

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
An Overview

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 1

Text: Hebrews 1:1-3

Intro: Today I am starting two new series of messages. This morning I am beginning the exposition of the book of Hebrews. Tonight, the Lord willing, I want to begin a study of the life of David. In order to give all of us a proper background for our study of David's life, I am going to spend some time dealing with the lives of Samuel, the prophet, and Saul, the first king of Israel. My purpose in looking into the lives of these two men will be to see the influence that they had upon David. Therefore, if you want to do some reading to prepare for the Sunday night messages, begin reading 1 Samuel. The story of David actually begins in 1 Sam. 16, goes through 2 Samuel, and is concluded in 1 Kings, chapter 2. King David would have to be considered as one of the most important men in the OT. He occupied a significant place in OT history, and is very prominent in the family into which our Lord Jesus Christ was born. Probably one of the greatest honors conferred upon David is the fact that our Lord is called, in Matt. 1:1 (and in other texts of Scripture, "the Son of David." But we will get started with the David's history tonight.

In connection with our Annual Meeting which was held last Wednesday night, I went through the record of the books of the Bible I have taught since the beginning of Trinity Bible Church back in 1981. Including Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Tuesday morning, this is the list:

- 1) Genesis.
- 2) Joshua.
- 3) Ezra.
- 4) Nehemiah.
- 5) Esther.
- 6) Job.
- 7) Many of the Psalms.
- 8) The last half of Isaiah.
- 9) Luke.
- 10) John -- now in the Tuesday Class.
- 11) Acts.
- 12) Romans.
- 13) 1 Corinthians.
- 14) 2 Corinthians.
- 15) Galatians.
- 16) Ephesians.
- 17) Philippians.
- 18) Colossians.
- 19) 1 Thessalonians.

DAILY RECORD OF EVENTS

DATE _____

SIXTH REASON: TEACHING TODAY IS
MAN-CENTERED, NOT
CHRIST-CENTERED.
ITS EMPHASIS UPON THE HIGH

PRIESTLY MIN. OF OUR LORD.

A GODWARD MIN.

AS THE SON OF GOD.

AS BOTH ^{HIGH} PRIEST + SACRIFICE.

AFTER THE ORDER OF MEL.

UNCHANGING + ETERNAL.

PRESENT INTERCESSORY MIN.

FOR HIS PEOPLE.

ALL LEADING TO OUR PERFECTION

Hebrews -- Intro (2)

- 20) 2 Thessalonians.
- 21) Philemon.
- 22) Hebrews -- in the Tuesday Class, back in September of 1981 our first year as a church. I started in the fall of that year, and continued for two years in Hebrews.
- 23) James.
- 24) 1 Peter.
- 25) 2 Peter.
- 26) 1 John.
- 27) 2 John.
- 28) 3 John.
- 29) Jude.
- 30) The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

In addition, there have been many messages from various verses and passages of Scripture throughout the Bible.

Why am I teaching Hebrews again? For several reasons.

First, if time would permit, a book like Hebrews ought to be taught more frequently than every eight to ten years. We could have gone over Hebrews many times in our ten years, and have done it with real profit for all of us.

Second, many of you have joined us since we began, and you have not been through Hebrews with us. And so I have had you in mind also--even though you have read Hebrews, and probably have been through it in other churches you have attended.

Third, I have never taught it here at Trinity on Sunday. So, since many of you cannot come on Tuesday, I have not had the privilege of going through this book with you.

Fourth, it has been almost ten years since I taught it in the Tuesday Class, and so I believe it is time to go through it again. It certainly is one of the major books of the NT, and all of us can profit from going through it again.

Fifth, there is a great deal of confusion today about the place that the Mosaic Law has, or should have, in the lives of the Lord's people. Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews are all important in this question. And it is not by chance that these three epistles are related to each other by the quotation from Hab. 2:4 found in all three of them, "The just shall live by faith." Cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38. Hopefully this study can help to clear the air of some of the confusion.

~~Sixth~~^{seventh}, and this is related to the point that I have just made, the emphasis in Hebrews is upon our perfection in Christ. Or, to state it another way, our sanctification. I

) firmly believe that the Body of Christ in this last decade of the twentieth century is greatly in need the truth of sanctification. Life in the professing church today is very shallow. Among those of us who claim to know the Lord there is very little interest in holiness of life. Perhaps this has always been the case, I do not know. But it is apparent from Hebrews 5 and 6 that the writer, who was probably the Apostle Paul, was greatly concerned because there were so many spiritual babies among the early Hebrew Christians. It was not that being a babe in Christ was something to be ashamed of, but it was that the believers to whom he was writing had known the Lord long enough to be more mature, but they were still babies in God's family.

Paul was concerned about the same problem in Corinth, as we can tell from 1 Cor., chapters 1 through 3. I am certain that he would be concerned about the low level of spiritual life among believers today. If there is a keynote to the book of Hebrews, it seems to be the words in Heb. 6:1, "Let us go on unto perfection." Paul's prayer for the Hebrew believers for whom this epistle was originally written, is found in Heb. 13:20, 21 -- giving expression to this very burden that was on the heart of the Apostle.

) As I was concluding the study of this book back in May of 1983 I came across a paragraph written by a Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh, Scotland, who wrote a commentary on this epistle back in the first half of the 18th century. I read the paragraph to the Class then, but I want to read it to you at the beginning of our present study. It will help you and me to understand what we ought to be expecting from the time we will be spending in this Epistle.

Before I read it, let me mention that he used the word "illustration," and "illustrating," in his comments. By these he probably meant the explanations, or the clarification of the doctrines in this book of Hebrews. If you will think of his comments in that way, you will appreciate what he had to say.

This is his comment:

) And now I close these illustrations of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Happier hours than those which I have spent in composing these expository discourses, I can scarcely expect to spend on this side the grave. I trust the study of the Epistle has not been without some improvement, as well as much enjoyment, to myself. I shall rejoice if at last it shall be found that others also have been made better and happier by it. All is now over with the author and his readers, as it his illustrating the Epistle, and

their listening to these illustrations; but there remains the improvement to be made, and the account to be given in. God requireth the things which are past, and so should we. Let me request those who have accompanied me thus far, seriously to review the whole Epistle, and ask themselves, Do we understand it better, and do we feel more strongly the sanctifying and consoling influence of the doctrines which it unfolds? Can we say with greater conviction of the truth than formerly, We need a High priest—we have a High Priest—we are well pleased with our High Priest; we have acknowledged Jesus as our High Priest; we will hold fast our acknowledgment; He died for us—we will live for Him; and if He calls us, we will die for Him; we will trace His steps on the earth, we will wait His coming in the clouds? If this be the case even in one individual, I shall not have laboured in vain: if it has been the case with a number of individuals, I shall have received a full reward (Brown, John, Hebrews, p. 728).

That is the end of the quotation.

This godly man came from his study of the book of Hebrews better and happier than when he started. And that is what he hoped for his people—that they would be better spiritually, and happier in the Lord, because of their time in this book. But their improvement would depend upon two things:

- 1) That they understood the message of the Epistle.
- 2) That they would experience in their lives the sanctifying and consoling effect of the doctrines set forth in this book.

The truth needs to be understood, and then it needs to be put into practice. If we do not understand it, then it cannot help us. But if we do understand it, then we need to seek the help of the Lord in doing what we are told to do. We cannot do it alone, but the Lord will give us the power to be and to do what He requires of us. This means that we need to be holy, and we need to live holy lives—lives that are pure in God's sight, and, therefore, pleasing to Him.

One thing I am going to ask you to do, and I hope that you won't close your heart to this just because I have said it so often before. Please read through this epistle as often as you can while we are considering it together. I timed myself in reading it, and it took me just 46 minutes! Read it at least once each week, and more if you can. I am sure that most of us let more time than this slip through our fingers every day. How wonderful it would be if we could redeem the time, and make it count for eternity! I can assure you that the more you read it, the better you will understand it, and

the more you will profit from our times in it each week. Decide now that, by God's grace, you are going to spend time each week in this epistle.

-) Most of you arrived today not knowing that we would be starting Hebrews. So this probably means that you have not been reading it. Maybe some of you have. I didn't decide until this past week what our next study would be. I had more difficulty than usual in making my choice. But I do believe that the Lord has led me. I hope you will agree as we see the Lord's blessing in the weeks to come.

But just to whet our appetite, and to get us started, let me spend the rest of the time this morning seeking to answer this question:

IF WE ARE TO GO ON TO PERFECTION, IF WE ARE TO BE A HOLY PEOPLE, TO GROW UP SPIRITUALLY TO MATURITY, WHAT SHOULD BE OUR GREATEST CONCERN?

It would seem that anyone who is reading this epistle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit would have no trouble in coming up with the answer. Our greatest concern should be to make sure that we growing in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ! The book of Hebrews is full of Christ. It begins with Christ; it ends with Christ. And Christ is found all through the book.

For the beginning, let me read Heb. 1:1-4.

For the ending, let me read Heb. 13:20, 21.

In chapter 1 we learn that He is the Son of God, and that He is infinitely better than angels. Angels are creatures; He is the Creator. He is the Son of God; angels worship Him. We are told at the very outset in this epistle that the Lord Jesus Christ died to cleanse us from our sins, and that He is now seated in heaven at the Father's right hand.

In chapter 2 we see that He is the incarnate Jesus who provided salvation for us through His death, and thus became for us "a merciful and faithful high priest."

In chapter 3 we see that He is "Christ Jesus," "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." Although Moses was great, Christ is infinitely greater.

) In chapter 4 we learn about the rest which God has provided for us in Christ. For the second time we are told that Jesus is in heaven, and that we have in Him a sympathetic High Priest Who can and will help us in our times of need.

Hebrews -- Intro (6)

In chapter 5 we learn that our Lord is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. And it is here in chapter 5 and throughout chapter 6 that we learn about the immaturity of the people for whom this book was written.

In chapter 6 we have the first emphasis on faith (v. 12), and we are told that our salvation is absolutely secure in Christ.

In chapter 7 we are taught that the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ is far superior to that of Aaron. He is not only our Savior, but our Intercessor. We learn that although the OT priests were sinners, and needed a sacrifice, the Lord Jesus was without sin. The Lord Jesus by "the power of his endless life" will never need a successor.

In chapter 8 we learn that the Lord Jesus is "the mediator of a better covenant" because it was "established on better promises" (v. 6).

In chapter 9 we are told that the Lord ministered in "a greater and more perfect tabernacle than that in which the OT priests ministered. We learn in this chapter that the Lord is coming again.

In chapter 10 we see that the OT order was but a type of that which is to come, and that those sacrifices could never take away sin. On the other hand, the perfection of our Lord's sacrifice is seen. It was made once, and need never be repeated. We have the right to enter into the holiest place of heaven and are exhorted to draw near, to be faithful in our lives, and to minister to each other.

And lest we think that those in the OT had a different salvation from what we have, we see in chapter 11 that they were looking forward to the coming of Christ, and were continually exercising their faith in Him. Thus we are a part of a great fellowship of saints.

In chapter 12 we are exhorted to keep "looking unto Jesus." We can also be comforted in the fact that our chastening is not because God is punishing us, but is purifying us, making us holy.

In chapter 13 we are told that Jesus Christ is unchanging, that it is only through Him that we can even praise God, and, as we have already seen in the prayer of verses 20 and 21, that our only hope of perfection is "through Jesus Christ."

The epistle to the Hebrews is Christ, all Christ, only Christ, from beginning to the end!

Concl: Heb. 1:1-4 really is the keynote of the entire epistle. God has spoken at many times and in different ways "in time past," but when His Son came, He spoke His final, His most complete, and His most glorious message. God spoke through the Person of Christ, and He spoke through the Work of Christ. His work of salvation was completed at the Cross, and the evidence that it is fully accepted is to be seen in the fact that He is now seated at "the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The object of Christ's death is the salvation of His people, not just salvation from sin's penalty, but salvation from sin's power, and ultimately salvation from sin itself. As far as the present is concerned, we need to be concerned about our perfection, growing more and more like Christ.

Perhaps as we focus our attention on our wonderful Lord in the following weeks, learning of Him, and seeking to be like Him, we will experience a real revival in our own souls. We live in wicked days, and it is so easy for us to be caught up in the ungodliness of the world. Let us pray that the Lord will do in us what He has always had to do with His people: Cause us to know Him and love Him and trust Him and seek to be like Him, so that the people of the world will begin to ask us for a reason for the hope that we have in God and in Christ. My heart is greatly encouraged just thinking of the possibilities for blessing that can be ahead of us by the grace of God as we give our attention to this wonderful NT epistle.

A holy life is a Christ-centered life, and a holy life results in Christ-likeness. There can be no salvation without Christ. There can be no holiness without Christ. We need to know Him, to love Him, to trust Him, to walk with Him, to glorify Him, and to be like Him. We will not reach perfection here, but we need to be moving in that direction. The work will be completed when we finally see Christ. "We shall be like him," the Apostle John said, "for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

THE HIGHEST PEAK OF DIVINE REVELATION
Hebrews 1:1-3

Intro: The grand testimony of Scripture is that God has spoken! This Book, which we call the Bible, is the Word of God! And how thankful we should be that God has spoken. If He had not, we would be in total ignorance of Him. We would be under the worst possible misconceptions concerning ourselves--where we came from, why we are here, and where we are headed. And that is exactly where millions of people are today because they are ignorant of the Word of God--many of them deliberately ignorant. Many who have some acquaintance with the Bible do not accept it as the Word of God, and so are able to set it aside as not having any special significance for them. When Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), he was declaring that all of the books of Scripture, which now include the 39 books of the OT, and the 27 books of the NT, are God-breathed! He may have used different men to write the books. He may have guided them in different ways. But His oversight of their writings was of such a nature that every book of the Bible is His book, and it would be wrong to call them anything but God's Word!

This means that the Bible is the greatest book that has ever been written. It alone bears the stamp of divine authority. It is a living and powerful Word, a twoedged sword. When blessed and used by God so that people believe it, it changes lives. People are born again, and they become the children of God.

But God has spoken in at least two other ways.

God has spoken in the heart of every person who has ever lived on the face of the earth. There is in every person the consciousness, the realization, that there is a God. Many have tried to cover up that evidence that is in their hearts, but it is there. Paul told the Romans that "that which may be known of God is manifest in them" (Rom. 1:19). And then he said why that was true: "Because God hath shewed it unto them."

The revelation of God that is in the heart of every man is not to be compared with the Bible, but it is a real and a powerful testimony that God has placed in every human heart. People may try to ignore it, but it keeps coming back to them telling them that there is a God.

But God has spoken in a third way.

He has spoken in creation. In that same first chapter of

Romans Paul wrote these words:

For the invisible things of him (God)
from the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being understood by the things that are made,
even his eternal power and Godhead;
so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

King David said this same thing long ago when he wrote Psalm 19. It begins like this:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language,
where their voice is not heard (Psa. 19:1-3).

One of the most foolish things that man ever does is to look at the world and all living things in the world and then say that this all just happened. There is no way to explain the universe in which we live except to say that it was created by someone infinitely wise, someone infinitely powerful, someone who is infinitely greater than the universe itself. No one can possibly qualify for such recognition except for GOD!

Again quoting from the Psalms, we read these words in Psa. 100, verse 3:

Know ye that the Lord he is God:
it is he that hath made us,
and not we ourselves....

We could also think about the way God speaks to us through acts of providence. Since God is God, He is sovereign over all of us, whether we like it or not, or whether we want to admit it or not. And He can bring circumstances to bear upon any of us until we have to admit that, as people sometimes say, "God is trying to tell me something!"

I have said all of this by way of introducing the words which we find at the beginning of this book of Hebrews. The writer, who probably was the Apostle Paul, tells us that there is another way in which God has spoken. Let me call it:

I. A UNIQUE MESSAGE (Heb. 1:1, 2a).

We call this book the Epistle to the Hebrews because the contents show that it was addressed to Hebrew Christians. It seems that this was also true of the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude. This does not mean that it is not for those of us who are Gentile Christians. There is not one Gospel for the Jew and another for the Gentile. Nor is there

one way of life for Hebrew Christians and another for Gentile Christians. The distinctions that existed under the Law in the OT have been fulfilled and it is now true that we are all one in Christ. Nevertheless, because of the background that the Jews had in the Law, it was necessary for them to be taught about the new covenant, teaching which is also very necessary for Gentile Christians. Some things remain the same; other things are different. The changes have been brought about as a result of this unique message from God!

What is the unique message?

"God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," or in His Son, or in such a One as His Son!

Although God had spoken primarily "unto the fathers" of Israel "by the prophets" of Israel, and He had done this in different ways, and at different times, yet when the Lord Jesus Christ came He spoke in a manner that was different and greater than ever before: He spoke in His Son!

God spoke to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Samuel, to David, to Isaiah and Jeremiah and Micah and Daniel (to name just a few of the prophets), but never had He spoken in anyone comparable to His Son!

But let me make this very clear. You cannot put the written Word, the Bible, in contrast with Christ, the living Word, because it is the Bible which tells us about Christ! That is true of the OT as well as of the NT. Remember what the Lord did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Cf. Luke 24:13-35.

For the book of Hebrews to begin this way was the writer's way of telling us that this is a book about God's Son! Let me just say that for now. I will get to some other things in a moment. But make sure that you understand this. What God has spoken to us in His Son does not contradict what we have learned before from the prophets of the OT, but it makes those OT revelations clearer, and Christ completes what God has to say to us. The Word of God reaches its highest peak when we come to Christ. When you read the Bible, you haven't gotten far enough until you get to Christ; if you try to go beyond Christ, then you will get into trouble--and into heresy! Everything in the OT points ahead to Christ; everything in the NT explains Christ to us and His place in the purposes of God.

All of God's Word is wonderful, but what God has to say to us in Christ is the best of all!

But now let us go a little farther in our text.

Just what does the writer of Hebrews tell us that God has had to say to us in Christ?

God has given us:

II. A THREEFOLD MESSAGE (Heb. 1:2b, 3).

Let me mention what the three points are, and then we will consider each one briefly.

This UNIQUE, THREEFOLD MESSAGE is:

- 1) A message about Christ.
- 2) A message about God Himself.
- 3) A message about sin.

All three are linked to Christ, but we have these three aspects before us in our text.

First, let us consider what the coming of Christ was meant to tell us about Christ.

A. A message about Christ (v. 2b, 3m).

There are three things here about Christ. In verse 2 we learn:

1. He is the Heir of all things.
2. He is the One by Whom God made, lit., the ages.

And in verse 3, the middle part,

3. He is "upholding all things by the word of his power."

By divine appointment the incarnate Son of God is "the heir of all things." We could spend a whole service on this one phrase, but let me just open it up to you if the Lord enables me to do this. All things were given to Him by His Father. He will inherit the throne of His father, David. The Church is His Bride. All authority in heaven and earth is given to Him. He will reign over all of the nations of the earth. He will receive the homage of all when every knee bows, and every tongue confesses that He is Lord. The whole course of human history will find its end in Christ.

Second, He is the One by Whom the Father made the ages. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator, but this is a truth beyond the fact of creation. Here we see the sovereignty of Christ

(and of God) throughout history. All time is made up of ages, and our Lord is the One Who has determined these and what goes on in them. Step by step we have the unfolding of God's plan for this world in which we live. As is often said, "History is His-story." In spite of man's rebellion against God, God has a plan, laid out in time. And Jesus Christ is sovereign over that plan.

And this brings us to the third thing about Christ: He is "upholding all things by the word of his power." This is where the first two are brought together. The Lord is the Heir of all things. He has laid out the plan. Now we learn from this expression that by His word, His spoken word, He resists all opposition and guarantees that God's purposes will be carried out in every detail. Our Lord not only laid out the plan, but He is the One Who will see to it that every detail of the plan is carried out. We could not have a greater statement of the sovereignty of Christ! The purposes of God are never in question. God through Christ is working "all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

But let me go on.

The second part of this MESSAGE in Christ is:

B. A message about God Himself (Heb. 1:3a).

You have heard me say many times that the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but a revelation of God! The same is true of Christ.

We read at the beginning of verse 3 that Christ was (and is) "the brightness of his (God's) glory, and the express image of his (God's) person." In simple words this is a very strong statement of the absolute Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is implied in the fact that Christ is God's Son. His nature and the Father's nature are identical. Christ's Deity is the same as the Father's Deity. If you have seen Christ, you have seen God. Christ is "the brightness of" God's "glory" in the sense that all of the divine attributes that you find in God, you will find in Christ. Not one is missing. And He is "the express image of" God's "person" in that as He came into the world He was the very essence of God.

Ienski, a Lutheran commentator, had this to say about these expressions:

Language fairly groans with the weight of meaning. Our poor human tongue and mind, which are occupied so much with the things that are beneath us, strain to rise to the heights of the divine persons. But these mighty

expressions form the rock bottom of our Christian faith, the essence of the sweet gospel realities. If the Son in whose person God drew nigh to us were less than is said here..., our faith and our hope would be vain indeed" (p. 38).

Let nothing shake us in the assurance that Jesus Christ is God, and, as such, is more qualified than any prophet before Him to reveal to us the glories and perfection of the Father in all of their fullness.

But there is one more part to this UNIQUE, THREEFOLD MESSAGE.

C. A message about sin (v. 3b).

It is important for us to understand Who Jesus Christ is, and what His relationship is to the Father, if the full power of these last words are to grip our souls.

This One Who is called the "Son," came not only to complete the revelation of God, but He came as our Great High Priest to purge our sins. This is the theme of the epistle.

The words "by himself" and "our" are not in many of the better MSS, but the idea of "by himself" is in verb, and the statement would certainly apply to the believers to whom Paul was writing, so we do not need to worry about the differences in translation at this point.

What the Lord did at Calvary was the fulfillment of what took place each year in Israel on the national Day of Atonement. Only, as we shall learn in the epistle, what the Lord did would never need to be repeated. He made purification of sins for all who would ever, or who had ever, put their trust in Him. He did the work by Himself. Nothing needs to be added to His work. And the evidence that God was satisfied with His work is to be seen in the fact that today He is seated at the Father's right hand, "the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Concl: So, where the knowledge of God is concerned, we need not, we cannot, go beyond Christ. And the same is true regarding our needed cleansing from sin: we need not, we cannot, go beyond Christ. Christ, and only Christ, is sufficient for knowing God, and for salvation from sin.

What should our response be?

For those of us who believe in Christ, how can we help but bow in worship and adoration before our God and our Savior? If you have not trusted Christ, trust Him now.

"A MORE EXCELLENT NAME"
Hebrews 1:4-14

Intro: The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews knew that if he were to get his Jewish readers to see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, he had to deal with the subject of angels. And this he did in chapters 1 and 2 of Hebrews.

There were two main reasons for the importance of angels in the thinking of the Jewish people:

- 1) Angels are higher creatures than men. The Psalmist David said in Psalm 8, referring to man, "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" (v. 5a).
- 2) The Lord used angels when the Mosaic Law was given.

On this second point we read in Stephen's message in Acts 7 that the Law was received "by the disposition of angels" (v. 53), that is, angels were instrumental in giving the Law to Moses—how, we are not told.

We also read in Paul's letter to the Galatians that "the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19b).

When you compare these truths with the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was a man, in this sense, lower than angels, it would tend to make people think less of Him and His message than they would of the Law because it was given by angels.

The answer to this dilemma is, of course, to be found in the added fact that the Lord Jesus was not only a man, but He was the Son of God! This is the point that Paul was making here in the latter part of Hebrews 1 which is what we are considering today. The Lord Jesus has "A MORE EXCELLENT NAME THAN THEY!" His Name is more distinguished than that of angels. It was both different and greater, worthy of much more honor than that of any angel! And this is what Paul set out to prove.

In doing so the writer here quoted from no less than seven OT passages. They are in the order that they are found here:

- 1) Psa. 2:7 in verse 5.
- 2) 2 Sam. 7:14, also in verse 5.
- 3) The source of the quotation in verse 6 is uncertain. Some take it as a quotation from the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of Deut. 32:43 in the OT where it actually says, "And let all the angels of God worship him." There are times in the Gospels where our Lord's statements were taken from the LXX, so this would not be unusual. Others think that it could be from Psa. 97:7 where the Psalmist may be referring to angels when he

wrote, "Worship him (the Lord) all ye gods. There is a third possibility. The writer of Hebrews may be speaking here of something that is not contained in Scripture, but something which God said. There is a difference also among students of the Word as to whether it is the first coming of our Lord, or the second coming, that is referred to here. Psalm 97 would seem to indicate that it has to do with our Lord's second coming, but this is certainly something that took place at the Lord's first coming. He was worshiped by angels. We do not have to be overly concerned about the source of this statement. Since it appears here, we know that God said it, and it is what He said that is important. Angels worshiped our Lord, and not anyone else! When He comes again, angels will worship Him again. He did not pay homage to them; they paid homage to Him!

- 4) Psa. 104:4 in verse 7.
- 5) Psa. 45:6, 7 in verses 8, 9.
- 6) Psa. 8:4-6 in verses 10-12.
- 7) Psa. 110:1 in verse 13.

This makes a total of five passages from the Psalms, one possibly from Deuteronomy, or another Psalm, and one from 2 Samuel.

It ought to be of special interest to us that the quotation of these verses from the OT here in Hebrews 1 definitely identifies all of these passages as Messianic, i.e., as referring to our Lord Jesus Christ.

But not look at verse 4.

This verse in all of the translations that I have examined, including my Greek Testament, actually belongs to and is the conclusion to verses 1 through 3. In those verses, as we saw last Sunday, the writer of Hebrews makes it absolutely clear that the One through Whom God has spoken "in these last days" is His Son, who became a Man, but Who in His nature is "the brightness of" God's "glory, and the express image of His person." So, the quotation of all of these seven OT passages is to give added confirmation to the fact that God's Son is greater than angels!

He received His Name "by inheritance." He is "the Heir of all things," according to verse 2. All of God's purposes and promises are destined to find their full realization in Him, Him Who is the Son of God. And it is unthinkable that angels would have a place superior to His, or even equal to His. No created being, whether angelic or human, can begin to compare with Him. He is greater than all, and His Name "more excellent." Cf. Phil. 2:9-11.

So now let us look at the added proof that the Lord Jesus Christ, or, as He is called here in this chapter, the "Son," is greater than angels. It would seem also that the truths presented in these verses also were meant to give added meaning to the inheritance of the Son.

There are seven reasons given here as to why our Lord has "a more excellent name" than angels. His Name is indicative of His relationship to God, His position, His authority, His importance, and, in the case of our Lord, the homage, the humility, the obedience, the faithfulness, which should be rendered to Him.

Now let us look at the seven reasons.

I. OUR LORD IS THE "SON," GOD IS HIS "FATHER" (Heb. 1:5).

Here we are looking at Psa. 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14--and we are given by the Spirit of God the main meaning of these passages. Both point to Christ.

God never addressed any angel the way He has addressed His Son. Angels are referred to as "the sons of God." And this is a title which we the Lord's people have. But there is no angel, no child of God among men, who can be called the only begotten Son of God. That title belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ. And this gives Him "a more excellent name."

There never was a time when the Lord Jesus became the Son of God, so we cannot take "this day have I begotten thee" in that sense. Paul quoted this verse in Acts 13:33 with reference to the resurrection of Christ, and he told the Roman church that the Lord was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom.1:4). Psalm 2 seems to have reference to the coming reign of Christ upon the earth. So it would seem that "this day" would refer to those times when it became, or will become, especially clear that our Lord is the Son of God. Such was the case also at His birth when the Deity of Christ was proclaimed.

