousness (immorality) of all humanity. While looking at the Ten Commandments, no spiritual mind can see anything in themselves other than their abject guilt. Thinking or even supposing that the Ten Commandments are a means of righteousness before God is a delusion of the natural, carnal mind. There is only one Law, and it contains the Ten Commandments as well as the rites and ceremonies performed by the priesthood. This singular Law was fulfilled by Christ on the cross. There, at the cross, all the elements or parts of the law (the Ten Commandments and the all the ceremonies) were completely fulfilled by Christ

The Ten Commandments declared that the sinner must die. This is the holy, just, and good judgment against sin. The priesthood and the ceremony declared that death was required to appease justice. The Law has to do with death. Our Lord lived a perfectly righteousness life, and it is generally held that His

“active obedience to the law” was the way He worked out a righteousness for us. But, since He was already righteous, and the Law has nothing to do with the righteous man (1 Tim. 1:9¹), we must conclude that His obedience was all active and singularly designed to fulfill the Law in its singular requirement, which is death for sin. The word declares that He, Himself, is our righteousness, not that His life is our righteousness. So, the purpose of His righteous life was to make Him a suitable sacrificial substitute for us so that He could perfectly die to fulfill the law for us. So, it was His death, not His life, that fulfilled the Law for us.

Every jot and tittle of the Law was fulfilled when our Lord gave up the ghost. Salvation—fulfillment of the law—was finished, accomplished, and perfected when our Lord accomplished the perfect death. Life does not fulfill the law because the law was added because of transgression. The law does not address life. When the Law was added, the sentence of death was already upon all sin, all life (Gal. 3:21²). Christ's life was not from Adam. Christ knew no sin, so the law was not added where there was no transgression (Rom. 5:13³). The Law had its dealings with Christ when He was made sin for His people. The transgression being added, the holy, just, and good law condemned and passed sentence, and the perfect sacrifice (death) was made to God, perfecting forever those for whom the sacrifice was made.

Paul shows that the Ten Commandments and the Levitical

¹ **1 Tim. 1:9**; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.

² **Gal. 3:21**; Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

³ **Rom. 5:13**; For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

priesthood are inseparable in very simple and concise language (vv. 11-12). If the law changes, this necessitates a change in the priesthood. If the priesthood changes, it necessitates a change in the law. They are one and cannot exist individually. They are perfectly fulfilled in the One who, by Himself, purged our sin by the performance, or carrying out, of His eternal priesthood. Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant and this was pictured, prophesied, and typified in the Old Testament when, after the priesthood was given at Sinai, David spoke of the eternal priesthood that preceded it and superseded it (Psalm 110:4; Heb. 7:17¹). Thank God for this eternal, unchangeable priesthood!

¹ **Psalm 110:4**; The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. **Heb. 7:17**; For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

A BETTER HOPE (2)

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?

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.

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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:)

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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.

Hebrews 7:11-28

As we have seen since the first chapter, Paul constantly employed the word "better" to describe the distinction between the Old and the New Covenants. This draws attention to the declaration of the preeminence of Christ and His fulfillment of the office of High Priest. In our vernacular, the word "better" is hardly a proclamation of resounding distinction. We generally employ the word to state a difference in degree and not necessarily a great difference. To describe superiority, we would probably use the superlative "best." However, the use of this gentler adjective when there are only two things in consideration annuls the need for hyperbole. If only two things are addressed, the "better" is a superlative understatement distinguishing the *better* thing as singularly superior. Christ is the better hope. Here the beauty of the understatement is clearly seen. The former "hope" made nothing perfect. Christ, by His sacrifice and the execution of the office of High Priest, did make all the "comers thereunto perfect" (vv. 18-19). This certainly qualifies His

accomplishment, performed under the New Covenant, as a better hope.

Part of Paul's proof that the priesthood of Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood is that Christ's priesthood is eternal while the priesthood of the sons of Levi lasted only as long as they lived. Paul shows the eternal nature of Christ's priesthood by showing from the Old Testament Scriptures that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec (vv. 16-17).

Let us now consider another aspect of Christ's superiority as High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec." Melchisedec was both priest and king. He was a royal priest. So is Christ. He was not from the tribe of Levi but rather from the royal tribe of Judah (v. 14). The fact of our Lord's kingship has already been established in describing Him as superior to the angels (1:8). Now His kingship is set forth as arising from His being a descendent of King David, who was of the tribe of Judah (Luke 1:32-33¹).

This priest/king status was described in type and shadow in the Old Testament though, under the Old Covenant, such a combination of offices was forbidden. This king/priest was typified in the golden plate that was affixed to Aaron's turban in Exodus 28:36-38². In Exodus 29:6³, this gold plate was called the "holy crown" prophesying that there was coming a High

¹ **Luke 1:32-33**; He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

² **Exodus 28:36-38**; And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

³ **Exodus 29:6**; And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

Priest who would also be King. This was prophesied again later and in greater detail in Zech. 6:12-13¹. Here the priest is on the throne and when Messiah comes, he will “seal up the vision and the prophecy.”

The fact that Christ came from the royal tribe of Judah sets Him forth as the sovereign conqueror and He to whom all His subjects give absolute obeisance. This is seen in Jacob's prophesy concerning Judah (Gen. 49:8-12²). Jacob's blessing of his son, Judah, prophesied of the great Lion of the Tribe of Judah found in the book of Revelation.

In the passage from Genesis 49, several things are said concerning the sovereignty of our Lord. These statements also point to Him as Savior.

He alone will receive the praise of His brethren (v. 8). This teaches us two things. First, if He is praised, it is because He is worthy. All glory belongs to Him. That glory is given because he has saved His people; He earned it (Rev. 5:9-10³). Secondly,

¹ **Zech. 6:12-13**; And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

² **Gen. 49:8-12**; Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

³ **Rev. 5:9-10**; And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

this teaches us that His people are His family. It is His brethren that shall praise Him. They are called “thy Father's children.” He died to redeem His family, His brethren, the family of God (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5, James 1:18; Heb. 2:10-12¹). These are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. In the matter of the salvation of the elect, God kept it in the family.

Our Great High Priest from the tribe of Judah is also presented as absolute victor over His enemies (v. 8). First, He is described as having His enemy by the neck. Here is a picture of His accomplishment on Calvary. He bruised the Serpent's head. He cast down Satan and put Him in a chokehold. This alludes to our Lord's complete control of those who oppose Him as well as the fact that no weapon formed against His people shall prosper.

Further proclamation of His royalty and victory is in this two-fold description of Him as a lion (v. 9). First, He is described as a lion's whelp, a young and vital, strong lion who is returned from a successful hunt. He has killed his prey. His “going up” refers to the reward of His labors. He is exalted at the right hand of the Father. His “stooping” refers to His condescension. The gulf that He spanned when He came to this earth is not fathomable to the finite mind. He stooped down—way down (Phil. 2:5-8²). He is seen also as an old lion, couched

¹ **Rom. 8:29**; For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. **Eph. 1:5**, Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. **James 1:18**; Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. **Heb. 2:10-12**; 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. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

² **Phil. 2:5-8**; Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,

(stretched out in repose or rest). This signifies our Lord entering into His rest having finished His work. “Who shall rouse Him up” teaches us that our Lord rests in complete complacency. He is not worried or in a bind as to how things will turn out, He controls history with absolute sway.

The scepter belongs to the King. The coming of Shiloh refers to the return of King Jesus. He shall reign until all His enemies shall be made His footstool. Until then the scepter will remain in His hand (1 Cor. 15:25-28¹). The coming one is called Shiloh. This name means many things, and all refer to Christ in some particular capacity. Shiloh means “the sent One.” Shiloh means “to Him it belongs.” Shiloh means “peace.” Shiloh means “the Son.” Shiloh means “rest.” Shiloh means “prosper” (1 Sam. 3:21²).

Verse 10 signifies the bringing in of the Gentiles. They are referred to as wild asses colts in Scripture, yet they are bound to the vine who is Christ. The last phrase of verse 10 refers to the sufferings of Christ and His death on Calvary (Isa. 63:1-4; Rev. 19:13³).

and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

¹ **1 Cor. 15:25-28**; For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

² **1 Sam. 3:21**; And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

³ **Isa. 63:1-4**; Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my

His eyes being red with wine does not speak of intemperance but of joy, the joy of His sacrifice, “who for the joy set before Him, endure the cross, despising the shame and is set down on the right hand of the father.” His teeth white with milk refers to the joy of the salvation of the elect (Luke 15:10⁴). This is the *Great High Priest* that sprang from the tribe of Judah.

redeemed is come. **Rev. 19:13**; And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

⁴ **Luke 15:10**; Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

A BETTER HOPE (3)

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?

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.

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.

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:)

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

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.

25, 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.

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.

Hebrews 7:11-28

As we have seen thus far in chapter 7, the thrust of it is the successful, accomplished work of Christ as High Priest and mediator of the New Covenant and it is seen as distinctive from the temporal nature of the Old Covenant. All this is done to teach us what the apostle refers to as a better hope.

This “better hope” is not better in the sense of degree but in the fact of superiority. This superiority is revealed in the fact that Christ's priesthood superseded that of Aaron's Levitical, Old Covenant priesthood. Not only did it precede the Levitical priesthood, it replaced it. It not only replaced it; it did what the old priesthood could not do. Christ's priesthood originated in eternity and was manifest in time in the tribe of Judah, signifying that His was a royal priesthood (vv. 13-15).

Because the Levitical priesthood was inextricably bound to the Law, the removal of that priesthood meant the removal of the Law (vv. 11-12). The word “law” embraces all that was handed down from Sinai, legal and ceremonial. Christ's office was not created by a commandment of the law but by an eternal

oath from the Father (w. 16-17). Christ's priesthood is endless.

When Paul sets out to distinguish the superiority of Christ to all things having to do with the Law, the descriptive language employed is very important. Not only does the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to declare the superiority of Christ, but He does so by revealing the inferiority of the former covenant. The adjectives used to describe the Law in the context are very revealing.

The first glaring adjective is found in verse 16. The commandment of the law is called “carnal.” This is certainly not a word commonly used to describe the law. In fact, the words of Paul in Romans 7:12¹ assert that the Law is spiritual and that he was carnal, sold under sin. In what way is the Law spiritual? It is spiritual in that it sets the just penalty for all sin against God. Sin is a spiritual thing, residing in the realm of spiritual darkness. The law defines and sets the punishment for sin. How, then, does Paul here call the Law carnal? The word, as it is used here, does not say that the Law is lusty or lascivious. The word is used to describe the realm in which the Old Covenant, the Law, and the priesthood operated. Here, carnal means natural and temporal as opposed to spiritual and eternal. The use of this language teaches us that the Old Covenant looks to human flesh to fulfill it. It looks to the power of the flesh for obedience and because of the weakness of the flesh, its requirements are never and can never be met. The law, being a carnal commandment, cannot save. But such is not the case with Christ (Rom. 8:3-4²). The righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by us (it was fulfilled by Christ). It is fulfilled in us because Christ answered

¹ **Romans 7:12**; Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

² **Rom. 8:3-4**; For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

it spiritual demands for us.

The Ten Commandments dealt with the indictment of the transgression and the justness of the penalty exacted. The ceremonial aspect of the law addressed the consciousness of sin (Heb. 10:1-4¹). It addressed the conscience. The conscience is a carnal aspect of the human condition. The ceremonies were a continual reminder that the issue had not been settled. Since this aspect of the law is also carnal, it can, in no way, operate in the spiritual realm. The only way that conscience is answered is if a sacrifice is offered—a sacrifice of such perfection that the conscience has no ground upon which it can accuse. Christ's sacrifice quieted the conscience by purging the conscience of dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 10:1-2; 9:14²). So, the law, which was performed by carnal priests on carnal altars is, itself, carnal and so, cannot bring about a spiritual accomplishment (7:11). This is the reason for the first phrase in verse 18. The commandment was disannulled because, by design, it could not bring about a spiritual result (Heb. 10:9³).

There are two more words in verse 18 that are used to describe the law. The law was weak, and it was also

¹ **Heb. 10:1-4**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

² **Heb. 10:1-2**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. **9:14**; 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?

³ **Heb. 10:9**; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

unprofitable. Its weakness resided in the fact that it relied on the flesh for fulfillment. In the flesh dwells no good thing. The flesh is continually contrary to the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18¹). Natural religion does not care for this truth, but Paul knew that the Hebrew children must be confronted with the fact that their salvation rested solely in the Person and work of Christ. The law is unprofitable whether it is employed for salvation, perfection, or as a rule of life. The righteousness obtained by the flesh endeavoring to meet the law's demands adds up to zero. So, if the law is a failure because it relies on the flesh, a better way must be brought in if man is to be saved. There must be a way for the law to be fulfilled and honored without employing carnal means.

Finally, the last phrase used to describe the law is found in verse 19. In plain and precise language, the Word of God declares that "the law made nothing perfect." Every notion of applying to the law for anything spiritual is cast into the mire. The pipe dreams of progressive sanctification are summarily disclosed as woefully inadequate. The law made nothing perfect. The Old Covenant is put in its proper place. It is declared to be carnal, disannulled, weak, and unprofitable. Everything that operates in that realm, the natural, carnal realm, amounts to absolutely nothing spiritual and makes *nothing* perfect.

Thanks be unto God for that wonderful little conjunction "but." The law did not and could not make anything perfect but the bringing in of a better hope did. It *did!* Search all that you might, and you will find no language of possibility or probability. The bringing in of a better hope *did*. Sweet finality

¹ **Gal. 5:16-18**; This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

this. The better hope is spiritual in force, strength, and profitability, and it makes things *perfect*.

This better hope *did* what the ineffectual hope *could not do*. By this better hope “we draw nigh unto God.” The Old Covenant—the law and the Levitical priesthood—brought no one nigh unto God, but the bringing in of a better hope did. *That better hope is Christ* (Eph. 2:13; Heb. 10:12-22¹). For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

¹ **Eph. 2:13**; But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Heb. 10:12-22; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; 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.

A BETTER COVENANT

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

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.

25, 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.

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.

Hebrews 7:22-28

In this passage we are introduced to a word that is used for the first time in this book even though is the word that defines this entire book. That word is “covenant.” It is translated, as “testament” in v. 22 but the word is “covenant.” This entire book could be called “The “Epistle of *Diatheke*-covenant.” This is interesting because this word is not introduced until the seventh chapter though it is the theme of the entire book.

Why did Paul wait until this point to open up this subject? If you read some commentaries, you will find a range of ideas that cover an area from “not mentioned” to “of little importance” to “waiting until the right moment.” I think the best reason is seen

in the matter of what it is to preach the Gospel. Before the covenant accomplishments are set forth, the head of the covenant is proclaimed in all His glory. We preach Christ and Him crucified. The efficacy of this covenant being fulfilled relies entirely on the head or the surety of it. So, before he brings up the covenant, Paul makes sure that the people to whom he is writing have no doubt concerning the validity and surety of the covenant's ratification.

Also, if the new covenant had been immediately introduced, those who were brought up under the previous covenant might think that salvation was nothing more than embracing a different set of rules. This would be appealing to the flesh, so Paul set out to present the glories of Christ's priesthood, and by that prepared the hearer for the respective result of the eternal priesthood, namely the changing and disannulling of all that was involved in the former covenant.

Introduction of the new covenant is inextricably tied to and dependent upon Christ, the high priest and surety of it. The better covenant is better because Jesus is the surety of it. The covenant, the better covenant, hangs on Him who is better than the prophets and the fathers, who is the better message and messenger, who is better than the angels, who is better than the kings, better than the patriarchs, better than the sacrifices, better than the priesthood, and better than the law. Christ is first and foremost, and what follows is the proclamation of the covenant successes (Ps. 103:1-2¹).

Now that the covenant is finally introduced, it is done so in the gloriously light and promise of absolutely accomplished success. Our Lord said that this covenant was the new covenant in His blood (1 Cor. 11:25²). It is the eternal covenant between

¹ **Ps. 103:1-2**; A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

² **1 Cor. 11:25**; After the same manner also he took the cup, when he

the Father and the Son (2 Tim. 1:9¹). This eternal covenant was declared in type and shadow in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was a continuing description of the eternal covenant. The law, the Old Covenant, did not annul the eternal covenant (Gal. 3:15-18²). When Christ, the great high priest, came on the scene, He, by His purging sacrifice, abolished death and brought immortality to light, and in doing so, ratified this eternal, preeminent covenant (2 Tim. 1:10³).

This description of Christ as surety gives assurance to all that follows in this text. This word surety means guarantor. The full weight of the success of the New Covenant rests on the shoulders of Him who assumed the sole responsibility of guaranteeing its fulfillment. None of the responsibility is upon the beneficiaries of this covenant for its completion. In fact, at the time these words were spoken, the surety had already executed and implemented the covenant.

This first means that, as opposed to the old priesthood, the priesthood of Christ is sure to never change (vv. 23-24; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8, Rom. 6:9⁴). Likewise, the fact of this surety is a

had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

¹ **2 Tim. 1:9**; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

² **Gal. 3:15-18**; Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

³ **2 Tim. 1:10**; But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

⁴ **Mal. 3:6**; For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. **Heb. 13:8**; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. **Rom. 6:9**; Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead

guarantee that those who are named in this covenant will be fully and completely saved (v. 26). An eternal, unchangeable priesthood is the guarantee of eternal salvation. This eternal priesthood is the guarantee of eternal intercession. If it is this glorious Surety that intercedes for me, then I am eternally secure.

Those who are named in this covenant come to Christ and are saved. Unlike the priesthood and the law that could not make the comers thereunto perfect, those who come to Christ are perfected forever. He is perfectly suited for our every need (v. 26; Heb. 5:8-9)¹. All things necessary for us *to be* what we could *never be*, He *is*. Unlike us, He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens”. He “became” us in that old sense of the word, “being suitable or proper for us.”

Since Christ is the surety of this New Covenant, the weakness of the Old Covenant is not applicable to the New Covenant, thus, it cannot become weak and ineffective and it is an “eternal covenant.” The former priesthood, because of its temporal nature, required the priests to offer up sacrifices for the people and themselves continually, and those sacrifices only reminded the people that their sins were still in them and on them (10:3²). When this Priest (Christ) offered Himself, *once* was sufficient to fulfill and ratify the covenant and perfect those who are under it. (v. 27; 1 Peter 3:18³). This is the primary meaning of this title “surety.” He is our glorious guarantor, and

dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

¹ **Heb. 5:8-9**; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

² **10:3**; But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

³ **1 Peter 3:18**; For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

all He did as our representative is a guaranteed success.

The reason is simple. Unlike the former covenant that required the obedience of temporal, infirm flesh, this covenant was between the Father and the Son and was confirmed by the oath of Him who cannot lie. The guarantee is as sure as God, Himself (7:28; Ps. 110:1-4¹).

¹ **Psa. 110:1-4**; A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

SURETY

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

Hebrews 7:22

In this verse our Lord is declared to be the surety of a better covenant. We considered this in the last chapter. We saw that our Lord being the surety of the New Covenant declared that He alone assumed the full responsibility for the execution and fulfillment of that better covenant. Now, let us to look at the biblical principle of surety and see this principle brought to light.

To be a surety is to take full responsibility for someone else's responsibilities. From the time a surety agrees to take responsibility for a debt and the one who incurred the debt has been proven unable to pay it, the debtor is never again considered in the payment of the debt. That one will never be called on as responsible for the payment of the debt unless the surety, himself, proves unable to pay. This surety is described as striking hands or shaking hands in agreement whereby a guarantee was made (Job 17:3¹).

Most of what is written in the Bible about suretyship is found in the book of Proverbs. The words of most of the Proverbs are the words of the wisest man other than Christ. Solomon was given great wisdom, and thus, his words—the words of the book of Proverbs—are profound. An idea or principle that is set in stone, as it were, becomes proverbial. It is always true. The thing declared is always true and worthy of following as a principle of living. Solomon, speaking of financial transactions between men, warns against becoming a

¹ **Job 17:3**; Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?

surety.

The first thing he declares is that surety agreements are binding and cannot be undone (Prov. 6:1-2¹). He calls it a snare and refers to it as being taken, that is, trapped. Note that he holds that the practice is to be avoided among friends. He secondly declares that a man who becomes surety is void of understanding (Prov. 17:18²). Thirdly, he states that if a person becomes a surety, it will prove a painful experience and a wise man would be wiser still if he despised the idea of surety altogether (Prov. 11:15³). As further warning against becoming a surety, those who know the guarantor are to take his coat just in case that is all he has left (Prov. 20:16; 27:13⁴). The general principle set forth is that it is unwise to become a surety (Prov. 22:26⁵).

Yet, our text glorifies Christ as the surety of a better covenant. One would be hard pressed to read the warnings of Solomon and apply them to the suretyship of Christ if we did not know that the Scriptures, all of them, testify of Christ. What we find here is a warning to men concerning surety; it is a description of the sufferings of our Substitute as He undertook the execution of the responsibility of being surety of the better covenant.

When our Lord assumed the debt of His elect before the world began, He bound Himself to the task by the word of His

¹ **Prov. 6:1-2**; My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

² **Prov. 17:18**; A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

³ **Prov. 11:15**; The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

⁴ **Prov. 20:16**; Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman. **27:13**; Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

⁵ **Prov. 22:26**; Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

mouth. His promise bound Him because He is not a man that He should lie. The necessity of our Lord perfectly executing His surety engagements is bound up in the glory of His Honor as the Truth of God. He is our Surety, and thus, He is “snared and taken with the words of His mouth” (Prov. 6:1-2¹). The very One who has assumed our debt must pay because His glory and honor are at stake.

When our Lord executed His suretyship, He suffered at the hands of men and the hands of God. His physical pain was great, but His spiritual suffering was unimaginable (Isa. 53:10-12²). He made His soul an offering for sin. As promised by Solomon, Christ’s suretyship was painful (Prov. 11:15³). In those three hours of darkness and His voluntary death that followed, the Lord fulfilled His promise, ratified the covenant, and saved the elect, and He smarted for it. The spiritual pain of being made to be sin and being forsaken by the Father in the moment of His greatest triumph is immeasurable.

When our Lord executed His suretyship, His garment of flesh was taken, or better yet, He gave up Himself for the salvation of our souls. He left nothing behind; He took nothing with Him. He, by Himself, alone, naked, and betrayed, put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. That garment also speaks to the glory of Him being our righteousness. With His holy

¹ **Prov. 6:1-2**; My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger.

² **Isa. 53:10-12**; Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

³ **Prov. 11:15**; He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure.

garment on, we are as holy as God's dear Son.

Perhaps the most wonderful representation of what it is to be a surety is found when Judah assumed surety for the life of Benjamin in the presence of Jacob. The language of that transaction teaches us what that surety meant to Judah and to his father. In Genesis 43:9¹, we find the declaration of promise. Judah declared that he would be surety for Benjamin and that Jacob must require Judah to produce him. He also declared that the entire blame would be upon him if he did not produce. This is the heart of what it is to be a surety—full responsibility laid on the surety—no blame for failure except to the surety. The Lord has covenanted with the Father to bring the beloved sons home.

In Genesis 44, we see another aspect of what it is to fulfill surety engagements. Read vv. 30-34². In this we see that the honor of the Father is tied up in the life of the one for whom Judah is a surety. If Judah does not return with the beloved son, the Father will be brought down. This matter of the salvation of the elect is no mere effort done in the hope of positive human reaction. For God to be glorified, for His name to be honored, those for whom Christ became surety must all be brought home.

Finally, this matter of surety is singular and personally accomplished. A surety can offer none but himself. No price but

¹ **Gen. 43:9**; I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.

² **Gen. 44:30-34**; Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

the price of the person will do. This is seen in the refusal of Jacob to allow Reuben to be a surety for the lad. Reuben's effort at surety did not meet the requirements (Gen. 42:37¹). A surety may not offer the payment at the cost of someone else. He must act alone and voluntarily. Christ is the surety of a better covenant.

¹ **Gen. 42:37**; And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE

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.

Hebrews 8:1-6

In this chapter and carrying all the way through Chapter 10, Paul shows the excellency of Christ, particularly in the office of head, mediator, and surety of the better covenant. But before he does that, he does some spiritual mathematics concerning what he has said thus far. He looks at all he has written up to this point, adds it all up, and arrives at a sum or a total (v. 1a). The sum and total of all of the first seven chapters is the sum and substance of all of Scripture. When everything in the Word is added up, when all is said and done, the totality of what is written concerns the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:27,

44-45¹). This divinely inspired calculation is the entirety of true religion and worship. Well-graced is the man who can read this glorious sum and begin his words with “we have such.” The one who has “such” need never despair because “such” is a guarantor of good things possessed and hoped in.

In a very true sense, Paul once again reveals the centrality of his message. It is Christ and Him crucified. It is who Christ is, why He came, what He did, and where He is now. What is the sum of all this?

“We have such an high priest who is set at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.”

Our representative, our surety, sits in the place of high and noble exaltation. He is there because he deserves to be there on the basis of the great and successful work that He alone accomplished (Heb. 1:3; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:9-11²). The high priest that we have is not a priest that ministers on the earth in an earthly tabernacle with earthly sacrifices on earthly altars. His ministry is in the heavens, from the throne of God. Our high

¹ **John 5:39**; Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. **Luke 24:27**, And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. **44-45**; And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45, Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

² **Heb. 1:3**; 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. **Rom. 14:9**; For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. **Phil. 2:9-11**; Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

priest is set on the throne. He is seated and this declares in no uncertain terms that His ministry is utterly different from that of those priests who ministered in the tabernacle and temple of the Old Covenant. Those priests never sat down because their work was never finished.

We have a high priest that is seated and that can only mean that the work He performed in that great and glorious capacity is finished (John 19:28, 30; Heb. 10:11-14¹). He is seated on the throne of heaven. He who ministers in heaven is the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth. We can say with Paul, “I think myself happy” because “we have such an high priest.”

Our high priest is a minister of the true sanctuary (v. 2). His ministry is in the house built with God's hands and not with the brick and mortar of human labor. The Lord pitched this tabernacle (Isa. 66:1; Acts 17:24-25²). The first thing that this teaches us is that the ministry of this high priest is a spiritual ministry. It is in the heavens and invisible; therefore, is not subject to the changing environment and social, political, or religious upheavals of this earth. We may look at what goes on around us and find ourselves perplexed and confused but “we have such an high priest” who is above it all. He, being the image of the invisible God, ministers in a place untouched by

¹ **John 19:28**, After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. **30**; When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. **Heb. 10:11-14**; And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

² **Isa. 66:1**; Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? **Acts 17:24-25**; God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

human hands where the filth and foulness of sin does not enter.

Also, this teaches us that these fading edifices that dot the earth, that sit on the corners of every town in the world, are not the place where Christ ministers. They are merely temporal things, soon to be consumed with the fires of wrath. Our high priest is in the heavens, and that tabernacle in which He ministers is not subject to time, tide, or the destructive elements of the earth. This also teaches us that the Old Covenant and all that it entailed with all its earthly trappings are and always have been subservient to this better Covenant of which Christ is the eternal surety.

As high priest, he must have somewhat to offer to God—both gifts of praise and sacrifices of appeasement (vv. 3-4). This is what priests do (1 Pet. 2:5¹). The difference between the gifts and sacrifices offered by earthly priests and those offered by Christ lies in what was offered and where and by whom they were offered. The Old covenant priesthood, being itself insufficient because of death, offered insufficient sacrifices on insufficient altars. Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice.

The “built-in” insufficiency of those sacrifices was by design. They did not take away sin. They did not cease to be offered until the sufficient sacrifice was offered. They were built, if you will, according to a heavenly blueprint. Their presence in the earth revealed that what they pictured, typified, and represented was from a pattern that existed eternally in the heavens (Heb. 10:1²). They were not the true sacrifice. They were *like* the true. They did not make the pattern for heaven;

¹ **1 Pet. 2:5**; Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

² **Heb. 10:1**; 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.

they revealed the pattern that *already* existed. The true tabernacle, with the true high priest was the model for the typical reproduction. The priesthood of Christ is the original; the earthly priesthood was only a carbon copy. The Law, the Old Covenant under which the earthly priests ministered, was without substance as to any accomplishment of salvation. It was a carbon copy of what and by whom salvation had already been accomplished.

That pattern, the sum of all that is, is Jesus Christ the Lord (v. 6). His ministry far exceeds the ministry of the Old Covenant. It is more excellent because He is the mediator, surety, and guarantor of a better covenant. This better covenant, mediated and administered by Christ, is built on better promises. The promises of this covenant are built on the oath of God, the eternal priesthood of Christ, and the combining of the offices of priest and king, and are entirely conditioned on the obedience of “such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens” and are not, in any way, conditioned on the obedience of earth-bound human beings. This is the sum and substance of sure, eternal salvation. It is Christ alone.

Happy indeed, is the individual who can say “we have such an high priest.”

UPON BETTER PROMISES

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.