But the point here is that God never said anything like this about any angel--referring to both of these passages.

II. ANGELS WORSHIPPED THE LORD, NOT VICE VERSA (Heb. 1:6).

Whatever may be the time referred to here, Christ's first coming, or His second coming, angels were commanded to worship the Lord. And the greater is always given homage by the lesser. The Lord Jesus was quoting from the Law when He said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only

shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). Therefore, if God told the angels to worship Christ, this was proof of Christ's Deity, making Him greater than any created being, whether animal, man, or angel!

III. ANGELS ARE MINISTERING SPIRITS; CHRIST IS THE KING
(Heb. 1:7-9).

Not only is the Lord the King, but He will never be succeeded. His throne "is forever and ever." And because it is a righteous kingdom, and because He hates iniquity, "therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

God is spoken of as our Lord's God in connection with His humanity. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He told Mary Magdalene not to hold Him back when she saw Him after His resurrection. The reason?

For I am not yet ascended to my Father:
but go to my brethren, and say unto them,
I ascend unto my Father, and your Father;
and to my God, and your God (John 20:17).

So, who are His "fellows"? They are angels. They share with Him in carrying out God's purposes in redemption, but always in a lower place than He has. The angels may have joy in their ministry, but it is not to be compared with the joy that He has in turning people from their iniquity to the righteousness of God.

IV. THE LORD IS THE CREATOR; ANGELS ARE HIS CREATURES
(Heb. 1:10).

Where did angels come from? Have they always existed? No. "The heavens are the works of thy hands"--and all that is in them: the angels. When Genesis 1:1 tells us that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," the Spirit of God was telling us that He created angels as well as men. The next time you read Psa. 102 and come to those words in verse 25,

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
and the heavens are the work of thy hands,
remember that the Psalmist was speaking to our Lord.

And since the Creator has to be greater than any creature, or than all of His creatures combined, Christ is greater than angels. They might be glorious, but His glory is infinite. They might be powerful, but He is all-powerful. They might be wise, wiser than men, but not wiser than He is Who is all-wise. So however God may have used them, they have not done the mighty works that our Savior has done.

But there is another thought in this passage from Psa. 102 which is quoted in verses 10-12 of Hebrews 1.

V. THE LORD IS UNCHANGING (Heb. 1:11, 12).

Paul was speaking here about the natural world and the heavens above. Creation is getting older and older, and will eventually perish, leading to a new heaven and a new earth. We do not know how angels change. But we know that there was a time when they were created. We know that they continue to learn. They learn about "the manifold wisdom of God" from the way the Lord deals with us, His people. Cf. Eph. 3:10. We know that some angels fell when Satan, also an angel, fell into sin by rebelling against God.

But the point is that the Son of God is unique even as far as angels are concerned because He is without beginning, without ending, and without change. He remains the same; our Lord will never die again. Hebrews 13:8 will tell us, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

I have two more points.

VI. CHRIST SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD (Heb. 1:13).

Search through your Bible, and you will not be able to find that God ever said anything like this to an angel. This place is reserved, and now occupied, by our Lord Jesus Christ. And He has the promise that all of His enemies will one day be subdued at His feet. This is one of the main themes of this epistle to the Hebrews. Paul will not be writing about Gabriel, nor about Michael, nor about any other angel. If you are speaking about the One Who is at the right hand of the Father in heaven, you have to be speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ, not about an angel. They are in heaven, but they are not at the right hand of the Father. Only Christ is!

The last point in the chapter is given in the form of a question. (Read it.)

Implied in this question is our seventh point:

VII. ANGELS MINISTER TO THE "HEIRS OF SALVATION," BUT IT IS CHRIST WHO IS THEIR SAVIOR (Heb. 1:14).

Paul used two words for ministering in this passage, and he related both of them to angels. One is in verse 7; the other is here. The first one speaks of one who ministers in a priestly way, including the idea of worship. The second really includes any kind of service which will be helpful to

the one being served.

Perhaps we could state it another way. The first has reference to service that is rendered primarily to God, while the second has to do with service rendered to people, especially the people of God.

You and I pray for people who do not know the Lord. Long before people actually come to Christ, the Lord has been working in their hearts. Verse 14 speaks of what angels do for the people of God before they are saved, as well as after they are saved. Angels had a part in our salvation, and they have a part in our lives today. We can see examples of that in the way angels ministered to Zacharias and Elisabeth and Mary. Angels ministered to the apostles. One let Peter out of jail. The book of the Revelation has a great deal to say about the ministry of angels in the end times. People sometimes ask, "Do we have guardian angels?" My answer to that is, "Yes!" But they always do what the Lord Jesus tells them to do. In their service they manifest that our Lord is greater than they are.

Concl: What are we to learn from this passage beyond the plain fact that the Lord is greater than angels? Angels have an excellent name, but our Lord has "a more excellent name than they."

One of the ways in which God spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets was through the ministry of angels. Angels have come to the aid of the people of God when they have been in danger. But they are like all of us as God's creatures. They were created for the Lord, to do His will, to bring glory to His Name. But we are never to glorify the instruments the Lord uses, whether he be an angel, or a human being. The Members of the Godhead are the only Ones we are to worship—ever!

This should also help us to understand in a greater way the glory of our Lord. Angels are glorious beings, but their glory is nothing in comparison with the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How great must His glory be! That is something that we will not be able to know when we see Him. But we do know that seeing His glory will be so wonderful that we will be transformed, finally and completely, to be like He is.

And so let me remind you in closing of 2 Cor. 3:18.

What is the glory of Christ? His glory is to be seen in His attributes. Therefore, as you read the Word, ask the Holy Spirit to show Christ to you. Look for the evidences of His

perfections. Remember that all you would ever see in God, you will see in Christ. Not one of the divine attributes is missing in Christ. We learned that from Heb. 1:3. Dwell on His holiness, His grace, His love, His mercy, His wisdom, His power, His righteousness, His unchanging character, His eternity, His presence, His work on the Cross, His glorious resurrection, His return, His promises, His prayers for us, and His providential dealings with us from day to day. As we look at Him in the Word, we will never again be satisfied with anyone else.

If our study of the book of Hebrews will only cause us to know Christ better than we do today, then the blessings that we will receive from this wonderful epistle will be well worth the time we have given to it. May the Lord Himself make it very profitable for all of us.

THE PERIL OF NEGLECT
Hebrews 2:1-4

Intro: For those of you who are visiting with us today, let me explain that we have just started through the epistle to the Hebrews. Last Sunday we completed chapter 1.

I am well aware that this is Easter Sunday, the one Sunday in the year when professing Christians all over the world remember the resurrection of Christ. Actually every Sunday is resurrection Sunday. That is the reason that Christians meet on Sunday, because our Lord was raised from the dead on the first day of the week.

However, rather than depart from our studies, I decided to continue with them. One reason is that recently I have turned aside to speak on subjects related to the war in the Middle East. The other reason that I have decided to continue on with Hebrews is because we have come to a passage which is an excellent text for Easter Sunday. Here Paul was speaking of this "so great salvation." There would be no "salvation," no Gospel, if it were not for the resurrection of Christ. In fact, Paul told the Corinthians Christians that, if Christ were not raised from the dead, we Christians, of all people, are the most to be pitied. That is because we are placing our trust in a non-existent hope, if Christ were not raised from the dead. So any text which speaks of "salvation" is very appropriate for Easter Sunday.

Let me take just a moment for review so that we can all be together in our thinking as we come to these first four verses of chapter 2.

In chapter 1, verses 1 through 3, the Apostle has reminded us of a fact that we all know to be true. It is this: From the beginning of time God has been speaking to men. He has done this primarily through men who were called "prophets." Sometimes He spoke directly and audibly to them. Sometimes He spoke in visions. He used different methods, and spoke over hundreds of years, but He was speaking. We have this message in the OT. That is why we speak of it as the Word of God-- because God was the One Who was speaking.

But shortly before this epistle was written, God did a most unusual thing. He sent His Son to the earth. He sent His Son with a message. That message was conveyed not only in the teaching of God's Son, but it was conveyed in what His Son did. In fact, it was even to be seen and heard in all that God's Son was. There never had been, and there never will be, a person like God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. While He was a real human being, yet He never ceased to be

the Son of God. He was morally perfect. He never committed a single sin during His entire life upon earth. He was incapable of sinning! God cannot sin, and, since the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, which means that He was equal in His nature with God, therefore He could not sin even though He became a man.

God spoke to the world through His Son, through all that His Son was, all that His Son said, and through all that His Son did—with special emphasis upon one thing which He did, mentioned in verse 3 of chapter 1. "By himself" He "purged our sins"! He provided cleansing for sinners to make them acceptable with God. He did what no priest in Israel had ever been able to do. As you go on reading the book of Hebrews, you will find that He only had to make one sacrifice to do this, and this cleansing is eternal in its duration. The Apostle Paul called it "so great salvation." (See chapter 2, verse 3.)

I like what a Bible teacher by the name of Dr. Griffith Thomas said about this salvation when he spoke years ago at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford University when he was lecturing on this epistle to the Hebrews. He said,

The salvation is "great" because it is at once divine, free, full, sufficient, universal, and everlasting (p. 31).

However, there was one major issue that kept Jewish people in that day, and perhaps in our day, from realizing how important this message concerning Jesus Christ really was. Their Law, giving to them by Moses, was given to Him by angels. And, because many of them did not believe that Jesus was any more than a man, they argued that what God had given through a man could not possibly be as important as His message through angels!

And so, in verses 4 through 14 of chapter 1, the Apostle cited many OT passages to show that Jesus Christ was greater than angels!

Having established that fact in chapter 1, Paul proceeded on into chapter 2 with a warning!

There are no less than five warning scattered throughout this epistle. The Apostle quite evidently wanted to wake up his fellow Israelites. And perhaps the Lord will use His Word to wake us up today, if we need it.

Looking at Hebrews, the second chapter, and verse 1, we have:

I. THE WARNING (Heb. 2:1).

Notice the word, "Therefore," at the beginning of the verse. This tied together what Paul said in chapter 1 with what he was about to say in chapter 2. It is a word which shows that the writer has reached a conclusion.

The argument would go like this: Since Jesus Christ is God's Son, and God has spoken to all men everywhere, therefore, not "we ought," but we must "give the more earnest heed..."

For those of you who are in the Tuesday Class, this is the same word that John used over and over again in his Gospel. "Ye **must** be born again," etc. Attention to the Gospel is not just an option for people; it is an absolute necessity. There is no message that has ever been given any place on earth that we are so obligated to pay attention to, and to consider it very, very carefully. This is a comparative statement, isn't it? You may pay attention to many things that you hear, but there is no message that demands your attention any more than this message. God has spoken in His Son. This is not a message that is going to change. And it is a message of supreme importance. What the writer of this epistle meant was this: PAY ATTENTION TO THIS MESSAGE OR YOU WILL REGRET FOREVER THAT YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO! THIS IS THE MESSAGE WHICH TELLS YOU WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU SO THAT YOUR SINS CAN BE FORGIVEN, AND SO YOU WILL GO TO HEAVEN.

Do you notice how Paul wrote in the first person plural? Three times in this verse he said, "We." No one is pointing a finger at anyone else. We all need to do this--Christian and non-Christian.

The Gospel message is not a new message. It has been 2,000 years (approximately) since Jesus Christ was here on earth. On this Easter Sunday the message of the death and resurrection of Christ will be preached again in thousands of places throughout the world. Some people will not go to church today because they have heard the message of the death and resurrection of Christ many times before. But they haven't really paid any attention to it for themselves. Others will go to church, but they won't pay any more attention to it this year than they did last year. Oh, it is my prayer that today some of you who have never thought of how the Gospel relates to you will give it your most serious consideration. Why?

Now look at the last statement of this verse: "Lest at any time we should let them slip."

Some feel that this expression would be better translated, "Lest at any time we should drift by them." Let me try to describe the picture that we have here.

The writer was picturing you in a boat. The current is very swift. You have lost your oars. You are rushing toward a huge waterfall and certain death if someone does not rescue you--although you don't know about the waterfall ahead. You are headed toward a great rock in the river, and there is a person on that rock prepared to throw you a rope. Your boat is coming nearer to the rock, but the current is going to carry you past it. The man on the rock has a rope which he is prepared to throw to you. He shouts at you, and you hear him. You know what he wants to do for you. He throws the rope, but you have decided that he is some kind of a fanatic, and so you drip on by to your own death and destruction.

Let me say this very solemnly this morning. Some people come to church every Sunday. They listen to the Gospel over and over again, but they have never grabbed the rope. They may feel that there is trouble ahead, but they will wait a little longer. Others will go to church today who have heard the Gospel before. Perhaps they have been impressed sometime in the past that they ought to do something about their plight. But they will let this year go by as they have before, and do nothing about their relationship with the Lord.

The Apostle said, in so many words, "In view of the fact that God has spoken in the death and resurrection of His Son, we must listen, and think, and put our trust in this wonderful Person Whom God has sent to speak to our hearts.

Now look at:

II. THE ARGUMENT (Heb. 2:2-4).

"The word spoken by angels" is the Law, the Law of God given to Moses by angels. The Law promised blessings if the people would obey, but it carried the most severe penalties for those who broke the Law. The Law could not be adapted to man's ability. And the consequence was that there never has been a person who has kept the Law perfectly--except for One: the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews' failure to keep the Law rendered them all guilty before God, and, therefore, faced with the terrible prospect of eternal judgment--IF THEY DID NOT GRAB THE ROPE!

Now, if that were true under the Law, the message given by angels, what do you think of the consequences of ignoring the message given by the Lord?

If they did not escape judgment through the Law, how do you and I think that we can escape if we neglect so great a salvation. Paul did not say reject; he said, "Neglect." What do you need to do in your boat, rushing toward

destruction down the river of life? What do you need to do? NOTHING! Just sit in your boat. Listen to the Gospel. Enjoy the trip as much as you can. But get ready to go over the falls! You don't have to reject; you just need to neglect. But continued neglect amounts to a rejection.

Why is this "so great salvation"?

It is "so great" because it has come from the Lord. That ought to be enough to satisfy any of us. All other ways come from man. This alone has come from God.

It is "so great" because it is the only way to be saved. Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

It is "so great" because this is a salvation which is enough for any sinner, regardless of what those sins might be. And it is "so great" because once our sins are forgiven, they will never again be brought up and charged against us in the court of heaven.

And it is "so great" because it is eternal. When the Lord saves you, you are saved forever! Then you are ready for heaven.

And it is "so great" because we have the confirmation of this from those who actually heard the Lord, and so His work, and who experienced His forgiveness and the change that He alone makes in people's lives.

Our society is riddled with sins of the most terrible nature. But it is the hardest thing to get people to really listen to the Gospel. And in many instances people who are involved in crimes, in drugs, in the terrible things that are taking place today, are never told about Christ and His power to save.

This past week a popular school teacher of many years of experience tied rather than face the charges that were against him, thinking that he was getting out of it. He only sealed His own doom, and found himself at the time of his death face to face with God--a holy, righteous God Who cannot look upon sin. The only escape is through Christ.

Have you noticed in our text for today that all Three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned?

The Lord Jesus spoke the message. God confirmed it by the many signs and wonders which our Lord performed while He was here on earth seeking to awaken sinners that the Son of God had come to earth. And then, after the Lord went back to

heaven, the Holy Spirit continued to witness to the truth of the Gospel by His gifts which He bestowed upon the people of God--again to make people listen to the message of Christ. You see, one of the continuing ways in which the Lord is getting His message across to sinners who need a Savior is through the transformation of those who have grabbed the rope, those who have forsaken all of their own efforts for salvation, and have simply trusted Christ to save them.

Concl: I hope that the Lord has been working as I have been speaking today. How tragic it will be if there are people who sit and listen to the Word of God every Sunday, but have never been saved. Familiarity with the Gospel often is the very reason we neglect it.

It will be equally tragic for people who occasionally go to church, but have never realized that they are obligated by God Himself to listen and to continue to listen, asking questions if they need to until they understand, until they quit drifting, and trust in Christ to save them.

We are not saved because we were raised in the church, nor because we belong to a Christian family. We are all going down the river of life in our own boats. When it comes to salvation, we stand before God by ourselves. The person who is the closest to you on earth may be a Christian, but that will not get you to heaven. Each of us must trust in Christ.

We are not saved because of the good things we do. Salvation is "not of works." Christ did all that was necessary for your salvation and mine. There is still cleansing from sin to be found in Christ alone.

I urge you to think seriously about your own soul, and your need before God. That is what the writer of the book of Hebrews was saying in this passage. May God turn all of our hearts to Christ. What must we do to be saved? The only thing that people have ever had to do: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"--and everybody in your house can be saved if they will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, too.

GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN AND THE PRESENT SCENE
Hebrews 2:5-9

Intro: If you are reading through the epistle to the Hebrews, you probably have noticed that this book is concerned with where everything is going. We had a hint of that in the second verse of this letter where we read about "these last days." In the thirteenth verse of chapter 1 we read where the Father said to the Son,

Sit on my right hand,
until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

This point us to the future.

In chapter 3, verse 6, we read of a "hope." This in Scripture is "a well-grounded expectation and a gladly and firmly held prospect of future good" (Bullinger, p. 383). In chapter 6, verse 5, we read of "the powers of **the world to come.**" In the eighth verse of the same chapter, and by way of contrast, we read of those "**whose end is to be burned.**" Verse 11 speaks of "**the full assurance of hope unto the end.**" And in verses 18 and 19 Paul referred to "**the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul....**"

Chapter 7, verse 19, refers to "**a better hope.**"

In chapter 8, verse 6, we read of "**better promises**"—and promises have to do with the future.

In chapter 9, verse 11, Christ is called "**an high priest of good things to come.**" And in the next verse we read of "**eternal redemption.**" In the fifteenth verse he mentioned "**the promise of eternal inheritance.**" And then look at the last verse of chapter 9. (Read.)

Chapter 10, verse 1, the law was but "**a shadow of good things to come.**" In verses 12, 13 of this chapter we have a reference to the same statement that was made in 1:13. And in verse 25 Paul spoke of "**the day approaching.**" See also verses 35 and 37.

Hebrews 11:1 speaks of the "**things hoped for.**"

See what is written about Abraham in Heb. 11:10. And then read verses 13 through 16. Then verse 20. Then verse 26. And then, at the end of the chapter, verses 39 and 40.

In chapter 12 we have verse 14.

Add to these Heb. 13:14.

So there is a very definite emphasis in the book of Hebrews

on the future!

And this is placed in the light of, and in contrast with, the past--the past for the nation Israel, and especially in connection with Moses and the law and the priesthood and the constant repetition of sacrifices that were offered in OT times under the Law. They were preparatory, but temporary. They were the shadow, not the substance.

One verse which we might consider the key text of the book of Hebrews is Heb. 7:19,

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

So in Hebrews we look backwards in the OT, and then we look ahead to the hope which even the OT saints believed in, and looked for.

But there is another thing in the book which is important for us to notice. From a practical viewpoint, Paul was concerned about two things:

- 1) He wanted his readers to make sure that they really knew the Lord.
- 2) He was concerned about their progress from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. We see this in such verses as 5:11-6:1a. We see it also in 13:20, 21.

In chapter 12 Paul discussed chastening, and said that the Lord chastens us to make us holy, and that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord."

Now all of this is related to the passage I want to consider with you today: Heb. 2:5-9.

Before I read these verses, let me ask a question. It is this: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MAIN OBJECTIVE THAT OUR WORLD LEADERS ARE SEEKING, AND AT LEAST THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD WHO DO ANY THINKING AT ALL? There are many people who don't think. They just take a day at a time, and want to have as much fun as they can day by day. But as far as having a long range view, they don't have it!

What are we hearing from our leaders?

Well, we would like to have a world in which there is no war. We would like to have a world in which there is no poverty. We would like to have a world in which there is no sickness. We would like to have a world with clean air, and a clean environment. We would like to have a world in which there is no crime, no prejudice--a world in which we would all get along together like one big happy family. I have not heard

anyone proposing that we might have a world in which there is no death, but everything possible is being done to slow down the aging process.

To state it as briefly as possible, we would like to have a perfect world.

And yet isn't it interesting, and discouraging too, that it seems that our goal gets farther and farther away all of the time? We felt that we were headed for a world of peace with the end, so to speak, of the cold war, and it was just a matter of months before we found ourselves facing Iraq in the Middle East--with many of the nations of the earth involved with us. And the situation in the Middle East is far from settled. Crime, poverty and people without jobs, broken homes, lives ruined by drugs--all of these things continue on at an alarming rate. And yet it seems that no one is saying, "Is there some solution that we are overlooking?" And it is especially distressing that very, very few are even interested in asking if God has any answers.

Well, God does have the answer. Although we refuse in twentieth century America to believe it, the problem is in the heart of man. That is where war comes from. Read James 4:1. That is why there is crime. That is why people are selfish, and greedy, and corrupt, and vile. Their hearts are wrong. Man has no place for God in his heart nor in his life, and that is why we are where we are in the world today.

We are much like the Pharisees of our Lord's day who were offended because the disciples did not go through the ceremonial washing of their hands before they ate. And the Lord explained to them that dirt on the hands was not the problem, nor was the problem something that could be cured with soap and water. It is good to be clean, but man's problems are more than skin-deep. Man's problems issue out of his heart. And the words of the Lord Jesus Christ have been written in the Bible for 2,000 years, but very few people today seem to be paying any attention to what He said. Listen to His words:

That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:20-23).

To show you what we in America think about God, our President issued a proclamation calling our nation to give three days for thanksgiving to God for the victory we and our allies

have had over Iraq. Instead of focusing attention on it, the Oregonian put it on the fourteenth page of section one on the 8th of March, and has not mentioned it since--to my knowledge. The news media who are quick to pick up anything they can which they think is important, have said nothing about this. There may have been some exceptions which I have not heard. We were informed in the newspaper and on the air over and over that we are starting Daylight Savings Time, but nothing has been said about this day of thanksgiving. Why? Because most Americans don't really believe that God had anything to do with our victory. Our victory, instead of humbling us, has made us proud. Instead of glorifying God, we take the credit to ourselves.

But maybe there are more people than we realize who are beginning to think that maybe our trouble is that we have left God out of our national life, and out of our personal lives. If you feel that way, then this passage will be an eye-opener to you.

We have seen in the opening chapter of Hebrews that the Jews were inclined to feel that nothing could surpass the Law because it was brought from God to Moses by angels. And Paul has also shown that angels were far less than Jesus Christ because, even though He became a man, yet He was and continued to be the Son of God.

But what about GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN?

I. GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN (Heb. 2:5-8).

Long ago, three thousand years ago in fact, God specifically declared in Psalm 8 a truth which had been apparent from the creation of the world. It was this: God placed the earth, the works of His hands, under man's authority. Everything was made subject to man.

But what happened? Man (Adam, to be specific) disobeyed God, became a sinner, and brought trouble upon all future generations, and upon creation itself. It was not God's plan for all things to be under angels, but under man, even though man was created as a creature lower than angels.

David wrote the passage that is quoted here. David lived approximately 1,000 years before Christ, and that would have been 3,000 years ago from us today. David looked at the world of his day, and was amazed that God would put things under man. Man was a failure. Man had ruined what God gave him to do. The world was in deep trouble then, and it continues in the same trouble today. The Apostle Paul, writing this epistle about 30 years after Christ was forced

to say that we still do not see all things put under man. That is written at the end of verse 8.

And we have to say the same thing today. Man is not in control. Man is not the master; man is a slave. He is not in control; he is the victim of his own wrongdoing. We often hear it said, but we don't really believe it, "Man is his own worst enemy"--and he is! He is the bondsman of sin in his heart, and it is a servitude which man cannot break. The situation for any person remains the same until he is changed inwardly.

That last statement of verse 8 is a good description of man today. We don't see all things under man, but we see man under all things. If he is the master of his soul, he is leading himself farther and farther away from what he really wants.

Now we need to ask ourselves a question: God put all things under man. It was God's plan that the world would be under a man. Has He changed His plan? Man has made a mess out of himself, and out of the world. What do we see?

II. THE PRESENT SCENE (Heb. 2:9).

"But we see Jesus." We do not see all things put under man, "but we see Jesus"!

Who is Jesus?

He is One "Who was made a little lower than the angels." This means, according to the wording of Psalm 8 in verse 7 of our text, that He became a man!

Now this means that He qualifies then to be the One under Whom all things will eventually be in subjection. He became a man to fill the place that God originally intended for a man to have. The book of Hebrews will make this clearer as we go along. But here we see what God's original plan was. It was not the man, Adam, who would rule the earth, nor any of His descendants until we get to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has spoken through His Son. His Son has come to do what Adam could not do. He came to be the One Who would rule over all things.

But why was He called, Jesus?

The very first chapter of the NT tells us why. The angel of the Lord told Joseph that Mary was going to have a child, and that His Name was to be "Jesus, for he shall save his people

from their sins."

Paul was not ready at this point to talk about all of creation being under the authority of Jesus Christ. Instead, he wrote about what Jesus had to do before He could rightfully claim that high position.

But why did He have to die? Because this was the penalty for Adam's sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Physical death is one of the penalties of sin. Spiritual death is another penalty of sin. And eternal death is the final and worst penalty of sin.

Before the Lord could reign, He had to die. And since He was the Son of God, He did not die for His own sins--because He had none. Our text says that "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

I want to deal with this more in detail later, but for now I want you to see that Jesus Christ died for sinners, He took our place that we might be forgiven, that we might be delivered not only from sin's penalty, but from sin's power. Jesus Christ is the only One Who can deliver people from their sins.

And Paul inserted that little statement, "crowned with glory and honour," to show that Christ not only died, but He was raised from the dead, His work was accepted by the Father, and therefore He, and He alone, is able to settle that problem of sin in the life of every person who trusts in Him for salvation.

Let me read to you what the Apostle Peter wrote along this line in his first epistle, chapter 1, verses 18 through 21:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Concl: Christ died for sinners. If you are unwilling to admit that you are a sinner, then you are not going to be interested in Christ. But if you want peace with God, and freedom from sin's penalty and sin's power, Christ is the One you need, and the only One Who can help you. Trust Him.

WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME JESUS?

Part 1

Hebrews 2:9-13

Intro: In the opening verses of this chapter we were immediately introduced to the Son of God Who became a Man. The first part of verse 3 is a clear statement of His Deity; in order for Him to purge our sins it was necessary for Him to become a man. Having finished that work He was exalted to the Father's right hand. This is mentioned in Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2.

Throughout the epistle we are continually reminded that our Lord was both God and Man. He never ceased to be God; He became a real human being, except for sin.

Special emphasis is placed upon the humanity of our Lord whenever in the epistle we come upon the name "Jesus" used by itself. This is what we have in Heb. 2:9. And this is followed by the same usage in 3:1 (Gk. text); 4:14; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2, 24, 13:12--nine times in all. Heb. 13:20 might also be included because the Greek would allow the translation, "our Lord, Jesus." So with this we would have ten times that the name "Jesus" is either used alone, or where, as in Heb. 4:14, the emphasis is upon that name.

Therefore, when I use the title, WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME JESUS?, I am really asking, WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME A MAN? But I am using the name "Jesus" because it is that part of our Lord's name which is emphasized no less than ten times in this epistle.

We all know, or should know, that our Lord was given this name because He would "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The name actually means, Jehovah is Savior, or Jehovah is salvation. Therefore, we can see that this name links the Lord with His work, which was to do what was necessary to provide salvation for sinners.