Hebrews 8:6

As we saw in the last chapter, this New Covenant, this better covenant, was more fully introduced by declaring Christ to be a better High Priest in that His was an eternal rather than temporal priesthood. Also, His priesthood was better because it did not originate in the law handed down from Sinai that made Aaron high priest from the tribe of Levi. Our Lord sprang from tribe of Judah and that fact set Him forth as not only the High Priest, but the surety of a better covenant. The covenant under which our Lord's ministry operated was a better covenant also because it was established upon better promises. The “betterness” of the promises of the New Covenant resided in the matter of obedience. The Old Covenant promises were conditioned upon human nature and the flesh's obedience for their realization. That built-in fact doomed it to failure, leaving the promises unrealized. The New Covenant was established upon better promises in that it was conditioned upon the obedience of the Great High Priest, who was the message from God, the substitute for the people, the Son of God and the King upon the throne of righteousness . He, being unable to fail, assures the believer that the promises are all “yea and amen” in Him. The recipients of the benefits of this New Covenant, this better covenant established on better promises, are referred to in Galatians as the “heirs of promise.” Here in chapter 8 and again in chapter 10, certain elements of this better covenant are

declared (Heb. 8:8-12; 10:15-17¹).

Verse 8 of chapter 8 and verse 15 of chapter 10 teach us that Paul is quoting from the Old Testament concerning this better covenant established upon better promises. Once again, we see the distinction that, though the Old Covenant is passing away, the Old Testament *taught* of the *New* and *better* Covenant. Paul is quoting from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Before we go any further into what is said in Hebrews chapter 8-10, let us go back to the origination of the better covenant established upon better promises.

The entire chapter of *Jeremiah 31* encompasses this better covenant. Let us note some things in that chapter about how the Old Testament taught of the New and better Covenant.

The first thing to note is that our Lord makes a clear distinction between the covenant established on Mt. Sinai and this better covenant, the New Covenant (vv. 31-34²). This New

¹ **Heb. 8:8-12**; 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: 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 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: 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. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. **10:15-17**; Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

² **Jer. 31:31-34**; Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and

Covenant is in no way established according to the Old Covenant. Though religion endeavors to combine the two, it is disallowed by the Lord God.

In verses 1-3¹ the nature of this better covenant is clearly declared. (Note the better promises—they are all accomplished by God.) It is a covenant that is designated for the *family* and the people of God. It is a covenant of grace that will culminate in rest for the weary. It is a covenant conditioned upon the *eternal love* of God because of which He will *draw* His people to Him (Jer. 31:4-5, 8-10; John 6:44²).

This covenant involves the *call* of the Gospel (Jer. 31:6, 23-26³). The watchmen, also called husbandmen, picture the

write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

¹ **Jer. 31:1-3**; At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

² **Jer. 31:4-5**, Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. **8-10**; Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. **John 6:44**; No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

³ **Jer. 31:6**, For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. **23-26**; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they

preachers of the Gospel of peace and rest, and they shall feed the flock of God.

This covenant is a covenant of *redemption* (Jer. 31:11¹). This is the salvation of the elect accomplished by the crushing of the enemy's head (Luke 11:21-22²).

This covenant results in *eternal joy* (Jer. 31:12-17³).

This covenant is a covenant of *mercy* that assures repentance and recovery of the child of God even though he is severely tried (Jer. 31:18-21⁴).

shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

¹ **Jer. 31:11**; For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

² **Luke 11:21-22**; When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

³ **Jer. 31:12-17**; Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

⁴ **Jer. 31:18-21**; I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did

This covenant is the covenant of the *promised Messiah*, the seed of woman (Jer. 31:22¹).

This covenant is a covenant *made with each one of the elect individually*, not a covenant made with a people collectively (Jer. 31:27-30²).

This covenant is *built on better promises*. They are better promises for they are sure and guaranteed promises. And they are sure and guaranteed promises because they do not rely on the flesh but on the will and power of God. The Word of God will not be written outside of man on a piece of stone to be a constant judge but will be written on the fleshly table of the heart as a constant influence for good. A stone cannot be bent; it can only be broken. But the broken heart is malleable, movable: it can be touched, bruised, and healed (**Jer. 31:33³**). This great act of grace is done by the Father for His people.

The promises of this covenant are better promises because part and parcel of this covenant is the promise that it will be

bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

¹ **Jer. 31:22**; How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

² **Jer. 31:27-30**; Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

³ **Jer. 31:33**; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

utterly successful in the salvation of the elect (Jer. 31:34¹). Notice the subtle but sure distinction: Under the Old Covenant the message taught was that the blessings were conditional. Instead of, “They shall all know me,” it was, “You must know God,” with the implication that a person is taught to know God by keeping the covenant. The New Covenant guarantees that every one of the people will know God from the least to the greatest, from the pauper to the king. They, the *elect*, will all know God; that's a promise (2 Cor. 2:14-17, John 6:45; 10:27-29²). The Gospel is not about what *might be*, rather, it is about what *is*.

The promises of this covenant are better promises because their accomplishment does not rely on man but is entirely the work and guarantee of God and will result in dead men being raised to holiness and life by the power and faithfulness of God Almighty (vv. 35-40³).

¹ **Jer. 31:34**; And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

² **2 Cor. 2:14-17**; Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. **John 6:45**; It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. **10:27-29**; My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

³ **Jer. 31:35-40**; Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations

“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” (Hebrews 8:6).

of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

OLD AND NEW

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.

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.

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.

Hebrews 8:6-13

In the last chapter, we looked at the source that Paul quoted for the elaboration of this New Covenant, this better covenant established upon better promises. The promises of the

Old Covenant were faulty because their fulfillment was dependent upon weak, corrupt, and sinful human flesh. No good or eternal thing could come from fleshly efforts to obey that covenant. No sin could be remitted; no salvation could ever come from that covenant. However, the Old Covenant did serve its purpose. The Ten Commandments served to incarcerate or garrison the elect, and the ceremonies served to remind the adherent of his sin. Therefore, they were continually conscious of their sin until Christ came and accomplished what the Old Covenant could not accomplish, both for and in those for whom He died (Gal. 3:23; Heb. 10:3; Rom. 8:1-4¹).

Paul sums up the “better promises” of this New Covenant. He speaks of 5 specific promises that were accomplished by Christ and established for the elect. These make up the inheritance of the saints in light. They have these promises, not as things conditioned upon their obedience, but as accomplished by the death of the testator of the covenant.

First, the Law (word) of God is written in their hearts and minds (v. 10). This assures us that the believer obeys the laws intrinsically from that grand endowment in the inward man. He can say without hesitation, “With my mind I serve the law of God.” (Rom. 7:25²). Obedience is an innate principle of the believer's heart.

Secondly, the believer is promised that God will be their

¹ **Gal. 3:23**; But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. **Heb. 10:3**; But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. **Rom. 8:1-4**; There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

² **Rom. 7:25**; I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

God and they will be His people. What could possibly be a better promise than this? What peace engulfs the heart with the excellent knowledge that the Sovereign Maker of the world is personally committed to you and has fixed your heart upon Him!

Thirdly, the Lord God promises that all His people will know Him (v. 11). They will not have to be told to “know Him” in the sense that knowing God is something to be strived after or to be accomplished by human endeavor. They will know Him by the power and authority of the Mighty Savior (John 17:1-4¹). It is certain—they will *all* know God!

Fourthly, our great God promises that He will be merciful to their unrighteousness (v. 12). This is the promise of forgiveness. God promises this because He is just in forgiving. He is just in forgiving because of the redemptive accomplishments of His Blessed Son. Every believer is fully and freely forgiven because God has been merciful to his unrighteousness.

Fifthly, the Lord God has promised that He will remember their sins and iniquities no more. There is a wealth of peace in these words. God has not developed amnesia. This is a declaration that the sins of His people have been put away in accordance with His strict requirement. Metaphorical language is employed to try to explain the unexplainable. The Word says that our sins are gone, put away, cast behind God's back, and buried in the bottom of the sea. This language declares that Christ has made such satisfaction that, in God's economy, our sins no longer exist and that they will never be laid to our charge. God will never bring them to our attention (Romans

¹ **John 17:1-4**; These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

4:7-8; 8:33-34¹). This is the significance of the words “no more.” It is here that faith takes its most magnificent stand. Here, faith transcends our experiential awareness of our own frailty and utter failure. Here, faith lays hold of that which transcends the knowledge of our sin and iniquity and embraces the wonder of divine mercy. I remember my sins, but *God does not*. To believe this is to be free from sin, its punishment, its power, and soon, its very presence. These are better promises, indeed!

In setting forth these promises, our Lord does so in light of the fact that the covenant wherein resided the lesser (faulty) promises is no more (vv. 7, 13). The words of verse 13 relate to the dissolution of the Old Covenant as an explanation of what God means when He speaks of the “new.” Because the language speaks as if the Old Covenant had not yet passed away, some have used this passage to argue that there must be a continuation of the Old Covenant until this very day. Such try, by many means, to incorporate the practices of the Old Covenant into the New Covenant. This is not the meaning of this verse. Remember the theme of this book: These Jewish believers must leave behind all the elements of the Old Covenant because they have received Christ. To return to those beggarly elements would be an affront to Christ and His work as mediator and surety of the better New Covenant (Gal. 5:1-6²).

¹ **Romans 4:7-8**; Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. **8:33-34**; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

² **Gal. 5:1-6**; Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are

Remember that these things were written when the temple was still standing, the priesthood was still active, and several elements of the Sinai covenant were still in use (though the Ark of the Covenant, the central aspect of worship, had been missing since the Chaldeans took possession of it when they besieged Canaan, several centuries before).

Two things are said in verse 13. For the believer, the Old Covenant is done (Heb. 10:9¹). For the Jew who is under the sound of the Gospel, the things that he holds dear are passing and will soon be brought to a complete end. This probably took place in AD 70 when Rome decimated Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Our Lord had prophesied this (Matt. 24:1-2²). Christians in Jerusalem did not join Rome in the destruction of the city. Many of them suffered at the hands of Rome because Rome held that Christianity was merely another Jewish sect. Nor was the act of Rome merely anti-Semitism. It was the judgment of God against those who yet embraced the Old Covenant and rejected the New. Athanasius, an early pastor, said in AD 373, "It is a sign and an important proof of the coming of the Word of God, that Jerusalem no longer stands...For...when the truth was there, what need was there any more of shadow? And this is why Jerusalem still stood at that time, namely, that the Jews might be exercised in the types as a preparation for the reality." The Amplified Bible reads, "When God speaks of a new (covenant or argument), he makes the first

justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

¹ **Heb. 10:9**; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

² **Matt. 24:1-2**; And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

one obsolete (out of use). And what is obsolete (out of use and annulled because of age) is ripe for disappearance and to be dispensed with altogether.”

The old is *retired*. It is *decommissioned*. It is *gone* (v. 13).

DIVINE SERVICE (1)

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.

Hebrews 9:1-5

In our last study we saw that Paul declared that the Old Covenant had expired because it was old and so, at that time, was passing from the scene. At the time of Paul's writing, the Old Covenant had been spiritually fulfilled and had been set aside, having been finished or fulfilled on the cross of Calvary. However, because many of the things that operated under that covenant still physically existed, Paul referred to these trappings as passing away or soon to be gone. This final blow probably took place in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. In the beginning of chapter 9, the inspired writer returns to the furniture found in the tabernacle in order to show that the elements that belonged to the practices of the Old Covenant must be viewed over against the Person and work of Jesus Christ. He speaks of the elements as "divine service." This is the English translation of the Greek word that means "ministration," and in this way, Paul revealed what purpose these elements served under the administration of the Old

Covenant. Remember that it is always Paul's aim to put the Old covenant in its proper place, functioning as a picture or illustration of a better covenant, established and administered by the Son of God (Heb. 9:11-12¹).

The first word of verse 1 and the last phrase of verse 5 are prohibitive bookends that assure us that these things Paul mentioned are not his subject but are mentioned merely as further proof of the institution of the New Covenant.

Verse 1 begins with the word "then." This word means "therefore" and relates to the fact of the dissolution of the Old Covenant (Heb. 8:13²). It is as if he wrote, "Therefore, since the Old Covenant is no longer in force, the service that used the elements of the tabernacle is likewise dissolved." These elements were employed by the priests and the High Priest, so they are merely another illustration of the glory of the Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's mention of these elements of Old Covenant worship is certainly not a reinstatement of these things, as some would like to have it. Rather, it is a statement that these things also passed with the passing of the Old Covenant under which their "divine service" was executed.

In the last phrase of verse 5 Paul assures us that the mention of these things is not the subject that he now broaches. The word "cannot" does not speak of inability but rather prohibition. He cannot speak of these things as useful except under the covenant in which they were used. They have no place in the New Covenant except as pictures and illustrations of the work of Christ. He is using these elements as a large adjective to

¹ **Heb. 9:11-12**; 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; 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.

² **Heb. 8:13**; 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.

illuminate and define his true subject.

Another distinction is clearly drawn in verse 1. All these elements and the services that attended them were done in a “worldly sanctuary.” This contrasts with the place where our Lord did business with His Father—in a tabernacle not made with hands and not of this building (tabernacle or temple: Heb. 9:11).

The purpose these things served was to testify, in type and shadow, of a better covenant established upon better promises. The word “verily” reveals that these things truly existed and truly served a purpose. This, too, is a simple but profound distinction. A thing can be true and yet not be the truth. The law was true; the Old Covenant with its “10 words” and its multiplicity of rites and ceremonies was true, but it was not the truth. The truth is Christ. The Old Covenant pictured the truth but only in shrouded shadow. John wrote that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17¹). Grace and truth are only in the beloved Son of God, the Word “made flesh,” gloriously “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14²).

Paul describes the elements of the first and second tabernacle in verses 2-5. He is speaking of the tabernacle proper, the veiled section of the tabernacle, a room which measured 15' x 45'. The first is a room that measured 30' x 15' and contained within it the lampstand and the table of showbread and the golden altar also called the altar of incense.

The lampstand or candlestick pictured Christ as the light of the world. Its fire was never extinguished, picturing Christ as the eternal light.

¹ **John 1:17**; For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

² **John 1:14**; And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The table of showbread pictured Christ as the bread of life. This bread was pierced through with an awl, picturing the suffering of our Lord as our substitute.

These elements were attended to by the priests. They trimmed the light and kept it burning, picturing the church preaching the Gospel. The bread was the food of the priests picturing Christ as the continual sustenance of the church. This section of the tabernacle is called the sanctuary or the “holy place.”

Now we run into something interesting. According to the KJV, Paul did not mention the golden altar (sometimes called the altar of incense). Instead, he wrote about the “golden censer.” However, the word translated “censer” means “incense burner” or “fumigator,” so it could be referring to either the altar, itself, or the censer used on it. Only the context can reveal which one Paul was referring to.

The answer lies in the meaning of the temple layout. In virtually all temples, both pagan and Jewish, the inner sanctum or Most Holy Place represented heaven. The outer court represented the world. But the Jewish temple had an intervening room called The Holy Place. This room was a picture of Christ on earth.

The golden altar was positioned by the veil that separated The Holy Place from The Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). This piece of furniture is unique in the Holy Place for, even though it was positioned in the Holy Place, its most important function was carried out in the Most Holy Place. Whenever the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place, he would put incense from the golden altar into the golden censer. As he entered the Most Holy place, the smoke from the golden censer would fill the Most Holy Place concealing the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant so that he would not die. (Lev. 16:12,13) So, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered The Most

Holy Place with two things: the blood of the sacrifice and incense taken from the golden altar and put in the golden censer.

This beautifully pictures the mysterious work of Christ on the cross. It is there that Christ carried out what was only pictured or illustrated on the Day of the Atonement. But there is a mystery in how Christ accomplished it, for while His crucifixion was carried out on earth in the sight of all who were there, it is written that He entered a “greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this [creation]” (Heb. 9:11). Hebrews 9:14 tells us that “[Christ,] through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.” Here is the mystery: Christ was on earth in the sight of men and in heaven in the sight of God at the same time! Like the golden altar in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle/Temple, Christ was on earth, but at the same time, like the golden censer, He was in heaven.

So, there is no error in Paul’s description of the “incense burner” being in the Most Holy Place. Rather, there is a glorious reference to the mystery of the work of Christ who, as our sacrifice, was on earth, and at the same time, as our High Priest, was in heaven. The golden altar and the golden censer are inseparable. Though they are two things, they are viewed as a single thing existing in two places. But, seeing that the primary work of the golden altar was carried out by the golden censer in the Most Holy Place, Paul places it there.

The elements of the blood of the burnt offering and the incense, both picturing the intercessory work of Christ, filled the Holy of Holies with the sweet smelling savor unto God and represented the mediator of the New Covenant built on better promises, showing us that the only thing between us and the Holy God is the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Thus, we see the use of the elements of the divine service

under the Old Covenant. They served to picture Christ as High Priest, the subject of chapters 7-10.

DIVINE SERVICE (2)

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.

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:

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.

Hebrews 9:4-10

As we saw in the last chapter, Paul is setting up the *particular work of the high priest* in the ceremony of the Day of Atonement. He did this first by using language that combined the golden altar and the golden censer, thus pointing to the work of the high priest who alone entered the Most Holy place carrying coals from the Brazen Altar and incense from the Golden Altar contained in the golden censer to fill the Holy of Holies with smoke to shroud himself from the shining glory of God. What follows in *these* verses is a description of the

elements involved in that ceremony described in light of the work of the high priest. We know that these things are not the subject but merely an introduction to the subject of the glorious successful work of the Great High Priest, our Savior. He makes this a point as he addresses these elements as things of which he “cannot now speak particularly.” These things point a singular finger to Christ (Heb. 9:11¹).

Beginning in verse 4, Paul describes the central piece of furniture in the worship of God under the Old Covenant. The makeup of the Ark of the Covenant was indicative of Christ in several aspects of His ministry. Being overlaid with gold, it pointed to the *royalty of Christ*. Its contents were three things: First was the golden pot of manna signifying that Christ is the *bread of life*. Second was Aaron's rod that budded which pictured Christ as *life from the dead*. Third was the tables of the covenant representing the *law*. The lid on this chest was solid gold. Upon the lid were two cherubim with out-stretched wings facing each other. Between these outstretched wings dwelt the Shekinah glory of God (v. 5). This represented the *work* of Christ in covering the law fully and revealing the Glory of God in the Gospel. The Ark represented the *presence* of God with His people. All these elements realized their fulfillment in Christ. He is God with us. In Him dwells *all* the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Verses 6-7 set forth the places and respective duties that were performed by the priests and high priests. All these elements and the people involved were part of the worship under the Old (and now dissolved) Covenant and took place in a worldly tabernacle. Their performance pictured a distinctive note—approaching the glory of God was by one man, once a

¹ **Heb. 9:11**; 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.

year, with blood for his own sin and the sin of the people. This picture revealed the representative nature of Christ's sacrifice. He *alone* stood before God as the representative of the elect (Rom. 5:19¹).

Verse 8 is the explanation of the last phrase of verse 5. Paul did not overly elaborate on worship under the Old Covenant because the Holy Spirit was teaching something else by all that testimony. By recalling the ceremonies and the temporal nature, of the priesthood and tabernacle, the Holy Spirit was declaring that the way into the holiest of all (that is to say, the way of salvation) had not yet been revealed. Once again, we see that the Old Testament, though revealing true things, was not the revelation of the truth. In the entire inspiration of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was signifying something else. This is part of the beauty of studying the Old Testament. Enlightened minds know that the treasure to be uncovered is Jesus Christ. The tabernacle and all its attendant ceremonies were only figures used at that time and they were unable to do what was necessary.

One of the interesting things here in verse 9 is the what Paul sets forth as being of primary importance—the perfection of the conscience of those who observed the appointed worship. We will look at this matter of conscience in the next lesson. But for now, it is important to note that this is the thing first mentioned. It would seem that to put our conscience in such a place of importance is odd, to say the least. But it is a great thing that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to place our conscience here and to declare that the Old Covenant could not make it perfect. First it assures the elect that in the great transaction accomplished on the cross, the mind of God had their interest at heart. Secondly, it is a revelation of that the Old Covenant practices had to do

¹ **Rom. 5:19**; For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

with the conscience though the word “conscience” is not found in the Old Testament. Thirdly, the conscience operates within the realm of the law, and evidently is invigorated, though to disappointment, by efforts to observe the law. Fourthly, the employment of the conscience is to reveal that what the law could not do, Christ did (Heb. 9:14¹). Finally, the conscience plays a significant role in our peace and comfort before God and our joy in this world.

The final aspect of the Holy Spirit's signification is that all that was accomplished under the Old Covenant was summed up in physical acts performed in the flesh. They are called meats and drinks and diverse washings and carnal or natural ordinances or commands (v. 10). The first two words of verse 10 are in italics. In this case, the translators were very helpful. They speak of the elements of the Old Covenant in the past tense—They “*stood.*” The past tense is employed because they no longer *stand*. Notice, also, how these things are described. They are called an imposition. That word “imposed” means to *press down*. It is even used in the sense of burying (Gal. 2:14²) Is it any wonder that those who are saved by grace are perplexed by someone desiring to be under the law (Gal. 4:21³)?

These all stood until the time of the reformation. This word, “reformation,” means correction or emendation, straightened out or fixed. It cannot be much clearer. The old covenant was corrected when Christ came. That which *utterly* perfected,

¹ **Heb. 9:14**; 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?

² **Gal. 2:14**; But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

³ **Gal. 4:21**; Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

replaced that which made *nothing* perfect (Heb. 9:14⁴).

⁴ **Heb. 9:14**; 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?

CONSCIENCE (1)

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?

Hebrews 9:14

As we have seen in the study of this chapter, our Lord graciously reveals that part of the intent and design of the successful work of Christ was to perfect the conscience of those who came to Christ. This revealed the superiority of Christ's sacrifice as contrasted to the Old Covenant sacrifices that could never make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to conscience.

In verses 9¹ and 14 of Hebrews 9 and in verse 2² of Hebrews 10 we have the word “conscience.” This word is a common word in the English language and is found often in the New Testament. In the original language it generally refers to that faculty of the mind that distinguishes between what is morally good and bad, prompting us to do the former and shun the latter; commending one, condemning the other. If you were a Freudian your definition of *conscience* would be “The part of the superego [the division of the psyche] that is formed through the internalization of moral standards of parents and society that censors and restrains the ego.” The Super-ego is mostly unconscious, it is composed of the ego ideal—that which tells me, “I'm a good person.” *Conscience* is “The part of the

¹ **verse 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.

² **verse 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.

superego in psychoanalytic language *that judges* the ethical nature of one's actions and thoughts then transmits such judgments to the ego for consideration." Conscience, no matter how it is used, has to do with *guilt*, whether positively or negatively. If one speaks of not being able to do something with a clear conscience, he is saying that he could not do it and be guiltless. If he says that he has a clear conscience, he is saying that he has no guilt or is not guilty. Conscience has to do with knowledge (whether consciously or subconsciously) of good and evil. That fact automatically reveals the origin of conscience.

When Adam consumed the forbidden fruit, he gained the knowledge of good and evil. He gained (for the worse) a conscience. Up until that devastating deed took place there was nothing in his knowledge but good. Everything in creation was good other than his loneliness or aloneness, of which there is no indication that he was aware. This was God's determination. His knowledge was all good and even very good. When he disobeyed God, evil entered into the world by him and man has since been plagued with a conscience. The singular product of conscience is always and only a knowledge and consideration of guilt. This was also clearly revealed by the actions of Adam once conscience became his guide. He immediately tried to assuage his guilt, first, by covering it, then by hiding from the sting of it, and finally, blaming someone other than himself for it.

Conscience, no matter how beneficial it might be in making moral and ethical judgment concerning behavior, can never bring a person closer to God by the exercising or obeying of it. The conscience is either an accuser or an excuser, and this is always the case (Rom. 2:14-15¹). Accusing or excusing is the

¹ **Rom. 2:14-15**; For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts,

particular arena in which works-based, free will religion operates and they can never produce perfection before God, as pertaining to conscience, for conscience operates within the nature that man has inherited from Adam (though religion may and often does blind the mind to the effects of conscience) (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Titus 1:9-16¹). Though religion may cauterize the conscience, it cannot ever *perfect* it. Conscience operates in the realm of the broken law, in the realm of the transgression, and never in the realm of spiritual life.

At the time of Adam's transgression, the existing law library was minimalist at most. There was just one law. That law, as all laws, was designed to define sin, assign blame, and designate punishment. That the law preceded the crime does not suggest that there was a possibility that the crime might not be committed. Rather it means that the crime, in the purpose of God had already been committed (cf. Christ slain from foundation of the world). A mutable creature will mutate. The only one that cannot mutate is God. Mutation in humanity is

their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

¹ **1 Tim. 4:1-3**; Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. **Titus 1:9-16**; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

always downward, even when man was at his best estate as in the unique case of Adam. Adam tried to assuage his guilt, even though he knew he had broken the law of God, for God had said “Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day ye eat there of ye shall surely die.”

Once the deed was done Adam proved that any of the efforts of natural religion, (which are all designed to make a person feel better about himself) are dead works. He did not know that he was spiritually dead. He surely felt the pangs of natural death because he began immediately to stress and be anxious over this new accuser in his bosom, the fear of judgment, which is the true fear of death. His conscience accused him. His knowledge of good and evil made him endeavor to make a moral and ethical choice to undo his aching dilemma and to quiet this screaming banshee in his bosom. The end product was that, with each religious effort, whether covering, hiding, or assigning blame, he showed for all who are spiritually alive that the law, no matter the shape or form, can only define sin, assign blame, determine punishment, and end in guilt (Rom. 3:19-20¹).

Shakespeare said, “Conscience makes cowards of us all.” Spurgeon defined conscience as “the sense of past and present sin and the recollection of our deficient life.” No matter the effort to reform or change behavior, conscience (the knowledge of good and evil) will always bring a man to despair (Rom. 7:15-25²). Where there is sin, there is law and where there is

¹ **Rom. 3:19-20**; Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

² **Rom. 7:15-25**; For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I

law there is sin (1 Cor. 15:56¹). Where there is sin, there is guilt and where there is guilt there is conscience. Any preacher who tries to bring his hearers to the law for righteousness is entirely discounting the work of Christ, making it of no effect to his hearers. He, operating in conscience, addresses the conscience of men and women reminding them of their guilt. He then takes them to the law so that they might make moral and ethical choices to cover, hide or blame someone or something else for their guilt (box, bottle, bordello, or internet—it's not your fault). Unbeknownst to him, because he is operating from the conscience, is that he is, in truth, declaring to his hearers that there is no remedy for sin (1 Tim. 1:7-10²).

would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

¹ **1 Cor. 15:56**; The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

² **1 Tim. 1:7-10**; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

CONSCIENCE (2)

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?

Hebrews 9:14

This is specifically what Paul is dealing with in Hebrews 9 and 10. The service performed toward God by observing the rites and ceremonies of the law cannot make the comers thereto perfect “pertaining to conscience.”

These services cannot remove guilt and, in fact, excite and exacerbate guilt. If they were able to remove guilt they would have ceased to be offered because the magnitude of the act of removing guilt is such that, once it is done, it can never be undone and therefore never needs repeating (10:1-3¹).

Paul makes a remarkable statement in verses 8-9 of chapter 9². Taking in the entire matter of service to God by the law, and setting the law to represent the Old Covenant, he says the Holy Ghost teaches precisely that all those efforts were designed to fail in removing guilt. In the performance of these things, the conscience was incited to guilt. These all operated in the realm

¹ **10:1-3**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

² **Heb. 9:8-9**; 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: 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.

of flesh and, therefore, could not please God (Heb. 9:10¹). According to the Holy Spirit, all these rites were carnal, hardly an adjective that men would apply to holiness, justness, or righteousness. Yet men stand in pulpits and preach the law as a means of righteousness, but what they produce in men by such preaching is nothing more than a carnal holiness, a holiness hatched in the conscience, a performance of the knowledge of good and evil. The Holy Ghost simply does not teach that a man should go to the law for righteousness, ever, in any form or for any reason. To do so is carnal and not spiritual because it only results in work generated from death (Rom. 7:4-5²). Operating in the realm of conscience is not spiritual, and all works that emanate from conscience are dead works and cannot ever be regarded as service to God. The catalyst of conscience is the broken law. This is what the Holy Spirit teaches.

Is there such a thing as a good conscience (Rom. 9:1; 1 Pet. 3:16-21³)? Can the accuser that we are born with be silenced? It

¹ **Heb. 9:10**; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

² **Rom. 7:4-5**; Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

³ **Rom. 9:1**; I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. **1 Pet. 3:16-21**; Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

is clear that it cannot be silenced by the deeds of the law; such deeds only increase the decibel level. Religious service designed to keep the Law and render service to God by the Law is dead—graveyard dead, twice dead and plucked up by the roots. Guilt is employed by man-made religion as the incentive for religious service, and such service is designed to soothe or ease the conscience. The only problem with that method is that it never works—*never!*

What does the Holy Spirit teach will silence the conscience? A *perfect* sacrifice. A *spiritual* sacrifice. A sacrifice that has nothing whatsoever to do with our religious service yet produces true and acceptable service to God. The conscience is only silenced *when no grounds exist upon which it may accuse*. This means that there can be no *law* to define sin, therefore, no *sin* to record, and therefore no *guilt* to condemn.

That sacrifice is the sovereign, successful, sweet substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (Heb. 9:12, 15, 22, 26; 10:12-18¹). The conscience is purged, quieted, silenced, and placed under a judicial gag order when every basis for condemnation is removed. Notice the allusion to the red

¹ **Heb. 9:12, 15, 22, 26;** 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. **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. **22,** And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. **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. **Heb. 10:12-18;** But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

heifer in verse 13 whose ashes symbolically cleansed the defilement of the flesh. What defilement did those ashes symbolically cleanse? The sin of touching a dead thing. This alludes to the dead works produced in serving God by conscience. Don't touch this! Don't touch that! If the ashes of a heifer had power to cleanse the defilement of the flesh, then blood of Christ has even more power even to purge the conscience from dead works. What does that mean? See: 10:1-2¹. It means that there is no basis upon which the conscience can accuse—there is no more conscience (guilt) of sins (Rom. 8:1-4; 33-34²).

We serve the living God, not by conscience, but by faith. We do not serve the living God to cover, hide, or assuage our guilt. We serve the living because we are not guilty. Our works are not dead but living because they are spiritual and acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5³). Looking to Christ makes the conscience *mute*. When I feel guilty, it is because I have breathed life into my conscience and the result will be that I will try to do something to cover my guilt, or I will try to hide from God, or I will blame someone else for my sin and that will land

¹ **10:1-2**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

² **Rom. 8:1-4**; There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. **33-34**; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. **34**, Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

³ **1 Peter 2:5**; For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

me in a pit of despair. When I look at my Savior knowing that He has obtained eternal redemption for me, knowing that He has purged my conscience from dead works, knowing that my sins are remitted, knowing that there is no ground upon which I can be accused or condemned, knowing that I have been perfected as pertaining to conscience, knowing that God will not remember my sins and iniquities, then, and only then, can I serve the living God. Any other motivation or rationale results in dead works.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

EFFICACIOUS

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.

Hebrews 9:11-12

These words are the believer's assurance concerning the work that our Lord performed—the sacrifice that He offered to God. Beginning verse 11 with the word “but” is a declaration of an opposite effect from that which has been set forth previously. Paul has addressed the ineffectiveness of the entire Old Covenant system to perfect those who practiced its rites and ceremonies as pertaining to conscience. He now addresses the ability of Christ to do what the Old covenant could not do and the manner in which He did it.

The glory of our Lord is here displayed in transcendent beauty. Here we see Him as the fullness of the Godhead in a body. He is Christ, the anointed, the shadowed subject of all the elements of the Old Covenant (Heb. 10:1¹), the promised Messiah, the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Here He is the Priest, the offerer, the offering, and the acceptor of the offering. Christ is all of salvation; He is the salvation of the elect. His arena of operation is in the greater tabernacle, the one that is invisible to us, the one not formed by the power and will of the flesh but rather by the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14²). It was

¹ **Heb. 10:1**; 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 **Heb. 9:14**; How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience

in this spiritual arena that our Lord worked His work upon the earth. Sin and righteousness are spiritual principles. Though each, in kind, may be represented by physical actions, they truly operate in the realm of the invisible. Our Lord offered His physical body for the suffering due sin and offered His soul as the just payment for sin. The entire transaction and execution of the work was in a place not made with hands. This is symbolic language that teaches us that humanity was not privy to this saving work. We may get a glimpse as we consider the cross, and imagine our bleeding surety hanging there, but we see nothing more than what human eyes can behold, and human understanding can embrace. Had we been physically there, we could have beheld the carnage, but we could not have seen the high priest of better things do business in the heavenly (spiritual) place. There and there alone were matters of eternity settled for all eternity. The only way we may understand these things for what they are is if we are given spiritual understanding thorough the new birth. To the natural man these spiritual things are foolishness because he can never get past what his eyes can behold. Mel Gibson made a movie about the physical sufferings of Christ and it was quite popular. However, it only reinforced what natural man can see. To many it was inspiring to see one of their own kind suffer such things for such an honorable cause. It was enough for many to make them turn over a new leaf and for a time return to religion. But what really took place on the cross was invisible and spiritual and our Lord gave evidence of it and suggested its grandeur when He hid the sun in darkness. The believer, with the heart of faith, sees the unseen and understands that in that day, heavenly, spiritual things came to pass. The description given of that glorious undertaking and its unqualified success is seen in the words of verse 12.

from dead works to serve the living God?

Once again, before declaring the glory of what Christ did, Paul assures us that this sacrifice was not according to the Old Covenant, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves.” This sacrifice was Christ's own blood, the blood of the spotless lamb, the blood of the eternal covenant, the blood of the New Covenant, the blood that purged our sins—the blood (the death) that met every requirement of the law's just sentence. “His *own* blood” teaches us that no *other* blood was needed and that no other blood was rendered. In our previous studies we have seen that “His *own* blood” was completely sufficient for its intended purpose.

This fact is stated in the singularity of the sacrifice. By His own blood, He entered “once.” Every aspect of this transaction points to the exclusivity of it. Christ is that unique high priest, offering unique blood in a unique place with a unique result. He was by Himself (Heb. 1:3; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:25; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24¹).

By His blood He entered once “into the holy place.” This is a symbolic representation of the very presence of God. Under the Old Covenant, the Most Holy was where the shekinah glory of God was manifest. In the Holy Place not made with hands is God, Himself. Because of the efficacy of what our Lord

¹ **Heb. 1:3**; 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. **Gal. 1:4**; Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. **Gal. 2:20**; I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. **Eph. 5:25**; Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. **1 Tim. 2:6**; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. **Titus 2:14**; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. **1 Pet. 2:24**; Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

accomplished, we who are the recipients of grace have access to this very same place (Heb. 10:19). This is no small thing! Sinners washed by this blood have free access and full welcome into the very presence of the thrice Holy God.

“Having” obtained eternal redemption. This word “having” is also an exclusive word. It denotes the distinction between the Old and New Covenants. Under the Old Covenant there was the sense of waiting for the Redeemer, waiting for salvation (Gen. 49:18¹). The New Covenant is a declaration that the Redeemer has come and has redeemed. By His own blood He has obtained eternal redemption. The original reads, “Having found eternal redemption”, which may allude to Job 33:24² (Matt. 10:28³).

The price of redemption was the blood of Christ. The assurance of the value of the blood is that the redemption obtained is eternal. This is also a clear declaration that the efficacy of the redemption is, in no way, subject to the whims of human will. The entire account was settled, once for all, in that Holy Place with that Holy Blood. In that critical moment, all the elect were redeemed and every one of them were eternally redeemed. They shall never perish.

The last two words of verse 12 are in italics, which mean that the translators added them for our better understanding. The italicized “us” is clearly declared in many ways throughout this book (1:3 “our sins”; 2:10 “many sons”; 2:14 “the children”; 2:17 “his brethren”; 9:24 “for us”). This is our redemption, the redemption of the elect.

¹ **Gen. 49:18**; I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

² **Job 33:24**; Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

³ **Matt. 10:28**; And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

FOR THIS CAUSE

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.

Hebrews 9:15

The first four words of this verse establish a very important principle and settle a very significant truth, especially for the Hebrew believer. I once spoke with a man who was attending an eschatology class on the book of Ezekiel. He was convinced that the Old Covenant would be reestablished in the end of the world, complete with Temple and Priesthood. I did not argue with him but pointed out a few things in the book of Hebrews and encouraged him to read the entire book to understand the end of the Old Covenant. Every time I tried to bring the conversation to Christ as the fulfillment of these things and the abolishing of them, this gentleman wanted to talk about a rapture, seven years of tribulation, of Gog and Magog and future attacks on Israel. He was convinced that the Old Covenant would be restored, thinking, as much of religion does, that it was a better covenant, though this book clearly declares otherwise. Because many in religion believe that the Old Covenant is still viable for justification or at least as a rule of life, they also believe that the people who lived under that covenant were saved by the law, while those who are under the New Covenant are saved by grace. For the Hebrew believer, the necessary truth needed to be finally settled.

Thus far in this chapter, Paul has established that those who endeavored to come to God by the Old Covenant were not made perfect before God as pertaining to conscience. This simply

meant that the obedience offered under that covenant did not remove every, or in fact, any ground of accusation. The Law, under that covenant, remained the accuser of conscience and the adherents to the Law found themselves in a constant state of guilt from which there was no possibility of relief. This removes any possibility of being saved by human obedience to that covenant. No one has been or ever shall be saved by the Law (Gal. 2:16¹).

Paul settles this fact in verse 15. The words of this verse declare that those who were saved in the time of the Old Covenant were saved in the exact same manner that those are saved in the time of the New Covenant. Both the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints were redeemed by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. This is settled by the words “for this cause.” These three words refer back to the last phrase of verse 14 and, in this instance, speak to the reason why Christ died. This is no small thing. We know that the primary reason that Christ died is revealed in the result it accomplished. His death fulfilled the Law, satisfied justice, and appeased God for the sin of the elect. Here Paul gives us a further cause. He declares that, in order for the children of God to have their conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God, Christ died. He offered himself to God to purge our conscience from dead works. The dead works to which he refers are the elements, rites, and ceremonies that a person observed under the law for acceptance before God. These were purged from our conscience by the death of Christ.

“For this cause,” Christ is the mediator (administrator, testator) of the New Testament, the final, glorious testament. By His position as Mediator of the New Covenant and by

¹ Gal. 2:16; Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

means of His death, He redeemed. He did not merely redeem those who lived during His time but all those who believed while living at the time of the Old Covenant. The only redemption of a man's soul is the redemption that Christ accomplished by His death. The Old Testament believers are referred to in the same manner as those saints of the New Testament. They are *called* (Acts 2:39; Rom. 8:29-30, 2 Thess. 2:13-14¹). One of the meanings is that they are *named*. They were named as children in the family of God before the world began. They are called by the Gospel. They are called by the voice of Christ (John 10:3, 14, 27²). All those saints who lived before the time of Christ, both Jew and Gentile, were called because they were redeemed by the death of Christ. They received the promise of eternal life by the death of Christ (Col. 1:12³). The Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints were, alike, saved by the blood of Christ. They, with Abraham, believed God and it was accounted to them for righteousness (Rom. 3:24-26⁴).

¹ **Acts 2:39**; For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. **Rom. 8:29-30**, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. **2 Thess. 2:13-14**; But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

² **John 10:3**, To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. **14**, I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. **27**; My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

³ **Col. 1:12**; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

⁴ **Rom. 3:24-26**; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I

With this verse Paul once again brings all of salvation to its singular place. The death of Christ redeemed the elect of God whether they lived in the past, the present, or the future. On that cross, all the sins of all the elect were made to meet on Christ. There He satisfied God and made reconciliation for the people, established eternal peace, and purged the conscience of the elect from seeking to approach God by the deeds of the Law.

“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? 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” (Heb. 9:14-15).

say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

WILL AND TESTAMENT

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.

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.

Hebrews 9:16-22

These verses are an explanation of two elements of the previous verse. The two elements are the testament and that which the testament relies upon, the death of Christ. The testament referred to is the New Testament or New Covenant. The covenant is expressed here as the covenant of promise (v. 15). The meaning is that of a legal arrangement and, considering the context, should be seen in the sense of a will. Paul uses this to, once again, bring us back to the singularity of Christ's death. Generally, a covenant is established between two parties, but the covenant of promise is different. In Galatians 3:17-18¹, Paul speaks to this truth. To distinguish between the

¹ **Galatians 3:17-18**; And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none

general view of a covenant and the specificity of the covenant of promise, Paul looks at the Old Covenant—the Mosaic Covenant—and declares that a mediator is not a mediator of one party but rather of two parties. In the case of that covenant, Moses is seen as the mediator of the covenant between God and his people, a covenant whose blessings or cursings were dependent upon the obedience of the people. Galatians 3:20¹ declares that the covenant of promise did not involve two parties, only one. When he said, “God is one”, he was saying that, in the execution of the covenant of promise, God operated alone. In this passage in Hebrews, Paul is declaring the same principle. He always brings the reader back to his message of “Christ and Him crucified.”

The New Covenant is a will and testament, and where there is a will, there is a testator—one who made the will and entered into it for those who would be the beneficiaries, the heirs of promise who receive the “promise of eternal inheritance.” These beneficiaries had nothing to do with the conception or the execution of the will. They were simply the recipients of the benefits of their benevolent benefactor. The testator is one. He acts alone. In this, Paul distinguishes between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and the differences in how the covenanted blessings come to the beneficiaries of each covenant. In the case of the New Covenant, the covenant becomes powerful and is enforced by the death of the testator. In the case of a will, it is only after the one who drew up the will (the testator) is dead that the will or covenant can be enforced, and once the testator has died, it *must* be enforced. But the Old Covenant was not a will, so it was activated and enforced on entirely different principles. Even though it was initiated with the death of many sacrificial animals, it still relied

effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

¹ Gal. 3:20; Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

on the obedience of the beneficiaries for them to receive the blessings promised in it. The New Covenant relied only on the obedience of the testator and that obedience was death (Phil. 2:8¹). The intricate nature and design of the covenant is that, upon the satisfaction of justice, all blessings flow to those who are named in the will without them ever having obeyed. Since no sacrifice of the Old Covenant could satisfy the law, the promise could not be realized under that covenant. But now, once in the end of the world (Hebrews 9:26², literally, “once in the consummation of the ages”) Christ has appeared to put away sin. He obeyed the precepts of the covenant, will, and testament, therefore, that testament is necessarily in force. Everyone named in that covenant is an heir of the promise (Col. 1:12³). They are so for no other reason than the fact that the testator has died. By His blood, the Lord ratified the covenant and gave unto His people what He had given them before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9⁴).

Verses 18 through 22 are an explanation of the truth that the Old Covenant was subservient to the New Covenant. The proof that the Old Covenant only pictured and typified the New Covenant is seen in the fact that, though that covenant was written in stone, it had to be purified by blood. Once this principle is understood, then the Old Covenant comes to light for what it is: a beautiful, symbolic representation of the New Covenant. For example, it is only in the light of Christ's answer

¹ **Phil. 2:8**; And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

² **Heb. 9:26**; 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.

³ **Col. 1:12**; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

⁴ **2 Tim. 1:9**; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

to the law that we see that the law only served to reveal man's guilt (Romans 3:19-20). The New Covenant was the model for the Old Covenant. The necessity of blood to cover the elements of the law pointed to the truth that the law was insufficient to answer its own demands. Look at Exodus 24:3-8¹. This is what Paul is referring to in verse 19 of our text. There are a couple of things that ought to pique our attention:

The first is that the sacrifices were not Tabernacle sacrifices, for the Tabernacle had not yet been built nor the priesthood sanctified to its work and that these sacrifices were brought up immediately after the response of the people to the reading of the law. It is as if, when the people responded that they would do all the law, Moses immediately realized that God must be appeased. The answer to the people's response was not an approving salutation from Moses but a reminder to them that God was holy and the remedy for sin was death.

Secondly, if you compare Exodus 24:3-8 (see footnote above) and Hebrews 9:19, you will see that Paul added the Book in which Moses had recorded the words of the Old Covenant to the things which Moses sprinkled with blood. It was not only the people who had to be purified with blood; the Old Covenant, itself, had to be purified with blood. It is possible that this was done also to say to the Hebrew believers that the

¹ **Exodus 24:3-8**; And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

law was satisfied, not by their personal obedience, but by the blood of the sacrifice. Since it has been established that the effectual blood was not that of Old Covenant sacrifices, he brings them to the death of Christ as the singular message of the Old Covenant. The Gospel preacher preaches the law as fulfilled and satisfied by the death of Christ, never as a matter of justification or rule of life. Verse 22 makes it clear that obedience to the law could not satisfy the law. The law required blood as the only means of purging sin for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

Verses 23-24 state in no uncertain terms that Christ and what He did was the true reality and that the Old Covenant and all its attendant sacrifices were merely copies of Him and what He did. It was necessary that they be covered in blood or they could not even be a real copy of what Christ did. Without the blood, the elements of the law would only have been another false religion. Since animal sacrifices could only atone or cover sin for a year, in order for there to be a true and eternal purification, there must be better sacrifices. Christ's singular sacrifice is all of those "better sacrifices" and is the better and truly satisfying sacrifices because of the superiority of His blood over the blood of animals, the superiority of His priesthood over that of Aaron and his sons (or even Moses) and the superiority of the "temple" in which He offered His sacrifice, that Holy of Holies not made with hands. He is there now to appear in the presence of God for us. The Old Covenant, though first revealed, was only a copy of the New Covenant that has existed eternally. The Testator has shed His blood, and the New Covenant is in force, and all those named in that will and testament have inherited the promise. The death of Christ has sealed it.

FOR US

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.

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.

Hebrews 9:24-28

The last phrase of verse 24 tells us that Christ is in the presence of God now for us. Here Paul shows Christ not only as the mediator of the New Covenant but again brings us to the fact of His High Priesthood. He is drawing on the high priest's merely typical entrance into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat before the merely typical presence of God, the Shekinah glory. Christ did not enter into that place but into the place where God dwells. Heaven and the presence of God are one in the same here. As High Priest, He is there for us. The word "appear" means to manifest or to openly show or display (7:25b¹). There is no doubt that this speaks to His advocacy with the Father (1

¹ 7:25b; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

John 2:1-2¹). In His death he settled the matter of justice that God required. He did that on the cross. Now, He is in the very presence of God, appearing (manifesting Himself) for His people. As a result of His effectual death He was exalted to the right hand of God. Now He continues His effectual work, appearing in the presence of God. It is beyond our ability to fully understand what this means, but it certainly sounds like good news. He is ever in the face of God, filling the view of God for us. He is there for us now and is the source of great confidence and comfort for us. Part and parcel with the proclamation of the Gospel is the revelation of this truth (1 Cor. 2:12²). The word of God speaks of the believer as one who “loves His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8³). Along with the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension and the second coming, the believer loves this appearing in our text.

The next two verses teach of the weight and gravity and guaranteed success of His appearance for us. He first does so by eliminating all previous appearances by the Levitical high priests. The Old Covenant priesthood offered sacrifices often. They came every year into the Holiest of All and offered sacrifices that never took away sin. They did not offer themselves. Christ offered Himself. Also, if the offering of the lambs was the true and not the copy, then Christ would have had to offer Himself often. He would have needed to have suffered since the foundation of the world.

¹ **1 John 2:1-2**; My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

² **1 Cor. 2:12**; And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

³ **2 Tim. 4:8**; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Christ's priesthood and mediatorial sacrifice was a singular event—the singular event that defines history. Now, in the end of the world, at the appointed time in the history of the world, He has appeared once to put away sin. This atonement for sin was not accomplished by the former priesthood or its numerous sacrifices. It was accomplished by Christ's sacrifice of Himself. Notice that Paul uses the present to speak of the advocacy of Christ as well as His crucifixion. By doing this he reveals the basis of the advocacy. He appears for us conditioned on His death. The singular message remains. We cannot preach Christ now unless we preach of His crucifixion. We preach Christ and Him crucified. His person and His work are inseparable. His blood, His righteousness, and His death are synonymous. As He appears in the presence of God for us, God sees His death for us.

The next two verses are the “as and so” of our salvation. “As it is appointed to man once to die and after that the judgment.” Why is there such an appointment that men must keep? The answer is *sin*. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” Ez. 18:4, 20) Hebrews 9:27, however, does not speak of spiritual death but physical death—the sort of death that is required by the justice of God. Physical death is the natural endpoint of sin (James 1:15¹). Each man must die for his sin. After a man dies, he must face God in judgment. This is the course of humanity. Shakespeare wrote, “we all owe God one death.” As this is the case with us, so it was the case with Christ. In the death of a man, he must bear his own sin; he must be held accountable for his own sin. So, Christ must likewise die for sin and be held accountable for it. Here we see the fact and the glory of our Lord's humanity. A man must die because a man has sinned. If we follow the context, the death of each man is, in some sense,

¹ **James 1:15**; Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

a copy of the true death accomplished by The Man, Christ Jesus.

Christ's singular offering in verse 28 may refer to the eternal aspect of Christ as, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). In the purpose of God, there was death in the eternal heaven before Adam ever sinned unto death in time.

There is a marked difference between these deaths. One (mankind) was the natural outcome of sin. That death involved no one but the guilty party. The other, the death of Christ, was an offering for the sins of many (the elect) and their many sins (Romans 5:16)¹. Christ's offering of Himself to God was the offering of His death. He offered this death as the payment for the sins that He had voluntarily become accountable for when He was "made *to be* sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). The right and true punishment for sin is death and Christ underwent that judgment of God for sin. However, because the sin for which He died was *His* sin by imputation and not by the actual commission of them, it was the sin of others that was punished in His body (Ps. 89:31-32²). His death was the offering for their sin. Eternal punishment is the judgment received by sinners who die without Christ. Our Lord bore that eternity of woe for the sake of many during the three hours of darkness on the cross. Man's death is his just reward for his own sin and it accomplishes nothing more than that. Christ died "the just [righteous] for the unjust [unrighteous]" (1 Peter 3:18). He was *righteous* when He died. His death was the offering for the sins of many. His punishment was for *sin*. His death was a payment, the offering

¹ **Rom. 5:16**; And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

² **Ps. 89:31-32**; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

for the sins of many to satisfy justice, to honor God's holiness.

He appears for us now, having appeared to put away our sins. His death is the offering that assures our salvation, and He shall appear the second time *unto* salvation for those (many) who look for Him. In that great transaction, the issue of sin was *forever* settled, and this set the stage for the glory revealed in Chapter 10.

A BODY

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.

Hebrews 10:1-5

In this 10th chapter of the book of Hebrews, the writer brings to final and glorious conclusion the distinctive supremacy of the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus in contrast to the priesthood of the Old Covenant.

He says first that the Law contained a shadow of good things to come. The law itself was not a shadow, but it cast a silhouette when the light of Christ was shined upon it, revealing a figure of good things (or a better thing) to come. Concerning the law, many commentators seek to divide the law into two parts: moral and ceremonial. Ultimately, they do this so that they can defend the Ten Commandments as a rule of life for the Christian. The Bible makes no such division. The 10 Commandments reveal sin and its just punishments, and the ceremonial aspect of the Law reveals the necessity of a blood sacrifice to appease God. Within these words and rites was a shadow of something better. The better things to come do not

point to future blessings but to the revelation of a clear and precise precept that is not yet clear because the “light of the world” is yet to appear. This precise precept was contained in the Old Testament but was not ready to come to light. Once the precept of the superiority of Christ was revealed, then that light dispelled the shadow.

A shadow is without substance, and the shadow cast by the Law was never able to accomplish anything substantial concerning the perfection of the saints. This fact is proven by the continual repetition of the ceremonies that showed, without question, that they did not accomplish to satisfy the Law’s requirements. The perfection of the saints can only be accomplished by the complete satisfaction of the Law and of God’s justice. The ceremonial aspect of the Law clearly reveals in shadowy type that its purpose was the perfection of the saints. This teaches that the glory of God, which is the ultimate purpose of all things, is inextricably linked with the perfection of the saints through the complete satisfaction of the Law and God’s justice. The glory of God is revealed in the salvation of the elect by the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord. He is the *shadow* cast in the Old Testament who is *revealed* in the light of the Gospel.

The proof that the shadow did not accomplish what was necessary for salvation is seen in verse 2, which approaches by a simple question. If any one of the sacrifices had accomplished salvation, then would they not have ceased to be offered? Once purging has occurred, then there is no further need for offering. The conscience would have no ground to accuse where no sins existed. Therefore, since the Old Covenant sacrifices were repeated, they were a continual inducement to the conscience. The repetition of these things was designed to reveal that sin had not been purged. Their repetition also served to make the saints yearn for a final sacrifice that would forever settle the

issue (Heb. 1:3¹). The sacrifices themselves were a reminder that the issue of sin was not yet settled (v. 3).

The reason for the inefficiency of those sacrifices is declared in verse 4. These sacrifices were only natural. They were things under the curse of sin. Though they were naturally without spot or blemish, the stain that Adam put on all creation prevented them from being an effectual offering. Natural men offering natural sacrifices on natural altars could never effect a spiritual outcome. It was an impossibility with men, but thankfully there is no such thing as “impossibility” with God.

Verse 5 begins the great declaration of the glorious accomplishment of Christ. The word “wherefore” turns the entire thing around. The writer of Hebrews attributes several verses from Psalm 40:6² to God and changes the wording of the entire verse. Some literalists find fault here averring that the writer of Hebrews is twisting the phrase to fit his agenda. However, what he is doing is turning on the light and dispensing the shadow. The “figure” is now the “substance.” The reason why God did not “desire” offering is seen in that they, though commanded by Him, did nothing except point to His Son entering the world. The illumination of the word “desire” has to do with satisfaction, which the law could not provide (Heb. 10:5b-6³). They did not please (propitiate) God in that they did not put away sin, as opposed to the sacrifice of Christ, which did (Isa. 53:10-11⁴).

¹ **Heb. 1:3**; 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.

² **Psalm 40:6**; Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

³ **Heb. 10:5b-6**; Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

⁴ **Isa. 53:10-11**; Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his

Most commentators have little difficulty with the first part of the quote from Psalm 40, but the latter part of the quote has sent many of them scurrying for an answer. In Psalm 40 the phrase “mine ears hast thou opened (‘dugged’ or ‘bored’)” is declared as, “a body hast thou prepared me” in this epistle. There have been numerous attempts to reconcile these two phrases, but context is still the way to go. The writer of Hebrews is still dealing with shadow and substance. The shadow referred to the bond slave who willingly—voluntarily—served his master, even though he was free to leave. He stayed because he loved his master and he loved his master's family. The substance was God in a bodily form willingly sacrificing Himself for the perfection of the saints (Heb. 10:7¹). It is God who alone can satisfy Himself, and a body is required for sacrifice. Enter the God-man, Jesus Christ. There is no need to attempt to explain this; it is the mystery of the ages (Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16²). We can, however, see why the phrase in Psalm 40 is illuminated in the way that it is in Hebrews 10. We have a beautiful description of the matter in Phil. 2:5-8³. Here we see Christ as God-man, making Himself of no reputation (inhabiting the body prepared for Him, humbling himself as

seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

¹ **Heb. 10:7**; Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

² **Col. 2:9**; For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. **1 Tim. 3:16**; And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

³ **Phil. 2:5-8**; Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

would a slave), taking upon Himself the form of a servant (bored in the ear, bond-slave), made in the likeness of the kind of folk He came to redeem, being found in the fashion of a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. In this passage, we see the shadow and the substance come to light, not in contradiction, but in complete agreement: God becoming the humble, willing servant to accomplish the satisfaction of His own Holy law, which the former sacrifices could not do.

LO, I COME

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.

Hebrews 10:6-10

That which is most blessed to the believer is the bane of the unbelieving religionist. The believer rejoices that God has only one thing for man: The exclusivity of Christ in the salvation of sinners is a constant state of comfort, because it removes all confusion and removes the sinner from having anything to do with his own salvation. The unbelieving religionist sees that exclusivity as restrictive. He sees it as disallowing all other avenues and excluding all his own efforts, merit, and worth. The entire person and work of Christ effectively removes the sinner from the equation of salvation, and religionists will not abide this fact.

A friend of mine told me a story of a plane ride he took, and he was seated next to a lady who asked him his profession. When he told her he was a preacher, she (as people tend to do) felt free to tell him her beliefs. She told him that she believed that heaven was a big castle with many doors—a door for the Baptists, Presbyterians, Muslims, Mormons, Catholics, Buddhists and so on. He told her that if there were that many

doors, somebody would be sure to fall out. She was the quintessential religious person. She believed that God accepted everybody as long as they believed something.

The Hebrews, who were the recipients of this letter in Hebrews 10, were faced with a particular dilemma. The religion that they were being shown to be unsuccessful in salvation was practiced with many facets. Under the umbrella of that religion there were many divisions, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenees, Scribes, Priests, numerous sacrifices, ordinances, and an executive branch called the Sanhedrin, and Rabbis. The people viewed each of these with particular significance, and though they debated among themselves, each generally held that the other was serving God. This is an early revelation of the religionist's need for denominational distinctions. Religion has denominations. Faith has a denominator. Personally, each held that their view possessed more truth than the next, which served to incite even more self-righteousness.

Now the writer of Hebrews has told them that all of the practices of the Old Covenant were put away and that all of salvation is centered in one Person, one Priest, and one Sacrifice, and that the entire scope of salvation is accomplished in His singular offering. In fact, the Old Covenant, though insufficient to save because it could not satisfy God's holiness, actually pointed to and declared the coming of the Messiah, the One who *would* save.

This is the subject that the author addresses in these verses. By inspiration, He speaks with the voice of Christ. Christ reveals Himself as Divinity and humanity (Heb. 10:5¹). He also reveals that the Old Covenant sacrifices never satisfied God because they were offered by the law (vv. 6, 8), implying that He, in *this body*, would (as the sacrifice) satisfy God. This

¹ **Heb. 10:5**; Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

distinction is preparation for the final blow. The word “then” is the beginning of the end for the process. “Lo, I come.” Before, in this context, the practitioners “*came*” and were not made perfect. Neither the sacrifices nor their efforts achieved the satisfaction when they “*came*” (9:9; 10:1¹). Now it is Christ who comes, and the difference is life and death. He declared that He came to do the “will of God.” The “will of God” is not used here in a general sense but in the particular sense of perfecting the saints. The “will of God” was not done under the Old Covenant in this sense only. He, by His own will, designed the Old Covenant to be insufficient to perfect the saints, because His will in the perfection of the saints was to perfect the saints by the sacrifice of Himself (God in a body). The undeniable proof of that fact is seen in the remainder of verse 9. When Christ came to finish salvation, he put away the Old Covenant.