And so in answering our question, WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME JESUS?, the primary answer is that He became Jesus, He became a man, in order to become the Savior of men. And it is very apparent in Scripture that this involved suffering--suffering the terrible death that He had to die on the Cross to provide salvation for sinners.

By quoting from Psalm 8 in Heb. 2:6-8 Paul was showing that it was God's original purpose in creating man that all things should be under a man. Sin in Adam seemed to make that an impossibility. He lost his dominion because of his sin. Creation itself was thrown into hopeless turmoil by the sin

of Adam, and so it seem to make dominion over the earth even more impossible. But God's purposes never change, and so God is never forced into an alternate plan. Even today we do not yet see all things under man, but we can say with Paul that "we see Jesus" (v. 9). That is, we see in the God-man, Jesus, the One in Whom that plan will eventually be fulfilled. It will be fulfilled in the Son of God Who became a man.

But what did it require for Him to restore that divine purpose which seemed to be ruined by Adam's sin? It required that He be able to deliver sinners from their sin, and eventually to rid the world itself, and the universe, of the effects of sin.

And this meant for Him, suffering, the suffering of death.

Look at verse 9: "...that he...should taste death."

Look at verse 10: "...to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Look at verse 14: "...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Look at verse 17: "...to make reconciliation (Gk: propitiation) for the sins of the people." This required His suffering and death.

And then look at verse 18: "For in that he himself hath suffered...."

Therefore, the answer to our question is that the Son of God became Jesus, became a man, to suffer in death the full penalty of sin for those whom He intended to redeem.

Three times in the latter part of chapter 2 we have a statement of the incarnation, when our Lord became a man, and the various things that had to be done in order to accomplish the work of salvation.

Now read verses 9, 10, verses 14, 15, and verse 17.

I am going to spend three Sundays on the latter part of this chapter. Today I want to direct your thoughts to verses 9 through 13. Next Sunday we will consider verses 14 and 15. And two Sundays from now, the Lord willing, we will be looking at verses 16 through 18.

Now let me re-read verses 9 through 13. They introduce a very important part of this epistle. (Read.)

Our attention is drawn to "Jesus."

I. "WE SEE JESUS" (Heb. 2:9a).

It seems that there are not very many people in the world today who can in reality say this: "We see Jesus." Oh, they may have heard His name, and they may know a little about His history, but they have never really seen Him! They do not know who He is, they do not know where He came from, nor do they know why He was born!

The verb "see" seems to suggest that there was a time when "we" first came to know the truth about Jesus, but prior to that we were like everyone else. Once we were blind, too, but now we "see"!

Let me say that there is no reason for anyone to have a hopeful view of the future until they see Jesus. Without Him everything is hopeless. The greatest of world plans leads only to failure and despair unless and until they are linked with the Word of God and with "Jesus." As we look at our world today we see men in every nation who are frantically trying to get a handle on the problems that are threatening to destroy us. We hear many optimistic claims, but we do not see the desired results. What people need is to "see Jesus." It is only then that the lights go on. It is only then that despair can be turned into hope.

What do we need to "see" about Him?

We need to "see" that He Who was greater than angels became by His birth "lower than angels" in order to die, after which He was "crowned with glory and honour"! The first Adam was created to live; the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, was born to die! But He accomplished by His death what the Father sent Him to accomplish, and so He was "crowned with glory and honour."

Listen to what Peter said about our Lord's death and resurrection in his words which are recorded in Acts 5:30, 31:

The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus,
whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.
Him hath God exalted with his right hand
to be a Prince and a Saviour,
for to give repentance to Israel,
and forgiveness of sins.

And in 1 Pet. 1:21 we read that "God...raised him up (our Lord) from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." The Lord's resurrection and exaltation were God's testimony to the world that Christ's work for

the salvation of sinners was completed and accepted. This is what we need to "see" in Jesus--not just a great Example to follow, and not just a great Teacher to instruct us, but a great Savior to redeem us!

This why it is important to believe not only in the death of Christ, but also in His resurrection and His ascension--that as we gather here today we have a Savior at the right hand of the Father, the Savior that God provided for sinners, and the only Savior that there is.

Before you accept the teaching of some other person who claims to be a Savior, ask for his proof that he is approved of God. Nobody but "Jesus" has such credentials, and when you really "see" Him you will realize that is the truth.

But now let me ask:

II. FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE? (Heb. 2:9b, 10).

The last part of verse 9 says this: "...that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Now some will say to me, "Pastor Custis, you have been teaching a particular redemption, that Christ died for the purpose of saving His chosen people. It seems that Paul here was teaching universal redemption--that He died with the possibility in mind that all might be saved. How will you answer this?"

I will answer it by calling your attention to verse 10.

When we "see" Jesus, and when we really begin to understand the greatness and majesty of God, we do not "see" a God and His Son Who were merely attempting to save sinners. We see a God Who made a certain provision which guaranteed that they would be saved. If you want a description of the work of God in the world today, you have it here in verse 10. He is bringing many sons unto glory! He is not just hoping that some will come. He is bringing them! And they are coming--one by one! If you are a child of God, if you are one who has seen Jesus, it is because He gave you sight, and He has brought you.

So the "every man" of verse 9 is the "many sons" of verse 10. They are the chosen ones of God, the elect, if you please. The Father is bringing them all; not one will be missing.

And let me add this: If the Father did not bring us, none of us would come. The Lord Jesus Himself said several years before this epistle to the Hebrews was written:

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
(John 6:44).

Note how the Apostle speaks of God here: God is the One "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." Some people feel that God spends His time reacting to what man does. If you read your Bible you will see that man is not in charge of things; God is. It was not an afterthought with God that all things would be under His Son. Jesus was not a replacement for Adam, or some other man. It was always God's purpose for everything eventually to be under His Son. And God is not waiting to see who is going to be saved, and who will not be saved. He determined that before the foundation of the world. And from the beginning of time the Father has been bringing "many sons unto glory"! He is working all things out after the counsel of His own will (see Eph. 1:11), not man's will. Man's will is in bondage to sin. His will is not free. When man wills to accept Christ, it is because God has set him free.

What a work that is! Bringing many sons to glory involves the eventual glorification of every one of those sons and daughters. This is message of the epistle to the Hebrews. Jesus Christ is "the captain" of our salvation. This means that He is the originator, the first cause, the author, the originator, the chief, the One Who is in charge. He is our salvation--from start to finish!

Therefore, my third point is:

III. THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST AS THE SAVIOR (Heb. 2:10).

Let me call your attention to the first part of this verse, and the last: "For it became him...to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

"It became him" means at least two very important things:

- 1) It means that this is what you would expect of God. People who haven't seen Jesus, haven't seen God. And so their ideas of God can be very distorted. But as you learn about God, that God is love, that He is gracious, and that He is holy and righteous, this is exactly what you would expect Him to do--to provide for the salvation of sinners.

But it also means this:

- 2) It means that it was fitting that He require such suffering of His Son in order for His Son to be qualified to be our Savior. The Cross not only stands as a testimony to the love of God, but also of the

righteousness of God. There was no other way that we could be saved. The righteousness of God had to be satisfied, and it could only be fully satisfied by the death of God's own Son. How amazing the Gospel is!

The last three verses of my text go together and show us:

IV. THE NEW POSITION OF THOSE WHO ARE SAVED (Heb. 2:11-13).

The Lord Jesus is here portrayed as the One Who is sanctifying us (progressively). And we are the ones who are spoken of as being (present passive) progressively sanctified. He and we are all of One, i.e., of God. Therefore, this gives us, by the work of our Savior, a position with God that is equal to that of His Son, "Jesus," our Lord. In the words of Ephesians and Colossians, we are "in Christ." And we could not be nearer to God than that.

Let us examine the expressions that the apostle used of those of us who believe. These terms apply only to those who know the Lord, those who have really seen Jesus!

In verse 10 we are called "sons," i.e., sons of God. He is the Son of God, but we lay claim to the same title even though it is with a difference.

In verses 11 and 12 we are called the Lord's brethren, brothers. And He is not ashamed to call us His brothers.

In verse 13 we are called God's children. And this verse also shows us that, while these were David's words, yet they belonged to our Lord also. As "Jesus" He continually trusted the Father. And this will open the way for what we are going to learn about the high priestly work of our Lord.

Concl: A child of God is one who has seen Jesus. But the more we look at Him as we see Him in the Word, the more we see. And the more we see, the more we want to see, and the more amazed we are that such a Person could ever love sinners like we are as much as He does. And the better we know Him, the more we love Him.

But perhaps you are saying that you have never really seen the Lord until this morning, and now you want to be saved. But you do not know if you are one of the those ones. That does not need to concern you. The Lord has promised that those who trust Him will be saved. He will not cast away any who come to Him. So I encourage you to come to Christ. Put your trust in Him, and His promise is that He will save you. When you trust in Christ you are trusting Him to do for you what He died to do, to make you God's child and His brother.

WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME JESUS?

Part 2

Hebrews 2:14, 15

Intro: We are examining in the latter part of Hebrews 2 three answers to the question, WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME JESUS? I am using the name "Jesus" because the Apostle used it in verse 9. But the thought of the question has to do with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Why did He become a man? He did not come to earth in the full glory of His Deity. He did not come to earth as an angel. He came as a man! Why?

The first answer is given in verses 10 and 11, which we considered together last Sunday. (Read.)

The third answer is the one we will consider next Sunday, the Lord willing. It is found in Heb. 2:17, 18. (Read.)

The second answer is the one we will look at today: Heb. 2:14, 15. (Read.)

Each one of these points could be enlarged upon, and there are other reasons that are given elsewhere in Scripture, but these are the reasons that fit into the message of the book of Hebrews.

Notice, too, that these are not isolated reasons. There is a connection between them that we need to notice. Verse 13 speaks of the people of God as children of God, and that is the way verse 14 begins. Verse 16 tells us that the Lord did not take upon Himself the nature of angels, and verses 16b and 17 tell us why. Note the connecting word, "Wherefore," at the beginning of verse 17.

So we do not have three isolated reasons for the incarnation of Christ, but three closely connected reasons which need to be seen in their relationship with each other.

There is no event in history that is of greater importance to people of every nation in every generation from the beginning of time than the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there are very few people in the world who have any conception of the reasons for His coming.

But let us get to our text, verses 14 and 15. We need, first of all, to be concerned with what Paul had to say about:

I. THE CHILDREN (Heb. 2:14a): "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood."

Paul spoke of the people that the Lord came to redeem as "sons" in verse 10, as "brethren," or brothers, in verses 11 and 12, and as "children" in verse 13. This latter word is the word that he used in verse 14: "Forasmuch as the children..." It is the Greek word _____, and it emphasizes the relationship between a parent and a child. We are related to God as His children.

As human beings we are "partakers of flesh and blood." This describes our humanity. And it is an expression which speaks of our frailty as well as of our corruption. In order to save us, our Lord, the Son of God, "took part of the same"--except for our corruption. The Apostle Paul said in Rom. 8:3 that God sent "his own Son **in the likeness of sinful flesh,**" not in sinful flesh. The Lord Jesus became a man, but not a sinful man. In Gal. 4:4 Paul said that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." He came into this world as a perfect man, experiencing the effects of sin, without being or becoming a sinner.

We have evidence in this statement of our Lord's pre-existence. And we see the humiliation which He suffered in order to provide salvation for us. He had to become a man if He were to save human beings from their sins.

Now there were many things which a Savior would have to do in order to save us.

First, and most important of all, He had to make us acceptable to God. He had to satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God. This is what He did when He "tasted death" for us, as we learned in verse 9. He took the full penalty of our sins. What should have fallen upon us, fell upon Him. As Isa. 53:6 says, "The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Peter said it like this:

For Christ also hath once (for all) 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.

But there was a second thing that a Savior had to do. That was to defeat our enemy. And that is what the Apostle Paul was speaking about here:

...that through death he might destroy him
who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

II. THE DEVIL IS DEFEATED (Heb. 2:14b).

You and I could not do enough to satisfy God, nor could we do enough to defeat the Devil.

In Eph. 6:12, where Paul was describing our conflict with the Devil and his demonic forces, he wrote, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." That is, we are not in conflict with other people; we are engaged in a warfare with being who are greater than we are. And until we are glorified they will continue to be greater than we are. They are wiser. They are stronger. They have the advantage of being invisible. So we are no match for them.

As the Devil, he is our Accuser. And he is like the Pharisees who were continually trying to get something against the Lord so that they could bring an accusation against Him. The Devil puts temptations in our way. He is a master deceiver. He knows just the right time to attack us. Even before we are saved he does everything possible to keep us from coming to Christ.

Do you remember the words of the Apostle Paul when he was describing the work of the servant of the Lord in 2 Tim. 2? He wrote in verses 24 through 26,

And the servant of the Lord must not strive;
but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,
In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;
if God peradventure will give them repentance
to the acknowledging of the truth;
And that they may recover themselves
out of the snare of the devil,
who are taken captive by him at his will.

The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34b)—the bondservant. The sinner cannot free himself from his sin. Human psychology and psychiatry are helpless at this point. The law may put some restraints upon us, but the law cannot free the sinner from his sin. There is only One Who can do that, and that One is Christ. He said in that same passage I just quoted from, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," i.e., really free, truly freely.

The place where our Lord defeated the Devil was at the Cross. If the Lord had not died, we would be helplessly bound by our sin without any hope of deliverance.

The word "destroy" does not mean that the Devil is no longer a problem to us. Nor does it mean that he will eventually be annihilated. This word means both that he had been deprived of his strength, of his power, of his efficiency, and that ultimately the Devil will be put away forever.

Perhaps it will help if I include one statement from our Scripture reading this morning in 1 John. In chapter 3,

verse 8, the second part, we have these words:

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested,
that he might destroy the works of the devil.

The word that John used is a different word from the one in our text for today, but the meaning is essentially the same. John was teaching that the Lord has delivered us by rendering the Devil powerless, by demolishing and completely overcoming Him.

It was none other than our Lord Himself who said that hell, "everlasting fire," is "prepared for the devil and his angels." In Rev. 19 we read that after the millennium Satan will be loosed for a short time, only to go back to his old ways. Then we read this in verse 10:

And the devil that deceived them (the nations)
was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,
where the beast and the false prophet are,
and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

For now the Devil is permitted a certain amount of freedom. Sometimes he goes about as a roaring lion devouring everyone he can. See 1 Pet. 5:8. At other times he transforms himself into an angel of light. See 2 Cor. 11:14. You see him posing as a teacher of the truth. But he is the father of lies. See John 8:44. He does not know how to tell the truth. And he has a lot of instruments in the pulpits and in the schools of our country, some claiming to be Christian schools.

BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THE DEVIL IS A DEFEATED FOE! He was defeated at the Cross. We are no match for the Devil, but neither is the Devil with all of his demonic forces a match for our Lord. The One Who is in us is greater than the Devil who is in the world!

III. THE CHILDREN ARE DELIVERED (Heb. 2:15).

It is still possible for Christians to sin, but the good news is that they no longer have to sin! Our enemy is defeated, and by the Gospel of Christ we are set free.

This is one of the major reasons that our Lord became a man, why the Son of God became Jesus.

We who are the children of God are set free in two ways, set free by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ:

1) We are set free from the Devil's power. (We have been speaking of that.) Our bondage to the Devil and to sin has been broken forever!

But there is this other truth.

2) As the children of God we are set free from "the fear of

death."

Why did Paul describe the Devil in verse 14 as "him that had the power of death"?

Let us go back in our thinking for just a moment to the Garden of Eden. When the Lord told Adam that He was not to eat of the tree of life, He added, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

Adam ate of the forbidden fruit. Immediately he died spiritually. Physical death began to work in his body. And he fell under the sentence of eternal death, eternal separation from God.

Do you remember what his first words to the Lord God were after that when he sought to hide from God, and God had found him, and said, "Where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9)? Adam said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, **and I was afraid...**" (v. 10).

In the very next chapter we see fear connected with death again. Cain had killed Abel, and the Lord came to him asking, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9). Then the Lord God pronounced judgment upon Cain. What was Cain's response? He said,

My punishment is greater than I can bear...

and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me (Gen. 4:13, 14b).

THIS IS THE FEAR OF DEATH.

On a Thursday night back in January of 1866 Charles Spurgeon preached on this text at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His first point was this: THE FEAR OF DEATH IS NATURAL TO MAN AS A SINNER.

We all know this to be true. That is the reason that people do not like to think about death. They do not like to talk about death. We fear death. And yet at the same time men will do the very things that will bring about their death prematurely. But he will do those things thinking that it might bring about the death of others, but not his death.

Where fear is, there is bondage. So through the fear of death man spends his life in bondage. He knows that he is not as happy as he could be because out there, sometime, someplace, because of something, he is going to die. I have a brother who, as a child, was often unable to sleep because he was afraid that he was going to die.

Is there any answer for this fear of death? Yes, there is! The answer is to be found in Christ. We need to know that

Christ by His death has delivered those who are the children of God from the fear of death.

We who are the Lord's people do not relish the idea of dying, nor the way in which we are going to die. But the history of Israel and the history of the church are filled with illustrations of people, men, women, and children, who faced death unafraid.

The Apostle Paul, in concluding his first epistle to the Corinthian church quoted from Isa. 25:8 when he wrote, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

And then he wrote as one who was experiencing that victory, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And then he added, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:54, 55, 57.

Even David in the OT said in that familiar 23rd Psalm,
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 (Psa. 23:4).

Concl: Why do we as the children of God not fear death, or why should we not fear death? There are many reasons.

- 1) Because we know that our lives are in the Lord's hands, and that we will not die until it is His time for us to die.
- 2) Because we know that when the time comes for us to die, the Lord has promised that His grace will be given, and that it will be sufficient.
- 3) Because we know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.
- 4) Because we know that we are going to be raised and glorified when the Lord comes for His own.
- 5) Because we always have the hope that the Lord may come even before we die.

But it all comes down to the question: Am I one of God's children? How do we become the children of God? John 1:11-13 has the answer.

Paul said practically the same thing when he wrote to the Galatian churches, "For ye are all children (lit., sons) of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). Make sure that you are a child of God, and then you will learn what it means to be delivered from the Devil, sin, and the fear of death.

WHY DID THE SON OF GOD BECOME JESUS?

Part 3

Hebrews 2:17, 18

Intro: We come today to the third reason given in Hebrews 2 for the incarnation of the Son of God, the third reason why the Son of God became Jesus. And this brings us to the main doctrinal theme of the book of Hebrews: the High Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. All of the practical teachings of the book of Hebrews are based upon this one, great truth--that the Lord Jesus Christ is our great High Priest!

The high priest of the OT had two main responsibilities in his ministry for the people in their relationship with God:

- 1) He offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people.
- 2) His office was that of an intercessor.

By the time we have gotten to the end of chapter two in Hebrews we have had no less than three major references to the sacrifice of our great High Priest:

- 1) Heb. 1:3.
- 2) Heb. 2:9, 10.
- 3) Heb. 2:14, 15.

We now come to the fourth in the last two verses of the chapter. And this is what we want to consider today.

Notice, first of all,

I. THE NECESSITY FOR THE INCARNATION (Heb. 2:17a).

We read, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren."

Who are our Lord's brethren? He was not speaking here of His younger half-brothers which Mary gave birth to after our Lord was born. If we remember what we read earlier in this chapter we will know that our Lord's brethren are those "many sons" mentioned in verse 20 whom our Lord is "bringing...unto glory," those for whom by God's grace He tasted death on the Cross.

In verse 16 they are called "the seed of Abraham." This does not mean Abraham's natural descendants, but those who were heirs with him of the promised salvation, those who are of the faith of Abraham.

So it behoved our Lord to be made like his brethren because they were the seed of Abraham, and Abraham was a man! He was a human being. If the Lord had come to save angels, He would

have become an angel. But He did not come to save angels; He came to save sinful men. And so it behoved him to become like those He intended to save.

However, we must realize that there was one major difference between Abraham and Christ, and between Abraham's seed and Christ. It was this: Christ was "without sin," as we learned from our Scripture reading this morning. Cf. Heb. 4:15. Our Lord "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). He "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22). "And in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

Sin was not originally a part of human nature. God did not create man a sinner. So becoming a man did not necessitate that our Lord become a sinner. One writer has expressed it this way:

Let it be remembered that sin...is an accident of, and not a property essential to our nature... SIN is a foreign and alien element... So far, indeed, from sin being an necessary and original element of our humanity, we became less human when we became less holy... Sin, despoiling our lower nature, reduces us to a level with the brute creation... Are not all our faculties and powers paralyzed and prostrated by the Fall? Have we not lost those fine and noble instincts, those traits of beauty, sensibility, and power, which, though human, once looked divine? Is not our humanity materially changed and essentially deteriorated by sin? Most undoubtedly we are less human because we are more sinful. We think less profoundly--reason the less accurately--feel the less intensely--act the less vigorously--and achieve the less nobly, because we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin...

Christ...was the most perfect type of our humanity. Essentially and entirely free from sin, He was the purest and most exalted specimen of man (Winslow, Octavius, The Sympathy of Christ with Man, pp. 3, 4).

So let us remember when we read that "**in all things** it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren," those "all things" do not include sin. He became everything that was necessary for him to become in order to be a real human being--"without sin"!

What does "behooved" mean?

It means that it was a requirement of the work that He came to do that He become like his brethren. There was no way that He could accomplish His work without becoming a man. Our Lord was under that obligation.

Now let us look at:

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION (Heb. 2:17b).

We can see that there were two more purposes to be added to those we have already had in this chapter:

- 1) "That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest."
- 2) "To make reconciliation (better, propitiation) for the sins of the people."

Note that we have the direction of the high priest's ministry stated in the words, "in things pertaining to God." The high priest ministered God-ward! He was concerned with pleasing God, with satisfying God, with doing whatever was necessary to establish and maintain the fellowship of the people with God.

However, it was necessary also that the high priest have a heart for the people, that he be sympathetic toward them. Note what the Apostle Paul wrote in the first two verses of chapter 5. (Read.) This was true of all of the high priests of the OT: They were men, and so were sympathetic toward men. See also the verse we have referred to before: Heb. 4:15.

This idea is brought out also in the words, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." In this verse both of these words refer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is "merciful."

When you think of mercy, think of misery. Sin brings misery. Sin promises happiness, but actually makes us miserable. And we deserve the misery which we experience. But we have a compassionate, a sympathetic High Priest, whose heart is moved toward us in mercy. His mercies are new every morning. They are inexhaustible. The publican was miserable because of his sin, and he prayed, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner."

The mercy of our Savior is one of the greatest wonders of the world. He loves us with an everlasting love and often we experience His mercy even before we seek it. And we will never be disappointed!

He is also "faithful."

This means that we can trust Him. Often people will appear to be merciful, but we know that we cannot trust them. That is never true of our Lord. We can always trust Him. He will never fail us. He will never mislead us. He will never do less for us than God requires. Our confidence is never misplaced when we trust in the Lord.

And the mercy and faithfulness of our Savior are never more evident than in which He has done about our sins. It is true that He has reconciled us to God by His death on the Cross, but the better MSS give us the word propitiation rather than the word "reconciliation."

Notice that this speaks of the purpose that the Lord had in dying; it was to make propitiation "for the sins of the people." You see, the Lord is bringing many sons to glory, sons who were chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world. They are the Lord's brethren. They are the children of God. In this 17th verse they are called "the people," i.e., the people of God! It was to provide for their salvation that the Lord went to the Cross.

What is "propitiation"?

This is one of the grand words of the Gospel. It tells us that God, Who has been offended by our sin, and therefore cannot look upon us with favor, has been completely satisfied by the death of His Son. The Lord Jesus has done everything necessary to make God propitious toward us. The righteousness of God has been upheld by the death Christ died so that He can be just in declaring us justified in His sight.

When you think of propitiation, think of satisfaction. Because Christ died for us, God is merciful toward us. It is the work of the high priest to do that which will satisfy God. And our Lord has done that perfectly.

But one thing remains in our text: Verse 18.

Verse 17 really speaks of what the Incarnation and the Cross mean to God. Verse 18 speaks of:

III. THE MEANING OF THE INCARNATION AND THE CROSS TO US WHO BELIEVE (Heb. 2:18).

Our need does not stop when we are first saved. It continues as long as we are in this life, and probably for all eternity. We are not going to be tempted to sin in heaven, nor is our faith going to be tested in heaven, but I am sure that we will still need the Lord even in heaven.

But, oh, how we need Him here! We live in a world where daily we face trials of different kinds. Temptations to sin are ever before us. And how often we fail the Lord because we do not trust Him as we should.

If you are reading the book of Hebrews faithfully perhaps you have seen that when you get to chapter 10 there is a word

which suddenly begins to appear over and over again. It is the word, faith. What the Apostle Paul is doing in the early part of this epistle by telling us about the High Priestly work of our Lord is laying a foundation for our faith. It is in Heb. 13:6 that he wrote those wonderful words, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper..."

How do we know that the Lord is our helper? Because He is our High Priest. How do we know that He wants to help us? Because He has come in the flesh, and He has suffered far more than you and I will ever be called upon to suffer. It is because He is God that He can do all that we need; it is because He became a Man that we know that He will have compassion on us, and help us.

While we must believe that the Lord Jesus could not sin, yet we also need to recognize that the awfulness of sin would affect Him far more than it does us. Sin hit Him with a force that we will never feel. Even as He went to the Cross our sin was laid upon Him, He became sin for us. He truly was tested in all points like we are, "yet without sin."

When we face trials, when we face temptations, we fail more than we overcome. Not so with our Lord Jesus. He never failed. He never gave in. And so having suffered more than we will ever suffer, and having overcome, He is able to help us in all of our temptations.

What we are being told here is that our Lord is not only able to help us, but that we can count upon Him as being sympathetic with us in all of our trials.

Bishop Westcott wrote this helpful statement:

The power of sympathy lies not in the mere capacity for feeling, but in the lessons of experience. And again, sympathy with the sinner is his trial does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain (p. 59).

Concl: As I have said before, there will always be things connected with the humanity of our Lord which we will not be able to explain, nor to comprehend, fully. But that should not disturb us, nor hinder us. What we need to be concerned about are those things which we can understand, and we need to accept the rest because it is what we are taught in the Scriptures.

How our Lord could learn anything when He was God, is impossible for us to explain. And yet He did!. Hebrews 5:8

says,

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

Luke tells us in Luke 2:52

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,
and in favour with God and man.

I can understand how He would increase in stature, but not in wisdom. And I can understand how He would increase in favor with man, but not with God. How can you increase that which is perfect. And yet we must believe this because it is what we are taught in the Word of God. Believe it even if you cannot understand it!

And so I must agree with Charles Simeon when he said that it was in becoming a Man that our Lord learned how much we need His help. He experienced trials which caused Him to pray "with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (Heb. 5:7). And He knew what it meant to feel deserted by God because He cried out on the Cross, "My God, my God, why...?" He would know that if He needed God's help, how much more we would need it.

But He not only learned how much we need His help, but He acquired the right to help us, so says Charles Simeon. This is what Heb. 2:18 tells us. He has become our only Savior, our complete Savior! And by His incarnation and death He has purchased the right to do all that is necessary to carry us throughout life into heaven.

And then, finally, Mr. Simeon said that our Lord by His incarnation and death has the disposition to help us. And we can add, that by His divine power He has the ability to help us. "He is able."