The words “taketh away” are important. Up to this, in reference to the Law, the Lord spoke in terms of change (7:12²) or “being ready to vanish away” (8:13³). These terms might allow for some to think of the law as being still in force and active to some degree. The words “taketh away” literally mean “to kill.” Thus the reading would be, “he killed the first in order to establish the second.” The Old Covenant is dead. The message of the Old Testament, wherein the Old Covenant was revealed, still serves its original purpose, which is to picture and typify Christ. But the Old Covenant as a means of approaching

¹ **9:9**; 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. **10:1**; 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 **7:12**; For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

³ **8:13**; 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.

God is dead, killed by the mediator of the New Covenant (Rom. 7:1-6¹). The Old and New cannot coexist. The Old and the New cannot mix. The New cannot be in force until the Old is altogether out of the picture. Christ said “Lo, I come to do thy will,” and since what He did is a revelation of that which was intended, it was God's will to kill the Old Covenant as a means of satisfying His holy precepts.

Verse 10 declares the manner in which the Old Covenant was killed and the New Covenant established. By the will of God, the beneficiaries of the New Covenant were “sanctified.” They were set apart from the remainder of Adam's fallen race. They were set apart from all comers of the Old Covenant—set apart to be perfected—perfected by someone else coming to God for them. The word “sanctified” also is a declaration of a state of being made holy. They were set apart in eternal election and predetermination to be made perfect by the singular sacrifice of Christ. This sanctification was accomplished not by the law but through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. The word “once” distinguishes the sacrifice from all others and likewise declares the efficaciousness of it. This offering sanctified and perfected the saints. The words “for all” are italicized. The translators added them. They did not, with these words, intend that this sacrifice was made for all men, but for

¹ **Rom. 7:1-6;** Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

all that are sanctified by the will of God. One sacrifice did the job, fulfilled the law, killed the Old Covenant, established the New, and perfected those who were sanctified. The writer defines and distinguishes this one offering in the words that follow in the remainder of this chapter. The believer loves the singularity of one way, one truth, one life. Christ is all!

BUT THIS MAN

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.

Hebrews 10:11-18

Chapter 10 is the culmination of all that the writer of Hebrews has declared in the previous 9 chapters. Almost every word of the first 18 verses proclaims, by contrast, the lack of success of the Old covenant with the absolute success of the New Covenant. For this lesson, I want to look at these contrasts before we address the glory of the sacrifice of Christ. Having established that the Law and all its attendant ceremonies and rites were taken away (killed) by the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the writer sets forth the specifics of what that means to the believer by declaring Christ's work as finished.

The first contrast is stated in verse 11. Under the Old

Covenant there was no period of rest. The priest tended to the tabernacle and temple 24 hours a day. There was no reason for them to cease their duties, because their offering of sacrifices and the duties performed never took away sins. They never sat down. They could never rest because their work was never done. There was not a piece of furniture in the tabernacle that would allow the priest to sit, because in that system there was no rest. In Hebrews 4:8-10¹ we see Christ contrasted with Joshua and we see Christ entering into His rest. Scripture reveals the importance of this fact (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2²).

The second contrast is also seen in verse 11. Under the Old Covenant, sin was never remitted. With every sacrifice offered, sin remained, and the continuous offerings served to remind followers of that fact (Heb. 10:3³). In contrast, the sacrifice our Lord made was singular and effectual (Heb. 10:9-10⁴).

¹ **Hebrews 4:8-10**; For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

² **Rom. 8:34**; Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. **Eph. 1:20**; Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. **Col. 3:1**; If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **Heb. 1:3**; 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. **8:1**; Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. **10:12**; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. **12:2**; 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 **Heb. 10:3**; But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

⁴ **10:9-10**; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh

The third contrast is seen in the phrase “every priest” (v. 11). This suggests numerous priests to accomplish the work, and it likewise suggests a continuously changing priesthood (Heb. 7:11-12¹). This we have seen was due to the fact that priests were dying men and their positions needed filling upon their death (Heb. 7:23²). Our Lord's priesthood is unchanging because it is eternal and immutable (Heb. 7:24-25³).

The fourth contrast is also seen in the phrase “every priest.” The contrast is multiplicity as opposed to singularity. Salvation is accomplished not in numerous efforts by many but by “this man” (v. 12). This also contrasts numerous sacrifices with a single sacrifice.

The fifth contrast deals with that which is temporal as opposed to that which is eternal (v. 12). Clearly, the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were temporal, as revealed in the fact that they were offered repeatedly and that they only covered sins for the span of a year (Exo. 30:10⁴). Our Lord's one sacrifice was “forever.” This concept is a great comfort to the believer because it is a declaration that the efficacy of the sacrifice will never change, diminish, or end!

away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹ **Heb. 7:11-12**; 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? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

² **Heb. 7:23**; And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.

³ **Heb. 7:24-25**; But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 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.

⁴ **Exo. 30:10**; And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

The sixth contrast is found in the employment of the word “perfect.” This word suggests neither degrees nor change. If a thing is perfect, it will never be more than that or less than that. The writer of Hebrews has shown that those who approached God under the requirements of the Old Covenant were never perfected. Their conscience was never quieted (Heb. 9:9¹). The justice of God was never satisfied to perfection (Heb. 10:1²). The fact that no Old Covenant sacrifice made the comers perfect was proven by the fact that the sacrifices continued to be offered (Heb. 10:2³). By contrast, our Lord's sacrifice perfected all for whom it was offered to God (v. 14). This is one of those blessed truths that wholly rests in faith, because experientially we know nothing of perfection (Rom. 7:21⁴).

The seventh contrast is seen in the fulfillment of the promise. The Old Covenant was not against the promises (Gal. 3:19-22⁵). The promise was the New Covenant, mediated by Christ, and the entirety of it was assured in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20⁶). Further contrast is seen in the placement of this New

¹ **Heb. 9:9**; 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.

² **Heb. 10:1**; 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.

³ **Heb. 10:2**; For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

⁴ **Rom. 7:21**; I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

⁵ **Gal. 3:19-22**; Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

⁶ **2 Cor. 1:20**; For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Covenant as opposed to the Old. The Old Covenant was written on stone. It was outside the person and sat as a continual accuser. It was unbendable, intractable, and could only be broken. It was a watcher, and everything it saw was sin. The New Covenant caused God's Law (the Word) to be written on the heart. The Law itself, now fulfilled, was taken away. The Word of God is written on the heart upon regeneration and faith. It resides in the inward man as the compass of life. It lives in man as a responder to the preaching of the Word. Written in the heart and the mind, the God's Word becomes a constant affirmer of the truth that is heard, and thus it is a distinguisher of that which is false. Though salvation was accomplished outside us by Christ, it is realized internally by God-given faith.

The eighth contrast is seen in God's memory. In verse 17 our God assures those who have been perfected by Christ that He will remember their sins "no more." This is not a lapse in the memory of God. He yet remains omniscient and cannot be accused of forgetting. The divine forgetfulness is an act of God's will. He wills to remember sin no more in His people. This is a judicial willingness to never charge one of His people with sin. In the Old Covenant sacrifices, there was a contrasting willingness to remember sins (10:3¹). This passage assures the believer that he will never be charged with sin (Rom. 4:8²).

The reason for our God being willing to remember sins no more is seen in verse 18. He will remember them no more because they have been remitted. Because there has been remission, there is no more offering for sin. Since the offering for sin is caused by remembering, remembering of sin cannot be where there is no more offering. The offering of the body of Christ once has forever settled the matter. This is the final

¹ **10:3**; But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

² **Rom. 4:8**; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

contrast. The Old Covenant involved continual offerings, and sins were never remitted. The New Covenant was ratified by one offering wherein sins were forever remitted by this Man. The old hymn declares, "Free from the law, O blessed condition; Jesus has died and there is remission."

DONE!

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.

Hebrews 10:12-18

As I wrote in the last lesson, this is the culmination of all that the writer of Hebrews has asserted up to this point in this book. As I was preparing this lesson, I was suddenly struck with memories of my youth in religion. Try as I might, I cannot recall ever hearing this passage read or preached from in all those years. I began to think of the Christ I was hearing of back then, and all I could remember was that, although I respected Him, I felt sorry for Him. He was presented thus: As giving it His all, but His work was ultimately ineffective because He was impotent to save unless He was allowed to do so by His creatures. I never *heard* a preacher say that Christ was to be pitied, but the lack of the language of power and victory registered in my mind, and eventually I obtained a sense of pity for Him. I can remember much talk of the sufferings of His *body*, and I remember being brought to tears when I heard of the

cruel treatment He received. It was *there* and *there alone* that men and women were caught up in the passion and anguish of the cross. If He did all of this but *actually did not* accomplish anything more than making salvation possible, He *is* to be pitied; His sacrifice is reduced to martyrdom and not exalted to salvation. Is it any wonder that He is held in such low esteem today? Years of preaching His failure has left man with no one to consider but one who was valiant, brave and selfless, yet *powerless* to effect real change. He was a selfless martyr but an *unsuccessful savior*.

I do not remember the first time I heard the words of our text read or preached upon, but I remember what I felt when I heard it, and what I suddenly knew when I heard it. I *knew* that *this Christ* was not to be pitied but praised and exalted. These words did not in any way, or to any degree, speak of failure. They did not engender pity but awe, inspiration, and glory. This was not the Christ that I had heard of all my life. This Christ *did* what He *came to do*. *This* Christ was the Savior of men, not the martyr whose efforts only meant something if sinful men gave them value. It was if a great ray of light had been diffused into the darkness of my dungeon. *This* was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Today, more than fifty years later, when I hear or read these words, I still get the same feeling, the same assurance of the glorious success of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Seeing Him revealed as who He really is and seeing what he has done engenders pity for those who have not heard of Him in this true capacity. Mark well that this is the record that God has given us of His Son. That other “jesus” is completely absent between the covers of the Bible. That other “jesus” is the figment of men's imagination, men who would be God and would rather burn than bow.

There was a popular “guilt trip” being passed around recently called “What Would Jesus Do.” The campaign,

complete with pretty, plastic pastel bracelets, was designed to aid in decision-making when faced with a moral crisis. But the issue is *not* “What *would* Jesus do” but “What *did* Jesus do.” Our text tells us in no uncertain terms precisely what He did; no pity here, no pathos, and no unrequited effort!

What did He do?

1. (v. 12) He offered one effectual sacrifice that was of eternal value and finished the work that He came to do. He sat down. If His sacrifice were nothing more than an *effort* to save, then He would yet be standing and sacrificing (v. 11). Instead, He sits (Phil. 2:9-11¹).

2. (v. 13) He waits in expectation till everyone who has opposed Him is brought to bow at His feet. In truth, they are already under His absolute control. They are His footstool. They are under His authority (John 17:2²).

3. (v. 14) By His one offering He has made all for whom He died to be holy. He has equipped them for all eternity, and their state will never be altered or diminished. He has made them perfect before God (“perfected,” the Greek “*teleioō*”—same word interpreted as “accomplished” and “it is finished” in John 19:28, 30³).

4. (vv. 15-16) By His one offering He has ratified the Covenant of Grace, an eternal covenant, in His blood. He fulfilled the Old Covenant, killed it, and took it away. He put His Word in the hearts and minds of His sheep, giving them (by

¹ **Phil. 2:9-11**; Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

² **John 17:2**; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

³ **John 19:28**, After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. **30**; When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

the gift of faith) understanding of all that they will hear concerning Christ (1 Cor. 2:15-16; I John 5:20¹). Because He has ratified this covenant, all who are named therein have received all that God has ordained for them (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7; Heb. 9:11-14²).

5. (v. 17). By His one offering, He made it so that God could be just and justify those for whom the sacrifice was made. Since this one offering completely paid the sin-debt of the elect, not one of them will ever be charged with any sin. They are perfect before God. It is as if they never sinned (1 John 3:9; Rom. 8:33; 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 1:30³).

6. (v. 18) Because of His absolute success, no other sacrifice will ever need to be offered. Sin is put away, righteousness is

¹ **1 Cor. 2:15-16**; But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. **1 John 5:20**; And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

² **Rom. 8:17**; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. **Gal. 3:29**; And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. **Titus 3:7**; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. **Heb. 9:11-14**; 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; 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. 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: 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?

³ **1 John 3:9**; Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. **Rom. 8:33**; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. **4:7-8**; Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8, Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. **1 Cor. 1:30**; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

imputed, law and justice are satisfied, and all for whom this offering was made are redeemed, holy, righteousness, wise unto salvation, perfect, and complete—and that will never change! They have eternal life (John 10:27-30¹).

Find—if you can—in these words one iota of pity, one breath of discouragement, one hint of failure. This is what Jesus did, and *all* glory and praise belongs to our Great Lord and Savior, our Great prophet, our Great High Priest and redeemer (Rev. 5:9-14²).

¹ **John 10:27-30**; My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

² **Rev. 5:9-14**; Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

HAVING BOLDNESS

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

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

Hebrews 10:19-20

Historically, the concept of entering into the presence of God has been faced with fear and trepidation, and well it should be if there is any doubt of one being freely welcomed there. Under the Old Covenant, such entering was allowed merely once a year and that only by the High Priest with the blood of the lamb, which he sprinkled on himself and on the Ark and on the entire area of the Holy of Holies. We know that this entering did not alleviate fear, because the same procedure was repeated every year and served to remind the high priest and those he represented that the issue of sin was not settled. Further evidence that this entering was made with anxiety was that the High priest entered with a rope around his leg so that, if he did not follow the designated procedures exactly, then his dead body could be dragged from the place where his error had cost his life.

This bold entrance referred to in our text must be done with a clear conscience. If there is any sin in the record of the one who approaches (anything that will bring about the accusation of conscience), then the very concept of approaching God with boldness cannot exist. It is no wonder the so-called “Christian” that relies heavily on the Law for personal righteousness also lives in a state of fear and suspicion and speaks more of woe than joy. Religion can succeed in cauterizing the conscience with good works, and men may presume that they approach

God with boldness, but in truth their presumed approach is not bold but brazen. They do not approach with alacrity but audacity. The primary principle of the word “boldness” is liberty, but liberty ceases to exist (and the blood of Christ is accounted of no value) where the Law is used for righteousness (Gal. 2:21; 5:1-4¹).

The boldness referred to is due to what the writer of Hebrews has previously declared in the first 18 verses of this chapter. In fact, this truth was first declared in 4:16², and with the same distinction. In both these verses, we find the word “therefore,” which is a declaration that this boldness is conditioned on what has already transpired. In Chapter 4 and in Chapter 10 the basis for the boldness is the successful work of Christ as our Great High Priest (v. 21). In one sense, all that the writer has said between chapters 4 and 10 is a doctrinal revelation of the privilege that belongs to everyone for whom Christ died: This boldness, this liberty, is possessed. It is not to be sought after, worried about, or employed with doubt or trepidation. It is for the believer to fully and freely enjoy. “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest.*”

Notice the exclusivity of the means of this bold entrance. First, notice what is omitted. One does not boldly enter by works, by doctrinal piety, by denomination, or by personal merit of worthiness. This bold entrance is afforded by the blood of Christ alone. If you are one of those who are perfected forever by the singular sacrifice of Christ, then you have

¹ **Gal. 2:21**; I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. **5:1-4**; Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

² **4:16**; Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

boldness, liberty, freedom, and assurance to enter into the very presence of the thrice-Holy God. It is not by anything we do or do not do. It is “by the blood of Jesus” alone, by something and someone completely outside ourselves—completely disregarding who and what we are, completely discounting what we did or did not do. Because of this, we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all. This is foolishness to the world, but it is joy and peace to the believer.

This entering is more fully described in verse 20. These verses relate to “the blood of Jesus” and more completely illuminate what that precious blood means. That blood is a *new* and *living* way. It is new as opposed to the old. Having established that the Old Covenant has been “taken away” (or “killed”) by Christ fulfilling the will of God in the perfection of the elect, this bold entering does not involve the Old Covenant at all. This is the New Covenant way, opened by the blood of Christ to all for whom that blood was shed. This new way is Christ, who is the way (John 14:6;¹ “way” means “road,” “progress made on the journey,” “means,” “journey,” and “distance”). The believer has boldness because he is already there.

It is a living way. Again, this is a word of distinction. The Old Covenant way was death (2 Cor. 3:6-11²). The works

¹ **John 14:6**; Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

² **2 Cor. 3:6-11**; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

accomplished under that covenant were dead works (Rom. 7:5; Heb. 9:14¹). The way of that covenant ended in death. This new way accomplished by the blood of Christ is living. Everything about this new way speaks to life and vitality. Christ is our life.

This living way also is a declaration of its eternity. This way is living because the One who is *the way* ever lives (7:25²). Part of the reason that the believer has this boldness is because this new way is a *living* way. It suggests a present and unchangeable state. It is living *now*, and if tomorrow comes it will still be the living way. This glorious fact is an absolute comfort to the believer. Anywhere, anytime, regardless of our frailty and our manifold faults, we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Christ, because it is a *living* way.

This new and living way is consecrated for us “through the veil.” This, of course, is a reference to the Day of Atonement, where only the high priest entered and not without blood for his own sins as well as the sins of the people. He entered under the veil by himself. That veil, which belonged to the old dead way, was torn from top to bottom when Christ died on the cross to perfect the saints. The veil represented access: Limited to one under the Old covenant (the old way), but it is now open to all the elect freely by the blood of Jesus. The veil is analogous with the blood and sacrifice of Christ. We have access through the “flesh” of Christ. The believer's free access to God is because our Lord gave His flesh to be broken for us. Is this not what we declare when we take the Lord's Table? We take the bread, which represents His body broken for us, and the wine, which represents His blood shed for us, and in doing so we show forth

¹ **Rom. 7:5**; For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. **Heb. 9:14**; 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?

² **7:25**; 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.

His death until He comes. We refer to that table as communion, and this speaks of communion with God and with each other through the blood of Christ.

UTILIZATION

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.

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

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

25, Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:21-25

As we saw in the last lesson, the believer has boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ. That word “boldness” also addresses the principle of liberty. Though the believer has boldness and liberty (and with it, permission to enter in), that concept implies that there is a possibility that he may not always avail himself to it. Our unbelief and our awareness of it sometimes make us reticent to enter into our blessed privilege. God can never be blamed when we lose the joy of our salvation or fail to employ the means that He has ordained for our good. Liberty does not always equate with utilization. This employment of our benefits is the matter that the writer of Hebrews is addressing in verses 22-25.

The assurance of our liberty is our high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 21). His presence before the throne is the guarantee of our presence there and (as our representative) is our free access. But again, access does not guarantee that we will make use of it. We have liberty and we have a perfect representative, so the writer admonishes us to make use of what

is ours.

“*Let us draw near.*” Since these privileges are ours and they are secure, we ought to use them. This “drawing near” involves both public and private worship. Sometimes orthodoxy as well as unbelief interferes with worship. We come and we sit, or we enter the closet in prayer to get something for ourselves, and enjoyment of our access is inhibited because we are approaching from a wrong direction. Worship is not obtaining, it is offering. We sometimes hear folks complain that they didn't get anything out of the worship service. They are not supposed to! They are to be giving, not getting. Worship is about offering praise and thanksgiving to God. Worship is toward God, not us. We have liberty to worship God, therefore “*Let us draw near.*”

What follows in the remainder of verse 22 is not a list of qualifications that we are to seek to gain, and they are not things that we can muster in the power of the flesh. They are what every believer possesses because he was included in benefits that accompany the New Covenant. The phrase “a true heart and full assurance of faith” do not refer to two different things. The one who has full assurance of faith is the one who has a true heart. This true heart is a benefit of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:31¹). The true heart is the heart that has full assurance of faith. Notice that the assurance is born of faith, not works, and that also is an indication of the distinction between the Old and New Covenants. Though faith has only been mentioned a few times up to this point in this epistle, it takes a leading role in the remainder of the book. It is faith that embraces the truth of this liberty and access. The heart of the

¹ **Jer. 31:33;** But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Ezek. 36:31;** Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

believer is true because his evil conscience has been sprinkled by the blood of Christ (9:14¹). His body has been washed with pure water. This does not speak of baptism or the numerous washings under the Old Covenant. This addresses what baptism and the Old Covenant washings picture. This is the washing of water by the word or, more specifically, being awash in the Spirit as He takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” Again, this directly addresses the utilization of our liberty to enter in. The fact that we are admonished not to waver suggests that the possibility of wavering exists. It is by faith that we overcome the world. Our faith resides in the fact that God is faithful. What more assurance could one have than this, that the One who has secured his salvation always keeps His promise? Though the possibility of wavering is real with us, it is impossible with God. He cannot lie (Titus 1::2²). He cannot be unfaithful (Deut. 7:9³). He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13⁴). He cannot change (Mal. 3:6⁵). Full assurance comes with knowing God and understanding His faithfulness.

Further employment and utilization of the boldness and liberty we have is seen in our relationship with the household of faith. Our high priest is head of the house of God (v. 21; Eph. 1:21-23; Col. 1:18-19⁶). We are members of His house;

¹ **9:14**; 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?

² **Titus 1:2**; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

³ **Deut. 7:9**; Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.

⁴ **2 Tim. 2:13**; If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

⁵ **Mal. 3:6**; For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

⁶ **Eph. 1:21-23**; Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in

everyone who has been given faith is a family member. Since we all are of the same standing and have been given like precious faith, we are admonished to consider one another. It is important to remember that, with this and the other exhortations that the writer of Hebrews gives us, he is admonishing us to use our liberty, with the implicit suggestion being that we sometimes do not use it. These things that follow then become a matter of an act of the will. We are to consider one another. This word “consider” means more than being considerate. In the original this word means to consider attentively, to fix one's eyes and mind upon. It means to have an ongoing, sympathetic, empathetic, compassionate, and loving consideration for every member of the body of Christ. This is not about being nice or saying nice things. It is about edification of the brethren. Part of that edification is about “provoking” them unto good works. The word “provoke” can mean to incite or irritate, but the best translation is “to stir up” or “to encourage.” We are to encourage one another to love and to good works. How do we do this? Do we do it by rules and regulation? Do we encourage our brethren “unto love and good works” by “spying out their liberty” (Gal. 2:4¹)—by watching them to judge and correct them?

We encourage our brethren by *example* alone. This is seen in the next exhortation. It comes back to “Let us draw near.” By example we make the matter of worship a priority. Some forsake the assembly of the saints temporarily and even for long

that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. **Col. 1:18-19**; And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

¹ **Gal. 2:4**; And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.

periods of time. No matter their rectitude, their personal moral behavior, or their doctrinal knowledge or piety, if they forsake the assembly of the saints to worship, they not only show no consideration for the brethren but are, in fact, a discouragement to them. Their actions (or lack thereof) reveal that the worship of God is of little value to them, and whether they would admit, it reveals little love for Christ, His Gospel, and His family. Time draws to a close. “Let us draw near.”

WILLFULLY

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.

Hebrews 10:26-27

This passage of scripture has been misused on many levels. Because this is so, we must first consider what is *not* meant by the concept of *willful sin* as it is employed in this context.

First, any and every *true* believer confesses that *every* sin he commits is *willful*. Our flesh was not made better in regeneration. The “flesh” (which cannot please God) and the carnal mind (which is enmity against God and cannot be subject to the law of God) do not belong only to the profligate but are present in every blood-bought child of God. Paul said that in his flesh dwelt *no good thing*, and this is the experience of every redeemed sinner (James 3:2; Prov. 24:16¹). So, this matter of sinning willfully cannot suggest that we sometimes might not willfully sin. This assures us that this phrase does not have to do with our common Adamic condition.

Secondly, further proof that this phrase cannot be applied to the general bent of our flesh is found in the word “if.” No believer would ever employ the word “if” in reference to the propensity of his flesh, as if to say that sin was a mere *possibility*. The word “if” makes it clear that the willful sin here

¹ **James 3:2**; For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Prov. 24:16; For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

referred to is specific rather than generic. The word “if” also suggests that this sin might *not* be committed and thus these words come to us, and to the church among the Hebrews, as a *warning with a stern consequence*. This willful sin is against light, “after that ye have received the knowledge of the truth.” Again, this cannot refer to a non-specific sin because every sin of the flesh of the child of God is both willful and against light. This is a specific sin against specific light, and the warning and consequence is such that the commission of this sin is proof of unbelief. If one commits this specific sin against this specific light, it is *proof* that the perpetrator is an *unbeliever*. For such, no sacrifice would be of any effect—their sin remains, and the judgment of God must follow.

The use of the word “sacrifice” brings this particular, specific sin to light. In this chapter, the writer of Hebrews has dealt with all sacrifices for sin. He has first shown that the Old Covenant sacrifices for sin never took away sin or made the offerors perfect. Therefore, the willful sinners in this passage cannot benefit from these sacrifices. The writer of Hebrews also spoke of another sacrifice, one that put away sin, that perfected those for whom the sacrifice was offered. That sacrifice—offered to God by the great High Priest when He made His soul an offering for sin and perfected forever them that were sanctified—likewise cannot benefit these willful sinners.

We therefore know that the unbeliever who remains in that position cannot benefit from the sacrifice, but as we have seen, the sin referred to is not general sinfulness. There is yet another group described in the word of God for whom “there is no more sacrifice for sin.” This group of unbelievers is declared to be those who believe in too many sacrifices. It is not that they do not believe, but it is that they trust in an amalgam, a combination of both Old Covenant sacrifices and the New Covenant sacrifice. Consequently, they benefit from neither.

Who are these *willful sinners*, and what is their willful sin against the knowledge of the truth? They are those who have been privileged to hear the Gospel and have sought to incorporate it with their practices of the ceremonies of the law. For people such as this, there remains no sacrifice for sins (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:21; 5:1-4¹).

So the writer of Hebrews has not, so to speak, changed horses in the middle of the stream. He still speaks to the Hebrews and to any professed believer who refuses to leave the Law behind and trust only in the merits of Christ as his entire salvation. This kind of language concerning sacrifice permeates this entire passage. In chapter 9, the writer declares that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (9:22²). In chapter 10 he declares that the Old Covenant sacrifices did not satisfy God because that did not remit sin (10:4³). Also, he declares that Christ, by His sacrifice, remitted the sins of those for whom He died, and because sins were remitted, no other offering would ever need to be made. His sacrifice was successful and effectual (10:18⁴). Then, in our text, those who seek to employ the sacrifices offered under the Old Covenant along with the sacrifice of Christ are defined as being without hope in either sacrifice, receiving benefit from neither. Thus,

¹ **Rom. 3:20**; Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. **Gal. 2:21**; I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. **5:1-4**; Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

² **9:22**; And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

³ **10:4**; For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

⁴ **10:18**; Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

those who sin willfully do so by mixing grace and works (grace and Law), and God will not abide that.

Though in this day men tolerate such criminality under the guise of being non-judgmental, our Lord inspires the writer of Hebrews to write terror upon those who commit such religious felonies. These nominal-professing, legalist practitioners are called the *adversaries* of God, which we know is a no-win situation (Isa. 1:24¹). These people do not merely have a different opinion of the Law or some new age application of it under a notion of reformed theology. These “willful” sinners who tolerate evil and claim to preach some truth are those who *mix* a deadly, poisonous concoction that pollutes the truth, and what they do is nothing less than a capital crime (Gal. 1:6-9; Heb. 10:27²).

Those who willfully mix the Law and Grace, who concoct this deadly potion, can look forward only to God's judgment, anger, fiery indignation, and vengeance. This is no small matter, and Paul makes it clear to his readers that to apply to the law after having heard the Gospel is the sentence of death without mercy. It is the willful act of *repudiating* the Gospel, *choosing* darkness in the presence of light. We do men and women no kindness by applying the salve of tolerance and acceptance to their deadly disease of combining truth *and* error. This is what the writer means by sinning willfully. The consequence is

¹ **Isa. 1:24**; Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

² **Gal. 1:6-9**; I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. **Heb. 10:27**; But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

horrible.

A FEARFUL THING

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

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?

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

Hebrews 10:28-31

This portion of the context is still dealing with what we looked at in the last lesson, which is that particular “willful” sin of returning to the beggarly elements of the Law and endeavoring to mix adherence to the legal ceremonies with that of the Gospel of grace. We saw that for such, neither the sacrifices of old nor the sacrifice of Christ is of any benefit. They are before God without any hope.

These verses that follow deal with this aspect of being without a sacrifice under the Old Covenant (Day of Atonement) or the effectual sacrifice of Christ (the New Covenant).

First, under the Old Covenant, the sentence for despising the Law was to die without mercy. The fact that the writer refers to the Old Covenant as “Moses' Law” is significant. He has already declared that no sin was *remitted* under that covenant. In that covenant, there was no saving mercy and no grace. It was full of elemental truths but was not *the* truth, which is Christ (John 1:17¹). That covenant—which could not save,

¹ John 1:17; For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came

which gave no hope of eternal life—did carry the threat of eternal death and the woe involved in the knowledge that, upon one's deathbed, there is the hopelessness of dying without mercy.

For the person who had heard the Gospel (who had not openly despised the Law of Moses) but had willfully opted for righteousness by the law or had *combined* personal merit with the meritorious work of Christ, that person died hopeless, without the benefit of any sacrifice, temporal or eternal—without mercy.

But the one who willfully rejects the Gospel after hearing it is worthy of an end much worse than he who despised Moses' Law. The language here does not fully express the severity of punishment due unto those who despise the grace of God. Because religion has turned Christ and His work of salvation into an offer to accept or reject, men feel no motivation to come to a verdict about their souls. Until he is faced with death, man feels that time is on his side, and this erroneous sense of immortality make this ersatz offer of the Gospel seem of little consequence to the hearer. Such is not the case. Rejecting the Gospel brings about the most severe description of God's wrath that is possible (v. 29). The attitude toward the Gospel of those who “willfully sin” against it is described in very strong terms. Those whose actions are worthy of death are said to be those who have “trodden under foot” the Son of God. We know that this language is symbolic. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and even those who are said to do this horrible thing are under His authority (John 17:2¹). This addresses the attitude of such and also looks into their mind, revealing what they truly feel and think in their rejection of Christ. Their act of appealing

by Jesus Christ.

¹ **John 17:2**; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

to the law for righteousness reveals that they think that Christ and His work are like something on the bottom of their shoe, something of no more significance than to be walked upon. We know that religion will not readily admit that attitude, but the inspired word makes no bones about it. This is God's view, and it is therefore, so. To appeal to the law in the face of the Gospel is, before God, as if you were wiping your feet on Jesus Christ.

Secondly, rejecting the Gospel by going to the Law is counting the blood of the covenant, by which Christ was sanctified for the work, to be an unholy thing. The general application of this word "unholy" means *common*. This definition fits well with the attitude mentioned in the phrase we just considered. However, there is another application to this word "unholy" and it carries a more precise description of the meaning. The word applies "in general" as opposed to "specific," for several rather than few. Though this usage certainly declares the glory of particular redemption, this also refers to the thoughts of the "willful sinner". He considers the work of Christ a "general thing," a work He did for all men rather than His specific people. What this does is change salvation to rely on something other Christ and His work. If Christ died for all and yet some men perish, then salvation must be the result of the righteous actions of men. This takes us back to the premise of this "willful sin." It is considering the blood of Christ of no value, a general effort that accomplished nothing, yet is given credence by the works of righteousness by the Law.

Thirdly, this "willful sin" occurs despite the report of the Spirit of grace. It is the Spirit that takes the things of Christ and reveals them to men. The Spirit gives no vague report. He exalts Christ in His person, His Deity, His glorious humanity, and His great and successful substitution. The willful sinner looks at these things and diminishes them by seeking to establish his own righteousness by the Law. This intrusion of self-

righteousness is despite the true report by the Spirit of grace.

Because “there remains no more sacrifice for sins,” what *does* remain is the *wrath* of God (vv. 30-31). But the wrath of God in this case is declared in its most severe form. Vengeance is not merely wrath but is seething and built-up anger. I cannot imagine this and there isn’t suitable language to describe it. It is stated in simple terms and yet, when you consider the source of this anger—the omnipotent God—then it is truly a fearful thing. Make no mistake here: God will not and does not tolerate any rival to the person and work of His Son.

“It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.”

THEM THAT BELIEVE

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.

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.

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.

Hebrews 10:32-39

These final words of chapter 10 are words of encouragement to the believer. They are not words for those who draw back to perdition (v. 39). Remember that the words of this book are designed to make the believer know fully that there is no hope outside of Christ. The believer's standing with God is entirely conditioned on the person and work of God's dear Son. Any effort to approach God on the basis of the Old Covenant has been thoroughly and completely set aside. This does not change the fact that there is part of us that cannot keep from flirting with the harlot of our own works. We tend, when some

trouble arises, to take on the job of fixer rather than believer. Whether we knowingly go to the Law or not, we begin to look to ourselves, and in doing so design a scheme to work our way out of the trouble. Since we are believers, we do not seek what we would count to be carnal means. Our approach is religious in nature, thinking if we become Mr. Pray-more, Mr. Study-more, or Mr. Do-more, that this will allay our troubles. No matter what we call it, it is not born of faith but rather is born of *unbelief*. Believing is not just difficult; it is *impossible* in the flesh. But the elect of God are given faith, and though they will struggle with unbelief until the day they die, they will die in faith.

What the writer of Hebrews gives us in these verses are some simple reminders for when we are confronted with our frailties or with the efforts of legalists to convince us that the law is the logical remedy for our woes.

The answer to such foolishness is solely in believing Christ. The first thing suggested is to remember when we first believed. Our Lord often uses the faculty of our memory—our Lord often reminded Israel to *remember* their deliverance from Egypt. Here He reminds the Hebrew believers of the fight of afflictions they endured when they were first illuminated. Of course, they suffered at the hands of the Jews who still held to the Old Covenant. So does every believer when He is faced with the world's religion after he embraces the truth. This must also address the struggles of the flesh, as our every move and thoughts are questionable. Throughout our lives we struggle with these inward things. What gets us through? What changes our hearts from inward struggles to peace and comfort? God-given faith casts our eyes and our hearts upon Christ. All things are possible when we believe.

Because God has given us faith to believe the Gospel, and because the truth is so evidently opposed to every effort of man

toward righteousness, the believer is viewed as some strange thing. To man-centered religion and to the self-righteous, the believer is a pariah, a “gazing stock” (v. 33a). Eyes roll and wagons circle when religion is faced with a believer. To religion, the believer seems a spawn of Satan, one who believes the Devil's doctrine or is a member of some elitist cult. When they hear of the doctrines of election and predestination, they assume that the believer thinks that he is something special, when precisely the *opposite* is true. The believer's affinity for Christ seems strange to religion because religion has so much more on their plate. No matter how the Gospel is presented, religion hears that they are not saved. Confronted with these reproaches and afflictions, all that is left for the believer is to look to Christ—to believe.

Another thing to be remembered is that, during the times of reproaches that the believer faces for trusting Christ alone, is that he is not alone. During those times it is a comfort to seek out godly companions, those of like precious faith (v. 33b; 2 Pet. 1:1¹). Such have suffered the same afflictions and have found peace at the same place.

Another thing remembered is the glory of seeing Christ. When we see Christ, we love Him and we likewise love one another (v. 34). Seeing Christ makes the things of the world grow dim. The spoiling of our goods can only be joyfully abided when we look at Christ. We overcome the world by faith (v. 34; 1 John 5:4²). The believer knows that the trials of this life are not the end of the story. The believer knows that heaven awaits, where no trials and no reproaches exist. Notice the word

¹ **2 Pet. 1:1**; Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

² **1 John 5:4**; For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

“substance.” The use of this word applies directly to faith (11:1¹).

Verse 35-37 is a simple admonition to believe and to keep on believing. The rewards of faith are great and cannot be counted in the measure of earthly things. Faith believes that God has settled all things by Christ and that the believer has need of nothing.

This is how the justified live. They live by *faith*. But lest we forget, there are those who profess faith yet still live under the Law. These are those who are said to *draw back*. They draw back into the bondage of the Law. The Lord has no pleasure in such as these. This is no small thing. This puts many souls in jeopardy. Everyone who does not trust Christ alone has no faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God (11:6²).

Faith, being the gift of God, will never fail. The gifts and callings of God are *without repentance*. The believer will believe. He will *not* draw back (Jer. 32:38-40³). This is the difference between the believer and the unbeliever. The one who God has not given faith draws back into perdition. The one to whom God has given faith believes to the saving of the soul (Mark 9:23⁴).

¹ **11:1**; Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

² **11:6**; 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.

³ **Jer. 32:38-40**; And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

⁴ **Mark 9:23**; Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

FAITH

1, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Most commentators view this verse as a definition of faith. Some say it is not a definition because it does not mention Christ as the object of faith. Calvin said that this verse is an illumination of the principle of patience in Hebrews 10:37-39¹. One commentator described this verse as not defining faith objectively or subjectively but according to its function. To do this, he used an example of three men describing a bicycle. One man said that it was a machine consisting of a frame, two wheels, a chain, sprockets, pedals and brakes. This is an *objective* view. Another man who was a cyclist described the bicycle as a thing that he loved to ride. This is a *subjective* view. Another man described the bicycle as a manpowered means of transport. This is a *functional* view. That writer felt that this verse was a description of the function of faith. The fact is that faith, as revealed in this verse, can cover *all* these views.

The first thing that must be considered is that this faith is the faith of the elect. This faith is part of the man or woman that has been "perfected forever" and whose sins have been remembered no more (10:14-17²). Likewise, this faith is the faith that

¹ **Heb. 10:37-39**; For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

² **10:14-17**; For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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

prevents any possessor of it from drawing back into perdition (10:38-39). Also, this faith is the faith by which the just (justified) live. This immediately tells us that the writer is not “changing horses in the middle of the stream.” He is still declaring the distinction between the Old and the New Covenant. Whereas the Old Covenant practices were objectively observed and entirely tangible (because they could be seen and handled), the New Covenant operates in the realm of the invisible, the anticipated, and the area where the natural man cannot discern. Faith, that precious gift endowed upon all those perfected by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, is said to be the substance (ground, confidence, underlying foundation) of things (real stuff) anticipated, expected, and hoped for. Faith, the gift of God, though invisible and not provable, is yet the real and substantial foundation. Faith is also said to be evidence (proof) of things not seen. There is no way for the natural man or his religion to even vaguely grasp this. It is a mystery even to the one who has been given this precious gift of faith. The New Covenant operates in the realm of the *invisible*.

There is a preacher who lives near me that puts a weekly article in a local paper entitled “Faith and Reality.” The title itself suggests that there is a difference between faith and reality. This also suggests that faith is somehow subservient to reality or less (in importance) than reality. In reading several articles, I found that this preacher advocated the view that Christianity must possess actual and visible works as evidence of faith or as evidence of salvation. This thinking gives rise to trite and cutesy little sayings like, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one,” or, “We must put feet to our prayers.” Our text lays the ax to the root of such faithless thinking. Faith is substance! Faith is proof! Faith is reality! Everything that can be seen is of no substance because it is of no eternal value. Just as the Old

will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Covenant cannot operate in the realm of the New Covenant, everyone who returns to the Old Covenant abandons the faith that is required in the New Covenant. The only real things are eternal things—things that will not pass away, things that you will take with you when you leave this earth. Faith is substance and evidence! It sees what cannot be seen. It embraces the invisible because it embraces Christ, who is the image of the invisible God. Faith is objective because its object is Christ. It is subjective because it rests in the promise of God as reported in the Word of God. It is functional because faith is how the just live.

Faith, for the child of God, substantiates what he hopes for. There is an expectant nature to faith. It is hope, but not in the sense of wishing that something was so. It is hope in the sense of full expectation of received promises. Faith does not doubt, it believes; and though it may seem foolish to the world, faith is the ground, foundation, and confidence of the reality of all that is anticipated. There is no other ground, substance, or confidence possessed by the child of God. The believer looks for and desires nothing more than what God has promised. The believer does not look for some tangible thing to prove to himself that he is God's child. He doesn't look to his prayers, his giving, his study, or his piety as anything substantial. He believes. Faith, for the child of God, is the singular evidence of the reality of things that he has never seen yet continually looks at. What a life, this life of the believer! He walks by faith and not by sight. Everything that he can see is suspect because it is fading and changing. Everything he cannot see is real and true. He lives in and is saved by invisible hope (Rom. 8:24¹). With the eyes of faith, the believer looks on things (substantial things) that cannot be seen (2 Cor. 4:18²). This being the case,

¹ **Rom. 8:24;** For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

² **2 Cor. 4:18;** While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the

the believer cannot and does not operate, in any way shape or form, in the realm of the Old Covenant. He lives in the invisible world that natural eyes cannot behold.

Francis Bacon wrote, “A Christian is one that believes things that his reason cannot comprehend and hopes for things which neither he nor any man alive ever saw. He believes 3 to be 1 and 1 to be 3, a father not older than his son and the son to be equal with the father. He believes himself to be precious in God's sight and yet loathes himself in his own sight. He dares not justify himself even in those things wherein he can find no fault with himself yet believes that God accepts him in those services wherein he is able to find many faults. He is so ashamed, that he dares not open his mouth before God, yet comes boldly to God and asks Him anything he needs. He hath within him both flesh and spirit and yet he is not a double-minded man. He is often led captive by the law of sin, yet it never had dominion over him. He cannot sin, yet he can do nothing without sin.”

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

CROWN HIM

1, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2, For by it the elders obtained a good report.

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.

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.

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.

Hebrews 11:1-6

Scott Richardson once said, “Faith puts the crown where it belongs: on the head of the Savior.” This is the beauty of faith—that blessed gift from God, that strange enigma to the flesh, and that sweet solace to the spirit (v. 1). In these verses we see this principle declared. Faith is “Christ-ward”, and its design and intent are to honor God. In these words, we see that faith is honored by God, obeys God, is rewarded by God, and pleases God, and the singular reason why all this is so is because faith believes God. All the works that flow from faith please God because the root of all of them is the honor and glory of God, designed to put the crown on His head.

Verses 2-5 are a catalogue of people who pleased God in the past and please God now. The first mentioned are the elders,

and it is written that they obtained a good report. This term “elders” has nothing to do with age. It refers to all those who in ancient times believed God. Two elders are named in these verses, and the remainder of the chapter names many others. It is said of them that they obtained a good report. There is no doubt that their dedication to God gained them favor among men, but generally such honor and accolades from men are given posthumously. This “good report” is from God. The basis of this report is found in verses 6. These men were believers. Note that this is a general appraisal. No single work is pointed out among these elders. There is no evidence given as to why God so honored them with a good report. The only evidence given is that of faith (vv. 1-2). This means that these elders were considered in Christ. The reason that no work is recorded for these elders is because every work that they did is seen in the perfection of their savior. They were accepted by God and are, in Christ, now holy. They obtained this good report by faith. This is a wonder, considering that it is God who gave them this faith. He is not just honoring what he has bestowed but the employment of it by these elders.

Faith is an interesting concept. It is first the ground, substance, and proof of invisible things anticipated. That aspect of faith has to do with the doctrine and the promise of God. Faith is also seen as the disposition of believing, and this is the aspect for which God gives these elders a good report. This truth is seen in the examples that follow.

Faith (believing) honors God in His record of the sovereign creation of the worlds. Through faith—that is, through the record that God has given concerning the making of all things—the believer understands that the record is true (John 3:33). This does not address human logic. Human logic endeavors to add science to the record or to disallow the record by science. However, through faith, the believer understands that God did

as He said He did. Make no mistake here; this truth is entirely unacceptable to the flesh. Even as I write these words my flesh would impress me with its logic. But the believer understands what the flesh can never accept. The word “understand” finds its root in the word “persuaded.” God has persuaded His elect of this truth, and nothing can ever shake them from this foundation. Through faith we understand.

Faith honors God in the requirement of death for sin, the justice demanded by His holy character (v.4). Abel, by faith, offered a more excellent sacrifice. He offered to God the type and shadow of God's Son. Cain offered the very best that his hands could produce, but God will not be approached by the works of human effort or merit. God accepts only blood, blood that represents death, a death that is sufficient to answer the Law. The excellency of Abel's sacrifice was that He offered it specifically according to God's requirement, and he did that because he believed. He was persuaded of Christ and His accomplished work, so he approached God based on that blessed death.

Like Abraham, Abel believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. God, in his dwelling fire, consumed that sacrifice and testified that the gift (or offering) that Abel made was accepted on his behalf. Since faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, it is reasonable to assume that Adam had told his son that God didn't kill him when he (Adam) sinned, but God instead killed beasts to cover him and Eve. With this knowledge, Abel approached God with the offering of a death, and God testified that his offering was excellent.

That Abel believed the Gospel is proven by the fact that, though he is physically dead, he still has a spiritual voice. Would any suppose that the words of Abel would be anything other than “God accepts sinners by the person and work of Christ alone?” Knowing that God accepted Abel and not Cain,

that Cain killed faithful Abel, and that Cain lost everything, would you suppose that Paul would declare that Cain's offering had some validity? Abel's message is the Gospel.

Faith's reward is to be in the presence of God. This wonderful account of the translation of Enoch still fills the mind and heart with astonishment. No matter how it is approached, the language is such that what transpired is simply to be admired. Enoch believed God. Some of the early writings declare that he worshipped (walked with) God. By faith (and in faith believing and worshipping), he was carried into the very presence of God. This is true spiritual worship, which is performed in faith. It is said that by faith he pleased God.

Faith *alone* pleases God. This is the declaration of verse 6 and is a clear proof that it is the Gospel that Abel, Enoch, and the elders believed and that we believe now. The proof is in the reason for the action described. Pleasing God is coming to God by faith, believing that He is as He declares Himself to be. The question is this: Would anyone believe God and willingly come to Him as reward if the message was not *good* news, or if the reward for coming was not a *true* reward? Would it be a reward to approach an angry God? The good news is that salvation is *accomplished*, not possible or probable. Coming to God is done in *full assurance of faith*. By faith, through faith, and in faith (not works!), these people pleased and honored God.

BY FAITH, NOAH

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.

Hebrews 11:7

Like Enoch and Abel, Noah is another one of those elders that obtained a good report. The good report that they obtained is that “they pleased God.” They believed God and came to Him, anticipating a great reward for doing so. Noah had been given the faith described in verse 1¹. This is seen in the description of the invisible things Noah was warned of, “things not yet seen.”

Noah came to God. We know that he did so because he found grace in the eyes of God. God looked on Noah in grace and called him, and he came to God. By the language of Genesis 7:1² we know this is so. These words suggest that God was in the Ark when he called Noah to come in (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:8³).

Noah was warned by God (Genesis 6:13-22⁴). We

¹ **11:1**; Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

² **Genesis 7:1**; And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

³ **2 Cor. 5:19**; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. **Col. 2:8**; Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

⁴ **Genesis 6:13-22**; And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood;

immediately see the ground of faith. Noah acted because he believed God's word. He had no other evidence except that God told him that something was coming that would destroy the world. A great flood was coming, a deluge of rain from above and waters from the deep, and it would be accomplished with terrors that no man had ever seen or imagined. God declared it, and by faith Noah believed it. For a hundred years Noah believed it.

Noah moved with fear. This was not terror in his heart; this was faith in his heart. This fear is reverential. He respected God and counted Him worthy of worship, love, and reverence. Many in this day fear God with *slavish terror*. They do what they do in false belief to hold back the wrath of God. They walk in guilt of conscience, waiting for that other shoe to drop, and can find no happiness in a good circumstance because they believe that God is around the next corner waiting to snatch their happiness from them. The believer comes *to* God. He comes boldly to the throne of grace; he comes into the ark, through the veil (that is to say, Christ's flesh), understanding by faith that the presence of God will yield nothing but eternal sweets. This is the faith

rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

that obtains a good report. This is the faith that *pleases* God.

Noah, by faith, prepared an ark. Faith *acts* on what it believes. This ark, a grand design from heaven, took more than a century to build. For a hundred years, by faith, this man believed God. What happened concerning Noah during the time of building we are not privy to. It makes for interesting speculation to think that he was ridiculed and mocked for what he was doing. There was no reason for his neighbors to believe him, if he even warned them at all. Faith rests on the word of God, and there is no indication that at this time God spoke to anyone but Noah. By this time the world had become so corrupt that even the stories handed down by the fathers had probably been put in the category of myth.

It seems that we are approaching the same place in this day, but because of the promise of God no flood will come upon us. Perhaps there is no record of the world's reaction to Noah preparing an ark because even if they did react, this entire episode in the history of humanity is about God and the man who found grace in His eyes. When all is said and done, the course of human history will show that God dealt graciously with His people.

We know that Noah was a type of Christ, and the Ark was a type of Christ, and the deluge was a picture of the judgment that took place on the cross. Ultimately this is a story of God declaring His righteousness in the justification of believers by the death of Christ. The preparation of this ark was the declaration of the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith. Perhaps this is why God spoke of Noah in this particular way in 2 Peter 2:5¹. Noah was said to be a preacher of righteousness. Whose righteousness do you suppose He preached? From the context in Hebrews and here in 2 Peter,

¹ **2 Peter 2:5**; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

it is obvious that the righteousness he preached involved two things: (1) the salvation of the elect and (2) the condemnation of the world. The Gospel of grace is also the news of condemnation. The more you study the word, the more you will find these elements involved in each deliverance of God's people. The message of the Gospel is that God is a just God and a Savior (Isa. 45:21¹). By faith Noah believed and preached the Gospel.

Noah prepared the ark to the saving of his house. We know that God is the Savior, but here it is implied that *Noah* saved his house. This is not strange language to scripture. We find that God often does a thing, yet graciously accounts it to be the act of His people (Deut. 9:3²). I'm reminded of that time when men brought their sick neighbor to see Christ, and when they could not get to Him, they took tiles from the roof and lowered their friend down to Christ. The record of what then transpired is amazing (Mark 2:5³).

Our text may also read that Noah prepared the ark for the purpose of saving his house, but regardless of what explanation we might come up with, the truth remains: Salvation was in that *ark* and Noah by faith prepared it. The fact that he went into the ark proves that he *believed* God concerning things he had *not yet seen*.

Noah, by faith, prepared the ark and in doing so condemned the world. Again, we see that this faith embraces the

¹ **Isa. 45:21**; Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

² **Deut. 9:3**; Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.

³ **Mark 2:5**; When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel. The very presence of faith in this world is a condemnation to all that is not of faith. Believing God condemns the world. For a hundred years the actions of Noah condemned the world around him. Your faith as a worshipper of the true and living God is judgment to all who love not Christ.

Finally, this faith was accounted to him as righteousness. This righteousness is that which God imputes to His elect and gives them faith to believe that they are righteous by Christ. All God-given faith is directed to the righteousness of God. The Old covenant cannot operate here. The realm of faith is the invisible. By faith Noah trusted the word of God and acted based on what he had *not yet seen*. This is the recurring theme throughout the remainder of this chapter—*evidence* and *substance* of invisible things.

LOOKING (1)

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.

Hebrews 11:8-10

I confess that I must fight the inclination to deal with each of these characters individually as they are revealed in scripture. Everyone mentioned in this chapter represents a life lived in rich declaration of the Gospel. However, to do that would not serve the context well. Verse 1 of this chapter and the first two verses of chapter 12 are bookends that hold a series of reports that teach a single theme and lead to the true definition of faith. Each of these characters believed God concerning things they had not seen or did see. Their lives were lived upon promise, promises revealed in the word of God. They lived in hope and expectation of a better thing, a better place, and a better world.

The better thing is that which the writer of Hebrews has, to this point, declared to be Christ and His work, held in opposition to all the rites, laws, and ceremonies of the Old Covenant. Though these respective references and reports of faith are often used to represent the new heaven and new earth and the blissful estate of the redeemed in glory, they are, according to the context, best viewed in the concept of the redemption accomplished by our Lord on Calvary, and the

believer's faith in Him who is the image of the invisible God.

This does not discount the believer's desire to be released from the veil of this flesh and to be with Christ in glory, to worship, sing, understand, and think without the plague of sin. It is also true that what we will have then is no different than what we have now save for the fact that when sin and the flesh is not a factor, we will be able to fully enjoy what is ours by grace through faith. This chapter is an illumination of faith as defined in verse 1. It is no surprise that true believers are viewed as foolish by the world. They simply have no proof of anything that they believe and, furthermore, refuse to offer up anything that the world or religion might accept as evidence. The believer will tolerate no distraction from "Christ alone" as the entire substance and confidence of salvation, though he or she has never seen anything that the world and its religion would acknowledge to have probative value. It is the things of the *invisible* world that these characters seek by their faith.

In these three verses the calling of Abraham to leave his country and follow the directions of God are set forth as seeking the unseen, conditioned solely on the word of God (vv. 8-10). We who are privileged to have the written Word (and have been given faith to believe it) find no difficulty believing this account. Think for a moment of the conversations that might have ensued among Abraham's family and friends when he told them that God had spoken to him, promised to make a great nation from him, and promised to curse those who cursed him and bless those who blessed him.

Abraham, at the time of his calling, was a resident of a polytheistic society and a pagan land, which some say was an area where there was an industry that manufactured idols and religious icons. Consider for a moment the looks that Abraham received when he told his spectacular tale. If we did not have the scripture (or God-given faith), and we made such an

announcement, think of the reaction of our friends and family. The fact is that what Abraham probably received is the same as what we receive when we tell the truth of how God saved us.

We live in a pagan world whose practice is that of manufacturing idols and icons. One of the biggest businesses in this land is religion. Religious music outsells rock, classical, country, and opera. The money taken in by TV evangelists is so extraordinary that many are under government scrutiny.

God has called *us* to go to another place, to a *person* we have never seen: a better thing. He has called us to be *in* the world but not *of* it. The cap of all of this is we *offer no evidence* other than that God *called* us through His Gospel to the obtaining of glory and that all of our salvation is invisible and not provable. It follows that Abraham's experience is also our experience, which is the experience of living in the world by faith. This being the case, we can expect certain things to be true of this life that God has given us.

First, living by faith means that we do not really know what is coming next (v. 8). Abraham went out, not knowing *where* he went. Our Lord teaches his people to be *invisible* concerning religious activity. He told them to pray in *private*, fast without anyone *knowing*, and give so that our right hand does not know what our left hand is doing. Paul, in his great confession given in Romans 7, declared that often he does not know what he is doing. Spurgeon said, "Sometimes the only reason a believer can give for doing anything is a that it turned out alright." When you think of it, the believer is an *old man* and a *new man* in this body of death. He knows his purpose but, like Paul, when he would do good, evil is present with him (Mat. 26:41¹). "He went out, not knowing whither he went."

Secondly, living in the world by faith is living in the land of

¹ **Mat. 26:41**; Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

promise (salvation wrought by Christ) as in a strange country (v. 9). The promised land (salvation by grace) is not a strange land, but it takes place in a strange land called the world. The believer, by faith, resides in a marvelous world, an invisible paradise that he cannot begin to describe. He in a moment is transported to glory itself, and all the while his body is bound to this cruel world. He dwells in this strange land, sojourns here, lives in his house as if it were a tent, and fellowships with his spiritual family. He is in the world and seated in heavenly places with Christ at the same time.

Thirdly, he lives in faith by looking (v. 10). He looks for Zion, the beautiful city of God. He looks for that place whose foundation is Christ and His Gospel; He looks for that place where the builder and maker is God. He looks to Christ, the body of Christ, the temple of God built with lively stones with Christ as the chief cornerstone. He looks to and sees the unseen, and who and what he sees by faith is both substance and confidence.

LOOKING (2)

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.

Hebrews 11:11-16

This section of the chapter continues to set forth the character of faith as defined in verse one. Believers live by faith, and faith continually looks to that which they have never seen but fully embrace in confidence as substance. In this passage, this truth is fully declared not only regarding the substance of faith but the result of faith also.

Sara is the last in the list of this particular group that began with the elders in v. 2. The catalogue of the faithful does not end here but is addressed in this manner to teach us a particular result of faith that proves the premise that faith is both ground and substance. You will notice that none of the faults and

frailties of these characters is addressed. God is not rewriting history. He is always faithful to tell the truth about His people, warts and all. But this context is not about their respective weaknesses. This context is about faith as it is revealed in the life of every believer, which is everyone who does not draw back into perdition but believes to the saving of the soul.

It is interesting to note that Paul is addressing salvation without the law, just as he did in Romans. Both are setting forth faith as exhibited for the salvation of the soul without having anything to do with the law. In both cases Abraham is used as an example of the possessor of faith. In Romans, faith is expressed as the result of righteousness without the law. Here faith is expressed as *unseen substance* in opposition to the elements of the Old Covenant (which are seen) but are *without substance* and offer no hope. So, in this chapter, Paul is not addressing faith being imputed for righteousness as the answer to the law, but faith looking to the invisible as the answer to the law.

The subject addresses Sara as looking to the God of promise and receiving strength in her feeble body to bring forth a son who will forever be known as the “seed of promise” (vv. 11-12; Rom. 9:7-9; Gal. 4:28¹). But a greater one than Isaac is truly viewed in our text—even the true Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sara's faith is described as “judging Him faithful who had promised.” She believed that God was able to perform what He had promised. In this she exemplifies everyone who believes the Gospel, which declares that God is faithful to what He has promised, concerning the Seed (Jesus) and what He has

¹ **Rom. 9:7-9**; Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

Gal. 4:28; Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

15

accomplished by His coming. The Seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ, produced a nation by his death, a people that are innumerable. Believers embrace this promise by faith, and they look no further. By faith they have received the promise, been redeemed, and been saved by Christ being a part of the innumerable company of elect. Though salvation is theirs, they still operate in the realm of faith because they cannot prove that any of this is theirs except that they believe that He is faithful who has promised.

One of the marks of these faithful ones is that they died in faith. The remainder of verse 13 is given as proof or evidence that they died in “faith.” This language goes to the definition of faith in verse 1. They did not physically or visibly receive the promises. But spiritually, by faith, they are said to substantially possess them. The words and phrases employed (embraced, persuaded, confessed) suggest tangibility. The fact that they confessed that they had no interest in this world but were merely passing through declares a persuasion and confidence that their interest and allegiance were toward a place that no man had ever seen. Clearly, they represent the believer who is, by faith, so utterly persuaded that He is faithful who promised, that they set their affection on things above and not on things of the earth. Those who live in this strange way declare that they are not looking to that which can be seen (v. 14). The just live by faith. Their life is a declaration of that truth, and a proof that they believe. The proof that they believe is that they embrace and are persuaded of that which cannot be proven. They look at all that is visible (all the palpable trappings of religion) and say that they have no substance or value. By the cross of Christ, they (believers) are dead to the world and the world is dead to them (Gal. 6:14¹).