For us, three questions need to be asked:

- 1) Do I realize how much I need the Lord as my High Priest?
- 2) Do I believe that, whatever my temptation may be, whatever my trial may be, that the Lord is really able to help me in it? Or do I think that my case is different, or that for some reason the Lord won't help me?
- 3) Am I actually trusting the Lord? Or, am I still trying to do for myself what only the Lord can do? If it took the incarnation, and the Cross, for the Lord to become my High Priest, am I not being foolish beyond description to think that I can get along by myself?

Always take the Word by faith, even believing what you cannot understand, and you will find that when you take God at His Word, you will really find the Lord to be "a merciful and faithful high priest" to you as a child of the living God.

CALLED TO CONSIDER
Hebrews 3:1-6

Intro: One reason that we do not profit more from what we read in the Bible, and from what we hear taught from the Bible, is that we do not spend time thinking about what we have read or what we have heard. Just because we have read something in Scripture, or heard something explained from Scripture, is no sign that we know it. It takes time for us to understand the truth. It calls for what the Bible calls meditation.

When Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy, one of the things that he said to him was this:

Meditate upon these things;
give thyself wholly to them;
that thy profiting may appear to all (1 Tim. 4:15).

His "profiting" would have been his progress, his advancement, his growth in the Lord. He was to give the truth his careful attention not only so he would understand it, but so it would have a practical effect upon his life.

This is the same idea that we have in Psalm 1, verse 2: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

It is very doubtful if we are going to profit from anything in the Word unless we spend time thinking about it. If we really love the Word of God, we are going to be meditating on it. The Psalmist wrote in Psa. 119:97, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." If we love the Word of God, we are going to be meditating on it, thinking about it. And the more we think about it, the more we will love it, the better we will understand it, and the greater will be our growth in the Lord.

Reading and re-reading any book of the Bible is a great help in meditation. I have been reading Hebrews each week like I have been asking you to do, and I never read it but what there are things that stand out to me in the book that I seem to have missed before.

Memorizing Scripture is also an aid to meditation. When you memorize a verse, try to express the truth of that verse in your own words. Ask some Christian you respect to listen to your explanation, and then let them tell you if they think that you have grasped the true meaning of what you have learned.

Remember that when it comes to Scripture, knowing the truth never stops with just being able to repeat a verse, nor with

understanding some doctrine of Scripture, nor the ability to repeat some Bible story. Knowing the truth includes all of that, but it also includes benefiting from Scripture in a practical way. When it comes to Scripture, we need to know it, and then do it! Meditation is absolutely essential to both.

Paul also told Timothy in 1 Tim.2:7,

Consider what I say,

and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

We need to remember that we are not just following a method, but we are doing as we are told to do in the Word, trusting that the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, will enable us to understand and to obey the Word of God.

Whenever you read the Word, or whenever you hear the Word taught, ask the Lord to give you a hearing ear. Then think about what you have heard.

I am saying all of this because it has a direct bearing upon our text for today. In fact, we had it also at the beginning of chapter 2. Look at the exhortation in verse 1, and then the explanation in verses 2 and 3.

In chapter 3, verse 1, we come to the word, "Consider." So let me spend a moment or two on:

I. THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION (Heb. 3:1).

This is a very interesting word. It means to consider carefully and thoroughly and continuously. But it seems also to contain the idea of esteeming what we are considering.

If we are wise as God counts wisdom, we are not going to spend our time considering something that is sinful, or worthless, or even of temporary importance. If you listen to TV you will be encouraged to consider many things that you probably should not consider at all. We certainly have to have some knowledge of things in this world in order to live here on this earth, but we are not to be absorbed with anything earthly. We are not to be guided in our lives by human wisdom. Human wisdom is foolishness with God. If you follow the ideas of men, you will get yourself into a lot of trouble. Read the book of Proverbs and you will see the difference between human wisdom and divine wisdom.

But the Apostle has struck on something here that is worth all of the attention that we have to give, the deepest thoughts, our meditation day after day.

Before we get into what it is, let me make another point.

Let us notice those to whom the Apostle is addressing his comments:

II. THE READERS (Heb. 3:1).

He was writing to a particular group of people. He called them, "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

The word "brethren" should make us think of what we have learned in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2. Those of us who are saved are not only brothers IN Christ, but we are brothers OF Christ! We are Christ's brothers; we are sons of God as He is the Son of God--although there is a difference!

Now if we are the Lord's brothers (and sisters), then we have to be "holy brethren." We are "holy" because we are set apart for the Lord, His special people, and also because we are set apart from the world and from the sin of the world. And as such, as His brothers, we have something to consider that the world knows nothing about.

But why are we "holy brethren"? Is it because we are better than other people? Did God see things in us that He liked, and so He brought us into His family, and is taking us to glory? No, no, no! The Bible says, "There is none righteous, **no, not one**" (Rom. 3:10). We are the "holy brethren" of Christ, and of each other, because we are "partakers of the heavenly calling." Do you see it there in verse 1?

"The heavenly calling" — That is how you and I got into the family of God. It came from heaven. It calls us to heaven. And its aim is to prepare us for heaven here and now. And that is another reason for calling us "holy brethren"! God has chosen us and called us by His grace with a "heavenly calling," and we are all going to get there eventually!

This is something for all of us to "consider." Think about these words, and what they mean, until you realize the divine obligation that it puts you under.

But now let me direct your attention to the very first word of chapter 3--the word, "Wherefore."

One commentator calls it,

III. "AN URGENT PARTICLE" (Heb. 3:1).

It is a conjunction, or a connecting word. It will not let us forget what we have learned in chapters 1 and 2 (especially chapter 2), and urges us to give that truth our immediate attention.

Now we come to the real meat of our text.

We have found out who we are. We have found out how we became what we are. We have found out what we are to do. Now we are to learn:

IV. THE ONE WE ARE TO CONSIDER (Heb. 3:1b-6a).

He is called, "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," or better, simply Jesus.

He is the One we are to think about—to think about carefully and thoroughly and constantly! We are to think about Who He is, why He came, what He did, and where He has gone. Every day we live, week after week, month after month, year after year, we are to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, **Jesus**."

He is "the Apostle...of our profession" because He was sent from the Father. He is our "High Priest" because He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins so that we could be made acceptable to God. He tasted death for us. He destroyed our Enemy, the Devil, and delivered us from fear. And He suffered as no one has ever suffered. Consequently He is able to help us in our testings and trials.

When we read our Bibles, it is "Jesus" we need to see. We need to think about Him. We need to pray that the Spirit of God will show us the things of Christ, which He delights to do. And when we hear teaching, it is Christ again that we need to hear about and to see in the Word for the growth and blessing of our souls, and so we will be able to live lives that will please our Lord and glorify Him before the eyes of man.

Now we have some helps in the rest of our text.

A. Jesus is like Moses (Heb. 3:2).

Why did Paul bring up Moses? Remember this is the epistle to the Hebrews. In Acts 15:21 we read what James said at the Council in Jerusalem. It was this:

For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Paul had no desire to belittle Moses, but there was a change that needed to take place in the thinking and in the affections of these Hebrew Christians. We will see why in just a moment. But first Paul mentioned one way in which Moses and Jesus were alike: THEY WERE BOTH FAITHFUL!

They both were "appointed" by God, and both carried out their appointments. They were dependable. They did what they were appointed to do. In fact, we probably would have to look hard to find anyone in the OT who could surpass Moses in his faithfulness to God.

And there is no question but that the Lord Jesus Christ surpassed all others in His faithfulness to God. He carried out every detail of the mission upon which He was sent by His Father in heaven. He did a finished work!

But, while we recognize both Moses and Jesus as being faithful to their calling, yet we also have to recognize that:

B. Jesus is greater than Moses (Heb. 3:3-6a).

Beginning with verse 2 and going through verse 6 we have the word "house" used 6 times. At the end of verse 2 in speaking of Moses, Paul said that he was "faithful in all his house." And in verse 6 Paul said, "Whose house are we," indicating that he was speaking of the family of God, the family in which we are brothers. The family of which Moses was a part. He was in the house.

But our Lord has more glory than Moses because He built the house. There would be no family of God if there had been no Jesus. Families are built by men, but the One Who built all things is God--a reference here to the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Both Moses and Jesus were appointed by God. Both were faithful to their appointment. Both had a part in the house of God, the family of God. But Moses was in it; our Lord was over it! Moses was a servant; our Lord was the Son.

Therefore, there is no question but that Jesus was the greater.

And therefore, He is the One Whom people in the family of God are to "consider," and not Moses.

The Apostle John said in John 1:17,
For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

And in John 5:46 the Apostle John reported that the Lord said,

For had ye believed Moses,
ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.
As great as Moses was, our Lord Jesus is infinitely greater.

Our text ends with a warning which continues on into the following verses.

V. A WARNING (Heb. 3:6b).

In verse 1 of this chapter we noted that our Lord is called "the Apostle and High Priest **of our profession**, Jesus." That word "**profession**" could also, and perhaps better, be translated, confession. A Christian is one who confesses that the Lord Jesus Christ is His Savior. He confesses that He believes in the Deity of Jesus Christ. He confesses that He believes all that the Scriptures teach about Christ, and about everything else that it teaches.

But there is always the possibility that a person PROFESSES, but does not POSSESS! Therefore, we have this warning.

A person is not really in the house of God, the family of God, if they do not "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

"Hold fast" -- The same word we used in 3:14. The person who holds fast does not let go of the hope. He does it with assurance ("confidence"), and with "rejoicing." He does it "firm," or firmly, meaning constant, and unshakable, "unto the end."

What is our hope?

Remember that we are "partakers of the heavenly calling." We share the same destiny with everyone else in the family of God. It is not only that we will be in heaven, but that we will be there conformed to the image of our Elder Brother, not Moses, but our Lord Jesus Christ.

A true believer may alter between weakness and strength, but he will not be in and out.

What makes us strong, and keeps us strong? It is when we consider Him, our blessed Lord.

Concl: I said to begin with today that considering our Lord always includes the idea of esteem, or worth. So that prompts me to ask, How much does the Lord Jesus Christ mean to you? If you are not a true believer, what I have been saying about our Lord will sound foolish to you. You will say, "Think about Jesus Christ? I have more important things to do than that!"

Maybe you wouldn't say that, but how much has the Lord been in your thoughts and in your heart this past week. Have you

thought about Him at all? The Psalmist said about the man of the world, "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4b). Does that describe you? Or do you love Him? Do you love to hear about Him, to learn of Him?

This is the mark of a true believer.

Can you say with the Apostle Paul, "But we see Jesus..."? Cf. Heb. 2:9a.

Believer, let me say to you that this is the greatest need that you and I have, to consider Jesus—to think about Him, to read about Him, to learn of Him, and then to trust Him and to seek by God's grace to be like Him. If you have gotten careless about this, then begin today to make the changes that need to be made. The Spirit of God will enable you to take time in your already busy life to do that which will lighten every burden and keep your heart rejoicing in the Lord and in the glorious prospect that awaits us in glory.

We are the people of God. We have been CALLED TO CONSIDER "THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION, JESUS." This is to be our life-long, glorious occupation until that day when we see Him face to face, and will be with Him and like Him forever. May we be like Moses, and like our Lord Himself, faithful to the calling which we have received from our heavenly Father.

A WARNING FROM THE PAST
Hebrews 3:7-19

Intro: At least twice in his NT letters the Apostle Paul said some very significant things about the use of the OT in these NT times in which we live.

The first is in Rom. 15:4. Listen carefully to what he said as I read it.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

There is much in the OT that the Lord meant to give hope to us living in these days.

The second is in 1 Cor. 10:11. There the apostle Paul was referring to the same thing that we have in our text today: the disobedience and unbelief of Israel during their desert wanderings. And this is what the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

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.

And then Paul added,

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

In the first passage Paul said we are to learn from the experiences of Israel in the OT; in the second he said that we are to be admonished by those experiences and the record in the Scriptures of them.

Paul was teaching the Roman church, and he wanted them to learn what he was teaching. To learn is to become informed about something that we would not have known without being taught. Hopefully this is why we are here today--to learn something from the Word of God. And what we learn, according to Rom. 15:12, is to bring us "hope" through patience and the encouragement that we get from the Scriptures.

Paul was also teaching the Corinthians church, but he wanted them to be admonished. This also speaks of teaching, of learning to do what is right, but it would include, in some situations, a word of warning, or of reproof, or blame.

So learning OT truth is to point out the way for us to live for us in our walk with the Lord today, to help us to avoid the mistakes that the Lord's people have made in the past, and possibly to include some warnings, perhaps strong warnings.

There are thirteen verses in our text for today, and six of them are quoted from the OT. Verses 7 through 11 are a quotation of Psa. 95:7-11. And verse 15 is a repetition of the first part of the main quotation. (Read both.)

These verses are here for us to learn some very important truth. Let us make sure that we are listening, and that we are learning. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher. And it is possible for us to interpret verse 7 to indicate that what the Holy Spirit said through the Psalmist when Psalm 95 was written, he was saying to the Hebrew people who first received this epistle, and He is saying the same thing to us today. The Holy Spirit used a human writer, but He was doing the speaking, He is the Teacher, and it is just as much for us as though it had been written in May of 1991! Do not say that it was for them hundreds of years ago, but not for us. It was for them, for us, and for every generation of the Lord's people who have lived from that time to our time. And it will continue to be a message for all future generations of the Lord's people to the end of time.

So let us look at the quotation, and seek the meaning of it for our own hearts today. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to learn what He wants you to learn from this quotation.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATION -- PSALM 95:7-11 (Heb. 3:7-11).

It clearly is a warning. We are reminded of the way the people of Israel treated the Lord during their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and we are told NOT TO DO WHAT THEY DID!

What did they do?

Verse 8 says that they hardened their hearts. Verse 10 says, "They do always ~~err~~ in their hearts, and they have not known my ways."

If we go back to verse 9 we are told that they "tempted" the Lord, and "proved" the Lord, and so they saw His works for forty years during which time that whole generation of older Israelites died.

You can read this sad story in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy in the OT. The people had spiritual heart trouble. Let me explain to you what that meant.

To harden your heart is to become stubborn, to be obstinate. It meant that they did not want to do what the Lord wanted them to do; they wanted the Lord to do what they wanted Him

to do. They were unyielding to the Lord! They knew that they were tempting the Lord, i.e., trying His patience, provoking Him to anger, but they were so insistent of having things their way that they threw caution to the wind--not once, but over and over and over again!

Consequently the Lord was "grieved" with them. He was displeased with them. His anger was aroused after they had rebelled against Him many times. They refused to learn the ways of the Lord. They insisted on having things their way. And finally, as we read in verse 11, the Lord declared His wrath with an oath, saying, "They shall not enter into my rest" (v. 11).

For that generation it meant that they would spend the rest of their lives in the desert, and would never enter the land of Canaan to experience the abundant blessings that the Lord had promised to give them IF they would simply do what He wanted them to do.

What a tragic end that was for those people who continued to sin in their hearts! There is only one way to describe disobedience; it is sin! We may try to excuse our disobedience, but God calls it sin—and so that is what it is! The word "erred" means that their hearts led them astray. Instead of listening to God, they listened to their deceptive, sinful hearts.

That is the OT lesson. Now let us look at:

II. THE APPLICATION OF THE OT ACCOUNT (Heb. 3:12-17).

You know, some people, even some of the Lord's people, have the idea that the God of the NT is somehow different from the God of the OT. But one thing that we learned about our Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 1 of Hebrews was that He is unchanging; He remains the same. Cf. Heb. 1:10-12. Let me tell you that sin still grieves God. And I will tell you that God still punishes sin. We have so eliminated God from our thinking that we don't realize what is going on. There are many evidences in our society today that God is judging our sinful ways.

However, we as believers must not be ignorant of the fact that God is, as verse 12 tells us, "the living God"! He not only sees what is going on outwardly in our lives, but He knows what is going on in our hearts. He not only hears every word that we say, but He knows every thought that we think. There is nothing that we can hide from God.

Therefore, we need to "take heed," we must see to it, we must

look at ourselves so as to see what God sees. And what are we to look for? Any evidence of "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (v. 12).

We learn here that any time, and in any thing, that we refuse to obey the Lord, it is because we do not trust Him. When we are disobedient we are saying we have more confidence in ourselves than we do in the Lord. And any such attitude can only come from "an evil heart." You still have such a heart, you know--or do you? This is why we are looking into Hebrews 3 today; we want to learn what these issues mean to God.

So verse 12 tells us that we need to keep a close check on ourselves.

Verse 13 teaches us that we need to help each other. What are we to do?

We are to "exhort one another." What does that mean? Literally it means to call to each other. It means that we are to encourage each other; we are to comfort each other. We are to help one another stay within the limits of the will of God, making it our desire to please the Lord instead of always trying to please ourselves instead.

And how often are we to do this? "DAILY"! Every day! Not just on Sunday, but Monday through Saturday also.

Let me say this to you today: If you are in a living situation where the only time you see another Christian is on Sunday, you are going to have a hard time with the sin that is in your heart. Many of us have our wives, or husbands, and our children who are believers. We probably do not know what a blessing this is. And young people, listen to me! Don't be looking forward to the time when you are 18 and can get out from under your parents because, if you take yourself out, you are playing with fire, and you will live to regret it the rest of your life. Every single one of us needs daily help in living a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Lucille is my encourager, my helper, and I hope that is what I am to her.

And don't get angry with another brother or sister in Christ if he or she should lovingly rebuke you because of things they may see in your life.

Cf. Heb. 10:24, 25.

We are to "exhort one another daily, while it is called To day." What is this day? It is today, isn't it? And what will tomorrow be when it gets here? It will be today, will

it not? And what about Tuesday when we get to Tuesday. It will be today. As long as the day we are in is called today, we need to be helping each other to walk in obedient fellowship with the Lord.

But this is not all. Let me continue with verse 14.

You and I should know by now that keeping ourselves in the will of God is a major assignment. And when we add to that helping each other to stay in the will of God, the assignment becomes impossible--except for one great truth which is expressed in verse 14. Here it is: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if...."

In verse 1 of chapter 3 we learned that we are "partakers of the heavenly calling." Here in verse 14 Paul said that we are "partakers of Christ"--the same word, "partakers." What, or who, is a partaker? Very simply he is one who takes part of that of which he is a partaker. You and I who know the Lord have take part, by the grace of God, in the heavenly calling. It is ours! So it is with Christ. We are partakers of Christ because now He and all that He is, is ours. We belong to Him, and He belongs to us.

Knowing this is basic to understanding how we can be, and do, what the Lord wants us to be, and do. We may be weak, but He is our strength. We can be deceived, but He is never deceived. We may be sinners by nature, but He is absolutely holy. So it is that as we, lit., have become partakers of Christ, so we find our greatest encouragement and guidance in Him. We have each other, but we also have the Lord--the Lord Jesus Christ, our Apostle and High Priest, the Son of God Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of the Father's Person. We have Christ! What a provision, a sufficient provision!

But there is an "IF" attached to this. It is like the "IF" in verse 6.

Not everybody who claims to be a Christian is a Christian. There are many who profess, but do not possess. And so they do not have Christ!

How can you tell a person who professes and possesses? He will "hold the beginning of" his, or her "confidence stedfast unto the end." (See also v. 6.) We do not hold fast in order to be saved, but we hold fast because we are saved, and as evidence that we really know the Lord. This is what we mean by the perseverance of the saints.

One who merely professes to be a Christian, but who does not

possess Christ, will, of course, live a life in unbelief.

But the Apostle here is concerned about the possibility that we who know the Lord can disobey the Lord, and so not enter into the rest that is ours in Christ. There were many who were saved who never got to the land of Canaan. Moses was one of them. And there are many of the Lord's people who never enter into their rest here on earth because they never learn to live a life of submission to the will of God. They will be in heaven, yet only by the skin of their teeth, or "yet so as by fire," as Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3:15.

Concl: Today we have learned about a hard heart, an erring heart, an evil heart of unbelief. We have learned about provoking the Lord, tempting the Lord, and proving Him. We have learned about grieving the Lord and rejecting His ways. But what does it all come down to? If we are going to keep watch on ourselves and help each other to walk with the Lord, what is it that we need?

Twice in this passage, both times as quotations from Psa. 95, we are told of the importance of hearing the Lord's voice. All of the Israelites did that! But the crucial part is, are we going to believe it, or not? Will we obey it, or reject it in preference for our own ways?

A whole generation of Israelites died in the desert, and never saw Canaan, because they did not believe God's Word. If they had, they would have obeyed it! Don't talk about believing that the Bible is the Word of God if you are not obeying what the Word says, starting with faith in Christ as your Savior, and then continuing to believe the Word every Today, and showing your faith by your obedient life.

The Holy Spirit told all of this to the Psalmist, and he wrote it for his generation. He told it again to Paul, and he wrote it for his generation. The Holy Spirit is still saying the same thing for us today. Let us pray that the Lord will give us listening ears and obedient hearts.

THE PROMISED REST
Hebrews 4:1-10

Intro: At the beginning of the book of Hebrews we are immediately introduced to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The words used in the first three verses of that chapter could not be improved upon in the way they describe the glory of Christ. (Read them.)

However, since this book was originally written for Hebrew believers, it was necessary for the Apostle Paul to show that the Lord was greater than any creatures to whom they as a nation had ascribed greatness.

This would include angels especially because of the part they had in giving the Law to Moses, but also because angels are beings of a higher order than men, and because angels had a great ministry in the OT. And so chapters 1 and 2 are devoted to showing that our Lord is greater than angels.

Secondly, it was important for the Apostle to show that our Lord is greater than Moses. This he did in the first six verses of chapter 3. The glory of God was shown on Moses' face when he came down from the mount after having received the Law, but the glory of our Lord is even greater. Our Lord is greater than Moses. Moses was a servant in the house of God (or the family of God); the Lord Jesus is "a son over his own house." So the Lord is greater than Moses.

But the mention of Moses brought to the Apostle's mind the tragic behavior of the Israelites during their journey from Egypt to Canaan. And so he said that we are members of the house of God "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." See v. 6b.

Just because a Jew was a Jew was no evidence that he belonged to the true house of God. The evidence that any Jew belonged to the house of God was to be shown by the steadfastness of his life. He did not "hold fast" in order to keep his salvation; he held fast because he was saved. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, as I have explained. A true child of God can waver in his faith, but he will never renounce his faith. A person who renounces his faith, never has had true faith.

The reference here in the latter part of chapter 3 to the desert wanderings of the children of Israel shows that their experiences were a picture of the Christian life today. The Lord brought His people out of Egypt (which is a type of the world) and was leading them to Canaan. Canaan was to be a land of rest for them, a place of blessing where they would

enjoy special fellowship with the Lord. Canaan was not a type of heaven. This is something that needs to be cleared up in our thinking. Many teachers, and certainly many of our hymns speak of Canaan as though it were a type of heaven. But I would remind you that the Israelites had to fight their way into Canaan. That is not true of heaven. And they could sin in Canaan (which they did repeatedly until they were finally driven from the land). We will not be able to sin in heaven.

Therefore, we must not think of Canaan as a type of heaven. Instead it is meant to represent what the Lord wants our lives here on earth to be like. It is not a life free from trials and temptations, but it is to be a life where we can experience "rest," continual "rest," even though we have continual troubles to face here on earth.

Although the prefix on the word our Lord used in Matthew 11:28, 29 is different from the word we have here, yet the root of the words is the same. So the idea is the same. I am referring to our Lord's words,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you **rest**.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;
for I am meek and lowly in heart:
and ye shall find **rest** unto your souls.

We cannot say that those who died before they reached Canaan were not saved. Miriam and Aaron and Moses are cases in point. They certainly were saved, but they never experienced the rest that God had promised to His people. The very fact that a whole generation died, and that even Moses did not enter in, is evidence that the Law cannot bring us rest. It is not through Moses that we enter into rest, but through the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Rest" is only mentioned in Hebrews from 3:11 to 4:11. But the basis of our rest in Christ, and the evidence of rest in the lives of the Lord's people, is to be seen throughout the epistle. Truly "rest" is one of the important words of Paul's letter to the Hebrews.

I said that the first mention is in Heb. 3:11. It is there stated that because of the repeated disobedience of the people of Israel, the Lord swore in His wrath that they would not be able to enter into rest. They never realized what the Lord had promised them.

It seems to me that the warnings issued by the Apostle were directed at two classes of people:

1) Those who professed, but did not possess, salvation.

- 2) Those who professed and possessed, but were not actually walking with the Lord.

There are some people who claim to be Christians, but are not walking with the Lord. They are to see that their claim is an empty claim, and that they need to be saved. And the only way they can be saved is by faith.

But there are also true believers who are not really walking with the Lord as they should. They need to see that their disobedience is due to unbelief. They need to trust the Lord and to realize that if they are really trusting the Lord, their faith will be shown by their obedience.

Verses 18 and 19 at the end of chapter 3 give us this teaching.

Now we are ready to go into chapter 4. The first thing that we come to is:

I. ANOTHER WARNING (Heb. 4:1-8).

Attention is drawn here to the promises of God, not to the commandments of God. We must begin with the promises. We either believe, or we do not believe, the promises. We respond to commandments by our obedience or disobedience. We are not saved by doing something; we are saved by believing something. And then our faith results in obedience, in the transformation of our lives. When we continue in true obedience to the Lord it is because we continue to trust the Lord. We are saved by faith, and we are to live day by day by faith. But when we are really trusting the Lord, we will show that by our obedience to the will of God.

So we need to take a long and careful look at the promises of God, beginning with the Gospel, and continuing on into our relationship with the Lord as His people.

"Fear" is used here in the sense of making absolutely sure that we are not missing what God has promised us in this wonderful salvation that we have. Note that Paul puts himself with them in the need to be sure!

In verse 2 Paul was not saying that no one in Israel was saved during the desert journey, but that many were not saved. And it may be that the word "gospel" is used here in the sense of being the good news of the promised rest. This is the only time that the word "gospel" is used in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Whatever the situation may be with regard to the word

"gospel," it is clear that the problem with the Israelites was that they were not trusting the Lord.

Verse 3 again emphasizes the need for faith—faith for our salvation, and faith in our daily walk. The emphasis upon rest goes back to the days of creation. Verse 4 is a quotation from Gen. 2:2. So the emphasis upon "rest" was long before the Law was given. The Gospel and its promise of rest pre-dated even man's sin. So it has always been God's purpose and His promise that man would have "rest."

And if the rest that the Lord had spoken of had been fulfilled in Canaan, then you would not have had Psalm 95 written, nor the book of Hebrews written, in which Psalm 95 was quoted, if the rest had not be something far greater and better than man was able to experience under the Law.

Note verse 6.

The additional warnings indicate that "some must," i.e., it remains for "some" to enter, a clear statement that there will most certainly be those who are yet to enter in to experience the rest that God has provided by His grace. And so the "Today" exhortation is repeated in verse 7.

It was not Moses who led the children of Israel into the promised land, but Joshua. Joshua is the OT equivalent of Jesus. Joshua was a type of Christ, as is indicated by his name, and also because he was the one who led the children of Israel into the promises land. But if what He did was the fulfillment of the promise, then "He" (v. 8b), which seems to refer to the Holy Spirit, would not have spoken of another day, implying a greater and more lasting fulfillment.

And so we come to:

II. THE PROMISED REST (Heb. 4:9, 10).

"There remains therefore a rest to the people of God."

As I have mentioned, we only find the word "rest" in the book of Hebrews from Heb. 3:11 to 4:11—eleven times in all. That makes it easy to remember. All of the words are essentially the same word except for the word that is used in verse 9. There it is σαββατισμός. You can tell from the sound of the word that it is related to the Sabbath, the rest which the Lord observed in Gen. 2:1-3. It is the only time that the word is used in the NT. Although some try to make this into a command that we must observe Sunday as the Sabbath, there is absolutely now evidence of such teaching. Nowhere in Scripture does it teach that the Sabbath of the OT has now

καταπαύεις
καταπαύω

become the Lord's Day of the NT--that the laws which applied to the seventh day of the week now apply to the first day of the week.