¹ **Gal. 6:14**; But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Verse 15 is iconoclastic. Truly, these were not mindful of what they left behind. There was no melancholia about the old homestead. That old place did not occupy any place in their thoughts. If it did, they might have had opportunity to return. The wording here is very important. This does not declare that they might have been inclined to return if they were mindful, which addresses possibility or even probably. This wording is a statement of the principle of God given faith. When it comes to salvation, a believer *never* considers returning to the Old Covenant. If he were mindful, then the opportunity to do so would exist. The fact that no such opportunity does exist is *proof* that that there is no salvation that is outside of faith in Christ. Only an unbeliever would look for salvation where salvation does not exist. The believer does not look to the Law or any element of personal obedience for salvation, justification, or righteousness, because they are not mindful of them and because they do not exist (Rom. 8:5-8; compare v. 8 with Heb. 11:6; 10:1-2¹). The religion of the world will never understand that the believer does not even *consider* the law as having to do, in any way, with his life in Christ.

The desire of the believer is heavenly. They look for that city that God has prepared for them. where God is not ashamed to be their God (Heb. 12:18-24²). They look to the throne where

¹ **Rom. 8:5-8**; For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. **8**, So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. **Heb. 11:6**; 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. **10:1-2**; 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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

² **Heb. 12:18-24**; For ye are not come unto the mount that might be

He who has purged their sin and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high resides. There, they are seen in Christ, who, by His death, declared God to be righteous and just in justifying the believer. He is not ashamed to be their God because He who sits by Him is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb. 2:11; 1 John 4:17¹). Every one of them looks here and nowhere else. Their highest desire is to be in that place of promise (Phil. 1:21, 23; 2 Tim. 4:6-8²).

touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 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: (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: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) 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, 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, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

¹ **Heb. 2:11**; For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. **1 John 4:17**; Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

² **Phil. 1:21**, For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **23**; For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. **2 Tim. 4:6-8**; For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

LOOKING (3)

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.

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.

Hebrews 11:17-22

Paul continues to teach that element of faith that looks to the invisible, that believes what cannot be seen and has confidence of its existence because it is declared in the word of God. The invisible, to faith, is the only thing that is substantial. In these verses the premise remains the same but looks at the invisible in reference to that which is common to faith. One thing that every believer can attest to is that trials accompany faith. Trials are tests; they are never designed to destroy but to bring us to the feet of the object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. Until we are given life in Christ, we have no concept of spiritual struggle. The trials that attend faith are designed to, as the old hymn says, “thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine” (Mal. 3:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:7¹).

¹ **Mal. 3:1-4**; Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the

One of the interesting things about trials is that, since they accompany faith, and though they are visible, real, and painful, they succeed in causing us to look to things invisible, to the Christ we have never seen, the very one who, having purged our sin, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. This, of course, is further proof that trials, being an element of faith, are not solved by going to the Law or looking to ourselves. Doing so would deny the very principles of faith (Heb. 11:1¹). Nothing God does for His people will ever make them look to themselves for remedy of trials. Trust this: if you are looking to yourself, it is not of God and therefore not of faith. The *fact* is that trials are *not* problems to be solved. They are ordained afflictions void of judgement and gifts of grace that run their full course. They begin and end at the appointed time.

While the trial is in progress, having its perfect work, the believer knows that there is a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13²). This passage speaks of faith, of seeing that which is invisible. This way of escape does not enable the believer to escape the trial; it enables the believer to endure the trial. So, while the trial continues, the believer knows that there will be an end to it

way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. **1 Pet. 1:7**; That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

¹ **Heb. 11:1**; Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

² **1 Cor. 10:13**; There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

when it has accomplished its purpose. The way of escape is something every believer knows, and he knows he will find it at the end of the trial. The way of escape is the city of refuge. The way of escape is Christ. The final escape will be in His presence where there will be no trials, no tears, no sorrow, and no pain.

This knowledge is the way of escape that enables us to endure the trial. Therefore, the trial is not something that can be undone at all. It is designed for faith to cause faith to look to Christ—no one and nothing else.

In the verses of our text, we see this truth particularly displayed. Three men are used here to set forth this principle of the trial of faith: Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. They are seen as representing three kinds of trials.

The first trial is Abraham's. God tells him to give up—even to kill—his beloved son, Isaac, the miraculously born seed of promise. There are many applications to this trial. We know that what Abraham did pictured what God the Father did in giving His Son as a ransom for many. From the passage in Genesis, we know that true worship of God is obedient sacrifice because Abraham, knowing that he was about to slay his son, told those that were with him to wait while he and Isaac went up the mountain to worship.

This pictured also the death of Christ as the true worship of God, because that death made it possible for God to be just and the justifier of them that believe.

We also see substitution pictured, as God provided Himself a ram to slay instead of Isaac. But here in Hebrews, this trial is revealed to teach us of the principle that Abraham looked to the invisible during his trial. He believed the promise. We are not told of Abraham's emotions because they do not truly aid in the presentation of the concept. However, we do know that Abraham lied twice to protect his wife, listened to his wife and took Hagar to accomplish what God had promised, and even

pleaded with God to accept Ishmael as the seed of promise. He was a man of like precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1¹), but he was also a human being of like passions. Offering up his son was a trial, and there is no doubt that it was painful. The Word says that Abraham offered up his son “by faith.”

The ram caught in the thicket that substituted for Isaac is not mentioned here. This is about the operation of faith. Abraham believed God concerning the promise that the seed would proceed from Isaac. He believed that if his son died (or if he killed his son), that it would not alter the promise of God. He believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham's faith was in Christ, and this is seen in the last phrase of verse 19. The trial that Abraham underwent was so that he could receive something in a figure (or type). Abraham, in that great trial, saw Christ (John 8:56²). What figure did Abraham receive? (See: Genesis 22:14³). In what mountain is Jehovah seen? He is seen on Calvary's mountain and there alone.

In vv. 20 and 21 we see the faith of Jacob. Jacob received the blessing of Isaac—though by law it belonged to Esau—that the purpose according to election might stand (Rom. 9:11-13⁴). Likewise, Jacob performed a crossed hand blessing in his old age when he blessed Ephraim instead of Manasseh because he believed God. He worshipped God by believing that God was

¹ **2 Pet. 1:1**; Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

² **John 8:56**; Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

³ **Genesis 22:14**; And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

⁴ **Rom. 9:11-13**; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

right in blessing the younger to be served by the elder. He looked beyond what Joseph construed to be wrong and, even as he was dying, he believed God and did not bow to the pressure of the living. He believed God—the invisible. The trial of old age and the prospect of approaching death did not diminish his faith.

Finally, by faith, Joseph revealed that he believed God concerning the deliverance of Israel and their eventual placement in the promised land—and even more, the “eternal” promised land. He gave orders that his bones should not be left in Egypt. He never saw the land of milk and honey with his eyes, but he looked at it by faith (Gen. 50:26¹). This is the only time the word “coffin” occurs in scripture. The word here means “hope chest.” In the trial of death, Joseph looked beyond the grave to the invisible and knew it was *evidence* and *substance* of a *sure* hope.

¹ **Gen. 50:26**; So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

LOOKING (4)

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.

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

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

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

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

Hebrews 11:23-27

As we have seen in our last 3 lessons, the people of faith are defined by the fact that they live in this world looking for a better thing (an invisible thing) based on the promise of God. In this first verse (v. 23) faith is revealed as being willingly disobedient to the government when the actions of government defy the word of God. This is not a treatise on the virtues of civil disobedience or a sanction on militant action against the government. The edict of the Pharaoh to kill all children under the age of two years was an act against the word of God. Moses' mother disobeyed that law in order to save the life of her son. She saw something in the child, by spiritual understanding, that made her know that the future held out something special for him. She saw this by faith. In compassion, Pharaoh's daughter retrieved the child from the river, adopted him and named him Moses. In all this, the providence of God controlled the minds

of men to preserve this deliverer. The thing declared is that Moses' mother acted on what she perceived as the promise of God for the deliverance of Israel. She believed God concerning invisible things. Her act of faith was to disobey the king because the king required her to act against the law of God.

The children of God are to obey the laws of the land. Governments are established for the benefit of the populous (Rom. 13:1-7¹), and although sometimes governments are cruel and unjust (1 Pet. 2:17-19²—Nero), the only true place of disobedience is when a government declares that the believer cannot obey God in the matter of worship (Acts 4:17-20³). It is no chance occurrence that the account of Moses was the account of care for the deliverer. Centuries later, Mary and Joseph would do the same. They fled to Egypt when the king of Israel put the same law in place in fear of the Deliverer that Moses pictured—the Savior, Jesus Christ. The invisible object of faith is Jesus Christ, and the worship of Him is the singular

¹ **Rom. 13:1-7**; What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

² **1 Pet. 2:17-19**; Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

³ **Acts 4:17-20**; But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

place where the believer is allowed—indeed commanded—to defy the established government.

Verse 23 establishes the reason for the action of Moses, who in faith defies the government of Egypt in order to deliver Israel. It is not clear whether the words that describe the actions of Moses relate to the first time Moses left Egypt or when He openly defied Pharaoh by demanding, “Let my people go.” If it refers to the first time that he left, when he fled in fear, these words reveal that the Lord was viewing Moses in Christ, and it declared that what he did in fear and trembling was seen in the scheme of providence. If it is seen in demanding “Let my people go,” which is more likely, it is the revelation that in faith the believer makes choices that have nothing to do with present circumstances but with an eye on the invisible as it relates to the promise of God.

Moses’ actions were not like his mother’s. He was not disobeying an unjust law. He was making a spiritual value assessment. He discerned that all that was physically available to him was of no value when compared to the promise of God (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17-18¹). This is faith’s view of the world, and it is all of its delights and trappings. When I speak of the world, I speak of it in the religious sense. Moses’ dismissal of the delights of Egypt was a refusal to be a part of that which would ultimately endow him with the power of an earthly deity (Pharaoh). The world and all its business is ultimately designed to exalt man and diminish God. Remember, this all began with the reaction of Pharaoh, and later that of Herod, to the news of the deliverer’s arrival. Their positions were threatened by the

¹ **Rom. 8:18**; For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

2 Cor. 4:17-18; For 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.

prospect of One coming that would destroy the power that Pharaoh and Herod had over the people, a power that would have fallen into the hands of Moses. Moses was not only rejecting the wealth of Egypt and the authority that would belong to him, he was also rejecting the gods and the religion under which he had been reared (v. 24).

This is faith's summation of everything that comes before God bestows belief. Former life, former religion, and former gods are discounted (disallowed and disavowed) when the Gospel finds purchase in the heart of the elect (2 Cor. 6:14-18¹). The sum of the power, influence, and rewards of world religion is found in the words "the pleasures of sin for a season" (v. 25). Faith's choice is to be afflicted with the people of God and to reject the religion designed to please the flesh (Rom. 8:8²).

The reason is plain (v. 26). Faith makes a proper estimation because faith enables the believer to highly esteem the unseen, but which is also clearly declared in the word of God. There can be no doubt of the reason for Moses' actions. He saw Christ by faith. He saw the glories of full and free redemption. He saw grace and mercy sovereignly bestowed. He saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is no wonder that years later he would ask the Lord to show him His glory and find that the reasons he left Egypt were due to God-given faith (Ex. 33:18-19³). He knew that God would deliver Israel. That promise was

¹ **2 Cor. 6:14-18**; Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

² **Rom. 8:8**; So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

³ **Ex. 33:18-19**; And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19, And

given to Abraham and handed down in the songs of Zion to all that came after him (Gen. 15:12-15¹). Upon that promise, renewed by God from Christ in the burning bush (Ex. 3:7-10²), Moses, embracing that which was not seen, believed God and turned loose everything that the world offered.

By faith Moses left everything behind, not fearing the reaction or the power of Pharaoh. The first time he left, he left in fear. Now in these verses, he leaves in utter assurance, knowing that a better thing awaits him (and the people of God) outside the boundaries and religion of this doomed land.

The world will never understand this. The big, successful business of religion looks with disdain at the little flocks that dot the landscape, refusing to acknowledge their religion, their practices, or their influence. But the promise remains, “Fear not little flock; it is the Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Once again, the truth of verse 1 is illuminated in the life of God's children. Moses endured “as seeing Him who is invisible.”

he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

¹ **Gen. 15:12-15**; And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

² **Ex. 3:7-10**; And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

LOOKING (5)

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.

Hebrews 11:28-31

In this chapter we have thus far seen that all those mentioned have exhibited faith, a faith that believes to the salvation of the soul. That faith, the wonderful God-given principle of spiritual life, does not produce a static, fatalistic existence. Faith looks to the promise of God and acts based on the word of God. The promise, though unseen, is not un-revealed. If God promises, then everything He has promised is done. Since it is impossible that what He has promised shall not come to pass, faith acts as if that promise were already accomplished in time. Faith does not operate in the realm of possibilities, probabilities, chance, wishes, or dreams. Faith operates on the sure Word of God, doing things that reason cannot perceive. Faith worketh by love (Gal. 5:5-6¹).

During the great pandemics in Europe, the concept of hospitals came to be. When most people fled from each other for fear of infections, and houses were filled with the sick and the dying, and warehouses were used to house the doomed, a

¹ Gal. 5:5-6; For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

certain group of people showed up voluntarily to tend to the sick, to wipe the fevered brows, and seek to comfort the dying. This “odd” group of folks didn’t seem to be concerned for their own well-being. They were believers, and they acted in what the world deemed an irrational manner because they believed the Word of God (Mat. 25:34-40; Phil 2:1-4¹). They acted in such a manner because they looked at a beautiful Savior that awaited them. They were not of this world, and their eyes of faith were cast upon the invisible. If they were infected while attending the sick, they would simply die and be ushered into the arms of their Savior. In those warehouses of sorrow and woe, the concept of a place to care for the sick was born. People who seemed to care for others more than themselves were showing the true hospitality from which the hospital came to be.

Faith acts contrary to everything that the world counts reasonable and sensible because the world cannot see what faith believes and knows. Faith always acts. Even when the believer refuses to move or seems dormant and in repose, he is acting in complete compliance with the word of God (Mat. 11:28²). Paul

¹ **Mat. 25:34-40**; Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. **Phil 2:1-4**; If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

² **Mat. 11:28**; Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and

said that the spiritual man discerns all things but is discerned by no man (1 Cor. 2:11¹).

In our text we see faith acting, and the act of faith is revealed as believing God. In verse 28 Moses is declared to have kept the Passover, through faith. This does not speak of the ceremony, or Sabbath of the Passover, but refers to that fateful night when God came for justice in every house in Egypt. Moses kept the Passover, or rather, did that which would cause God to pass over his house on that night. He put the blood of the substitute on the doorpost and lintels of his house so that God would see justice honored at that house and pass over it. It was faith that slaughtered the lamb and painted the doorposts with its blood. But then faith, which sees the invisible, took over. When Moses walked into that house, he did not see the blood any longer, for it was on the outside. God saw it, but Moses didn't. Moses, through faith, kept the Passover, believing the promise of God, because God had promised, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." So it is with every believer. We do not see the blood, but we believe, according to the Word of God, that the blood has already been applied and redemption has been accomplished, and salvation is promised to every believer (Heb. 9:11-12²).

By faith the children passed through the Red Sea. It was a remarkable act of faith to tread between the walls of water towering above their heads. They, according to scripture, were seeing "the salvation of the Lord." The salvation they saw was

I will give you rest.

¹ **1 Cor. 2:11**; For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

² **Heb. 9:11-12**; 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; 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.

the demise of their enemies. Their walk through the walls of water was merely a step toward that land of promise that they saw by faith because God had promised. They believed God for what lay ahead.

By faith the walls of Jericho came down. Now that they were in the land of promise, the children of Israel—with sounds, noises, not with natural weapons of conventional warfare—act in faith. This is an example of the believer's faith while living in this world, particularly in relation to preaching the Gospel. To the walled city of hell, we approach with a sound—a noise of words—with shouts of the deliverer, “It is finished.” Even though we never put hands on the gates, they cannot prevail against us. The word we speak is the power of God unto salvation, the word of His power by which all things are upheld, the words of eternal life. No human force can resist it. Men who think they resist it are but deluded to think that it is meant for *their* salvation. This blessed arrow always hits its mark. It always finds purchase in the heart of those for whom it is intended. There was but one of the elect in that horrible city Jericho who was a target of grace, and the rest of the city fell in rubble around her feet. The Israelites shouted and the walls fell, and the harlot was saved. The Israelites believed God. They believed the promise of victory without shooting one arrow. So we, who have been given “this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7), preach the Gospel, and know that the victory is ours; that no matter how high the walls of the strongman's palace, a stronger one than he will tear (has torn) down the walls and delivered the captives. We need no weapon that man has invented; we have only by faith to obey God and declare the truth.

Finally, by faith, Rahab perished not with the rest of that city. She received the spies, hid them from the enemy, and received the promise of salvation. In truth, she lied for God, and

He delivered her while He destroyed the unbelievers. She was a believer, and that is declared by the fact that she did not perish with the unbelievers. She hung that scarlet cord in the window of her house and when the Lord saw it, he preserved her life. Our protection against the judgment and wrath of God is faith in Christ.

LOOKING (6)

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.

Hebrews 11:32-40

The final verses of this chapter continue the teaching that faith *acts*, looking at the *invisible* based upon the *promise* of God. Paul, having named and revealed the actions of the champions of faith from the elders, to Able and even to Rahab the Harlot, concedes that the volumes would not be able to contain the works of faith of every Old Testament believer.

Those he mentions by name, and others he mentions by what they suffered, form a kind of catalogue of the operation of faith in every situation.

Those mentioned in verse 32 would have been well known to the Hebrews, but remember Paul is bringing all things to Christ, of whom the prophets gave witness and all these characters pictured in one way or another. Though the deeds of these men were great in and of themselves, if they are not seen as pictures of Christ in the Old Testament, they are not rightly viewed. Also, Paul is still teaching the dissolution of the Old Covenant upon the institution of the New Covenant. This entire chapter is dedicated to that blessed principle that declares that, whereas the Old Covenant consisted of that which could be seen and touched but never took away sin, the New Covenant consists of the work of Christ that put away sin, and it is received by faith, which operates in the realm of the invisible.

What follows in the remainder of the chapter brings us to that place. The first aspect of faith is found in verse 33 and is the report that faith overcomes the world (1 John 5:4¹). By faith, those mentioned in verse 32 “subdued kingdoms.” Each in his own way, believing the promised of God, overthrew various nations and people. Though these nations and peoples who were overthrown were counted as sheep for the slaughter, the believers “through faith” were more than conquerors through Christ. Throughout history, God's little flock has been discounted, but it has also turned worlds upside down because they (God’s flock) believed God. These are said to have worked righteousness. Though respectively they brought about judicial and political righteousness, ruling and acting in a just manner, these words are better interpreted as personal integrity of doing the right thing. They did so because God had made them

¹ **1 John 5:4**; For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

righteous by the promise of Christ, and being righteous in Christ, they sought to do that which was right according to God's word (Rom. 12:21; Titus 2:12-13¹).

They “obtained promises.” This simply means that in the respective tasks to which they were assigned, God gave them victory. We who believe and preach the Gospel have the promise of victory (the promise that the Word will prevail), and we have obtained the promise. By faith, those named, as well as other believers, were courageous in conflict (vv. 33-34—Daniel in the Lion's den; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walked in the furnace; David escaped Goliath's sword). These great things were done by believing God was able to do what He had promised. Each of these is record of great deliverances.

The wonder of faith is clearly defined in the last phrase of verse 34. Out of weakness they were made strong. Though this makes no sense to the world, it is the clear understanding of all whom God has blessed with faith. In the end, all glory belongs to God. The mark of faith is utter dependence upon God. If we have strength, the strength of faith, that strength is completely derived, and it brings every believer to praise God from whom all blessings flow.

The last example of faith overcoming the world speaks of the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite woman who by faith sought the help of God through Elijah and Elisha to bring their sons alive again from the dead. They *believed* God for the impossible and God honored their *faith*.

Sometimes, perhaps even more often than not, faith is not revealed in victory but in sorrow and anguish (vv. 35-38). Some were tortured, refusing to give in to their torturers, who only

¹ **Rom. 12:21**; Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. **Titus 2:12-13**; Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

required them to *renounce* their God. Refusing to do so, they paid with their life, because they looked to a better resurrection. This does not mean a better resurrection than those who might not have suffered as they did. They were, by faith, looking to Him who *is* the better resurrection, even the resurrection and life. Believers suffer with eyes on Christ. Faith suffers at the hands of a world that *despises* God.

The description given of what these believers suffered is truly remarkable in that it reveals what the world feels about Christ, about love for the true and living God. The world cannot touch God, but the hatred it has for Him gives it a sense of entitlement to do whatever it seems is necessary to rid the name of God from the earth. There is nothing too cruel or too vile for a religion devoid of Christ. Such deem it their moral duty to destroy believers and thus destroy the life that is lived in a realm that they cannot fathom.

Faith suffers (2 Tim. 3:12¹). Faith suffers, and the believer's suffering shames the world. The world that so despises the believer is not worthy of those who it seeks to destroy. What the world does to, and feels about, the believer is shameful because it despises those who are created and sustained by grace through faith.

In verses 39-40 the theme continues, and the believer in Christ sees all that took place in the lives of these faithful ones. These verses reveal two things. First, their faith was entirely fixed on the promise that they did not obtain in their natural lives. Second, the object of their faith was realized when the new covenant was ratified in the blood of Christ, that covenant under which God gave his people faith to believe in the revealed Christ. They lived in the era of *promise* as we live in the era of the *promise fulfilled*. Both we and they live in the realm of the

¹ **2 Tim. 3:12**; Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

invisible—the new covenant—trusting in the Mediator of that covenant, based entirely upon the Gospel, the everlasting word of God. The Old Covenant has served the New, and the Old Testament is revealed and understood in the New Testament.

LOOKING (7)

1, Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

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.

Hebrews 12:1-4

Verse 2 of this passage is the bullseye of the target that Paul erected in the first chapter of this blessed book. The guided missile of faith has finally struck its mark. That mark is the object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ

These words are not a general statement, though it would certainly fit that scheme. They are declared as the antidote for a specific spiritual malady. Since this is so, it stands to reason that these words, applied as a remedy, also define the disease that it treats. Obviously, if we were told that looking unto Christ would cure our ailment, our ailment must be born of not looking unto Christ. If we are told to run, it is obviously because we are immobile. If we are told to consider, then it stands to reason that we are inconsiderate. The fact that we are told to do these things *patiently* certainly suggests a lack of patience.

These verses continue to address the words of chapter 10 verses 38-39¹. In our text, Paul uses, as examples, these great

¹ 38-39; Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my

heroes and heroines of faith to show that believing is difficult, even impossible, if it is in any way governed by circumstance or conditioned upon the ability of men. These all died in faith having *not* received the promises. The believers that are now addressed by Paul have it better than they did (11:39-40¹). Those under the Old Covenant were justified, sanctified, and saved in the *same* manner as we—by grace through the blood of Christ—and were given faith to believe it. However, *we* are privileged to be a part of a fully realized church—we are not under the law, which could not save them, though they had to live under its constraints. We have not come to the mountain that may be touched, that burned with fire. We have come to Mount Zion (12:17-23²). God has given us *better things*. Yet, in spite of this gracious benefaction, we often find ourselves stalled. We see what God has done, we see what price others have paid for believing God, yet we often find ourselves encumbered with weights that seemingly halt us in our tracks.

Having seen that we are compassed about with a great multitude of those who have believed in the past, our eyes are

soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

¹ **11:39-40**; And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

² **12:17-23**; 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. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 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: (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: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) 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, 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.

directed to Christ—even as our Lord looked past His suffering to the glory that awaited Him. If we do not look to Him and continue not looking to Him, we will be unable to run the race that is set before us. These witnesses are not witnesses in a legal or historical sense but witnesses in an ethical sense, which is to bring us, having seen their faith, to consider why we, who have better things than they, are yet stymied in unbelief. On one side of our unbelief we have a great crowd of believers, and on the other side we have Him who obeyed perfectly. We are to consider Him in comparison to ourselves. He ran the race set before Him and finished His course; He endured and was obedient to the giving of His life's blood. We who are saved by that blood are such a contrast to Him. We are rendered catatonic by unbelief and weighed down by it, and we are constantly turned from the course. We have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin of unbelief.

The malady is always unbelief, and it is particularly the way unbelief is always manifested. Unbelief will always cause us to turn back to the beggarly elements of the world, to the religion of things seen and not to things unseen. Unbelief will seek evidence instead of faith in Christ. Unbelief is not the absence of belief; it is the absence of believing Christ. It is the internal struggle of the soul (2 Cor. 10:3-7¹). Faith brings all things that have to do with acceptance before God to stand in Christ's obedience alone. Obedience is *believing* God (Rom. 10:16²).

¹ **2 Cor. 10:3-7**; For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

² **Rom. 10:16**; But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Disobedience is manifest in imaginations and high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, or what we know to be true of God: that our salvation is because of the obedience of Christ. The antidote for disobedience is obedience. The remedy for not looking is looking. This unbelief is called a weight, which as used here is a burden that inhibits us from movement. The word *beset* means to *skillfully surround*, to enwrap as if curving its arm around your neck. Unbelief is skillful, a subtle chokehold that, to the natural mind, is both logical and reasonable.

There is a race to run and a course to finish. This is simply stated as a fact. Don't become ensnared trying to understand what the course of your race is. No map is available or forthcoming. Religion plays fast and loose with men's imaginations, telling them that they must find out what their talent is or what the will of God is for their lives, so they can plot the appropriate course. The word of God says there is a race to be run and that it cannot be ran in unbelief. You and I also have a race to run, but we are not to try to figure out what it is. You and I are to look to the prize. We are to fix our eyes upon the finish line, and the race and the course will take care of themselves. If we are beset by stopping and looking at the course, or measuring our presumed progress, or seeking to invent better ways to run, we will be shut down by the sin and weight that so easily besets.

The steps of the righteous man are ordered of the Lord; the race and course are set. Do not bother yourself with the particulars; they engender unbelief. Look to the prize! Look to Christ! He is the beginner and perfecter of faith. He endured the cross—His race, His course. He did so with His eyes on the glory that awaited Him. He despised (disregarded, counted as nothing) the suffering that attended the course and did so for the joy set before Him, and He is now seated at the right hand of the

throne of God. He suffered loneliness, betrayal, the weakness of the human body, the anguish of dealing with intractable human obstinacy, and disregarded these things for the joy set before Him. *How* the race is run is what is important: It is run “looking unto Jesus,” the one who raised faith to perfection, and so set before us the highest example of it. Read 10:38-11:1¹ then 12:1-2². Don't concern yourself with the course. Light out toward Christ! The only remedy for unbelief is belief.

¹ 10:38-11:1; Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

² **12:1-2**; Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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.

CHASTISEMENT

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.

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?

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.

Hebrews 12:5-11

If you will notice, verse 5 begins with the word “and,” which connects this passage about chastisement to verse 4¹. Our context addresses the issue of resisting sin, not in a general sense but in specific reference to the sin of unbelief, the sin of taking our eyes from Christ. The sin of unbelief besets us, weighs us down, and halts us in our race: our life lived as a child of God. Because these believers in our text have not striven against this sin, the Lord will most certainly bring them

¹ **verse 4**; Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

back to the feet of the master. The manner that He employs is *chastisement*.

There are some that hold chastisement to be a form of punishment or judgment designed to so injure the recipient that he will be forced to crawl, defeated, back to the door of mercy. Our dear Lord has clearly declared that such measures do not result in one being brought back to God, but rather always achieve the exact opposite result (Isa. 1:5¹). Religious men not only believe that chastisement is penal, but they believe that they are arbiters of it. Such use the word of God as an instrument of punishment and seek by religious censure to bring about what they deem to be correct moral behavior. Forced morality, or morality produced under duress or threat of punishment, is one of the definitions of self-righteousness.

Chastisement is *neither punishment nor judgment*. In His great substitutionary sacrifice, Christ suffered the judgment that was due the elect. Chastisement is the loving correction of a child, who has strayed from the correct path, by a father, whose singular interest is the welfare and safety of his child. For God's children, its design and its result are that those upon whom it is exercised will turn their eyes to Christ. Chastisement never comes without cause, and the cause is always addressed in the remedy. If the remedy is "looking to Christ," then the illness must be that God's children have been looking elsewhere.

Chastisement is the gracious act of our loving Father that causes us to know who we are and reminds us of what we have abundantly received. Part of our happy estate to be the recipient of such love is due to the "chastisement" that our Lord took in our place (Isa. 53:5²). Since true chastisement is not

¹ **Isa. 1:5**; Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

² **Isa. 53:5**; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

punishment, this form of substitution relates to the Lord and to us in His intercessory office as sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 4:15¹). The affliction and infirmity that attends chastisement is borne by our Lord as it is borne by us. Like everything that comes our way, chastisement always works for the good of all who are called according to God’s purpose (Rom. 8: 28²).

The particulars of the chastisement are not given. This is probably because Paul is addressing many who have not striven against the besetting sin of unbelief, and the Lord deals with His people individually and not collectively. The *fact* they are being chastised is being addressed, and verse 5 intimates they have forgotten the *reason* for it, as well as its *cause*. Whatever sorrow attends them is because they are the objects of God’s love (Prov. 3:11-12³).

Chastisement is not for everybody. It is *only* for the children of God (v. 6; Heb. 2:10⁴). Though it is not for everybody without exception, it is exercised upon every believer without exception. There is a popular religious notion that when you become a Christian and use the tools available to you, no trouble will come your way. If no trouble comes your way, it only proves one thing: that you are *not* a child of God.

Verse 7 is not speaking of your ability or your willpower to endure. It is not about your endurance. This simply means that if chastisement is exercised upon you it is God dealing with you as his child. Chastisement is defined by its recipient reaching a

¹ **Heb. 4:15**; 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.

² **Rom. 8: 28**; And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

³ **Prov. 3:11-12**; My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

⁴ **Heb. 2:10**; 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.

specific end. Many people designate every trouble as the chastisement of God, but if the trouble that comes your way does not result in returning your eyes to Christ, then those troubles are merely the result of being born of woman—not chastisement. Chastisement involves the relationship between a father and his child (vv. 7-8).

In the realm of natural humanity, chastisement is commonly understood as coming from a father who loves his children. *Cruel* punishment that provokes a child to slavish *fear*, *anger*, and *resentment* is not the result of a loving relationship but the result of a father seeking to satisfy his *own* wrath. The result of every correction that flows from a loving desire to help and aid the child, to set him on the right track, will produce reverence for the father who exercises such loving correction. Their “pleasure” does not refer to vindictive treatment but means that they exercise it according to their best judgment based on the need.

On the natural level, this is, of course, the ideal scenario. But we all know that some discipline that we have administered (or failed to administer) was sometimes not out of love. If, however, in that ideal scenario of chastisement, the result is reverence, how much more will the child of God revere Him who the child knows acts out of pure love (v. 9)? The holiness referred to is not God’s essential holiness but refers to the result of the chastisement as the Lord spoke of in verse 11.

Though the divine process employed to bring us to the feet of Christ is hardly pleasant to the flesh and is indeed grievous, its employment always has the same result: our eyes are returned to Christ, who bore “the chastisement of our peace,” who is our peace and our righteousness, and the fruits born of that relationship are peaceable to everyone who is chastised of the Lord (Isa. 32:17¹). The struggles of our life are but the

¹ **Isa. 32:17**; And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the

sweet loving corrections of our Lord, and—praise His name!—
they will bring us to our Savior.

effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

WHEREFORE

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.

14, Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

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.

Hebrews 12:12-17

These verses are admonitions for the children of God as they endure the chastisements from the Lord. Paul has made it clear that the trials and tribulation of chastisement are common to every son and daughter of God. Troubles in the life of the child of God for the most part are simply the life of the believer. If one lives a life that is not attended by troubles, sorrows, and affliction of chastisement, it is proof that they are not the children of God (Heb. 12:7-8¹). These chastisements are grievous, and the natural tendency of frail humanity is to fold under the pressure of trial.

The words before us are not a way of escape. They are

¹ **Heb. 12:7-8;** If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

admonitions that will keep us from folding under the weight of the trial. Do not think that you or I will always come out smelling like a rose. Peter denied the Lord three times under the pressure of exposure and censure. He *quit* the business of the Gospel after the Lord was crucified. He *folded* under the pressure of the Judaizers at Antioch, as did Barnabas and James. Paul tried to *appease* the Jews by going under an Old Covenant ceremony and *paid dearly* for it. The scriptures, with such reminders, make the believer glad that what comes his way is by the hands of his loving Father and in no way changes God's relationship with him.

Knowing that chastisement is painful while also knowing that it is our best medicine (Heb. 12:11¹), our Lord directs us to keep our eyes on Christ and not revert to the Old Covenant to try to fix our problems. Verses 12-13 reveal the effects of troubles and sorrow by what they encourage us to do. These admonitions refer us back to the race that we must run, which is the life as a believer. The sin that besets us and the weight that burdens us down is what causes our hands to hang down in despair and our knees to be feeble. We know that that sin is unbelief (the plague of every believer), and it is manifested in the singular fact that these chastisements come upon us because we are not looking to Christ, and they are designed to bring us back to that blessed view.

Unbelief is not “belief in nothing;” it is believing in something other than Him who God has commanded us to believe. “Not looking” does not mean that our eyes are closed but rather refers to the fact that we are looking where we ought not look. We are to look to Christ alone (Heb. 12:2²). Looking

¹ **Heb. 12:11**; 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.

² **Heb. 12:2**; Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the

to Him lifts up those hands and strengthens the feeble knees. It is making the paths straight (running the race), with our eyes on the prize. The chastisement that comes upon us is for our healing, so that we would not be turned aside again to that which has been put away (Heb. 10:9¹). God has promised that chastisement is for our good (Micah 4:6; Zeph. 3:19²).

The next admonition is a reasonable and general prospect for every believer. "Follow peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18; 14:19³). However, as in every case, the meaning of the text is determined by the context. To "follow" indicates a diligent pursuit. The peace with all (*men* in italics) that is to be pursued has to do with enduring the affliction of chastisement and bearing up under it with grace. The *peace* that is to be pursued, first of all, is *He* who is our peace, the very One who made peace for us by the blood of the cross.

Within the context, the application is for us to not behave in a manner during our trial that would cause men to believe that we are not at peace with God, or that what has befallen us would somehow seem to diminish our confidence in our Savior. It is the same principle that our Lord referred to in Mat. 6:16-18⁴. The meaning of this is more clearly illuminated in verse 15.

shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

¹ **Heb. 10:9**; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

² **Micah 4:6**; In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted.

Zeph. 3:19; Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

³ **Rom. 12:18**; If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. **14:19**; Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

⁴ **Mat. 6:16-18**; Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The *object* of the view is the same as in verse 2. The way we “fail of the grace of God” is to behave in such a manner as to seem that the grace of God is insufficient to hold us up during chastisement. To not look diligently to Christ is to be soon found in the slough of despond, to become bitter and be defiled by the rudiments of the world.

If you have a marginal reading in your Bible, you will see that the words “fail of the grace of God” can also be rendered “fall from grace.” We know that such a phrase is foreign to scripture if the subject is the salvation of the soul. The believer is saved by grace, grace that is entirely a work of the sovereign God (Eph. 2:8-9¹). The interpreter of scripture is scripture, and the only place where we find the phrase “fall from grace” is found in Galatians 5. That usage is clearly in reference to someone who professes to trust Christ alone but returns to the law for righteousness or justification; such declare, by their action, that the death of Christ is nothing. The same application is made in our text. To take our eyes from Christ during the time of trial while suffering the affliction of it, and to seek help from the elements of the Old Covenant, is to call into question our belief in Christ.

This truth sheds some light on the meaning of the second phrase of verse 14. Some would see the word *holiness* and immediately begin to consider human works of merit. The “follow” at the first of the verse applies also to this matter of holiness. “Follow” means to *diligently pursue* or *flee after*. Again, we are drawn back to Heb. 12:1-2² (race to be run,

¹ **Eph. 2:8-9**; For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

² **Heb. 12:1-2**; Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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.

looking to Christ). The (only) holiness by which men see the Lord is Christ. The same word for holiness (*hagiasmos*) here is translated “sanctification” in 1 Cor. 1:30¹. The holiness “to diligently pursue” or “to flee after” is Christ. When we feel as if the chastisement is weighing us down, we do not apply to anything else but Christ. We see God by seeking Christ and by fleeing to Him (Col. 2:8-10²). The word “holiness” basically means *separate*. The separation is from all that God has forbidden, and in the context, deals specifically with the employment of the Old Covenant for any part of our life. This separation is born of being separated *unto* something (Rom. 1:1³).

All of these admonitions are simply different ways of saying the same thing. No matter the circumstance—no matter the grief or sorrow, whether up or down, high or low, in sorrow or in joy—our path, our way, our pursuit, our peace, and our holiness is Jesus Christ the Lord.

¹ **1 Cor. 1:30**; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

² **Col. 2:8-10**; Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

³ **Rom. 1:1**; Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

PROFANE

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.

Hebrews 12:16-17

These two verses are connected to verse 15¹. Though verse 15 is primarily addressed to a believer that is undergoing chastisement, the subject matter that is being addressed is still about the danger of returning to the Old Covenant for acceptance with God. Clearly, the subject of chastisement and the warnings about being beset by the sin of unbelief that keeps us from running the race, both teach that the believer, while running the race, may indeed falter and momentarily turn back to the beggarly elements of the Old Covenant. Chastisement is the *remedy*, and it results in bringing the believer back to diligently looking to Christ.

There is, however, another category of folk that Paul has previously dealt with in this book. They are those who profess Christ but still embrace the Old covenant for justification. These are not chastised because they are bastards and not sons. They are apostates, and they are without hope and beyond recovery. They are spoken of in Hebrews 6 and are revealed in chapter 10 as those who draw back into perdition (10:39²), clearly distinguished from the believer, who is justified and lives by faith. Remember that, ultimately, the crime of returning to the

¹ **verse 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.

² **10:39**; But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Old Covenant is a wholesale discounting of Christ and His work. Apostasy is leaving the truth after having professed to believe it and it is described graphically in the Word of God (2 Pet. 2:20-22¹).

These apostates are described as the “many” that are “defiled” in the last phrase of verse 15. To illustrate the crime they commit in returning to the Old Covenant, Paul calls up a character from the Old Testament—Esau.

In the first part of verse 16, Esau is described as a fornicator and a profane person. The base meaning of profane is ungodly. Esau was an ungodly person, which means more than that he was simply not like God. It means that he was against God, an enemy of God (Rom. 8:5-8²). As horrible as this indictment is, it is the indictment of everyone who is born of a woman. Until and unless God gives us spiritual life in Christ through regeneration, we will remain natural, carnal men.

The second description given of Esau is that of a fornicator. This sin needs no expansive definition. It means illicit sexual behavior. The Greek word is “pornos” from which we get our word “pornography.” However, the biblical use of the word does not deal with what we would call the concept of pornography but with unlawful sexual activity or sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage. The criminality of this sin is that

¹ **2 Pet. 2:20-22**; 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. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

² **Rom. 8:5-8**; For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

it cannot be committed in a vacuum. It is a sin of community. In order to fornicate, one must involve another in their sin. The difficulty of the use of this description in our text is that there is *no* indication in the record of Esau's earthly life that he practiced such behavior.

The fornication that Esau was guilty of was spiritual fornication, that horrible act of seemingly embracing Christ and yet whoring after other gods. The explanation of his profanity and fornication is simply stated. He was a profane man and a fornicator because he sold his birthright for a morsel of meat, a bowl of pottage. Gen. 25:34 declares, "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

The question arises: How does this equate with professing Christ and returning to the law for justification? The key to understanding this is in the principle of the *birthright*. The birthright involved much more than eventually becoming the patriarch of the family. The birthright primarily and foremost has to do with the *Christ*. The principle of the birthright ensures the continuation of the blessing promised to Abraham concerning the *seed*. The principle of birthright honors the firstborn. It involves the promise of eternal life.

By selling his birthright, he proved himself a profane man who despised God. By selling his birthright, Esau proved himself a fornicator, whoring after the desires of his flesh, making *himself* the god in whose glory he was invested. By this act, Esau revealed that he had no interest in Christ, who is the firstborn of every creature. He had no care for *eternal* life but rather acted in a way that revealed that he was bound to the things of this world. His act revealed that he had no interest in the promise given his grandfather Abraham, nor his father Isaac, the seed of promise. He *rejected* the covenant promise, the promise of the covenant of *grace*. He did not care for his birthright and thus did not care for Christ.

The reason that Paul put his actions in the category of apostasy is found in verse 17. This verse is easily misunderstood because the actions described concerning Esau sounds like what most religious people feel repentance to be. Most of religion relies heavily upon *seeking* and *tears*, and seeing those things, they believe them to be indicative of repentance. They thus apply the words to mean that Esau was repenting or seeking to repent. There is no indication in this verse or any other in scripture that Esau was repentant of selling his birthright. Tears do not mean repentance. Repentance is not sought for; it is *granted* and is *born* of the goodness of God.

The first phrase of verse 17 declares the repentance, or change of mind, that Esau was seeking with tears. He sought Isaac's repentance, or change of mind, about rejecting *him*, like many who, realizing their stupidity too late, seek to change the outcome by becoming emotional wrecks. His tears, though they were shed to persuade his father to “unreject” him, did not reflect the severity of his actions. The fact that he thought that tears would undo what *he* did revealed the low view he had of the birthright. Isaac knew, however, that what Esau did was not some slip of the tongue, or some little recoverable misstep.

Esau had rejected the promised seed. The Hebrew writers said that he had given up his future, “when he would have inherited the blessing” (v. 17b). Paul is simply saying that to abandon Christ and opt for the law for justification is apostasy, and one may cry interminably before God and it will change nothing. Go back to the law after professing Christ and you are done, forever.

CONSPICUOUS CONTRAST

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:)

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.

Hebrews 12:18-24

These words bring us to the last argument of this book. That better “covenant” has been established from every possible angle. The Law, the Old Covenant priesthood, the sacrifices, the prophets—all have been proven to have served their purpose (to picture Christ and reveal the true purpose of the Law) and have been fulfilled. Having been fulfilled, the entire covenant has been set aside and has nothing whatsoever to do with the believer.

The glorious new day has dawned, and believers are secure in the great high priest and all that He has accomplished for

them. The believer has set up camp at the fountain of grace where the living waters never diminish, and he will never return to the dry well of the old way. Considering what God has taught us in this book, it seems such an obvious distinction that any measure of cogent thought would prevent anyone from applying to the former covenant for anything. But this book would not have been written if the danger of toying with the law were not a *present* danger to those who profess to believe Christ.

So, Paul brings us to a place of conspicuous contrast. He sets forth these two covenants with such an obvious distinction that for a person to return to the law would be a clear indication of veritable insanity. We know from the teaching of scripture that a person who turns back to these beggarly elements does so because they do not believe “to the salvation of the soul” (1 Pet. 1:19¹) They remain in spiritual darkness and therefore have no understanding of and no desire for the tender mercies of our God. However, Paul continues to declare this distinction because it *needs* declaring.

The Old Covenant was given to Israel as God distinguished them as a *type* of those who were *elect* unto salvation. What He gave them from Sinai was a more defined system of that which they had been practicing since Adam in the Garden of Eden. Laws, regardless of whether singular or numerous, are but the reflection of what men *think they need* to be righteous. The truth is that the Law has nothing to do with the righteous. But those who believe that they can achieve righteousness in themselves by applying fig leaf coverings will always blame their sin on something or someone else when they fail.

While the unbeliever believes that he needs the Law for justification and righteousness, the believer knows that the law

¹ **1 Pet. 1:8-9**; Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

does nothing but condemn, and he desires no part of it. This fact seems so obvious that it should need no further explanation. But because we are slow to learn, Paul teaches us the facts by turning our eyes to two mountains.

These two mountains represent the *old* and the *new* covenants, righteousness by the *Law* or righteousness by *Jesus Christ*. The descriptions of these mountains serve to strike fear in the heart of anyone who might consider going to the Law and they also reveal the utter foolishness of such a wretched choice.

If anyone can read these words and not see the difference, then that person is without hope. The believer has come to Christ. This is how Paul approaches this subject—where the believer *has* and *has not* come.

The believer has not come to the Law, which is typified in Mount Sinai (v. 18). The first thing to notice here is that *this* mountain might be touched. This is an indication that, although the believer has not come to the Law, sadly, he might yet touch it. He might in a moment of unbelief revert to his natural religion, but the warnings that follow reveal that if he does touch it, no good will come of it. To touch it, to apply to the law, will burn you and cause you nothing but pain. It will be the pain of turmoil, tempest, blackness, and darkness that is palpable (Exo. 10:21¹).

The clarion of strife and war, of endless struggle and labor (v. 19), are in this mountain. The trumpet sounds out words, but what comes forth are *not* words of comfort, quietness, or peace. When these words are heard they carry with them such a real and horrible condemnation that those who have ears to hear what they say wish that they would not be spoken ever again. If there were a message of deliverance in them, some modicum of good news, the sinner would beg them to be repeated again and

¹ **Exo. 10:21**; And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.

again. But the true voice of the words that come from this mount are terror to the lost sinner and offer no comfort. Why would anyone come to this place of woe unless somehow they thought the suffering that ensued was somehow meritorious?

The parenthetical expression of verse 20-21 is an explanation of why the words that proceed from this mountain are darkness and blackness. The commandments could not be endured (Acts 15:10¹). They were death to everyone who touched them, because they revealed the awful transgression of man's behavior. Even the one by whose name the laws are called (the *Law of Moses*) trembled before the sound of their words. He trembled because he understood what they meant. The believer has not come to that mount. The believer has come to Mount Zion; not to darkness, but to light—bright, effulgent, glorious light (Heb. 1:3²). He has come to God's city, the heavenly Jerusalem (the church—Rev. 21:9-10³). In that city, the angels of glory surround the believer. In that city, the believer stands in the midst of the church, the body of Christ, whose names are written in heaven and have been written from the foundation of the world. In that city, the believer stands before the God who has judged him in Christ and justified all who are in Christ and made them perfect. The believer has come to Christ, the mediator and executor of the New Covenant who, by His work, has perfected forever them that are sanctified; whose blood has put away the believer's sin; and

¹ **Acts 15:10**; Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

² **Heb. 1:3**; 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.

³ **Rev. 21:9-10**; And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

who has satisfied the law and justice of God. Though Abel was counted among the faithful in chapter 11, his offering did not put away sin. Christ's did, and His work speaks better things than Abel. This is where and to whom the believer has come and by comparison with the other mountain...it is no contest (2 Cor. 3:6-11¹).

¹ **2 Cor. 3:6-11**; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

SHAKEN

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.

Hebrews 12:25-29

These words are the conclusion and further explanation of the difference between the two covenants. It is clear that *believers* have come to Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant. What follows serves to warn nominal professors of Christ that their very foundations are being shaken, and what they are considering is doomed to failure if they are considering the Old Covenant to still be in effect.

Paul begins this last part of chapter 12 continuing the theme from verse 24 of Him “that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” If you read the commentaries, you will find various ideas about who spoke from earth and who speaks from heaven. It seems to me that the context makes both speakers the same but refers to different times. The Lord God spoke at Sinai and the people quaked with fear. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks from heaven, and the entire structure of the world, the universe, and

the religion of the Old Covenant is being shaken to its foundations.

The warning is clear. Those who refused Him who spoke from earth (from Mt. Sinai) did *not* escape, and all that He spoke concerning the law and the ceremonies have passed away. So then, no one who refuses “Him who speaks from heaven” (the seat of the Mediator) shall escape (10:27-29¹). This is a preparatory statement for the warning that follows in our text.

The subject is *still* the dissolution of the Old Covenant and the utter uselessness of applying it for anything spiritual. God once shook the earth when He delivered the Old Covenant (v. 26a). That is past, but now, according to promise, He is shaking not only the earth but also heaven (v. 26b). This is metaphorical language that asserts that everything in earth and heaven is put to a singular test and everything lives or dies right there. Everything finds its value when it is shaken from heaven. The *promise* that is referred to here (v. 26) is from the book of the prophet Haggai in chapter 2 verses 6-9².

The historical fulfillment of this prophecy took place between 536-516 BC, after Cyrus was employed by God to deliver the people from Babylonian captivity and rebuild the Temple. The book of Ezra records that event. But since this

¹ **10:27-29**; But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 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?

² **Hag. 2:6-9**; For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

promise is referred to here in the New Testament, we can be sure that what is being spoken of here is the true and spiritual meaning of that prophecy. Haggai's prophecy was the same as *all* Old Testament prophecy. It is to be understood in the light of the New Testament and particularly revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and His office of mediator.

For the believer, the words of Haggai, without doubt, speak of Christ. He is the desire of all nations. His house is filled with glory, the glory of the only begotten Son, full of grace and truth, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. His house is the temple—Christ and His church—and its glory exceeds that of Solomon's temple as light exceeds darkness. His temple is built with *lively, living* stones built on the “foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). In that house is that which was never found in the former temple, which is *peace*, accomplished by the blood of the cross; peace that passes all understanding and knowledge; *peace* that breaks the “middle wall of partition”¹ between Jew and gentile and makes of them both like one flesh in God's house; *peace* preached by Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel of *peace*.

It is this blessed One and His work that shakes everything now and leaves nothing but *Him* and *His Temple* standing. The shaking is going on *now* because the Gospel is being preached throughout the world, and though men and religion may feel no quaking, their foundations are being shaken to dust. The power of God, which is the Gospel, has entered this world, and neither the gates of hell nor the edifices men build on the shifting sands of personal merit can prevail against it. Every tree that “bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire” (Matt. 3:10).

¹ **Eph. 2:14**; For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.

There is no doubt that vv. 26-27 apply to that great day when all that opposes Christ will be brought to nothing, when He shall appear, and we with Him, to destroy the enemy and see all things made new. However, the use of the word “shaken” (v. 27) is in the present tense, passive voice, and the mood is participle. This indicates an ongoing, present process. The earth and heaven are being shaken as we speak. Men and women who continue to embrace the Old Covenant, who tie themselves to the flesh and the earth, have no idea that they hang on a spider's web swaying in the wind of sovereign providence. They are so anesthetized that they are past feeling sense. They are being shaken along with all they trust in, and their ignorance is so deep and so ingrained that they callously go about in their cheerful indifference as if all is well. Their prophets have preached peace where there is no peace, while the house of peace is being built in their very midst and its glory shines before their blinded eyes.

This shaking *began* at the incarnation when the heavenly host declared the glory of the savior. This shaking *culminated* on the cross when God poured out His wrath on His Son, the sovereign sacrifice. The earth shook that day, and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom and the rocks were rent in twain (Matt. 27:51¹).

This shaking *continued* at Pentecost when the Lord returned His people to a pure and singular language. He spoke, and His preachers spoke in Christ. The last days had begun; various religions would fall like flies. As the Gospel was preached, stouthearted men that had formerly stood in the courtyard and cried, “Crucify Him!” became shaken to their very heart and were compelled to confess that the One who they desired to be rid of was back, and He is Lord.

¹ **Matt. 27:51**; And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent

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This shaking continues *today* as the elect are called out of the darkness of works, freewill, and legal religion into the marvelous glory of Christ.

The question we must ask ourselves is simple. What do we have that cannot be shaken? Only that which cannot be shaken will remain. Thank God we have come to Zion, to that *unshakable* city. We have received the kingdom, where we serve the Lord with fear and reverence. Our God is a consuming fire, and only that which cannot be shaken is fireproof.

THE NEW COVENANT MANIFESTED (1)

- 1, Let brotherly love continue.
- 2, Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
- 3, Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.
- 4, Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Hebrews 13:1-4

The first 19 verses of this chapter are about different aspects of a singular product of the New Covenant: *true heart love for the things of God*. This chapter has been called by many an addendum to this book, and though all that is said is true, it does not necessarily have to do with the things that are set forth in the previous 12 chapters specifically. Some have said that perhaps even another writer is involved in these words and is asserting a practical application to the clearly positional view espoused previously.

Verse 20¹ makes it clear that the subject has *not* changed, and in truth the position we have “in Christ” is manifested in a way that can *only* be manifested in the New Covenant.

This love spoken of is the fruit of the Spirit, born of the law of life in Christ Jesus and not of the Law of Moses or the law of the flesh. This is *life* in Christ Jesus, and it still addresses and confirms the New Covenant to be opposite of the Old Covenant, and that the old is passed away. What is spoken in the verses could never be produced in the realm of condemnation, only in

¹ **Verse 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.

the realm of new life, motivated by true imputed righteousness.

This chapter turns our attention to what it means to worship and serve God acceptably (12:28¹). The Master said that to love God and love your neighbor is the fulfillment of *all* the law and the prophets (Mat. 22:37-40²). The things set forth in this chapter are the results of the New Covenant relation between Christ and His body (the church).

The fact that these are *admonitions* certainly suggest that we need to be reminded, because we are yet sinners in this body and are prone to wander from the things here addressed. These are all accomplished in a singular manner, the thing that has permeated the teaching of this epistle—that of looking to Christ.

The first admonition concerns brotherly love (v. 1). The apostle declares, “let it continue.” This is spiritual love because it was taught us by God (1 Thess. 4:9- 10³). It is the outward working of what God has wrought in us by His Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Phil. 2:13⁴). This love is not feckless emotion; it is action born of the love of God in us (1 John 3:18-19⁵). The admonition is *to us*, but we are not the object or the target of it. We know

¹ **12:28**; Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

² **Matt. 22:37-40**; Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

³ **1 Thess. 4:9- 10**; But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10, And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.

⁴ **Rom. 5:5**; And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. **Phil. 2:13**; For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

⁵ **1 John 3:18-19**; My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

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we have passed from death to life because we love *the brethren*. Under a conditional covenant (the Old Covenant) the command to love would be obeyed in order to get the blessing attached to the commandment. Thus, such obedience would ultimately be about getting something *for self*. New Covenant love is entirely *outward* and without any consideration of self.

Verse two is about hospitality. Grace in the heart produces a hospitable spirit. The basis for any lack of hospitality is unthankfulness or ingratitude. Our Lord declared it is easy to love a loved one, but true love extends to strangers, even our enemies (Mat. 5:43-48¹). The true church is a hospital for sinners, not a conclave for the piously separated. The elect sinner will not be afraid to enter the place where other sinners saved by grace gather. But he will fear to enter where a judgmental, inhospitable spirit is manifested by huddling herds of restrictive religionists. Just as we are unaware of who the elect are as we go into the world to preach the Gospel, we are also unaware of the part that the stranger plays in our life. The Lord in the latter part of this verse refers to Abraham, who, after entertaining a stranger, received the promise of a son. Lot, who entertained strangers, was delivered from the wrath of God. These strangers were angels in human form, and they blessed those who were hospitable to them. Thus, we are admonished to entertain strangers.

In verse 3 we are admonished to remember those who are imprisoned. This particularly refers to those who, at the time of

¹ **Mat. 5:43-48**; Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

this letter, were in bonds for the Gospel's sake. But this is also the general principle of love to Christ (Mat. 25:34-35¹). Those in *bonds* and those suffering *adversity* are alone and full of fear. This admonition also must be considered in light of the subject matter of the entire book of Hebrews. Remember those who are in the *bonds* of sin and under the *adversity* of the law. Theirs is a horrible existence, and only the Gospel will fling open the doors of the prison and set the captive free (Luke 4:18-19²).

Verse 4 concerns the love between a husband and wife, particularly as it relates to the sexual aspect of the marriage relationship. We know that sex is what sells in this day. The concept of sexual relationships has, in *my* lifetime, been radically altered. Our children have been robbed of what is referred to in this passage. The world's influence has bastardized love to be nothing more than a sexual experience. But the love that is sanctioned by God is a *holy gift* to a husband and wife. Legislatures may pass laws that redefine what marriage is but God is patently clear and has never changed on the subject. The sexual bond of a husband and wife is *undefiled*. This is not only a negative statement concerning that which is defiled but a positive statement as to what is *holy*. Coitus between husband and wife is as holy before God and is as spiritual as prayer or reading the Bible.

Marital love between a husband and wife pictures the union and oneness of Christ and His church. Any sexual relationship outside that concept is forbidden and will come under the

¹ **Mat. 25:34-35**; Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

² **Luke 4:18-19**; The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

judgment of God. Adultery is sexual activity that is against marriage vows. Fornication is any and every sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage, and both are rebellion against God. It matters not that society condones such behavior or considers it acceptable if “love” is in the air. Sex is for married couples, a husband and a wife, and is honorable before God.

All that is said here is referring to *believers*, so we can be assured that it is a needed admonition. *Anyone* may fall. What is here for the believer is a plain thing, and any other activity is inexcusable. Whoremongers and adulterers will be judged. Love does not act against the loved one. Love worketh no ill to its neighbor. If it is sexual and it is outside the marriage bonds, it is defiled. But sex within marriage is a holy gift of God, by which a man and a woman can be a picture of two becoming one—as our Lord said of His church—“you are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23).

THE NEW COVENANT MANIFESTED (2)

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.

Hebrews 13:5-6

These two verses are admonitions concerning loving your neighbor. We know from the Word of God that the entire law hangs on loving God and loving your neighbor. We have seen that this love involves love of the brethren, hospitality toward strangers, remembering those in prison and in spiritual bondage, those who are suffering affliction as if we ourselves were imprisoned and suffering, and it is also expressed in the loving, intimate relationship between husband and wife. These final admonitions concern love for our neighbor.

The first part of verse 5 would carry considerably less weight if we could determine who we want for a neighbor. The determining factor is not “*who* is my neighbor” but “*to whom* am I a neighbor,” and that concept leaves no wiggle room as to who our neighbor is (Luke 10:29¹).

The exhortation is to “Let your conversation be without covetousness.” There are two aspects to the principle of covetousness.

The first is horizontal and cannot be committed in a vacuum. That is why this admonition is about loving your neighbor. It is impossible to covet what you already possess. In order to covet, there must be someone whose possession you covet. The Law of Moses forbade anyone to covet his

¹ **Luke 10:29**; But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

neighbor's wife or property (Exo. 20:17¹). Covetousness is centered in the heart of man and flows from the truth that, at heart, man is a thief (Mark 7:21-23²).