What Paul was teaching was that just as God finished His work of creation and rested on the seventh day from all of his works, so when we realize that the work done for our "rest" has been finished, we cease working for such a rest and accept it by faith. And it is not a faith that only has to do with our salvation initially, but it is a faith that continues to be exercised throughout our lives until our faith is turned to sight when we see the Lord.

Canaan was a place of rest for many in Israel, but it was only a type of a greater rest--then and now. Our rest is not geographical, but spiritual. Its greatest fulfillment is in heaven, but it can be a present reality now. It will never be perfect here, but it can be a growing reality in this life as we await the perfection of rest in heaven.

"Rest" = peace. That is what every person desires, peace of mind and peace of heart. It is not gained by human effort, although we are going to learn next week, the Lord willing, from verse 11 that there are responsibilities for us to meet. But true rest is to be found in ceasing from our works and resting in the work of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. True rest is not found in doing things our way, but in believing the promises of God and doing things the Lord's way. Rest is the result of faith, faith which leads to obeying the Word of God.

Concl: Although Paul has not yet gotten to the details of the work of Christ by which we have rest, that is coming, and coming very strongly, as we move on through the epistle. But let us heed the warning because that is the purpose of the verses we have been considering today. It has a twofold application:

- 1) For those who may not be truly saved.
Does this include you? Are you a professing Christian, but not a possessing Christian?
- 2) For those who are saved, but who are not living by faith.

Living by faith does not mean that we quit our work, and just depend upon the Lord to supply our needs. Living by faith means that we are trusting the Lord to take care of us, to lead us, to work things out for us, to guide us by His Word and by His Holy Spirit. It is beautifully expressed in the words of an old familiar hymn. Most of you will recognize it as I read it:

Simply trusting every day,

Trusting through a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Brightly doth his Spirit shine,
Into this poor heart of mine;
while he leads I cannot fall;
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Singing if my way is clear;
Praying if the path be drear;
If in danger, for him call;
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Trusting him while life shall last,
Trusting him till earth be past;
Till within the jasper wall:
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Trusting as the moments fly,
Trusting as the days go by;
Trusting him whate'er befall,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

When we worry we are not resting. When we are resting we are trusting. And when we are trusting then we are obeying, and that deepens and strengthens and increases our resting.

Cf. Phil. 4:6, 7.

ENTERING INTO REST
Hebrews 4:11-16

Intro: In chapter 3, verse 11, the Apostle Paul introduced the word, "rest." I told you last week that we find this word eleven times from 3:11 down to and including the first verse of our text for today. I want to make a slight correction to that. It is used twelve times; once it is translated, "ceased"—in verse 10 of chapter 4. (Read.) So make that correction in your notes.

All of these words are from the same basic root (meaning either a noun or a verb), except for one: the one in verse 9. It probably should be translated sabbath rest, meaning, as verse 10 explains, that entering into God's rest signifies ceasing from our own works, just like the Lord did when creation was finished. "Rest," as this passage shows, is not a matter of works, but of faith.

"Rest" is the product of salvation. We "rest" in the finished work of Christ. We do not work to obtain salvation. Neither do we work to keep our salvation. Works are important after we are saved, but we work because we are saved; we work because we love the Lord and want to glorify Him.

You may remember that last Sunday I likened this "rest" of Hebrews 4 to the peace that the Apostle Paul mentioned in Rom. 5:1:

Therefore being justified by faith
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
To know this is to be at rest. And this, in turn, is the assurance of our salvation.

So, "rest" is a present possession of those who are saved and know that they are saved. We will have perfect rest in heaven, but we enjoy it in varying degrees now.

The more I read the book of Hebrews the more I see that the Apostle was concerned that his readers would know that they were saved, not because of any time in the past when they felt that they first trusted Christ, but because of their perseverance in believing God and remaining steadfast "unto the end." See Heb. 3:6, 14.

We have a "hope" in Christ, don't we? Not something uncertain, but something absolutely sure. It is that we are going to be with Christ in heaven, and that we will be like Christ. This is our "hope." We believe it, and we are living our lives with that "hope" before us. To be unsure about it is not to be at rest. To be sure in their minds,

and to have the added assurance of godly living, is what the Apostle Paul wanted his readers to have. This is why we have warnings inserted throughout the epistle.

Some people are resting in a false security because even though they may have professed faith in Christ at some time in the past, their lives do not show that they are saved. There is nothing in the Bible that says if you can remember the time and place where you supposedly accepted the Lord, you can be sure that you are saved. Instead, we are admonished to look closely at our lives to see if inwardly and outwardly we can see evidence that we truly belong to the Lord. And the important thing is to look for the evidence that the Bible talks about. ONE OF THESE IS PERSEVERANCE. Christians aren't perfect, but they are changed people. As I have said, I suppose, hundreds of times, the Bible knows nothing about a salvation which leaves you like you were before! Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.

Rest comes by faith, faith in the promises of God. If you are lacking in rest, it probably means that you need to take a good look at the promises regarding salvation that you will find in your Bible. It is a wonderful thing to be saved, and to know it! But the tragedy is that there are many people who think that they are saved, but they are not! This was what bothered the Apostle Paul.

How can any person be saved? By believing in Christ, trusting in the Son of God Who died on the Cross, shedding His precious blood, that guilty sinners might be forgiven, cleansed, and made into new creatures.

Illus: For the third time in the past six months, and from ministers in three different denominations, I have heard them consoling their people during funeral services by saying that the people who died were all right because they had been baptized! One of them read those two great verses, John 11:25, 26, word of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore words of the highest authority:

I am the resurrection, and the life:
he that believeth in me, though he were dead,
yet shall he live.
And whosoever liveth and believeth in me,
shall never die.

And then the minister very emphatically read the question that our Lord asked Martha at the end of verse 26: **"Believest thou this?"** And yet soon after that he said that the person who died was an heir of heaven from the day of her baptism.

Now I hope that those for whom these services were held were

really saved. I hope that with all of my heart. But if they were, it was not because some minister sprinkled water on their heads, or lowered them into a baptistry. And to place one's hopes for heaven on baptism is to have a false hope. That is a false rest.

With the Jews the problem was usually circumcision. Do you remember what Paul told the Galatian churches about circumcision? Listen to his words which you will find in Gal. 5:2--and notice how emphatically and authoritatively he wrote it:

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you **nothing**.

He would say the same thing about baptism, or church membership, or good works, or anything else. Circumcision was commanded by God in OT times, **BUT NEVER FOR SALVATION!** Baptism has its place. Church membership has its place. Good works are certainly commendable. **BUT NOT IF YOU THINK THEY ARE GOING TO GET YOU TO HEAVEN!**

Only Christ can save us, and the salvation that He offers us as a gift cost Him His very life-blood. "What can wash away my sins," or yours? "Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

I hope I have conveyed to you the burden that was on the heart of the Apostle as he wrote this epistle. It was twofold: (1) professing Christians who were not really saved because they were trusting in something other than the work of Christ on the Cross; (2) immature Christians who needed to grow. (We will get to this later.)

Now let us look at our text. The first thing we have is:

I. AN EXHORTATION (Heb. 4:11).

This is Paul's last use of the word "rest" in this epistle.

The statement in the original is not as contradictory as it might at first appear to be in the KJV--laboring to enter into rest. There certainly are things for us to do, there is effort that we put forth, but it is all to be done in faith. This is a word which calls for us to be diligent. The dictionary lists perseverance as one of the meanings of diligence.

Therefore, this means that "rest" should be one of our greatest concerns as the people of God, not only "rest" for ourselves, but for our fellow-believers. We do not want to follow the example of the Israelites who failed to trust the Lord. Doubting the Lord always robs us of our "rest" in the Lord. We need to be strong in faith if we are to continue to

be at "rest." We are saved by faith, and so enter into rest. And we walk by faith that we may continue in our rest. And our purpose is that eventually we will all get to heaven. We need to be careful about any evidence of unbelief, any way in which we are tempted to doubt the faithfulness of the Lord.

I think all of us have known people who we thought were saved, people who may have been very active in the Lord's work—but then something happened which caused them to stop coming to church, and maybe they became involved in sins which you would never have thought they would have committed. That is the reason we have to keep persevering until we get to heaven. Paul was probably speaking here of our final "rest" in heaven. It is not that people can be saved, and then lose their salvation. It is that it is possible for us to be deceived about ourselves as well as other people. Cf. Jer. 17:9, 10:

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked: who can know it?
I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins,
even to give every man according to his ways,
and according to the fruit of his doings.

Now all of this raises a very important question. It is this: **WHAT HELP HAS THE LORD GIVEN ME SO THAT I WILL PERSEVERE TO THE END?** Or, to state it another way, **HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I HAVE GOD'S REST IN MY HEART SO THAT I WILL CONTINUE TO ENJOY IT UNTIL THAT DAY WHEN MY REST WILL BE PERFECT?**

Our text tells us that we have three glorious provisions. And they are given here at the end of chapter 4. Let us call them:

II. GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR A LIFE OF REST (Heb. 4:12-16).

Let me point them out, and then we will examine each one briefly. They are:

- 1) The Word of God (v. 12).
- 2) The Nature of God (v. 13).
- 3) Our Great High Priest (vv. 14-16).

A. The Word of God (v. 12).

There is only one book which can be described as we have it here in verse 12, and that book is the Bible. And there can be no "rest" for the soul without the Word of God. It is a living Word because it is the Word of a living God. It is "powerful," i.e., active, energized. There is not only power in this Word to transform sinners into saints, but there is power in this Word to make saints saintly.

It is like a sword, but sharper than any other sword that you have ever heard of. God by His Word can reach the hardest person, the worst sinner, and before the Word of God people learn things about themselves that they never knew before. And we need to remember that the Word of God is "the sword of the Spirit," accomplishing what the Lord intends for it to accomplish. Cf. Isa. 55:10, 11, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven...."

"Piercing even...." (to the end of the verse) has been interpreted in various ways. It seems to me that the Apostle was saying that the Word of God searches and exposes the immaterial part of man (his soul and his spirit) as well as his body ("joints and marrow"). And then to sum it all up he said that the Word is "a discerner," or critic, of the hearts thoughts and intents. We are either pleasing or displeasing God with our inner man, and we are either pleasing or displeasing God with our bodies. The Word lays claim to our whole being, and shows us what will lead us away from our rest, as well as what will keep us enjoying the rest of God. The Word of God shows us whether or not our purposes and our ways of achieving those purposes are pleasing to the Lord.

It is "a discerner" -- The Greek word means lit., a critic. The root of the word is from the verb, to judge. This is the only time that the word is used in the NT. It speaks of one who is fit or skilled in judging. Throughout time men have set themselves up as critics of the Word. The opposite is true. The Word is our Critic, our Judge. Actions are right or wrong to the degree that they are in agreement with the Word of God.

How important it is for us to ask the Lord to search us and to try us as David did in Psa. 139:23, 24. The Spirit does this through the Word. And it behooves us never to act contrary to the Word of God.

This verse is meant to be an encouragement to the obedient as it is a warning to the disobedient.

B. The nature of God (Heb. 4:13).

How easy it is for us to forget the Lord! This verse is also both a warning and an encouragement.

There is nothing that anybody in the world can ever hide from God. We may be able to hide from each other what is going on in our hearts, but nobody can hide anything from the Lord! It has been said that "secret sin on earth is an open scandal in heaven." Therefore, the wicked, the perverse, the disobedient, should fear before an all-knowing, omnipresent

God! The Lord not only sees what we do, and hears what we say, but he knows what we think!

But for the child of God struggling with some sin, or worried and failing under some trial, or fearful of some prospect, or exhausted under some task--the Lord knows all of that, too. As our Lord said, "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matt. 6:8b). That which is a warning to those who sin is a source of great blessing for the child of God who would live in the enjoyment of God's rest.

The third provision that God has made for us is:

C. Our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16).

Have you done what the Apostle told us to do in Heb. 3:1? If not, you should! You need to do it. It is important for your rest.

Did you notice that the Lord is not only faithful to His Father (Heb. 3:1), but also faithful to those of us who are His house (Heb. 3:5, 6)?

We need a high priest, and we have one! And He is One Who has lit. passed through the heavens! He is presented here in His resurrection glory. Although His glory is greater than the highest heavens, yet He is "touched" with the feeling of our weaknesses. Sometimes we fail because we sin; at other times, because we are weak. He knows exactly what we are going through because He experienced far more and far worse things while He was here on earth than we will ever experience.

And so, as a result, we not only have an Intercessor in our Great High Priest, but He has made it possible for us to come to God in prayer for ourselves, but only in His name (as He made it clear in the Upper Room Discourse).

Concl: And so do you see that in which we are to be diligent and persevering if we are to follow on in this life of rest? You will see that the Holy Spirit, the Father, and our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, combine their divine efforts to keep us at rest until we finally enter into rest. The Holy Spirit used the Word. Our living God keeps His eyes upon us and His ears open to us and His heart for us. The Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest takes our part and has opened the way for us to enter into the Holiest of All and into the presence of the God Who loves us and has mercy and grace for us in our time of need.

Heb. 4:11-16 (7)

So, as we labor, or are diligent, to keep going to the end, let us remember what we have in the glorious Triune God, and know that whatever our problem may be, the Lord is our Helper and Keeper and Perfecter. He is our only Hope of being able to reach heaven with all of the glory that will hold for us.

If you are one who is without the Lord, or if you profess to know the Lord but are not walking with Him, then heed the warnings and turn to the Lord for His rest. You will never find it in sin, but you will find it with the Lord.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
Hebrews 4:14-16

Intro: If you have been reading the book of Hebrews, you probably have been impressed with the special emphasis that Paul had in writing this epistle. His intention was to explain for us the truth concerning OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST—Who He is, what He has done, and the wonderful provisions that God has made for us in Him.

As we come to the last three verses of chapter four, we have already had three references to our Lord as our High Priest. Cf. 1:3; 2:17, 18; 3:1, 2.

There are many more references to follow before we get to the end of this epistle.

The reference that we are going to consider this morning comes at the end of what we might call a long digression. Actually digression is not a good word because to digress in writing or speaking means to stray or to turn aside from the main subject. The Holy Spirit never does that in Scripture. Everything in every book of the Bible is fully related to the message of the book. Perhaps it would be better to call it an application. As I have sought to emphasize each week, the Apostle was not only concerned with his subject of the priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he was concerned that those who professed to know the Lord actually had trusted Him as their Savior, that it was not an empty profession. Furthermore, he wanted to make sure that those who knew the Lord were profiting as they should from their relationship with Him. And so, in chapters 3 and 4 he had been speaking of one of the practical evidences that we need to look for in our lives. That practical evidence is "rest" --rest of heart, inner rest, rest which is actually a fore-taste of the perfect rest which we will all experience some day when we are with the Lord in heaven.

The Apostle warned them from the experience of the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Canaan. They did not trust the Lord. They did not obey the Lord. And so a whole generation died in the desert without ever reaching the land of promise. That historical narrative has a lesson for every generation of people who profess to know the Lord in salvation. Present rest is to be the expectation of all of us as the Lord's people, leading to our final and perfect and eternal rest in heaven.

We saw last week that the Lord has made three provisions for our present rest. And when the Apostle concluded this, he resumed the main discourse of his epistle.

But what are the three provisions that have been made for our present rest in the Lord? I spoke about the first two last week; today I want to spend our time on the third. The three are:

1) The Word of God (v. 12).

2) The nature of God (v. 13).

And to make these headings uniform, let me call the third:

3) The Son of God (vv. 14-16). This is actually what our Lord is called in verse 14. However, it is not just with our Lord as the Son of God that we are concerned here, but with Him as our "great high priest."

(Explain the first two again.)

In these truths and their appropriation by faith we can be assured of entering now into that rest of heart which is a part of our salvation. It is possible for a person to be saved, but not be at rest. However, there is no possibility of having rest if we are not saved.

As we come to our text for today, we are brought back to the statement the Apostle Paul made in 3:1, 2.

The first part of verse 14 could simply be translated, Having therefore a great high priest...." This is where we must start in our thinking—not that we need a great high priest, nor that some day we will have a great high priest, but that we have a great high priest! The Greek indicates that we have, and we will continue to have. We are not going to lose Him. He is not going to be replaced by someone else. **He is our great High Priest!**

This is the doctrine of Scripture. This is the teaching of the Word of God. There are some professing Christians who do not want to hear doctrine. How are you ever going to benefit practically from having the Lord Jesus Christ as your great High Priest if you do not know that He is your great High Priest? Let us not be led astray by those who reject doctrine. The foundation of all practical teaching is doctrinal instruction. If you do not believe that, I hope that you will see today how true that is.

Paul has given us this teaching. It is for you and me to believe this, and it takes much meditation to get such a truth into our hearts. The saints of the OT had their Levitical priests, after the order of Aaron. It was wonderful that they had their high priest. But we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our great High Priest! He attends to all of our needs before God. He looks after each of us personally. He has given us perfect acceptance with God. He ever lives to intercede for us. If you are saved, Jesus, the

Son of God, is your great High Priest. He is right now, and He always will be. You will never have another; you will never need another. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to comprehend this great truth. Meditate on it until it really grips your heart. How could any truth be more wonderful than this? This is the third great truth that is designed by God to bring us into rest, and to keep us resting.

Now I want to spend the rest of the time this morning answering the question from these three verses, Why is Jesus, the Son of God, a great High Priest? What makes Him great? That is, what makes our Lord so important, so influential and effective, so powerful, so outstanding. Why is it better to have Jesus, the Son of God, as our High Priest than to have anyone else?

I see five answers to those questions in our text: verses 14 through 16!

Here are the answers:

- 1) He is great because of **WHERE HE IS**: "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens."
- 2) He is great because of **WHO HE IS**: "Jesus, the Son of God."
- 3) He is great because of **WHAT HE CAN DO**: He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He "was tempted like as we are."
- 4) He is great because of **WHAT HE CANNOT DO**: "Tempted like as we are, yet without sin."
- 5) He is great because of **THE PROVISION HE HAS MADE FOR US**: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace...."

Let us look at each of these points briefly.

- I. OUR HIGH PRIEST IS GREAT BECAUSE OF WHERE HE IS (Heb. 3:14a).

This fourteenth verse could read, and should read, Having then a great high priest who has passed through the heavens... What does this mean?

The Bible speaks of only three heavens. The first is what we see when we look up from the earth--where the sun, moon, and stars are. The third is where God dwells. We are never told what the second heaven is, but we are probably safe in assuming that the second heaven is where the angels dwell.

To say that our Lord has passed through the heavens means, as we are told several times in Hebrews, that our Lord has ascended back into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He died, was raised in His glorified body,

ascended back to the Father—through the first heaven, through the second heaven, and into the third heaven—and that is where He is today: at the Father's right hand!

We learned this at the very beginning of this Epistle.

See the question the Apostle raised in Heb. 1:13. No angel has that place. Moses does not have that place. Neither James nor John has that place. Mohammed does not have that place. That place of acceptance, of authority and power, of influence with the Father, belongs solely and eternally to our risen and glorified Lord.

It should not cause us to wonder that Paul called our Lord "a great high priest." His death was accepted as fully sufficient for every sinner who will ever be saved. He had to be "great" to accomplish that for us.

II. OUR HIGH PRIEST IS GREAT BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS (Heb. 4:14b).

Who is He? Paul called Him, "Jesus, the Son of God." This name and title which belong only to Him speaks of His humanity and His Deity. He is the God-man. Is there anyone else like He is? Absolutely not! Our Lord is eternally the Son of God. He became a Man without ceasing to be God. And after His resurrection He continued to be the God-man. And that is what He is today at the Father's right hand: "Jesus, the Son of God," the God-man.

This is doctrine again. And how important it is to believe this about our Lord. If He were only a man, He could not be our Savior; He would have needed a Savior Himself. If He were not man, He could not have died for you and me.

There is no person in all of the universe, in heaven or in earth, who has this distinction. And since the name "Jesus" was given to Him because He would save His people from their sins, He has to be the greatest of all people who have ever lived because He is the Savior of sinners.

We are going to learn more about His saving work as we get on into this epistle, but let me say with reference to His greatness that he is great because of Who He is: Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior! There is no person like our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. OUR HIGH PRIEST IS GREAT BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CAN DO (Heb. 4:15a).

This statement is stated negatively, actually a double

negative, to make it even stronger. And it seems that the Apostle Paul was anticipating some kind of an objection like this: Surely a Person as great as the One you have described would never be concerned about meeting our needs, nor would He able to understand what our needs are.

The Apostle Paul said that our Lord can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "Touched" is the Greek verb from which we get our word sympathy, or to sympathize. It literally means to suffer with. Our Lord, because He became a man, is able, not just to pity us, but to enter fully into all that His people go through because of what He Himself has suffered (Vine).

We had this truth in Heb. 2:17, 18.

We may not be able to understand this fully, but we can profit from it if we will just believe it. It is our "infirmities" that get us into trouble. Our weaknesses often open the door to sin. The Lord was tested in every way that we are, and so He does sympathize with us, He does have compassion for us. And He, and He alone, can help us in our times of testing and trial.

This is a third reason for the greatness of our High Priest.

IV. OUR HIGH PRIEST IS GREAT BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CANNOT DO (Heb. 4:15b).

Here I would call your attention to those words at the end of verse 15: "Yet without sin."

The object of our Lord's testings and temptations was not to see if He would sin, but to prove that He could not sin! God cannot sin, nor could our Lord, the Son of God, commit sin. His humanity did not change that. Sin was not a part of man's nature when God created him. All men from Adam on down have been sinners, but that was not the case originally with Adam and Eve. So the Lord could be a real man, and yet be incapable of sin.

Every high priest from Aaron on down could and did sin. But such was not the case with our Lord. There was no sin in him. So said the Apostle John in 1 John 3:5. He was never guilty of sin. The Apostle Peter said this in 1 Pet. 2:22. And the Apostle Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:21 that He knew no sin. In theology this is called the impeccability of Christ. Our Lord is incapable of sin.

How wonderful it is to know this! Other high priest have failed, but our Lord as our great High Priest can never fail.

Finally,

V. OUR HIGH PRIEST IS GREAT BECAUSE OF THE PROVISION THAT HE HAS MADE FOR US (Heb. 4:16).

Prayer meant something more than it had ever meant before as a result of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 16:24 we have some special words which our Lord spoke to His disciples as they made their way to Gethsemane. Listen to them. I am sure you will remember them.

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name:

ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

The people of God have always been able to pray, but there was a difference after our Lord came. We come now to the throne of grace in His Name. It is there that we, lit., receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Bishop Westcott says that we need mercy because of past failures; we need grace for present and future needs. And the Lord gives it all as we need it. His help is timely and always sufficient.

When you think of how many people the Lord has, and how many needs each one of us has, the Lord has to be great in order to meet each need of every child of God, and to meet them so adequately that we never need to turn to anyone else for help.

Concl: I hope we all have a better understanding of the greatness of our High Priest as a result of what we have seen in the Word today. Go back over these verses. Meditate on them. Pray over them. Ask the Lord to show you what they really mean.

As you meditate on them you will notice that there are two practical things for you to do. The teaching comes first, then the application. What words of exhortation did Paul give in these verses?

One comes at the end of verse 14; the other, at the beginning of verse 16.

To "hold fast our profession," or our confession, is to get a firm grip on that which we profess to believe—with special reference to these verses. We make some great claims as Christians; make sure that they are real in your life.

In verse 16 we are exhorted not only to come, but to keep coming; not only pray, but keep praying. And we will find that knowing and believing and acting upon verses 12 through 16 will bring us into that rest of heart which we all need.

TWO HIGH PRIESTS
Hebrews 5:1-10

Intro: The last three verses of Hebrews 4 are among the best known, and most loved verses in all of the book of Hebrews. Who has not depended upon that sixteenth verse more than once? (Repeat.) That gives us encouragement that help is available when the guilt of sin is upon us, or when we are facing some special time of testing in our lives. We have in Jesus, the Son of God, not only a High Priest, but a Great High Priest. And although He is the Son of God, yet because of His incarnation He is able to suffer with us in all of our testings because He was tested just like we are, but He never sinned! And so we can come to the throne of grace fully expecting to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

As I mentioned last week, it is clear from the very beginning of this book that the Apostle Paul was concerned about our Lord's priesthood. But before he concentrated on that it was important for his Jewish readers that they be reminded that this Jesus was, and continues to be, greater than angels. And He was, and continues to be greater than Moses. But now we are about to learn through chapter 5 (the first ten verses), chapters 7, 8, 9, and half of chapter 10, that our Lord was, and continues to be, greater than Aaron. The Jewish people were enamored with all three of these: angels, Moses, and Aaron. And so to show that the Lord was greater than any of them, or all of them combined, would certainly expose them at least to the incomparable greatness of the Lord Jesus.

And let me remind you that when we are talking about angels, we are not speaking of insignificant, unimportant creatures. They surpass all men in wisdom, in power, and in glory—at least man's present glory. The glory of Christ is so much greater than angels that it is impossible to compare them. And, of course, the same is true of Moses and Aaron. All are creatures; our Lord is the Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth, the eternal Son of God.

But as we come to chapter 5 we again have an unfortunate chapter division. The first word of verse 1 is "For," indicating that what follows is an explanation of what the Apostle has just said. Especially in the first four verses of chapter 5 he intended to show the qualifications for a high priest, as well as some of his responsibilities. And, as verse 4 shows, he had in mind the OT high priesthood of Aaron. Then in verse 5 he turned his attention to "Christ." And be sure to notice the change from "Jesus the Son of God" in 4:14 to "Christ" in 5:5. "Christ" means the same as

Messiah, the Anointed One, and so relates our Lord's Messianic mission to His position and work as our Great High Priest.

Therefore, in the first ten verses of chapter five we have TWO HIGH PRIESTS: Aaron and Christ. There are many points of similarity between them, but there are also some very important differences. And this is what we are going to be learning as we proceed on through the remainder of the epistle. Both Aaron and Christ were "called of God." See that about Aaron in verse 4; about Christ, in verse 10. We will look more into that statement when we come to it in those verses.

We could say that in verses 1 through 4 we learn what the high priest's qualifications were, and then in verses 5 through 10 we will see if Christ qualifies.

This morning I plan to deal with verses 1 through 4. And two weeks from today, the Lord willing, I will ask you to consider the last six verses of this section, verses 6 through 10.

In considering these verses, please note with me that verse 1 gives us:

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK OF THE HIGH PRIEST (Heb. 5:1).

Note four prepositional phrases:

- 1) "From among men."
- 2) "For men."
- 3) "To God."
- 4) "For sins."

A. "From among men."

If you and I can understand these four little statements, we will understand what a high priest is, and what he does.

The high priest was a man. He was taken "from among men," and that is just another way of saying that he had to be a man. He was not an angel. He was a man. No animal could be a high priest. Animals were offered as sacrifices by the high priest, but the high priest was a man.

But this expression "from among men" probably means something else as well. It means that he was taken out "from among" other "men" and made uniquely different from others. There were not many high priests; there was only one at a time. No one in all of Israel had the honor, the position, the

privileges, the authority, that the high priest had. No one could take his place. No one could do the work that he had to do.