Covetousness is comprised of the principle of *envy*, which holds that a person ought not to have what he has, and the principle of *jealousy*, which holds that a person should rightly possess what someone else has. Both have to do with a personal sense of *entitlement*. In either case, covetousness reveals a true nature of discontent. Discontent covers a variety of errors, but the most prominent is anger against God's sovereignty, especially in the matter of providence. It is that principle which introduces us to the opposite of covetousness as well as defines it. Covetousness is the absence of contentment and contentment is the absence of covetousness. This truth brings to light the other aspect of covetousness.

Covetousness is rebellion against God. Covetousness is idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5³). At the heart of covetousness is worshipping the creature (or that which is created) rather than God (Rom. 1:25⁴). One may pass off the idea of discontentment as a mere personality trait, but in truth it is a desire that God would be other than He is, and that He is not caring for His own as He ought.

¹ **Exo. 20:17**; Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

² **Mark 7:21-23**; For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

³ **Eph. 5:5**; For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **Col. 3:5**; Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

⁴ **Rom. 1:25**; Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Covetousness is utterly unbecoming in the child of God. The believer should rather be content with such things as he has. Jedidiah Burroughs wrote a book entitled *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. Contentment is indeed a rare jewel, and like any gemstone, it becomes a jewel after much cutting and polishing in the hands of the Jeweler. Contentment is not automatic in this life. It is something that the believer learns to have (Phil. 4:11-13¹). The cost of this refinement will always be born of the revelation of covetousness. Contentment will cost you your covetousness. Like darkness and light, the two cannot abide together.

The reason that the believer is to let his existence be without covetousness and instead be content with such as he has is simple. He has the Lord, and he has the Lord's promise. In Christ all things are the believer's (Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 3:20-23; 2 Peter 1:3²). Nothing has been withheld from the believer. In every matter that is of true value, the believer is complete, having need of nothing. Who would not be content if he knew he had all that was to be had? The very thought of covetousness in the light of such knowledge simply makes no sense. What can be added to *all*? What can be added to *complete*? Our Lord has promised that He will never leave his people (Jos. 1:5; Psa.

¹ **Phil. 4:11-13**; Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

² **Rom. 8:32**; He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? **1 Cor. 3:20-23**; And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. **2 Peter 1:3**; According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

37:25; Matt. 28:19-20¹). This is the fountain and source of our contentment. He is with us. What more could we want or ask? He that is with us is our righteousness, life, and peace. He that is with us lives to intercede for us. He that is with us is our advocate with the Father. Not a moment passes that He is not ever-present with us, and the result of that is *contentment*. This knowledge, this blessed truth, enables us to testify aright concerning Him in this world.

Verse 6 declares the *result* of contentment and it is also a clear *denouncement* of covetousness. A person that is a malcontent—one that lives in a way that the world around him sees him as a complainer, murmurer, and as a pinch-faced gripe—cannot say these words and be believed. I grow weary of those who claim to gladly own Christ while living in a state of discontent. Such a life speaks ill of God and denies the good of His grace. The freed slave does not walk in this world as if he is still in shackles. For such a one to boldly declare that the Lord is their helper is a mockery to His sovereignty and a testimony that simply doesn't add up.

The only way that a person can boldly say that “the Lord is his helper” and that he will not “fear” what men may do to him is to say it from a place of contentment. If it comes from any other place, it will be obviously false. To be a poormouth and a complainer, and generally a malcontent, prevents the declaration of verse 6. See Psalm 23².

¹ **Jos. 1:5**; There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. **Psa. 37:25**; I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. **Matt. 28:19-20**; Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

² **Psalm 23**; The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's

May the Lord give us grace to see what we have received at His good hand. If we know that He is with us and is all things to us, then we can boldly say, “the Lord is my helper.” If He does give us grace, we will find it *easy* to love our neighbor because we will not covet what he has.

sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

THE NEW COVENANT MANIFESTED (3)

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.

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.

Hebrews 13:7-9

In these three verses Paul continues with that which the believer is admonished to love. Having encouraged the believer concerning the relationships that he will encounter in his life, Paul now turns our attention to the things of God, specifically those things that are given to edify and strengthen the believer.

Three things that God has given to His children are addressed here and are to be loved, and *are* loved, by the believer. They are: (1) those men whom God has appointed to rule or guide His people, (2) the doctrine of God and (3) the grace of God. In the middle of these admonitions is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible (v. 8). We will consider this verse last as it teaches again the source of all that pertains to God.

The first thing mentioned as given to the church of God, and that which the believer is to love, is *the preacher of the Gospel*. This word “rule” might easily be abused by someone who wished to exact “pastoral authority” over the flock of God. This word actually means “leader” or “guide.” The principle declared is transitional. Having set forth that great cloud of witnesses

before us—the Old Testament saints who, by their faith, encouraged and taught us of the glory of Christ—Paul now brings us to *this* day, to those who teach us and guide us.

We know that the Spirit of God is our guide into all truth, but God has chosen “by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). The believer is admonished to “remember” those who God has sent to them, those “who have spoken” the word of God to them. This phrase designates the true matter of their ministry. In this day folks have come up with all manner of things that they have declared to be the arena and domain of the pastor. Teachers of seminaries have invented courses for the duties of the pastor, and these cover everything from community organizer to psychological counselor.

Our Lord makes it clear as to the true arena of the pastor. It is the *pulpit* and the ministry of the *word*—the *Gospel*. Remember those who have “*spoken* unto you the word of God.” The phrase declares the New Covenant ministry to be primarily involved in preaching the Gospel. Even though churches are built and missionaries are sent out into the world from that foundation, the primary function of the New Covenant is to glorify Christ through the *preaching* of the word of God. The Old Testament saints have finished their course; now it is *today* and it is *now* that the Gospel is preached.

The believer is admonished to “follow” their faith. While this may imply that their faithfulness in life is an example worth emulating, I think the context means to *believe* what these men believe and *speak* as they speak—the word of God. Their faith here does not necessarily mean the *act* of faith but rather the *ground* and *confidence* of it, the doctrine often referred to as “the faith.”

Then comes the admonition to hold to sound doctrine—true doctrine, old doctrine, the eternal doctrine of God (v. 9). Though this principle is contained in the matter of *speaking* the

word of God, it is further stated in a negative warning. The believer is warned against being carried about by *diverse*, manifold doctrines. Note that the language is passive. Being “carried about” suggests an instability, mutability, a lack of faith, and a readiness to change. It implies the thinking of the Greeks (intellectuals) who were interested only in finding something new. In truth, the doctrine of God is singular—not *diverse*. It has not changed since God set it forth in eternity. It is the Gospel of the Lamb slain from the *foundation* of the world (Rev. 13:8¹).

The manner in which this mutability concerning doctrine is avoided is seen in the third thing that God has given His people and in the thing that is loved by them. Strange and diverse doctrines will not carry one about if his “heart be established with grace.” The message of the Gospel is the message of *grace*. This aspect of the Gospel makes it impossible for the believer to be carried away by anything else. If it is grace that is established in the heart, there is neither room nor warrant for anything but grace. If any other doctrine raises its head, it finds no purchase in the heart established with grace.

As grace is the singular doctrine that allows no other, grace is also the singular doctrine that deals entirely in the spiritual realm. The reference to the Law instead of to grace is accomplished by addressing the dietary laws of the Jews. As in the case of circumcision, of the Old Testament priesthood, or the ceremonies and sacrifices, the *dietary laws* here represent the Law of Moses in general. Perhaps the belly is addressed because it is a very visible aspect of the natural rather than the spiritual.

The preaching, the doctrine, and the grace of God are revealed in *type* in the Old Testament and in *fact* in the New

¹ **Rev. 13:8**; And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Covenant. They are promised for the ages to come. The message, though refined and more fully revealed through the ages, has not changed.

Thus, we have in verse 8 the hinge pin that anchors these things of God and assures their appreciation and establishment in the heart. What was the message of the Old Testament? It was Christ, the same *yesterday*. What is the message of the New Testament in the present day? It is Christ, the same *today*. What is the everlasting message? It is Christ, the same *forever*.

The *old*, the *new* and the *eternal* all find their substance in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. Whether He is found in the Old Testament, in the sacrifices, offerings, or Sabbaths, He is the same then as He is now and as He will always be. He is the doctrine of God. He is the manifestation of the grace of God, and He is how the preacher preaches the word of God unto you. This is the manifestation of the New Covenant, revealed in love for the things of God.

WHAT THEN?

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.

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.”

Hebrews 13:10-14

Paul of this book has, by the inspiration of the Spirit, showed Christ to be superior to any and every aspect of the Old Covenant. As we saw in the last study, Paul used the dietary laws as indicative of *all* the Law of Moses, revealing that they were of no profit. It is difficult for many who have been raised in useless religion to utterly discount all that came before faith in Christ.

Some among those to whom this book was addressed still held that there might be benefit in using the law in some form. There are some who claim to believe grace yet think that the law is beneficial to the believer. In these 5 verses, the last blow of the ax is laid to the root of such thinking. Stating that the dietary laws do *no* benefit, Paul picks up on the fact that people *must* eat.

He sets forth Christ and His work as the single and only sanctification of His people. He uses the altar specifically as it relates to the place of sacrifice and to the sacrifice itself. At this altar, the believer freely eats—not food that is of no profit—but food that nourishes the eternal soul (v. 10). The believer feeds

on Christ and His Gospel, Christ's body and blood. His words, which are life, are the sustenance of life (John 6:63¹). The *Gospel* is not shadow but *substance*. The believer has an altar, a place to eat where there is a feast of fat things and wine on the lees, well refined.

However, those who serve the tabernacle, those who appeal to the Law, those who practice even dietary laws for righteousness, cannot eat at the altar that is Christ. They feed on the beggarly elements of the world that do not profit, and they are not allowed to feed on Christ (Col. 2:20-22²). Here the truth is clearly stated and is no small thing. If you seek to bring the law into the believer's life, if you seek to establish righteousness by the law, if you do anything concerning the law to be sanctified, you cannot have Christ. They that serve the tabernacle cannot—are not—allowed to have Christ. This altar is inclusive of all believers and exclusive of all who, in any way, involve themselves with the law.

This does not say that they who serve the tabernacle “should not eat” or “must be careful how they eat” or “cannot eat at this altar at the same time as you serve the tabernacle.” This word is plain. The believer has an altar that those who serve the law have “no right” to (v. 10). The Old and the New Covenants are mutually exclusive. One has nothing to do with the other and never will. One cannot serve 2 masters; “he will hate the one and love the other” (Matt. 6:24). If you look to self, to works, to ritual, to law for righteousness—you cannot have Christ.

Paul picks up on what he meant by some having “no right”

¹ **John 6:63**; It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

² **Col. 2:20-22**; Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

to feed on Christ. He alludes to the restriction of the priests concerning the beasts who were slain and the blood taken and sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement (v. 11). Though with certain offerings the priests (as well as the people) could feast on the sacrifice, the bodies of the beasts slain on the Day of Atonement were not to be eaten but rather taken outside the camp and burned. They were not burned on an altar, but outside the camp, as garbage rather than food (Lev. 6:30; 16:27-28¹). Here we see the difference between those Old Covenant sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ. Those sacrifices were to be burned because the sins of the people were typically transferred to them. They were vile, unclean, and not fit for consumption because, typically, they were nothing but sin. They, of course, pictured Christ being made sin for His elect (2 Cor. 5:21²). There is a grand distinction here. Those priests could not eat those sacrifices, but the believer feeds on Christ. The difference is that those Old Covenant sacrifices never took away sin. Christ's sacrifice did. Those sacrifices were burned, and nothing was accomplished. Christ was baptized with fire and He came forth from the grave glorified and without sin.

Leaving the concept of food, Paul turns rather to this matter of where the believer eats. He eats "outside the camp." The camp represents the Old Covenant. Those who serve the Old Covenant cannot go outside the camp. Those who feed on Christ will not go inside the camp. Christ suffered outside the camp. He was rejected by men, and His own Father turned away

¹ **Lev. 6:30**; And no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire. **16:27-28**; And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

² **2 Cor. 5:21**; For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

from Him when He was made sin. But that rejection is our sanctification. He sanctified His people by suffering utter rejection (Gal. 3:13).

Where does the believer go to feed on Christ? Not inside the camp—within the Law, within the Old Covenant—where those who serve the tabernacle are. He goes outside to *Christ* (v. 13), the *altar* that they have no right to. We gladly bear His reproach, for He is still rejected by legal, free-will, and works religion. The believer has no interest or investment in that camp. That camp will not continue; that camp has already been set aside (10:9; 13:14¹). That old camp is the city to which the believer has no desire to return (v. 14); (See; 11:14, 16; Gal. 4:25²). The believer willingly bears the reproach that His Lord bore from the camp. Religion will hate the believer just as it hated Christ. Legalists will despise the believer (Matt. 10:24-25; 5:11-12; Gal. 5:1; Phil 3:7-11; Heb. 11:25-26³). But the believer

¹ **10:9**; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. **13:14**; For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

² **11:14, 16; 14**, For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 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. **Gal. 4:2**; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

³ **Matt. 10:24-25**; The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? **5:11-12**; Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. **Gal. 5:1**; Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. **Phil 3:7-11**; But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by

looks for another city and gladly goes outside the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ, there to feed on eternal marrow and fatness, knowing that he dines where those who oppose Christ have no right to eat.

The believer wants *nothing* to do with the Old Covenant, because there is no food there. We have an *altar*, a *sacrifice* whereof they have no right to eat, which serves the tabernacle. Can the fact that the law has nothing to do with the believer be any plainer? The believer does not eat with the legalist; there is no place of fellowship. The legalist has no right to fellowship in the Gospel. Christ is all the believer's sanctification, all his salvation.

faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. **Heb. 11:25-26**; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

THE BELIEVER'S OFFERING

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.

Hebrews 13:15

In the last lesson we saw that Paul delivered a kind of “fatal blow” to any and all who would seek to gain righteousness by the Old Covenant or would seek to mix the Law of Moses with the grace of God to gain acceptance with God. The message was plain and to the point: if anyone would appeal to the law, that person cannot have Christ. The two are mutually exclusive. There is no matter of degree, no extenuating circumstance, no mitigating factor in this truth. It is “either/or” in acceptance before God. Since those who know Christ go outside the camp (the Law), bearing His reproach, there is but one thing that they can rightly do. What is left for the child of God in the matter of his salvation is to worship God in spirit and truth, and that worship is accomplished in thanksgiving and praise. Though religion may write list upon list of “Christian duties,” the “duties” of the redeemed are plain. They are to offer unto God thanksgiving and praise. This is their life and the heart of their existence. To religion, this may seem a small thing, but matters of the heart cannot be accomplished with deeds of the flesh. Praise and thanksgiving are truly a miracle of grace.

There is uniqueness about the terms “praise” and “thanksgiving.” Praise is a sacrifice that is born of thanksgiving. Praise is called a *sacrifice* because it *costs the offeror* something. In 2 Samuel 24, David said, “Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth *cost me nothing.*” The heart of the meaning of the word “sacrifice” is

“victim.” If we offer the sacrifice of praise, we are, in a sense, the victim of praise—to praise God will cost you *yourself*. No one can praise God who praises *himself*. To praise Christ is to remove yourself from the possibility of praise. The first word in the text, “by,” is rendered in one translation as “against myself” (See 1 Cor. 4:4¹). If I offer praise “by Christ” it is offered *against* myself. Since we so appreciate the praises of men and are willing to pat ourselves on the back if we cannot find someone else to do it for us, it is no wonder that God would call praise a sacrifice!

It is the same with the source and reason for thankfulness. You and I cannot thank God and ourselves at the same time. In fact, there is no ground upon which a son of Adam or a son of God may thank himself. David said, “Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.” Paul said, “Yet not I but Christ.”

I once heard a man say, “I thank God for giving me the greatest of gifts. He gave me the great gift of my free will.” He was thanking God for being given the right to thank *himself*. In Luke 18:11-13², one thanked God by thanking himself, while the justified one thanked God *against* himself—“smote himself.” With thanksgiving and praise, the object of both is not the offeror, it is God. The sacrifice of praise from a thankful heart is the sacrifice of self so that God alone will receive all the glory.

Thanksgiving and praise are an integral part of prayer both private and public. 1 Timothy 2:1 reads, “I exhort therefore,

¹ **1 Cor. 4:4**; For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

² **Luke 18:11-13**; The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” Paul wrote to the Philippians 4:6 “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” In Hebrews 13:15, it is called the sacrifice of the heart. It is a sacrifice because self is left out of the equation. Praise and thanksgiving attribute all glory to God and has none for self. Self is thus sacrificed for the honor of God. It is truly the *affliction* of the soul.

Note well that this sacrifice and this thankfulness is “by Christ.” “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory forever” (Rom. 11:36). Christ is the singular avenue by which thanksgiving is realized and praise is offered (1 Peter 2:5¹). Christ is the center, the hub of all that is. He is in the midst of the throne, the elders, and the four beasts. He is in the midst of the seven candlesticks. He is the center of praise and thanksgiving. The only way that God can be praised is “by Christ,” for “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). He is to be praised from a thankful heart for his substitutionary work. Therefore these things have nothing to do with us concerning *accomplishment*. He is to be praised from a thankful heart for the perfect righteousness that is imputed to our account. Therefore the righteousness that God has and will accept has nothing to do with us as to the *accomplishment* of it. You cannot thank him or praise him if you can claim *anything* or *any part* for which you are thanking and praising him.

I know that in religion, phrases such as “Praise Jesus,” “praise the Lord” and “thank ya' Jesus” are everywhere and on every hand. They are, for the most part, just “filler” in the rhetoric of religious chatter. They are catch phrases, punctuation

¹ **1 Peter 2:5**; Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

marks, commercial stingers, and the prosaic hooks of folks who have lots of words but nothing to say. Thanksgiving and praise always have a reason for their being (Rev. 19:6¹). There is always a “because” involved in thanksgiving and praise. Perhaps we should start asking folks, when their stream of *unconsciousness* ends with “praise God”—For what?

Unlike the result of the Old Covenant, which left men in the lurch with a covering for but a year, and a sacrifice that left them with a conscience of sin, the New Covenant, ratified and mediated by Christ, leaves the recipient with a heart full of praise and thanksgiving. This is the believer's worship. This is what the believer offers to God.

¹ **Rev. 19:6**; And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the LORD God omnipotent reigneth.

SACRIFICES

16, But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

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.

18, Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Hebrews 13:16-18

As we saw in the previous lesson, the believer's sacrifice is the sacrifice of praise born of thanksgiving. What follows is an admonition concerning the life of the child of God. The fundamental aspect of that life is thanksgiving and is the basis of all the believer does. We know from the main point of this book that any acceptable sacrifice has nothing to do with anything *legal*. The believer does not operate from the Law but from *love* for Christ. The highest and most noble incentive for serving the Lord is love. It far exceeds anything accomplished by legal duty.

The word "But" begins this portion of scripture that we will address in this study. We know that with the use of this conjunction, Paul is declaring the opposite to what has come before. This is employed here more in the sense of a disclaimer. It does not in any way discount the sacrifice of praise, because all that follows flows from thanksgiving. The word is used here as an admonishment to remember that thanksgiving and praise are the highest offering *but does not exclude* other sacrifices that are the reasonable and essential product of the heart of thanksgiving.

Perhaps this "but" addresses the natural bent of humanity,

even redeemed humanity, to extremes. That is to say that people tend to make qualitative judgments as to what is most important and therefore tend to put less significance on other important matters (Mat. 23:23¹). This context is a reminder of the sacrifices that proceed from a heart of thanksgiving. The sacrifices are the product of “faith, which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6²). Compare the last phrase of verse 16 with Hebrews 11:6³.

The sacrifices with which the Lord is well pleased in this text are 4 in number.

The first we have already addressed in v. 15 of our last study.

The second sacrifice that we are to be careful to maintain is “good” works and to remember to “communicate.” We know that the works of the child of God are ordained and that the Lord has equipped His people to do the works that He has predestinated for them (Eph. 2:10⁴). If opportunity arises for you to do good, do it. But take note: The word of God does not contain a list and categorization of good works, and for good reason. A list would be a tool for legalism and a gauge by which religious men could judge the believer in meeting the standard of evidence of salvation. But what slays the legalist is that the believer *knows* what is good, because the word of God is written in his heart as a result of the success of Christ (10:12-

¹ **Mat. 23:23**; Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

² **Gal. 5:6**; For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

³ **Hebrews 11:6**; 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.

⁴ **Eph. 2:10**; For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

16; 6:10¹). The believer does not approach a brother in need and pull out a list to see if helping will meet the standard of a good work. The believer is not keeping score and needs no one to tell him to do what is right.

The “good” that is mentioned here is also defined by the word “communicate.” This word has to do with giving *to meet a need* or giving because you simply *want to*. It is the care and feeding of the church of God primarily but does not exclude showing a liberal spirit to all who you are able to assist (Phil. 4:18²). When good works are addressed in scripture, they are almost always about love to God and love to the brethren (Matt. 25:34-40; James 2:14-18; 1 John 3:16-18³). Our Lord reminds

¹ **10:12-16**; But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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. **6:10**; 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.

² **Phil. 4:18**; But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

³ **Matt. 25:34-40**; Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. **James 2:14-18**; What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works:

us of this sacrifice in very plain language—“forget not.” The *heart* of thanksgiving and praise is *love* for God.

The third sacrifice is toward those whom God has appointed as pastors over the flock. This is listed among these sacrifices because the most offensive thing to human nature is obedience to authority. From the beginning, man has shown his aversion to obeying God, and the concept of obeying another man is also anathema to him. This is not without warrant, and, generally speaking, we all should be wary of men (Isa. 2:22¹). But here our Lord is being very specific as to the *place* of obedience. This does not speak of “so-called” pastoral authority, which has been abused by many in the name of Christ. This obedience has to do with a particular *area* of “rule.” How a pastor “watches for” your soul is the key to understanding this requirement of obedience to them that have the rule over you.

The pastor's “rule” is singular. He watches for your soul in only one way. Though he may and should be ready to help with any physical and visible need, those necessities, when provided, do not reach the soul. The care of the soul is singularly this: an undiluted diet of the Gospel. Only the bread of heaven feeds the souls (Acts 2:28²). Regarding and obeying the pastor here means doing so *for* the one who must give account. The sacrifice of obedience here will lighten the burden of the pastor (v. 17). If you obey the Gospel, he will be able to execute his office with joy. If not, his task will be encumbered with grief.

shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. **1 John 3:16-18**; Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But 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? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

¹ **Isa. 2:22**; Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

² **Acts 2:28**; Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

The disobedience that would cause grief would be seeing the believer endeavor to employ the law for righteousness (Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18¹). The only time a pastor worries over the souls of his people is when he sees them seek to accomplish in the flesh that which is only achieved in faith (Gal. 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:2-4²). If you obey them that have rule over you in this capacity, it will be profitable to you.

The fourth and last sacrifice mentioned is the sacrifice of *prayer* (v. 18). We know that prayer involves adoration of God, confession of sin, and thanksgiving. Prayer also involves supplication. This aspect of prayer is about intercession. Intercession is always about the one for whom intercession is made. Paul says, “pray for *us*.” If we do pray for our brother or sister, we sacrifice ourselves. If I pour out my heart to God for someone else, if I seek God's mercy and help for someone else, then I am not considering myself, but rather God and my brother in need. Prayer is always beneficial for us but it is not generally *about* us. We are told to pray for our enemies (Mat. 5:44³). It is almost impossible to hate someone when you

¹ **Gal. 4:19**; My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. **2 Cor. 3:18**; But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

² **Gal. 3:1-3**; O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? **2 Cor. 11:2-4**; For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

³ **Mat. 5:44**; But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

approach the throne of grace on his or her behalf. We benefit from this because in this act we sacrifice ourselves, and anytime we can get our minds off ourselves, it helps us mightily. A scriptural illustration of this is when God commanded Job to pray for those forgers of lies and physicians of no value called his “friends” (Job. 42:7-10¹). These are the sacrifices of the believer.

(For more on Paul's “good conscience,” see the previous studies titled “Conscience (1)” and “Conscience (2)” addressing Hebrews 9:14).

¹ **Job. 42:7-10**; And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

IN SUMMATION

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.

Hebrews 13:20-25

In the last 4 verses of this book, Paul encourages the brethren to attend to that which has been written to them and reveals his desire that he and Timothy would soon visit them if the Lord wills. He exhorts them to salute (extend his regards) to the pastors and the saints, the Hebrew believers to whom this letter was written. He ends the letter with his standard signature, praying that the grace of God would be with all the Hebrew believers.

In verses 20-21 we have the final summation of the things that Paul has said. In these few words is a synopsis of the truth that the Old Covenant has been fulfilled and satisfied and is now no longer in force. There are two phrases that are, in a sense, a concise declaration of the singular place where the believer stands accepted by God. Everything else that is mentioned hangs entirely on the truth of these two phrases. In

fact, with these two phrases, every believer can sum up the totality of his salvation. Everything that accounts as our salvation and everything that honors the God of all glory is locked up here.

The two definitive phrases are, “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” and, “through Jesus Christ.” None of the things mentioned in these words—not one—can be attributed to the Old Covenant, which established men in their sin, continually reminded them that they were sinners, and never with all those sacrifices took away even one of their sins. All that pertained to godliness and life was accomplished “through the blood of the everlasting covenant” and “through Jesus Christ.”

The first thing revealed is the attribute (or title) by which God is described. He is called the “God of peace.” This description belongs to the Holy God and God the Father. Though the Son is our peace (and is called the Prince of Peace), this description is of the God who could not be at peace with men under the elements of the Old Covenant because the issue was not resolved. *Now* this thrice Holy God is, to the believer, the God of *peace*, and the cause of that can never be attributed to anything meritorious in the believer.

How can the Holy God be at peace with men who are born sinners and *justly* condemned? This is only possible if *that which separates* God and men is *removed*. This was accomplished for the elect “through the blood of the everlasting covenant” and “through Jesus Christ.” The word of God declares that Jesus Christ made peace through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:18-21¹). That precious blood that He shed is the

¹ **Col. 1:18-21**; And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or

blood of the everlasting covenant (10:16-17; 29; 2 Cor. 11:25¹). In this covenant and by this blood, our God is the God of Peace.

The next thing mentioned is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This again is a discounting of the Old Covenant. All the sacrifices, all the priests and high priests, and all the fathers were dead, and their remains had long since turned to dust. Christ was the only sacrifice to be raised from the dead, signifying that His sacrifice satisfied the Law, and He was therefore honored. This High Priest, our Lord Jesus, has a continuing priesthood, unlike those that preceded Him, whose priesthood did not continue because of death. His blood took away sin, unlike all the Old Covenant blood that never took away sin. The proof of this is the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection was evidence that this was possible only “through the blood of the everlasting covenant” and “through the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The next thing declared is that the Lord Jesus Christ whom the God of Peace brought again from the dead is the Great Shepard of the Sheep. This title belongs to Christ because of what He died for: His sheep (John 10:11,14-16²). The fact that believers are referred to as sheep is again relative to the things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

¹ **10:16-17**; 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. **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? **1 Cor. 11:25**; After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

² **John 10:11**; I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. **14-16**; I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

everlasting covenant and not to the Old Covenant. Our Lord, in John 10, was speaking to those who held to the Old Covenant and frankly told them that they did not believe because they were not His sheep (John 10:24-28¹). The eternality and everlasting principle that distinguished the sheep from the goats is eternal election as is seen in John 10:29². God gave the sheep to the good Shepherd. His greatness is proclaimed in that, of all that the Father gave Him, he lost not one (John 6:37-39³). He is the great Shepherd of the sheep “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

Just as verse 20 is about what the God of Peace has *done for* us “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” verse 21 is about what He is *doing in* us “through Jesus Christ.”

First, these words reveal the source of our “good works.” It is the God of Peace that has ordained our works, ordained that we should walk in them, and here we see how that is accomplished. It is He, “through Jesus Christ,” that God causes us not only to do good works but makes us perfect in the doing (10:14⁴). In that “doing,” we are doing His will.

Secondly, we are doing His will because He is working in us. This glorious thing of Christ dwelling in His people by His

¹ **John 10:24-28**; Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

² **John 10:29**; My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

³ **John 6:37-39**; All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38, For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39, And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

⁴ **10:14**; For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Spirit is a wonder and a mystery, but it is by that Spirit that the God of peace is “working in us.” Under the Old Covenant, He was always separate from his people. They were not allowed in the presence of God. Even the High Priest could not approach God except on one day a year and not without blood for his own sin. God’s commandments were recorded on stone tablets that could not be bent, only broken. Now He is working in us and dwelling in us, having saved us “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

He has written his words in our hearts. We are in Him, and there we “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28¹). The truth of this is magnificent because it makes the believer know that, though He can never be truly certain that anything is a good work, God knows because it is He that is working in us (Phil. 2:12-13²). The believer knows that if he does anything good, the glory belongs to God alone (John 3:20-21³). God is working in us, “through Jesus Christ,” which is well pleasing in His sight, because he has freely, by grace, given us that which pleases Him (Eph. 2:8; Heb. 11:6⁴). To Christ alone belongs all the glory because it is “through Jesus Christ: and “the blood of the everlasting covenant.

¹ **Acts 17:28**; For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

² **Phil. 2:12-13**; Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

³ **John 3:20-21**; For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

⁴ **Eph. 2:8**; For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. **Heb. 11:6**; 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.

Your Notes