B. "For men."

This expression means not only that he had to do with men (and women and children), but his work was to benefit them. It was to be for the advantage of people. He was to do things for people that no one else could do, no one else had the authority to do, no one else had the power to do. He was not against people, but for them! They were to be better off because of what he had to do.

C. "To God."

The whole expression is, "in things pertaining to God." The priest was to be a man whose job was to benefit people in their relationship to God.

He did not have the task of making them healthy, or wealthy. He was not a high priest to fulfill their ambitions in life, nor to make them prominent, or popular, or famous. Sometimes these things were special blessings into addition to what the high priest's main work was, but the high priest was primarily concerned with God and what God required from man. The high priest served man, but more than that he served God. He always had to be concerned about the will of God, the glory of God, the blessing of God. It was not for man to tell him what to do; God was his Lord, his Sovereign.

And the last expression:

D. "For sins."

With this the picture of the high priestly ministry is complete. The high priest was concerned about "sins" in his work. It was the forgiveness of sins which he sought. It was cleansing from sin that was the purpose of his ministry. He was concerned with what it took for a holy God to forgive sinful human beings. The high priest knew better than anyone else that sin is the great human problem. It is sin which has alienated man from God. It is sin which has put man under divine judgment. And it is sin which could separate man from God eternally if the right solution were not found.

What did he do about sins so as to benefit man and to satisfy God?

He offered "both gifts and sacrifices for sins." The "for" here is the same word that we had earlier in the expression,

"for men." And it means on account of "sins." If there had not been any sin, the high priest would not have had anything to do. He offered "gifts and sacrifices" on account of the fact that people were sinners.

Why "gifts and sacrifices"?

It seems that the "gifts" were those offerings which the people offered to the Lord of their own accord; the "sacrifices" were those offerings which the Lord required from them. But whatever they were, they had to be offered by the high priest. The object of it all was the removal of sins and the restoration of fellowship with the Lord.

And so we see from all of these statements in verse 1 that which qualified the priest to serve, and that which he had to do for the people.

Now let us go on to:

II. THE COMPASSION OF THE PRIEST (Heb. 5:2).

The high priest had a most difficult task, dealing with the sins of the people all of the time, often deliberate, rebellious, and persistent. And so he had to be a man of "compassion."

This means that he would not be harsh and hard with people in dealing with their sins. He would be disturbed and grieved, and yet at the same time would deal gently with them. His purpose was to restore, not to drive away. The high priest must be a man to whom people would come.

This compassion could be illustrated by James' statement that the Lord gives wisdom to those who seek it from Him, "and upbraideth not," i.e., He does not rebuke us because we have not come sooner. The mercy of the Lord is most amazing, and the high priest was to demonstrate this.

Some sins are due to ignorance, if not of the sin, surely of the steps which ultimately lead to the sin. To be "out of the way" is a description of sin, and often is itself the result of ignorance. This comes close to a definition of sin: missing the mark!

The need for compassion helps us to see why the high priest was to be human: because "he himself also is compassed with infirmity." He also had his own moral infirmities to deal with. Therefore his weaknesses made him compassionate for the infirmities of others. Often ignorance is not the sinner's problem, but infirmity, weakness. And the high

priest had his infirmities clinging to him. He could not get rid of them. And so his own needs made him compassionate of others when they fell into sin.

But let us go on to verse 3:

III. THE SINS OF THE PRIEST (Heb. 5:3).

When we look at the Levitical order of priests, the family of Aaron, we not only see weaknesses, but sins! And, therefore, "he ought," i.e., he was under obligation imposed upon him by his position, and by the very nature of God, not only to offer gifts and sacrifices not only for the people, but for himself. The very nature which made him sympathetic also at times caused him to sin.

IV. THE CALL OF THE PRIEST (Heb. 5:4).

The very office of the high priest was evidence of the grace of God toward sinners. It did not originate with the Jews; it was an office created by the Lord Himself. Aaron was the first high priest because he was called of God.

In verse 1 there are two words which support this idea of a divine call. The expression are:

- 1) "Taken."
- 2) "Ordained."

Man did not seek God. Man did not ask for a high priest. It was God who established the priesthood for the salvation of sinners. Man did not ask to be saved; the Lord planned to save him.

God took Aaron. He laid hold of Aaron. Aaron did not volunteer; nor did anyone else. God chose Aaron. And he "ordained" him, i.e., appointed Aaron.

When we consider the purpose of the high priest's ministry we have in those three words, "taken...ordained...called" (vv. 1, 4), we can see that God is sovereign in the whole work of salvation.

It was an "honour" to be called of God for this office. There is no work that is more important than that of the high priest. He was the one who had the most to do with man's relationship to God, and there is nothing more important than that. The high priest not only had no right to put himself into this office, but he had no right to say how the office should be conducted. It was all planned and worked out by the Lord. The office of the high priest is a testimony with its roots in the OT that God chose not to leave man in his

sin, but to provide a means of escape from the judgment which otherwise would have been inescapable and eternal.

Concl: This description of the work and the qualifications necessary for a person to serve as a high priest, make a point very clear that will be emphasized more and more as we go through this epistle. It is that the OT high priesthood, as wonderful as it was, was not sufficient for what man really needed. It required a greater, more perfect high priest than Aaron or any of his sons. And that One has now come, and we know Him to be the Lord Jesus Christ. And so as we move from verse 4 to verse 5 which we will do the when we come back to this passage, we are moving from Aaron to Christ. We are moving from a high priest who was a sinner to a High Priest Who was without sin. We move from a high priest who had to offer sacrifices for his own sins to a High Priest who is totally without sin. We move from a high priest who offered countless sacrifices which never did actually solve the sin problem to a greater High Priest Who offered Himself as the Sacrifice, and Who by the one sacrifice has provided an eternal solution for the need that we all have because of our sin.

Do you see what your need is from this passage? And do you see that the Lord has made provision for sin? The OT sacrifices were pictures of the greater sacrifice of the Son of God by which countless numbers of people would be forever cleansed, forgiven, and made new creatures in Christ through the merit of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Make sure that He is your Savior. There is none other.

For those of us who are saved, how thankful we should be for the grace of God. God provided salvation without our asking, and we should praise Him every day for the meaning of what He has done in providing such a Great High Priest for us to deliver us from sin's penalty, sin's power, and some day, sin's presence.

THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION
Hebrews 5:5-10

Intro: The book of Hebrews is a book about the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen this in each of the first four chapters of this epistle. But then as we come to chapter 5 we can see that it was here that the Apostle Paul really got into his subject.

Although he was writing to Hebrew Christians who were acquainted with what priests were, yet the priesthood of Paul's day was different from the OT priesthood. The priesthood had been corrupted in many ways like everything else in Judaism, and so he was directed by the Holy Spirit to teach them what a priest is, and what he does.

That information is especially helpful for Gentile readers. Many religions have their priests, but the priesthood of Israel is unique. In fact, there are only two high priesthods which have a right to claim that title. They are the high priesthood of Israel, of which Aaron was the first, and the high priesthood of Christ.

We learn from Hebrews 5:1 what a priest is and what he does. I pointed this out to you when we considered that verse. Look at that verse again with me. A high priest is:

- 1) "From among men," that is, he is a man.
- 2) "For men." He is to benefit people.
- 3) "To God." This is the direction of his ministry.
- 4) "For sins." He is concerned with the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sins.

As I said before, if you and I can get those four ideas clearly in our minds, we will know what the Word of God means when it speaks of the high priest and his work.

We also learned from those first four verses of chapter 5 that one essential characteristic of a high priest is that he is to be a man of compassion.

Also, Paul told us that no man had the right to make himself a high priest. This was a position to which a man had to be called by God. Aaron was not elected by the people. He was not a volunteer for the job. It was not even Moses' place to appoint Aaron. Aaron was the high priest because he was "called of God"! See verse 4.

As we come to verse 5 Paul was still writing about the high priest, but a different High Priest. Here he was writing about Christ! My text for today is Hebrews 5:5-10—six verses which I would like to consider with you under three headings of two verses each. They are:

- 1) THE APPOINTMENT OF CHRIST (Vv. 5, 6).
- 2) THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST (Vv. 7, 8).
- 3) THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST (Vv. 9, 10).

I will explain each of these headings as we come to them. It is important that we understand this passage so that we can understand the high priesthood of Christ.

I. THE APPOINTMENT OF CHRIST (Heb. 5:5, 6).

Verse 4 tells us that no man has the right to take this honor for himself. This applies to our Lord just as it did to Aaron. God is the One Who reserves the right to determine who shall approach Him on behalf of sinners. And so it is very important for Paul to show that our Lord did not assume this position "on his own," but that He was appointed by God to be a high priest.

Paul did this by citing two passages of Scripture. The first quotation is of Psa. 2:7 (which we have in verse 5); the second is Psa. 110:4 (which we have in verse 6).

Psa. 2:7 was quoted by Paul in Heb. 1:5. It has caused many commentators to say that there was a time when Jesus Christ became the Son of God, and that He was not always God's Son. But the best way to interpret Scripture is by Scripture, and so let me ask you to turn to Acts 13:32-35 where we have the record of what Paul himself told the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia that this verse means. (Read.)

It really means two things:

- 1) That when God raised Christ from the dead He was confirming that Christ was His Son. This is what Rom. 1:4 says, that Christ was **"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."**

The Lord did not become the Son of God when He was raised from the dead, but God was demonstrating that Christ was His Son! And a part of this was also indicated by Paul in Acts 13:34, 35.

- 2) The resurrection of Christ was unique in the sense that He was raised never to die again. Others were raised from the dead before Christ was raised, but they all died again. Our Lord's resurrection was different. When He was raised, death no longer had any dominion over Him, as Paul said in Rom. 6:9.

But to go on with what our text says in verse 6.

Paul said that it was to this One Who had been raised from the dead that God also said, "Thou art a priest for ever

after the order of Melchisedec."

We are going to learn that one thing that is unique about the high priesthood of Christ is that He has no successor. He holds that position as this verse says, "For ever." And He could not do that if He did not live forever! That is why Paul quoted these two OT passages together.

Therefore, in Psa. 110:4 we have our Lord's appointment, His commission by God, to be an high priest. He did not take the honor for Himself; the Father gave it to Him. So He fills that office as a commission from God, the Father.

Now for our second point:

II. THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST (Heb. 5:7, 8).

You will find the word "perfect" verse 9, but it is used with reference to what is stated about our Lord in verses 7 and 8.

Let me help you to understand this word "perfect," and what I mean, and I hope, what the Apostle Paul meant, when He spoke of THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST.

Please dismiss from your mind any idea that the Lord came to a time in His life when He changed from being imperfect to being perfect. That is not what this verse means. If we use the word "perfect" with the idea of being sinlessly perfect, our Lord has always been sinlessly perfect, and always will be sinlessly perfect. But that is not what we are speaking about here.

Paul used that word in verse 9 in the sense of our Lord being fully qualified to act as an High Priest.

Let me explain what Paul meant.

A young man or a young woman decides to become a doctor, a physician. He or she does not just open up an office and put out a sign saying that patients may come for physical help. He goes to the university to take a pre-med course, then he goes to medical school. After successfully meeting those requirements, it used to be that he had a period of internship. I think the internship is done a little differently now, but he does have a time when he trains under other doctors. Then he has to pass a state exam. It is necessary for him to purchase certain equipment, depending upon the area of medicine he is in. After all of this he is "perfect," that is, he is considered to be fully qualified to practice medicine. And so he can then open his office, and treat the patients who come to him.

The same thing is true of someone who wants to practice law. There is certain training that is required, and certain exams that have to be passed. School teachers have to qualify before they can teach. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians, all workers are supposed to have certain training and experience, to possess certain tools, and to be licensed in some cases, in order to be qualified to practice their occupation.

We have an illustration of this in Scripture. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. Verse 17 reads in the NKJV: "That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

How did the Lord become qualified, equipped, to act as our Great High Priest. We have seen that He was appointed by God. But what about His qualifications? He must be a man. He must be a compassionate man. He must be concerned about bringing sinners into a right relationship with God through the offering of a sacrifice.

We have all of this in verse 7 and 8 of our text.

A. He is a Man: "Who in the days of his flesh."

B. He is a compassionate Man.

We are accustomed to think of the sufferings of Christ in connection with our salvation. But we must learn also that it was through our Lord's sufferings that He "learned" what we go through in our trials. It was in His sufferings that He learned to hear His Father, and to do His will. It was then that He learned to pray. Take Gethsemane, John 17, and the Cross, and put all of them in this verse. Think of all of those times when the Lord spent whole nights in prayer. We are not told what He said to the Father, but we have an indication here in these verses. Suffer as we may, physically or for the sake of the Gospel, and none of us will ever suffer as terribly as our Lord did, outwardly and inwardly. God's suffering saints need to look at the Man Christ Jesus and especially at the Cross to find comfort and help. It is all there in Christ.

The Lord was learning through His humanity and through His sufferings throughout His life and through His death complete submission to God in order that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest for you and for me.

C. He offered a sacrifice for sins.

I call your attention to the expression, "Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."

We are going to learn as we go on in the book of Hebrews that one difference between the high priesthood of Aaron and the high priesthood of Christ is that Aaron brought animals and birds as sacrifices; our Lord offered Himself as the sacrifice. The Father did not save the Lord from death, or there would have been no salvation. He saved Christ, as the Greek says, out of death, that is, to raise Him from the dead. So the Lord offered a sacrifice—not many; just one! He gave Himself for our sins, but He was raised from the dead, not only to show that He was the Son of God and that it was impossible for death to hold Him, but also to show that the Father was perfectly satisfied with the work of His Son on the Cross. This was the burden of our Lord's praying, not that things would be made easy for Him, but that He would "obey," lit., hear the Father, do His will, and glorify His Name. And He was heard because the Father raised Him from the dead.

What glorious truth this is, and these verses deserve our careful and continued meditation.

This brings me to the last two verses of our text.

III. THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST (Heb. 5:9, 10).

Because of what we read in verses 5 and 6, and then in verses 7 and 8, we now can know that we have a fully qualified Great High Priest, fully acceptable to the Father, and completely sufficient to be our Savior: "the author of eternal salvation."

This means that He is the One Who provides our salvation, and He is the One Who bestows it on whomsoever He will. And, since it is an "eternal salvation," He guarantees the complete salvation of every redeemed sinner.

But notice that it does not mean that because He died and was raised from the dead that all men will be saved. It is only for those who "obey" Him.

The root of the word "obedience" in verse 8 and the word "obey" in verse 9 is the same. Lit. it means to hear. To

hear is to obey; to obey is to trust. This is what Paul called "obedience to the faith" in Rom. 1:5.

So our Lord qualifies as our Great High Priest, our Savior. But the climax of it all comes in the statement we have in verse 10.

The word for "called" in verse 4 with respect to Aaron, is different from the word "called" in verse 10 with respect to our Lord. The idea in verse 4 is that Aaron was called by God to be the first high priest of Israel. The idea with respect to Christ is equal to that of a formal and public declaration that it is Christ, and only Christ, who is "an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." One Greek authority (Thayer, p. 543) would translate it as a salute from the Father to the Son. It is a statement to remove all doubt as to who is the Savior. To look to anyone else but to Christ is to violate the plain declaration of God Himself.

Concl: The remainder of the book of Hebrews is simply an enlargement upon what we have in these six verses. The truth is here. God has made it official. Christ is the Savior. He is our High Priest. He is "THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION." All that we need to find full and eternal acceptance with God is in Christ. He has taken the penalty for every sin of every believer upon Himself. We can sing from our hearts,

I need no other sacrifice; I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.

How we need to praise God and praise our Lord Jesus Christ that salvation has been provided for us, and that the Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to see that we do not save ourselves, but we trust our High Priest to save us now and for all eternity.

Some of you may not be saved. It is possible to go to church all of the time, and sit under the ministry of the Word, without being saved. Make sure that you are not just a hearer. Make sure that Christ is your Savior today.

THE DULL OF HEARING
Hebrews 5:11-14

Intro: It is very apparent that the Apostle Paul had run into a problem in his teaching by the time he got to eleventh verse of chapter 5. And he continued to deal with that problem until he got to the end of chapter 6. And there he got back to what he had started to say in Heb. 5:10, or even in Heb. 5:6 where he mentioned the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ for the first time. Paul was getting to the heart of this epistle, and he knew that he was faced with a problem.

The problem was that, as he said in verse 11, they were "dull of hearing." The word "dull" means lazy, or slothful. It means that they were lazy hearers. They were like many people today who enjoy the Word while they are reading it, or listening to it when it is being taught, but that is as far as the Word goes with them. They never do anything about it. It does not become a part of their lives. They are never changed. They go on living the same way that they have always lived, and so the Word has no effect upon them. It is like they never read the Word, nor ever heard a message from the Word.

Paul told the believers to whom he was writing that they had become "dull of hearing." That is, they had not always been that way, but they had changed. This is what they had become! And this presents a real problem for the one who is teaching the Word--whether in written form, or in speaking as I am speaking to you today. Such a condition in the hearers makes it hard to expound the Word, hard to explain the truth.

This is why many people do not enjoy Bible teaching sermons. They would much rather be entertained. Or, it may be that they like to hear the Bible taught, but spiritually they never go anywhere. Even people who do not know the Lord can listen to the Gospel, and be impressed with the truth of salvation, but they never do anything about it.

James was speaking of this problem when in the first chapter of his epistle he exhorted the people to be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas. 1:22). You see, we think that, because we are hearing the Word of God, we are profiting from it. That is not what makes the Word of God fruitful in our lives. The hearing of the Word must be followed up by faith and obedience. Even our Lord told His disciples after He had taught them and placed His own example before them, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). Look back also at what Paul wrote in Heb. 4:2.

There is great power in the Word of God. We learned that in Heb. 4:12. But the fact remains that there is human responsibility connected with the hearing of the Word, however we may hear it. We must believe it, and act upon it, or it will not do us any good. And when we fail to act upon what we hear, that makes it more difficult for us to hear with profit the next time, and it becomes more difficult for those who are seeking to teach us to explain things to us.

It is a most serious thing for us to argue with the Word of God, or just to ignore it. People who turn away from hearing the Word of God are people who refuse to submit themselves to it.

If you want to look ahead, you will see a couple of verses which help us to understand the problem that the Apostle was facing because of the spiritual condition of his hearers. I am referring to Heb. 6:11, 12. (Read.)

So this is the first thing we face in our text. The people were:

I. "DULL OF HEARING" (Heb. 5:11).

And it was because they were lazy hearers that Paul felt great difficulty in getting them to understand the high priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. They would not be able to comprehend nor to profit from the truth that our Lord is an High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec."

As a result of what they had become ("dull of hearing") the Apostle went on to speak of:

II. THEIR PRESENT CONDITION (Heb. 5:12-14).

The remedy of their situation is not confined to this latter part of chapter 5, but goes all the way through chapter 6. But today we are going to be concerned with just this latter part of chapter 5.

- A. They should have been teachers, but they were not (v. 13).

The church has always had those whose gift and responsibility it is to teach. Eph. 4:11 shows us that every pastor is to be a teacher. That is really what the pastoral ministry is. Any pastor who is not teaching the Word of God, and teaching it truthfully, is failing to live up to his calling. But I do not think that is what Paul was referring to here, the ministry of an apostle, or a pastor. Instead, he was indicating that every child of God should be a teacher of the

Word. We do not all teach as leaders of the church, but every child of God should seek to understand the truth so that he can explain it to someone else who needs to know it.

This takes time. How much time, we cannot say, but we know that the people who received this letter could not have been saved very long, and Paul told them that "for the time," i.e., for the time that they had been saved, they should have been able to teach others. Instead, they needed others to teach them. And what they needed with respect to the teaching was for someone to teach them again the things which they had been taught before.

So it was not that they had not been taught. They had been taught, but they had not learned what they had been taught.

All of this teaches us that there are several things which must be taking place in a New Testament church:

- 1) The Word of God must be taught.
- 2) People must be learning.
- 3) Their lives must be changing as a result of what they are learning. If they are not making progress in holiness of life, it is because they are not learning what they should be learning.
- 4) The people themselves should be teaching others.

At this point I am reminded of what Paul told Timothy with regard to teaching. You will probably remember this verse, but let me repeat it for you in connection with what we are seeing here in Heb. 5.

The verse itself is found in 2 Tim. 2:2. Notice that you have four generations of Christians referred to in what Paul told Timothy. Here it is:

And the things that thou has heard of me
among many witnesses,
the same commit thou to faithful men,
who shall be able to teach others also.

Paul taught Timothy. Timothy was to teach "faithful men." And those "faithful men" were to teach "others also"---four generations.

The Bible teaches us that husbands are to teach their wives. It also teaches us that parents are to teach their children. A husband who is a lazy hearer is not going to be worth much to his wife. And parents who are lazy hearers are not going to be of much spiritual help to their children. The same can be said for SS teachers, and for pastors as well. Lazy hearers are a problem to everyone because they are not growing themselves, nor are they able to help others who need

the Lord, or other believers who need spiritual help.

The condition of the church today shows that there has been a terrible lack of teaching, true teaching of the Word of God. And so people in our churches easily follow false teachers because they do not know the truth. And we are seeing this morning that one of the main reasons they do not know the truth is because they are lazy hearers, hearers who may understand what they are hearing, and even enjoy it, but they do not profit from it because they do not follow up on their own lives, applying and obeying the truth of the Word of God.

I hope you are hearing me this morning. This may be your problem, and you have not realized what it has been. You know much truth, but it has not helped you with your sins. It has not strengthened you in times of temptation. It has not given you joy and peace. It has not made you more like your Savior.

What do lazy hearers need?

B. Lazy hearers need milk.

A lazy hearer is a spiritual babe, and babes need milk.

What a sad thing it is to see a person who has known the Lord a long time, but is still spiritually a babe. He may want to enjoy the great truths of Scripture, but he does not have the capacity for it. He probably blames the one who is teaching when the message seems to go over his head. But the trouble is in his own heart.

What does he need?

He needs to go back to "the first principles of the oracles of God." Let me explain what this means.

"The first principles" of anything are the basics. The basics of a language is the alphabet, and then the words which are formed from the letters of the alphabet. A person who does not know the alphabet, the a b c's, will never learn to read nor write.

We have an illustration of "the first principles" right in this fifth chapter of Hebrews. We will never be able to understand the high priesthood of Christ unless we understand what a high priest is. Those details about an high priest which we learned in verse 1 of chapter 5 are the basics, "the first principles."

What are "the oracles of God"?

This is a NT expression for the Scriptures. Lit. it means the utterances of God. There are basic things that we need to know, and act upon, if we are to get out of a state of spiritual infancy. A babe in Christ is not necessarily a lazy hearer, but a lazy hearer is always a babe in Christ.

I think that we need to realize that there is milk and there is meat in the same truths. The most basic thing about the Word of God is the Gospel. The Gospel reveals to us the nature of God, and it also teaches us about the nature of man. And it is through the Gospel that we understand how God makes saints out of sinners. And yet we can find the most solid food in the Word of God in the truths of the Gospel.

But as for the basics, we need to understand what the Bible is. We need to understand our relationship with the Holy Spirit. We need to know where we are headed spiritually—to be like Christ. We need to know about prayer, and start learning to pray. We need to be told about the importance of Christian fellowship, and the nature and purpose of the church.

A lazy hearer needs to start over again, and become, as James has said, not just a hearer of truths, but a doer of the truth. A lazy hearer needs to wake up and to ask not only what do these truths mean, but how should they be affecting my life? How should they be changing me?

A lazy hearer is "unskilful in the word of righteousness." He is inexperienced, untried. He may have some understanding of many truths, but he has never been able to put them together. Children often learn a great deal about driving a car, but it is different when they get behind the wheel. A person can know much about swimming who has never swum a stroke.

So it is in the knowledge of the Word. The doctrinal and the practical need to go hand in hand with each other. If they do not, it is because the person is "dull of hearing."

The clincher is verse 14.

C. The mature Christian.

What makes a strong Christian, a true Christian?

He is spoken of here as being "of full age." This is another way of referring to maturity. A person is mature when he is where he should be when you consider his age, his abilities, and so on. A child of God is mature when he is where he should be spiritually for the time that he has known the

Lord. Time is always an element in growth, whether it is physical growth, or mental growth, or growth as a child of God. If every child of God were growing, mature for the time that he or she had known the Lord, what a joy it would be to teach the Word. And how easy it would be! But we do not have an abundance of believers who are growing. And so this makes Bible teaching very difficult in many instances.

We need to have our senses "exercised to discern both good and evil." That is, we need to have our minds, our hearts, our wills earnestly striving after all that would make us holy, and avoiding everything that would keep us from being what the Lord wants us to be. "Good and evil." And we need not only to recognize the difference between "good and evil," but we need to know to choose the good and refuse the evil. This, in turn, opens the heart and mind to the Word of God so that it is not so difficult to learn more of the truth that we need to know.

Concl: This passage gives all of us a wonderful opportunity to test ourselves, and this is just what we need as we come to the Lord's table this morning.

Do you have to admit to yourself today that you are "dull of hearing," that you are a lazy hearer? Do you have to admit that you can read the Bible, and hear the Bible taught each week, but that you spend little or no time thinking about how the truth should apply to you? You enjoy hearing the truth, but it stops there.

Knowledge hardly ever, if ever, helps us until it is put to use. The doctrine is important, very important. But doctrine alone is not all that we need. We need to know the truth, and we need to believe the truth, **BUT WE ALSO NEED TO LIVE THE TRUTH!** May God enable us to seek to be what He wants us to be as well as to know what He wants us to know. If this is our goal, the Bible will become our greatest joy, and our lives will begin to show the evidence of the transforming power of the Word of God. We get out of spiritual infancy and into spiritual maturity when we walk in the truth, not just when we are able to talk about it.

ON TO PERFECTION
Hebrews 6:1-3

Intro: Last week we saw that the Apostle Paul interrupted what he was getting ready to say about our Lord as a Priest "after the order of Melchisedec," and his charge against them as being "dull of hearing." By this he meant that they were quick to hear the Word, but slow to do anything about what they heard. They lacked the application of the Word to their lives. This is what constitutes a lazy hearer.

All believers are to some degree guilty of being lazy hearers. None of us does a perfect job of applying the Word to his or her life. It is probably true that we all know more than we do. It is bad to get into the habit of either reading the Word, or hearing the Word, without applying it to our lives. And one of the tragic results of being a lazy hearer is that a failure to apply the Word keeps us from understanding more of the Word. Ultimately a lazy hearer will be perfectly content to listen to the Word without asking, "How does this apply to me?"

As we move on into chapter 6 we are going to see that the Apostle was not one to point out a problem, and then go on to something else. He began immediately to show how this spiritual problem could be remedied. And we see it in the first exhortation of the chapter. It is this:

I. "LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION" (Heb. 6:1).

I believe that I have mentioned before, perhaps more than once, that "perfection" is one of the important themes of this epistle. The word perfect, or perfection, is found in some form at least 12 times in this book.

Cf. 2:10; 5:9; here--6:1; 7:11, 19; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:28; 13:21.

Sometimes it refers to our Lord, as in 2:10 and 5:9, but most of the time it refers to believers as it is here in 6:1. With reference to us as believers, it sometimes speaks of perfection as something which we already have; in other verses, as here in 6:1, it speaks of something which we need to seek.

For example, look at Heb. 10:14, and compare it with our text here in Heb. 6:1. Hebrews 10:14 says we are perfected; Hebrews 6:1 says we need to "go on unto perfection." How can we reconcile the two?

First of all, let me point out that the Biblical doctrine of perfection is related to the Biblical doctrine of sanctification. It is in harmony with Scripture to say that we are sanctified; it is also in agreement with the Word of God to say that we are being sanctified!

Teachers of the Word in the generation before mine used to speak of the difference as being one of standing and state. Our standing before God is perfect. That is, God looks upon us in Christ, and there is nothing required to give us perfect acceptance with Him. We already have it. This is what we mean when we say, "We are perfected," or when we say, "We are sanctified." It is expressed in the words of that familiar hymn which says,

I need no other argument; I need no other plea.

It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me. In Christ we have a perfect standing with God. We have all that we will ever need for the eternal salvation of our souls.

But our present state, our present condition, is a different matter. Not one of us this morning is all that we need to be. Our standing before God in Christ is all that it needs to be for us to gain entrance to heaven. But the goal of our salvation is not only to get us to heaven with Christ, but to get us to heaven like Christ. We are not as much like Him as we need to be. We all need to grow spiritually so as to be more like Christ. And so we need to "go on unto perfection." Christ's work for us on the Cross is finished. We cannot, we need not, add a single thing to what He did when He died for us. Our money does not help. Our works do not help. We are not saved by works; we are saved by Christ. But while Christ's work for us is complete, His work in us is NOT complete. It is being completed as we seek to be what the Word tells us to be. That is why we cannot be lazy hearers. It is through obedience to the Word of God that our state will get closer and closer to the perfect standing that we have in Christ. That is why it is so important for every Christian to be reading the Bible, hearing others teach the Bible, believing it, and obeying it!

So when we talk about going on "unto perfection," we are speaking of seeking to become more like God wants us to be, seeking to be more like our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, Who enables us to be like we are told to be in the Word of God.

If you are a lazy hearer, you are not moving along toward perfection. And you need to get going! Every single one of us who knows the Lord needs to "go on unto perfection." But how do we do it?

Some would say that a person who hears the Word, but is not obeying the Word of God, needs to be saved. And that may be true. There are always people in every church who claim to be Christians, but who are not Christians. That has been true in every generation from the beginning of time--people who claimed to know the Lord and belong to the Lord, but who have never been saved.

That is a problem which the Apostle was not dealing with here.

He had in mind those who were saved, but were lazy hearers. They might act like they were not saved, at least for a time, but they really were.

Recently there has been a revival of the discussion as to whether or not there is such a thing as a carnal Christian. I believe that there is, and I believe that the Apostle Paul thought that there were carnal Christians. He said in 1 Cor. 3:1,

And I, **brethren**, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, **but as unto carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ.

In the third verse of that same chapter Paul said, "For ye are yet carnal...and walk as men." And yet to these same people in Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 3:9, "...ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." He could not have said that about them if they had not been saved.

As I have said before, there are many who profess to be Christians who are not, but there is such a person as a true child of God who is standing still spiritually, and who needs to get moving on toward perfection. Such an exhortation as we have here in Hebrews 6 would be meaningless if this were not the case.

And so the answer is not that a person has to start all over by being saved a second time.

I believe that the Apostle was teaching later here in this chapter that there is no such thing as being saved a second time! We will get to that later. But for now let us look at what Paul called,

II. THE FOUNDATION (Heb. 6:1, 2).

They had been born again; they needed to move on toward full growth, toward maturity, in Christ.

It might be well to point out before we leave the exhortation, "Let us go on unto perfection," that the Greek

verb has been translated in more than one way. The English Revised version rendered it, "Let us press on." Bishop Westcott translated it, "Let us be borne on." All three are correct. The AV suggests that we have a responsibility in it. The Revised Version indicates that the way will not be easy. Bishop Westcott's translation suggests that there is divine enablement for such a work and for such goal, that we cannot do it without the help of God.

Now what about THE FOUNDATION?

Verse 1 could probably be best translated, Therefore, leaving the instruction concerning Christ which we were given at the beginning, ... Or, Going on from the foundational teachings we had at the first concerning Christ, ...

The Apostle Paul certainly did not mean that we had no further use for the foundation so that we could forget about it. But he did mean that there was more to the teaching of Christ than those basic things which were essential for our salvation. No person can be a Christian who does not accept the basic teachings of the salvation.

What are they?

There are six expressions here. Are we to take them as six individual doctrines? Are they related to each other, possibly in pairs? What seems to be the true meaning?

My own thinking about these has undergone a slight change as a result of studying them again. So if some of you remember what I said before, while I believe basically the same, yet I feel that the relationship of these terms has been clarified in my own mind, and I trust that this is a work of the Spirit.

These terms speak of the Gospel. But they are not all equally important. It seems to me that the important parts of the Gospel are:

- 1) "Repentance from dead works."
- 2) "Faith toward God."
- 3) Skipping to the fifth that Paul mentioned: "Resurrection of the dead."
- 4) "Eternal judgment."

As I mentioned last week, there is both milk and meat in the Gospel. That is, there are simple truths and deep, deep truths. The simple truths are the basics, and this is what we have here.

What about "the doctrine of baptisms," and the "laying on of

hands"? How do they fit in?

Well, we must remember that Paul was writing to Hebrew Christians. They were inclined to hold on to the Law. But it seems that Paul was referring to "the doctrine of baptisms," or washings, and the "laying on of hands" (both of which were OT ceremonies), to show that the OT ceremonies were types, or pictures, of the Gospel, but that they pointed to greater and eternal truths. "The doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands" pictured "repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." And the connection between the two would show that salvation was the same in the OT that it is now in these NT times.

So what do we have?

We have four basic truths of the Gospel, with two OT types giving us illustrations of the first two. This is the foundation of our lives as Christians. And it is from these truths that we are to move on "unto perfection."

A. "Repentance from dead works."

Repentance is not just an OT doctrine; it is a NT doctrine as well. Paul told the Roman church that it is "the goodness of God" that "leadeth...to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). And he told Timothy not to strive and argue in presenting the Gospel, but to be patient if perhaps God "will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).

We usually think of repentance as meaning we are sorry for something that we have done, but the main idea in repentance is a change. A persons repents when his thinking changes about his life and what he has been doing, and he shows a desire to be different from what he has been.

"Dead works" probably refers to what a person does before he is saved thinking that they will make him "perfect" with God. One of man's greatest sins is to try to earn the salvation which was purchased by the blood of the Son of God.

The OT doctrine of "baptisms" pictured the cleansing that always accompanies "repentance."

B. "Faith toward God."

Salvation is by faith, not by works. Salvation is a work of God, not a work of man. John 5:24 speaks of "faith in God." Most passages speak of faith in Christ, but faith in Christ is faith in God. We cannot have faith in One without faith in the Other.

And this was expressed in OT times when the priest or the people placed their hands on the head of the animal which was to be sacrificed. They were transferring their guilt to the animal ceremonially, and it portrayed what we are to understand about "faith in God." God took the curse which belonged to us, and placed it upon His Son.

C. "Resurrection of the dead."

There would be no Gospel without the resurrection of Christ. This testified to His finished work, that His sacrifice was accepted by God. But it also guarantees the resurrection of all believers in Christ, a resurrection to life eternal!

And the resurrection always includes the death of our Lord. He would not have been raised and glorified if He had not died. When Paul was describing the Gospel in 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, he said that Christ died, was buried, rose again, and was seen. No person can be a Christian who denies the bodily, glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again let me say that there is milk and there is meat in the doctrine of resurrection.

D. "Eternal judgment."

This explains the reason for the Gospel. The Gospel speaks of a salvation, and the word implies that there is something that we are being saved from! People need to be told that they are under divine judgment, and that divine judgment is "eternal."

John the Baptist warned people "to flee from the wrath to come" (Luke 3:7). And he called upon them to repent. It is doubtful if people will ever see the need to be saved until they see that they are destined to spend eternity in hell if they are not saved by Christ.

One final point in verse 3.

III. Divine Sovereignty (Heb. 6:3).

The Apostle sounded a note here which people have a hard time with who do not believe that "salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9b). Going on "unto perfection" is just as impossible as it is for us to save ourselves in the beginning. This is like saying, "If God wills." We are not only saved by faith, but we live by faith; we walk by faith. And we are not going to accomplish anything unless it is by the enabling grace of God. He wills it for His people; He does not will it for those who are not His people.

Therefore, if you have been convicted that you have been a lazy hearer, do not attempt to make the changes in your life by yourself. You and I can only do what the Lord enables us to do. Anything else will end in failure. And that is why we try and fail so often. But when the Lord is in it, we can be sure of His blessing, and we can be sure that His purpose in saving us will be fully accomplished—all to His glory, not to ours!

Concl: Why have you and I been saved? Because it is God's will. Why have we made the progress that we have made thus far? Because God has permitted it. How can we press on, go on, be carried on? Only as God permits and enables us to "lay aside every weight..."

Paul was giving expression to this great truth when he told the Corinthian church,

But by the grace of God I am what I am;
and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain;
But I laboured more abundantly than they all:
yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

We must not doubt but that the will of God is that we go on "unto perfection." But as we go, let us remember that every bit of progress was only made with the help and blessing of God. Without Him, we can do nothing. But by His grace we all are predestined to become like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CAN A PERSON BE SAVED TWICE?
Hebrews 6:4-8

Intro: There are two things which stand in the way of the ministry of the Word:

- 1) Problems with the teacher.
- 2) Problems with the hearer.

The teacher may not know what he is trying to teach. Or he may not be spiritually in the right condition for the Lord to bless and use him in the lives of his hearers. The hearer, on the other hand, may not be prepared to receive the Word. As we learned in the latter part of chapter 5, this was the problem with the Hebrew Christians to whom the Apostle Paul was writing this epistle. The reason for the condition was that they had become "dull of hearing; they were lazy hearers. They had been saved long enough to have been teachers themselves, but instead, they needed to be taught again the abc's of the Word of God. They were still babes. They needed milk, not solid food.

Then, as chapter 6 begins, we see that the Apostle told them what their basic need was. It was to "go on unto perfection." He said, "Let us...", not because he, too, was still a babe, but because every believer needs to be doing this as long as he lives. We will never be perfect, or spiritually mature, until we get to heaven. And so we need to be going on, or pressing on, or be borne alone, anticipating that time when we will stand before God in the likeness of Christ.

To do this we do not need to be saved over again. We haven't lost anything that we had in Christ, we simply need to use what we have. But we need to build upon the foundation that we have in the Gospel of Christ. And those foundational truths are mentioned (at least in part) in verses 2 and 3. However, some of those believers may have needed further proof that they were still saved. Usually when we are living in disobedience to the Lord we begin to question our salvation. And so in our text for today, verses 4 through 8, Paul was actually dealing with the doctrine of assurance.

But let me recognize that this passage has been interpreted in several ways. Three are especially prominent:

- 1) One is that Paul was speaking of a person who had lost his salvation. But this cannot be because the teaching of Scripture is otherwise. Even in chapter 5 we read that our Lord, as the result of His sufferings, "became the author of **eternal** salvation unto all them that obey him." See verse 9. And we will read in Heb. 7:25 that our Lord "is able to save them to the uttermost" (completely) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever

liveth to make intercession for them." We could also add many other passages to these in the book of Hebrews. If a person is really saved, he will never lose his salvation. I hope that we all understand this. It is true that there are people who profess to be Christians, but who are not really saved. But Paul is not talking about that problem here.

- 2) A second way of looking at this passage is that it speaks of a person who is under conviction, but not really saved. The people who hold this view point, for example, point to word "tasted" and say that it does not speak of a true relationship with Christ. Well, we are going to examine those five statements in verses 4 and 5. And when we do we will see that they are far too strong to be descriptive of anyone but a true believer--not just one who professes to be saved, but one who genuinely possesses salvation! So, therefore, I am eliminating the interpretation that Paul was not speaking of a real Christian. But let me say that if it did, it would mean that a person once convicted of his need of Christ, who did not accept Christ, could never be brought under conviction again. We know that is not the case with many. Some have rejected Christ over and over before they finally have been saved.
- 3) The third view that I want to mention is the one which I believe gives us the true meaning of the passage. This is the one which says that Paul was speaking of something which could not really take place in order to prove his point. The key word in this interpretation is the word "if" found at the beginning of verse 6. And this interpretation recognizes the strength of the five expressions used in verses 4 and 5, as well as acknowledging the point which the Apostle was making in this passage. He was not insisting that they needed to start over; he was saying that they simply needed to "go on" from where they were. But let us examine what the Apostle wrote here in verses 4 through 8.

Let us determine, first of all:

I. THE PERSON PAUL HAD IN MIND (Heb. 6:4b, 5).

Note that the word "and" connects the five statements. (Read.) So he did not have in mind the person who had experienced one, or two, or three, or even four, of these, but all five! I think that when you listen to what each means, you will agree that Paul could only have been speaking of a true child of God.

- A. "Those who were once enlightened" (v. 4).

This same verb is used in Heb. 10:32, and there seems to be little question but that Paul was speaking there about true salvation. A person who has been enlightened has come out of the darkness into the light. He, or she, possesses a saving knowledge of Christ. And this is such a drastic change that Paul said in writing to the Ephesian church,

For ye **were** sometimes darkness,
but now **are** ye light in the Lord:
walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8).

Cf. also 2 Cor. 4:6, "For God who commanded the light...."

Add to this the word "once," which means once-for-all, and we have the doctrine of salvation. When we are saved we are enlightened, or saved, once-for-all! It is an eternal word which never needs to be repeated because it is a permanent, eternal work.

B. "And have tasted of the heavenly gift" (v. 4).

What is "the heavenly gift" if it is not salvation? It is heavenly because it has come to us from God in heaven, and is heavenly in character. Salvation is not of human nor earthly origin, but from God in heaven. Cf. Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8, 9.

But what about the word "tasted"? Does this not suggest a sampling of this "heavenly gift," but not the actual possession of it?

Let me answer those questions by asking another question.

When it is said in Heb. 2:9 that our Lord tasted death, does it mean that He had a close brush with death, but did not die, or does it mean that He partook of death and all that was involved in taking our penalty upon Himself. I hope that no Christian would be satisfied with any interpretation except one in which we learn that our Lord actually died; He "tasted death" to the full. The Lord tasted death by dying! A true child of God tastes "the heavenly gift" of salvation by being saved—saved completely and forever!

So this speaks of true salvation as well. What about the third statement?

C. "And were made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (v. 4).

To be a partaker of the Holy Spirit is actually to be brought into association with the Holy Spirit. Does this not speak of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Paul used this great truth as a means of drawing the Corinthian church back into fellowship with the Lord. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. See also

Rom. 8:9 and John 14:17. This may even be related to what Paul said about being sealed with the Holy Spirit in Eph. 1:13, 14.

And so the case gets stronger and stronger that Paul was speaking about one who was truly saved. What about the fourth point?

D. "Have tasted of the good word of God" (v. 5).

This word "tasted" is identically the same in the original language as "tasted" in verse 4. And it not only goes with this fourth expression in this series, but with the last one as well: "And the powers of the world to come."

So it does not just mean to sip from the Word of God, nor to sample the Word of God, but to drink of the fullness of the Word of God. To taste of the Word of God is to believe the Word of God. And the Apostle Peter wrote that we are "born again...by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

"The Word of God" here speaks of the spoken Word, and it has to do with a particular revelation. And that particular revelation in this context would mean nothing but the Gospel. And it is "good" because it is God's Word, and by it we are made fully acceptable to God. The new birth fits us completely for heaven. Nothing else is needed.

E. "Have tasted...of the powers of the world to come" (v. 5).

Lit. this is the powers of the age to come. This is what Paul was speaking about in Eph. 2:7. We are not there yet as far as our actual experience is concerned, but God in saving us has guaranteed our arrival by saving us from our sins.

And so all of these expressions not only speak of our salvation, but of our absolute security in Christ. We have none of this by nature. Nor do we have any of it because we have earned it, nor do we deserve it. All of it is by the grace of God and only because of the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us consider:

II. PAUL'S SUPPOSITION (Heb. 6:6a).

It is found in Paul's words, "If they shall fall away."

Paul was saying, "Now just suppose that a person who has all

of this in Christ should 'fall away.' What then?" Those five terms should show us that it is not possible for a person to be lost again after they have been saved, but just for the sake of proving his point, Paul said, "Suppose it could happen."

III. PAUL'S RESPONSE (Heb. 6:4a, 6).

The Apostle Paul, speaking with his authority as an apostle, said that it would be impossible to renew such a person again to repentance! Remember that "repentance" was mentioned in verse 1 as a part of the foundation of the work of salvation. So, if a person could not be renewed to repentance, it means that there would be absolutely no possibility of being saved a second time.

So those who are saying that they have been saved more than once are saying something that the Scriptures flatly deny! Paul said, "If you could lose your salvation, then do not think for a moment that you could be saved again."

Why did Paul give this answer?

Because the only way a saved person could ever be lost would be to lose, or use up, what he has in Christ. So in order for him to be saved a second time, it would be necessary for Christ to go to the Cross again. It would mean crucifying the Son of God again, and putting Him to open shame!

But this is contrary to all that the Bible teaches about salvation. It would mean that Christ's work was not really a finished work. It would mean that we could undo what He has done. It would mean that, after all, our salvation would be conditioned on what we do after the Lord saves us.

Read Heb. 9:11-15 and Heb. 10:9-14.

This is to show our security in Christ. It also shows that a true child of God will persevere to the end. So Paul was not speaking of those who merely make a profession of salvation. Nor was he teaching that a saved person could become unsaved again. But He was exalting the work of our Savior by pointing out that if we could be lost once we are saved, it would be because we have used up what we have in Christ, thus making it necessary for Him to come and die again--which Paul said in Romans 6 He cannot do. "Death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9b).

This section closes with:

IV. A TWOFOLD ILLUSTRATION (Heb. 6:7, 8).

Salvation is illustrated by the way the earth responds to the rain which comes upon it.

The background for this illustration seems to be Isa. 55:10, 11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven...."

The earth represents the people who are on the earth. And just as the same rain produces herbs, on the one hand, and "thorns and briers, on the other, so is the ministry of the Word. Some are saved; others are not. But there is no such thing as going back and forth from one to the other.

It would seem that Paul was actually teaching the doctrine of election here. If we see that salvation is, as those five terms in verses 4 and 5 suggest, a work of God, and that God's work never fails, it will help all of us to see that once we are in Christ, we can never again be out of Christ. This is truth that believers need to know in times of failure so that they will be able to see that the need is not to start over, but to "go on" from where they are "unto perfection." We may fail, but God never does. We may doubt that we know the Lord, but the Lord has no doubts about us.

Paul wrote to Timothy in second epistle:

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 2:19a).

And then he added:

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

We may fall even though we are in a state of grace, but we can never fall out of grace! We are not only saved by grace, but we are kept by grace. Therefore, what a true child of God needs is not to be saved again. There is no such thing. He needs to get going in this life of faith, pressing on toward the goal of being like our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

SOME MARKS OF TRUE SALVATION
Hebrews 6:9-12

Intro: We have seen how the Apostle felt constrained to turn aside temporarily from his subject when he got to what is Heb. 5:11 in our English translations. He knew that they would have difficulty understanding what he was going to teach them about the priesthood of Christ because they had become "dull of hearing," or, lazy hearers. They had become careless in the practical application of the Word of God to their lives. This made it difficult to understand what the Apostle wanted them to know about Christ and Melchisedec.

It is always difficult to know where people really are spiritually when something like this happens. It could mean that they have not been saved. On the other hand, it could mean that they were saved, but just not making any progress spiritually because of their failure to respond in a practical way to the teaching of the Word of God.

It seems very clear from this whole passage (Heb. 5:11-6:20) that the Apostle Paul had more than a casual acquaintance with the people to whom he was writing. He believed that they were saved. He knew that their need was to "go on unto perfection," not to think that they needed to start over. In fact, he showed them that they could not start over. If they could have lost their salvation (which was not possible), it would require a second death by the Lord for them to be able to be saved a second time. This, of course, was not going to happen. Nor was it necessary. Christ's death was a finished work. He did all on the Cross that was necessary to get every real child of God to heaven.

Therefore, as we come down to verse 9, we find that the Apostle Paul was expressing:

I. A STRONG PERSONAL CONVICTION (Heb. 6:9).

He did not believe that they fell into the condition described in verse 8. He called them, "Beloved," and said that he and his fellow workers had been convinced before, and still were (a perfect tense) that they, his readers, were truly saved. He probably did say this to indicate that this was true of all of them, but surely of the majority of them.

And his reason for saying this was that he had seen in their lives "things that accompany salvation."

What did he mean by this statement?

Well, he meant that there are certain things we can expect to

see in the life of a person who has been born again.

This past week several of us were on our annual bike trip. About 30 of us were in the group, and around 20 were bikers. Each evening I had the privilege of speaking to them, and I used as a theme, The Grace of God in Salvation. The first night I spoke on Election. The second night on Redemption. The third night on Regeneration. And the last night on what it means to be a new creature in Christ. We learned that the Father chose us for salvation in eternity past. We learned that Christ redeemed us on the Cross by His precious blood. We learned also that we are born again by the Spirit and become new creatures in Christ. But in my last message I spoke about some of the things the Apostle John mentioned in 1 John as accompanying salvation!

We learned that a person who is born again believes that Jesus is the Christ. We also learned that a born again person lives a righteous life, that he no longer continues in sin. He wants to do what pleases God; he does not want to do what displeases the Lord. We learned, too, that a true Christians loves other Christians. He loves the people of God. He wants to go to church so that he can not only learn more about the Lord, but have fellowship with others who love the Lord. And then we learned, finally, that a born again person overcomes the world. He does not live like the world lives; he lives like God wants him to live. These are all "things that accompany salvation." That is, if you want to know if you are a Christian, or if you want to know if someone else is a Christian, these are some of the things that you need to look for.

The list that the Apostle John has given us in 1 John is an excellent list, but there are other things that can be said about one who is a true Christian. And we are about to see three more in our text this morning. Paul had seen these in the lives of the Hebrew Christians to whom he was writing, and he had seen enough to convince him that God had done a work in the hearts of those to whom he was writing.

What are they?

There are three:

- 1) Love -- in verse 10.
- 2) Hope -- in verse 11.
- 3) Faith, and its companion, patience -- in verse 12.

Love, hope, and faith are three things that Paul says you will always find where you have a person who is truly saved, one who is a genuine child of God. They will not always be present in every person to the same extent, but they will

always be there, all of them. You cannot be a Christian without manifesting to some degree love, hope, and faith. These are the "better things" that Paul had in mind, the "things that accompany salvation." Whenever a person is saved, he (or she) always will possess and manifest **love, hope, and faith.**

Let us consider together:

II. THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN (Heb. 6:10-12).

A. "Love" (v. 10).

A Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul said in Rom. 5:5 that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." In Gal. 5:22 he said that "the fruit of the Spirit is love...."

We see a twofold love in verse 10 of our text: Love for God, and love for the people of God. We could translate this verse, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which you (plural) have shown to His name, having ministered in the past to His people, and continuing to minister to them."

A ministry is not necessarily a formal ministry such as a person would have in a church (although it could include that). It is doing anything, prompted by love, that will benefit another Christian in any way. The fact that it is called "work" is evidence that it would take both time and energy. It could be material help, or physical help, or spiritual help. A Christian is going to be thoughtful and helpful to all people, but he takes special delight in doing what he can for the people of God, "the saints."

A person who is not a Christian usually wants to stay just as far away from Christians as he possibly can. But that is not the case with a Christian. He loves the people of God. He wants to be with them, and he wants to help them, to minister to them in any way that he can. Paul said that they ministered in the past, and were continuing to minister. Serving the Lord's people becomes a way of life to a true believer. And the fact that this is a labor of love means that it is something that a Christian takes great pleasure in doing, that he would rather help other believers than do anything else, and that he is unwilling to stop it.

The Apostle John said in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

But the interesting thing about love shown to by one believer to another is that the Lord looks upon this as love shown to Himself.

Do you remember the Lord's teaching about the separation of the sheep and the goats in the judgment following His return to the earth to reign? He said to the sheep on His right hand, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). Love for God and love for the people of God go together. Again quoting the Apostle John: 1 John 4:20, 21:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother,
he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother
who he hath seen, how can he love God
whom he hath not seen?
And this commandment have we from him,
that he who loveth God love his brother also.

It doesn't speak very well of our relationship to the Lord if our best friends are non-Christians. We all have non-Christian friends, but a true Christian delight in being with and being of whatever service he can to the Lord's people.

And we need to note that God will not be unjust by forgetting our work and the love which we have manifested in our work, love for His people, and our love for the Lord Himself.

B. "Hope" (v. 11).

Cf. 3:6. See also 6:18, 19. And 7:19. Then 11:1.

Paul never said that he hoped that he was saved. He knew that he was saved. But he did say that "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24). What is the difference?

Well, if you say that you hope you are saved, you mean that you are not sure that you are saved. But if you say that you are saved by hope, you mean that you are saved now but that you have a special, certain, guaranteed expectation as far as the future is concerned. You mean that you are headed for something that is infinitely better than you have now, and that you expect some changes in yourself that will all be better than what you are now.

Cf. 1 John 3:1-3. Cf. also 1 Pet. 3:15. Also 1 Pet. 1:3-5. According to Titus 2:11-14.

Now Paul said that this is something else that we need to show, to manifest, to display, the same word that he used in verse 10. That is, this is something which others are to be able to see. They need to be able to tell by the way we live

that this world is not our home, our permanent dwelling place; we are bound for heaven and glory and perfection. This is our hope.

And to show "the full assurance of hope unto the end" means that we are absolutely convinced, entertaining no doubt, but that we will reach the goal for which we have been saved.

If we are convinced, then we will be using all of the means that the Lord has given to press on toward that goal--the Word, prayer, obedience, fellowship with other believers, trusting God when things go wrong. People ought to be able to tell by the way we live that we have a hope that we are looking forward to.

Is your hope in Christ being displayed in your life?

C. "Faith and patience" (v. 12).

The book of Hebrews is a book about faith. Chapter 11 is the faith chapter. In Heb. 12:2 the Lord Jesus is called "the author and finisher of our faith." In Heb. 10:38 we are told that "the just shall live by faith." To have faith is to believe, to trust.

This verse brings us back to the expression we had at the beginning of Paul's interruption of his own message, the interruption which began in 5:11. There he said that they were "dull of hearing," which can be translated, as we have seen, lazy hearers! A slothful person is a dull person, a lazy person.

Paul did not want them to be people who listen to the promises, but did no more. The promises of God are given for us to believe. And our faith is tested by patience. It seems that very few promises are fulfilled immediately when they are needed. We always have to wait.

But others have waited on God, and have found Him to be faithful! Chapter 11 is filled with illustrations of people who trusted God to be faithful to His promises, and who were not disappointed. They did not see their hope realized, but they were like Abraham in Rom. 4:20, 21:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;
but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised,
he was able also to perform.

We are not just to read about those mentioned in Heb. 11, and others mentioned throughout the Bible, but we are to become "followers of them." We are to imitate their faith, not just

pretending to do so, but really doing it. Paul used this same word in 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1 ("of God"); 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; and Peter used it in 1 Pet. 3:13.

Have you ever read your Bible paying particular attention to the promises of God? Do you believe them, really believe them? Remember: They are the promises of God!

Let me ask you another question: Who are you following? Do you want to talk like the people of the world? Do you want to act like the people of the world? Do you want to dress like the people of the world? Are you following people who do not know the Lord? Are they what you would like to be? Or are you following the example of godly parents? Are you following the example of people you know who really love the Lord? Is the Apostle Paul your pattern? Do you want to be like the Lord Jesus?

Paul's desire for every one of us is expressed here in verse 12. May God give us the grace to believe the promises of God and to follow those who have gone before us trusting God to do as He has promised to do in His Word.

Concl: Let me say to any of you who do not know the Lord that the greatest promises in Scripture have to do with the Gospel and with salvation. We begin the Christian life by trusting the Lord's promise to save us. We continue the Christian life by trusting the Lord's promises to keep us, to help us, and to perfect us until we are like our wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For those of you who do know the Lord, remember these three words: love, hope, and faith (with patience). Their presence in your life is evidence that you are saved. Their continuation will give you greater and greater assurance that what God has started in your life He will continue until the work is finally finished when you stand in His presence in the glory.

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL
Hebrews 6:13-20

Intro: Thus far in the book of Hebrews we have seen that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than:

- 1) Angels -- in chapters 1 and 2.
- 2) Moses -- in chapter 3.
- 3) Aaron -- in chapter 5.

And now we are to learn that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than:

- 4) Abraham -- in chapter 6, verses 13-15.

The reference that the Apostle Paul made to each one was with reference to salvation. And although we have references to salvation in the book of Genesis before we get to the life of Abraham in chapter 12, yet it was to Abraham that the original promise was formally stated.

We can see the significance of the promise given to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 by noting what the Apostle Paul said about it in Gal. 3:8. Before Moses' day, before the Law was given, and before Aaron was appointed as the first high priest, the promise of salvation was given to Abraham.

And so the first point in our text for today has to do with:

I. THE PROMISE OF GOD TO ABRAHAM (Heb. 6:13-15).

We have already seen that this promise, actually containing several promises (of a land, and of a nation) was a promise of salvation, of salvation not only for Jews, but also for Gentiles. The families, or nations, of the earth were to be blessed with salvation.

A promise is only as good as the one who makes the promise. Men make promises and may back down on them later, or for some reason are unable to fulfill them. But this is never the case with God. His promises are sure! His goodness will not allow Him to break them, and His power is such that He cannot fail. So, when God makes a promise, it is sure. We need have no doubts about His intention nor about His ability to do what He has promised to do.

And so a promise from God is a certain promise, and we can be sure that God would never have made the promise if He did not intend to keep His promise.

But here we have something very unusual.

God not only made a promise, but He backed up His promise with an oath! And to make His promise as strong as it could

possibly be, He swore by Himself. Verse 14 gives us the promise and the oath all in one.

Now God's oath did not make His promise more certain. A promise from God is as certain as it can be. But for the strengthening of the faith of Abraham, and of all His people from that day to this, God confirmed His promise with an oath. God wanted Abraham to know that there was not the slightest possibility that this promise could fail.

When a person appears in court he is required to take an oath that the evidence he will give is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." And then the one administering the oath adds the words, "So help me God."

The person taking the oath may be an habitual liar, but he is required under oath to tell the truth. He swears by One Who is greater than he is, and that One is God!

Now there is no one greater than God, and so, when God confirmed His promise with an oath, because there is no one greater than He is, He confirmed His promise by swearing by Himself! The promise alone was enough, but the promise and the oath made the promise appear to Abraham as absolutely certain of fulfillment. And this was in spite of all of the evidence to the contrary.

"And so," verse 15 tells us, "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." That is, the promise was fulfilled to him in the birth and preservation of Isaac.

We are told in Gen. 15:6 that Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

However, the promise of a Redeemer through the seed of Abraham was to be tested for twenty-five years before Isaac was born. In the meantime Abraham and Sarah got too old to have children. But they continued to believe God (even though their faith faltered at times). Eventually, under impossible circumstances, Isaac was born. And even after that God called upon Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham even trusted the Lord through that, "accounting," as we learn in Heb. 11:19, that God was able to raise him up," i.e., Isaac, "from the dead."

Up to that point in Genesis we have no evidence that anyone had ever been raised from the dead. But Abraham was so convinced of the faithfulness of God that he believed that if he would kill Isaac, and burn his body as a sacrifice, God would raise him up so that His promise could be kept. It probably was at this point that it could be said that Abraham

"obtained the promise."

At this point the Apostle went on to speak of:

II. THE PURPOSE OF AN OATH (Heb. 6:16).

When men take an oath they swear by One Who is greater than they are, that is, God! And they take an oath to put an end to all debate about the truth or falsehood of his testimony. An oath is take to end any uncertainty about what the witness is about to say.

That is the purpose that men have; that was also the purpose that God had in dealing with Abraham. And, we are about to see, that God's promise was supported by His oath for our sakes, too!

III. THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S OATH (Heb. 6:17-20).

It was not only for Abraham's sake, but for us also who are "the heirs of the promise."

To be an heir of the promise given to Abraham, you must be of the seed of Abraham. Let me read for you two NT passages:

- 1) Gal. 3:5-14.
- 2) Rom. 4:13-25.

The seed of Abraham are the heirs of God's promise to Abraham. They are the elect whom God chose before the foundation of the world. Nobody deserves it. Nobody can earn it. It is a gift of God's love and grace that we should be saved from our sins by the One Who was Abraham's greatest son, and also the Son of God: our Lord Jesus Christ.

So the purpose of God's oath was not just to strengthen Abraham's faith 4,000 years ago, but it is to strengthen our faith today. God confirmed His promise with an oath because He wanted to show us today "the immutability of his counsel."

What is "his counsel," i.e., the counsel of God?

God's "counsel" is His will, His purpose, His plan. God's counsel is what He has determined that He will do!

Let it be known this morning, if it has not been clear to you before, that God's will never changes!

The Apostle Paul wrote these grand words to the Ephesian church. You will find them in Eph. 1:11. Remember that we are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, heirs of the promise God gave to Abraham. This is what Paul wrote:

In whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance,
being predestinated according to the purpose
of him who worketh all things
after the counsel of his own will.

So God not only will never change His mind about salvation,
but He will never change His mind about those whom He intends
to save! And not only can we say that God's work will not
change, but we can say that it will not fail.

"Immutability" means "not subject to change" (The American
Heritage Dictionary, p. 644). It not only means that God's
purpose does not change, but it cannot change! An immutable
God makes immutable promises that have immutable purposes.

But, you might say, why do we need that added confirmation?
Jesus Christ has come. He died, and rose again, and ascended
back to the Father. We have the Gospel of God's grace. Why
would we, the heirs, need encouragement like Abraham needed
encouragement?

We need it for one reason, the same reason that Abraham
needed it. And it has to do with "the hope set before us."

You see, Christ did come. And He died, and rose again, and
went back to the Father. However, the purpose of God in
salvation is not just to save us from sin's penalty (to keep
us from going to hell). The purpose of God is to get us to
heaven, and to transform us into the very likeness of our
Lord Jesus Christ. That is our "hope." And, by God's grace,
we who would never have sought God for ourselves, have "fled
for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." We are
like the Jews of OT times who fled to the cities of refuge,
only our refuge is Christ. Once our eyes were opened to see
our need, and to see Christ as the Supplier of our need, we
may haste to get to Him as fast as we could.

Believers have forsaken every other hope, and have placed
their hope in Christ. If He fails us, we have nothing. As
Paul told the Corinthian church, if Christ did not rise from
the dead, we are of all people most to be pitied. Cf. 1 Cor.
15:19.

But listen to me now. The future of our salvation is just as
certain as that Jesus Christ came to die for our sins! It is
"both sure and stedfast." What do these words mean? They
mean that God's promise is absolutely certain and that it is
impossible for anything or anyone to change it.

This hope which we have is our present "anchor of the soul."
This is what those Hebrew believers in Paul's day needed, and

this is what every believer from that day to this has needed, "an anchor of the soul" which is both "sure and stedfast." And it is that "which entereth into that within the veil." And it is clear that Paul was speaking about "Jesus," who is our great High Priest, and our "forerunner." A "forerunner" is one who has gone to a place where others are to follow. When John the Baptist appeared as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, it meant that the Lord Jesus was close behind, and coming.

Christ spoke as our "forerunner" in John 14:1-3. (Quote.)

Philip Mauro, in his book, God's Apostle and High Priest, referred to a practice in OT times that may have been in the Apostle's mind as he wrote this passage. This is the way Dr. Mauro described it:

The figure is taken from the practice that prevailed in old times in the harbors of the Mediterranean and other inland seas. In every harbor, as may be seen indeed to this day, was a great stone (and usually a number of such) immovably embedded in the ground near the water's edge. That rock, as we understand, was the anchoria (Gr. agkura). It served ordinarily as a mooring for the little vessels of those days; but it also had another function. Sometimes the little ship could not, by means of its sails, make its way to a secure mooring within the harbor. In such a case, a 'forerunner' would go ashore in a small boat with a line, which would be made fast to the anchoria. That was 'sure and steadfast,' being of ample strength, and immovably embedded in the ground. Therefore, those on the little ship had only to 'hold fast' on the line, and by means of it, and by patient, persistent effort, gradually drew near to the shore (Griffith Thomas, W. H., Let Us Go On, p. 79).

Our hope for getting into the harbor, or into the veil, is guaranteed by our "forerunner," the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "within the veil." And we have an eternal assurance of an eternal hope because we have "an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." With our Forerunner already there, our arrival is "sure and stedfast."

Concl: Have you wondered why, in a passage in which the Apostle was concerned about spiritual lethargy and immaturity, he would deal so extensively with the assurance of salvation?

The answer seems to be very clear.

The assurance of salvation is an absolute necessity if a person is to be faithful in walking with the Lord. A person

who is unsure of his salvation is always going to be thinking that he might not be saved. Such uncertainty is one of the biggest hindrances to a growing and vibrant faith.

So it behooves us to make sure that we know the Lord. And in this we cannot afford to be wrong. Look for the evidences that we considered together last week from verses 9 through 12. Do you remember what they were? Love in verse 10. Hope in verse 11. And faith accompanied by patience in verse 12. Look also for the evidences which the Apostle John mentioned in his first epistle. Look for the testimony of the Spirit to your own heart. Perhaps the thing that is holding you back, is right here. If you are saved, you have "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." Make sure that you have it, and that the evidences are to be seen in your life, imperfect though they may be, and spiritual progress is certain to follow.

THE GREATNESS OF MELCHISEDEC
Hebrews 7:1-10

Intro: I hope that most of you remember that the Apostle Paul began speaking of Melchisedec back in Hebrews 5. He first mentioned him in chapter 5, verse 6; then in chapter 5, verse 10. At that point, however, the Apostle interrupted himself, and began to deal with a problem which was holding back the spiritual progress of those Hebrew believers. He said that they had become "dull of hearing," or, as I have been explaining it, they had become lazy hearers. By this he meant that, although they may have been glad to hear the Word of God, yet they were delinquent in applying the Word to their lives. And this is what made it difficult for the Apostle to teach them what he wanted them to know. They needed the milk of the Word, but they were not capable of digesting "strong meat," or solid food, as we could call it.

And so in the last four verses of chapter 5, and through all of chapter 6, the Apostle was dealing with this problem, and showing the people not only that they needed to change, but how to change. Paul did not believe that they needed to be saved; he felt that they needed to "get going," moving on toward real maturity in Christ. We see that in chapter 6, verse 1: "Let us go on unto perfection."

I am not going to review all that we have covered in the latter part of chapter 5 and all of chapter 6, but I hope that each of you will read that section frequently, thinking about your own relationship with the Lord as you do.

But now let us notice that in the last verse of chapter 6 Paul mentioned Melchisedec again. And you will find Melchisedec's name six times in chapter 7: verses 1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21. Hebrews 7 is about Melchisedec. But after Heb. 7:21 he is not referred to again in the book of Hebrews. However, what Paul wrote about Melchisedec and his relationship with Christ carries on right to the end of the epistle.

It would seem clear from what we have seen in Heb. 5:11 through chapter 6 that teaching the Melchisedec priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ is teaching solid food! But why is this solid food? John Owen suggested the answer to that question when he declared it is not possible to understand the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ if we do not understand His priesthood. It surely is clear that some of the simplest teaching of the Bible is that which has to do with our Lord. But it is also true that the Biblical doctrine of Christ is not only the most important teaching in the Bible, but the most profound! And it might be added that

there are comparatively few of the Lord's people today, who know anything at all about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, or who are even interested in knowing anything about it. And yet there is really nothing that is more important! We all need to be praying that the Lord will give us greater insight into this message of the book of Hebrews.

The book of Hebrews is the only book in the NT which speaks at all about Melchisedec. But He is mentioned in two books in the OT: in Genesis and the Psalms—but only in one chapter in each of those two books. We have him mentioned in Gen. 14, verse 18, and in Psalm 110, verse 4. Up to this point in Hebrews Paul's references have been to Psa. 110:4. But here at the beginning of chapter 7 we have a reference to what was said about Melchisedec in Gen. 14.

Some have distinguished between these three references to Melchisedec in three ways:

- 1) In Genesis we have the history.
- 2) In Psalms we have the prophecy.
- 3) In Hebrews we have the doctrine.

That seems to be an accurate description in each case.

Before we look at what is said about Melchisedec, let me answer the question:

I. WHO WAS MELCHISEDEC? WAS MELCHISEDEC CHRIST?

My answer to that second question is, "No, I do not believe that he was an OT appearance of Christ."

I believe that he was a real king over a real city, Salem, which probably was ancient Jerusalem. Paul quoted Psa. 110:4 six times in Hebrews 5, 6, and 7 saying that Christ was a priest "after the order of Melchisedec." I believe he was a type of Christ, but not Christ. He was unique in the sense that he was both a king and a priest. He appeared as a type of Christ because of this fact.

If you prefer to think of Melchisedec as Christ, I doubt if that changes the meaning of the truth we are considering here in Hebrews. But it seems to me that the language in Psalm 110 would indicate that there were two priests in that order: Melchisedec, the type; Christ, the antitype, or the fulfillment of the type.

Since Paul began with the prophetic passage in Psa. 110:4, let us look at that first. Please turn with me to that Psalm.

II. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING CHRIST (Psa. 110).

Psa. 110:1 is quoted in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt., Mark, and Luke), as well as in the book of Acts. And in each case it is applied to Christ. Our Lord Himself made this application. We could paraphrase it: "The Father said to the Lord Jesus," The latter part of verse 1 is quoted by Paul in Heb. 1:13. So there is no question but that Psa. 110 is a Messianic Psalm, i.e., a Psalm which speaks of the coming Messiah, or Christ.

Verse 4 tells us what we have already learned that the Lord confirmed with an oath our Lord's appointment to be a priest. It was an eternal appointment that never could be changed. So it was inevitable that our Lord would be both a priest and a king, like Melchisedec, and that He would occupy both offices forever.

My third point is:

III. THE MELCHISEDEC OF HISTORY (Gen. 14:17-20; Heb. 7:1-3).

Please turn with me now to Genesis 14. (Read.)

We see here:

- 1) Who Melchisedec was (Gen. 14:18—the first and last of the verse.
- 2) What Melchisedec brought to Abraham (Gen. 14:18m).
- 3) What Melchisedec said—and the place that he occupied as he said what he said (Gen. 14:19, 20a).
- 4) What Abraham gave to Melchisedec (Gen. 14:20b).

Now when Paul drew from Gen. 14 in writing Heb. 7 he did three things:

- 1) He mentioned most of what Moses had written in Genesis.
- 2) He did not mention the bread and the wine that Melchisedec brought. I won't speculate on the reason for that omission.
- 3) Paul mentioned some things which Moses did not mention.

Let us turn back now to Heb. 7 and notice these three details. We can learn a great deal about how to interpret Scripture from the way Paul treated Gen. 14 in this seventh chapter of Hebrews. (Read vv.1-3).

- 1) He mentioned that Melchisedec was both a king and a priest, actually a "priest of the most high God"! Just as a matter of passing interest, this had to mean that Melchisedec, what we would now call a Gentile (certainly not of Abraham's family), was a true believer in "the most high God." Cf. v. 1a.
- 2) Paul mentioned that Melchisedec blessed Abraham (v. 1b).
- 3) Paul alluded to the fact that Abraham gave a tithe to

Melchisedec (v. 2a).

- 4) He interpreted the meaning of "Melchisedec" and "king of Salem." This suggests that names in Scripture can have real significance. "Melchi" comes from the Hebrew word for king. "Sedec" comes from the Hebrew word for righteousness. Since the Hebrew language is a language of consonants, you can see that the name "Salem" comes from the Hebrew word shalom, which means peace.

So we have a king and a priest whose name and title gives us righteousness and peace. We will talk later about the significance of this.

- 5) Paul made a point out of some things which Moses did not mention in Gen. 14. See verse 3. This teaches us that omissions in Scripture often are significant.

We do not know who Melchisedec's father was, nor who his mother was, nor from what family or nation he came, nor when he was born, nor when he died. From the record in Genesis we could assume that he was just like our Lord. As the Second Person of the Godhead, our Lord had no parents, He was not a descendant of any family, He never began to exist, and will never cease to live. So, from just the facts given, we could say that Melchisedec was just like our Lord.

This does not mean that Melchisedec was not a true human being. He probably did have a father and mother, was born on a certain day, and died on a certain day. The point is that those things were not mentioned because Melchisedec's role in Scripture was to typify our Lord Jesus Christ. The point of this passage is not to tell us about Melchisedec, but to tell us about Christ. If we are interested in the solid food of Scripture, then let us focus our attention upon Christ, and learn of Him. There is nothing that we can do that is more necessary, nor more profitable. Learn of Him!

Now let me speak of:

IV. THE GREATNESS OF MELCHISEDEC (Heb. 7:4-10).

A. He was greater than Abraham (vv. 4-8).

The greatness of Melchisedec over Abraham is brought out by three things:

1. Abraham gave him a tenth of his spoils from his victory over the kings (vv. 4-6a).

This was a recognition on Abraham's part of the superiority of Melchisedec. We are not told why and how Abraham came to feel this way, but his actions indicated how he felt. And so to honor God, Abraham gave to Melchisedec, the "priest of the

most high God."

But there is a second way in which we see that Melchisedec was greater than Abraham.

2. Melchisedec blessed Abraham (vv. 6b, 7).

And the Holy Spirit led Paul to write here those words which we find in verse 7. (Read.)

3. Genesis 14 gives us the testimony that Melchisedec lived, but not that he died (v. 8).

We have the record of Abraham's death in the book of Genesis (ch. 25), but not of Melchisedec. So he appears as one who was never born and who never died. Thus, he was greater than Abraham as far as his record in Scripture is concerned.

I have one more point to make about Melchisedec:

B. Melchisedec was greater than Levi (vv. 9, 10).

Levi was a descendant of Abraham, a great grandson of Abraham. And so, although he was not yet born, he paid tithes to Melchisedec in what his great grandfather did. Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, was of the tribe of Levi. So we can say, and Paul will say, that Melchisedec was greater than Aaron. His position was higher; his authority was higher. And if Melchisedec were greater than Levi and Aaron, then his priesthood is greater than that which Aaron exercised all through those years that the nation Israel lived under the Law of Moses.

Concl: The whole point of what we are learning from this passage is that if Melchisedec were greater than Abraham, and greater than Levi (including Aaron), then our Lord, Who is a "priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" is greater than Abraham, greater than Levi, greater than Aaron, and even greater than Melchisedec because He is Melchisedec's successor, and will never be replaced!

If the book of Hebrews has taught us anything at all, it has taught us the unsurpassable greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is greater than angels, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua, greater than Aaron, greater than Abraham, greater than Levi, and greater than Melchisedec. He is greater because of Who He is, and greater because of what He has accomplished.

Let me just briefly review His greatness.

He is great because He is our High Priest to intercede and intervene for us with the Father. He is great because He is destined to rule the entire world as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is great because He is eternal. No king will ever conquer our Lord; no priest will ever replace Him. This is a major point in the book of Hebrews.

But as wonderful as all of this is, as far as we are concerned it is surpassingly wonderful that in our Lord Jesus Christ "righteousness" and "peace" have been brought together. The Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest has, by His death, provided righteousness for all of His people, taking our sins upon Himself. And this means that we are at peace with God. Cf. Rom. 5:1. Also Psa. 85:10:

Mercy and truth are met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

One final word:

Did you notice that the Lord is spoken of as the "**KING of righteousness**" and the "**KING of peace**"? He is not only to become the **KING of kings and LORD of lords**, but He now exercises complete authority concerning those who will be declared righteous before God, and who will find peace with God.

Therefore, if you belong to the Lord, all of the praise for your salvation belongs to the Lord. If He had left you alone, you would still be in your sins, without God, and headed for eternal judgment. But in grace He intervened, and your standing before God could not be better. It is perfect, and so you have peace. Even when it may seem that things are going wrong, and you have little for which to praise the Lord, you can always praise Him for the gifts of righteousness and peace which have met together in Christ, and upon you.

If you do not know the Lord, if you are not saved, if you are not right with God, there is only One Who can make you acceptable to God. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He died to provide full righteousness for all who put their trust in Him. And so I plead with you to forget your ideas about how you can make yourself right with God. You will never succeed. Not until you see yourself as utterly hopeless and lost without Christ will you come to Him, and trust Him, that the righteousness and peace of God Himself can meet together in your needy heart. May the Lord enable you by His grace to trust Christ as your Savior today.

ON TO PERFECTION

Hebrews 6:1-3

Intro: Last week we saw that the Apostle Paul interrupted what he was getting ready to say about our Lord as a Priest "after the order of Melchisedec," and his charge against them as being "dull of hearing." By this he meant that they were quick to hear the Word, but slow to do anything about what they heard. They lacked the application of the Word to their lives. This is what constitutes a lazy hearer.

All believers are to some degree guilty of being lazy hearers. None of us does a perfect job of applying the Word to his or her life. It is probably true that we all know more than we do. It is bad to get into the habit of either reading the Word, or hearing the Word, without applying it to our lives. And one of the tragic results of being a lazy hearer is that a failure to apply the Word keeps us from understanding more of the Word. Ultimately a lazy hearer will be perfectly content to listen to the Word without asking, "How does this apply to me?"

As we move on into chapter 6 we are going to see that the Apostle was not one to point out a problem, and then go on to something else. He began immediately to show how this spiritual problem could be remedied. And we see it in the first exhortation of the chapter. It is this:

I. "LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION" (Heb. 6:1).

I believe that I have mentioned before, perhaps more than once, that "perfection" is one of the important themes of this epistle. The word perfect, or perfection, is found in some form at least 12 times in this book.

Cf. 2:10; 5:9; here--6:1; 7:11, 19; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:28; 13:21.

Sometimes it refers to our Lord, as in 2:10 and 5:9, but most of the time it refers to believers as it is here in 6:1. With reference to us as believers, it sometimes speaks of perfection as something which we already have; in other verses, as here in 6:1, it speaks of something which we need to seek.

For example, look at Heb. 10:14, and compare it with our text here in Heb. 6:1. Hebrews 10:14 says we are perfected; Hebrews 6:1 says we need to "go on unto perfection." How can we reconcile the two?

First of all, let me point out that the Biblical doctrine of perfection is related to the Biblical doctrine of sanctification. It is in harmony with Scripture to say that we are sanctified; it is also in agreement with the Word of God to say that we are being sanctified!

Teachers of the Word in the generation before mine used to speak of the difference as being one of standing and state. Our standing before God is perfect. That is, God looks upon us in Christ, and there is nothing required to give us perfect acceptance with Him. We already have it. This is what we mean when we say, "We are perfected," or when we say, "We are sanctified." It is expressed in the words of that familiar hymn which says,

I need no other argument; I need no other plea.

It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me. In Christ we have a perfect standing with God. We have all that we will ever need for the eternal salvation of our souls.

But our present state, our present condition, is a different matter. Not one of us this morning is all that we need to be. Our standing before God in Christ is all that it needs to be for us to gain entrance to heaven. But the goal of our salvation is not only to get us to heaven with Christ, but to get us to heaven like Christ. We are not as much like Him as we need to be. We all need to grow spiritually so as to be more like Christ. And so we need to "go on unto perfection." Christ's work for us on the Cross is finished. We cannot, we need not, add a single thing to what He did when He died for us. Our money does not help. Our works do not help. We are not saved by works; we are saved by Christ. But while Christ's work for us is complete, His work in us is NOT complete. It is being completed as we seek to be what the Word tells us to be. That is why we cannot be lazy hearers. It is through obedience to the Word of God that our state will get closer and closer to the perfect standing that we have in Christ. That is why it is so important for every Christian to be reading the Bible, hearing others teach the Bible, believing it, and obeying it!

So when we talk about going on "unto perfection," we are speaking of seeking to become more like God wants us to be, seeking to be more like our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, Who enables us to be like we are told to be in the Word of God.

If you are a lazy hearer, you are not moving along toward perfection. And you need to get going! Every single one of us who knows the Lord needs to "go on unto perfection." But how do we do it?

Some would say that a person who hears the Word, but is not obeying the Word of God, needs to be saved. And that may be true. There are always people in every church who claim to be Christians, but who are not Christians. That has been true in every generation from the beginning of time—people who claimed to know the Lord and belong to the Lord, but who have never been saved.

That is a problem which the Apostle was not dealing with here.

He had in mind those who were saved, but were lazy hearers. They might act like they were not saved, at least for a time, but they really were.

Recently there has been a revival of the discussion as to whether or not there is such a thing as a carnal Christian. I believe that there is, and I believe that the Apostle Paul thought that there were carnal Christians. He said in 1 Cor. 3:1,

And I, **brethren**, could not speak unto you
as unto spiritual, **but as unto carnal**,
even as unto babes in Christ.

In the third verse of that same chapter Paul said, "For ye are yet carnal...and walk as men." And yet to these same people in Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 3:9, "...ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." He could not have said that about them if they had not been saved.

As I have said before, there are many who profess to be Christians who are not, but there is such a person as a true child of God who is standing still spiritually, and who needs to get moving on toward perfection. Such an exhortation as we have here in Hebrews 6 would be meaningless if this were not the case.

And so the answer is not that a person has to start all over by being saved a second time.

I believe that the Apostle was teaching later here in this chapter that there is no such thing as being saved a second time! We will get to that later. But for now let us look at what Paul called,

II. THE FOUNDATION (Heb. 6:1, 2).

They had been born again; they needed to move on toward full growth, toward maturity, in Christ.

It might be well to point out before we leave the exhortation, "Let us go on unto perfection," that the Greek

verb has been translated in more than one way. The English Revised version rendered it, "Let us press on." Bishop Westcott translated it, "Let us be borne on." All three are correct. The AV suggests that we have a responsibility in it. The Revised Version indicates that the way will not be easy. Bishop Westcott's translation suggests that there is divine enablement for such a work and for such goal, that we cannot do it without the help of God.

Now what about THE FOUNDATION?

Verse 1 could probably be best translated, Therefore, leaving the instruction concerning Christ which we were given at the beginning, ... Or, Going on from the foundational teachings we had at the first concerning Christ, ...

The Apostle Paul certainly did not mean that we had no further use for the foundation so that we could forget about it. But he did mean that there was more to the teaching of Christ than those basic things which were essential for our salvation. No person can be a Christian who does not accept the basic teachings of the salvation.

What are they?

There are six expressions here. Are we to take them as six individual doctrines? Are they related to each other, possibly in pairs? What seems to be the true meaning?

My own thinking about these has undergone a slight change as a result of studying them again. So if some of you remember what I said before, while I believe basically the same, yet I feel that the relationship of these terms has been clarified in my own mind, and I trust that this is a work of the Spirit.

These terms speak of the Gospel. But they are not all equally important. It seems to me that the important parts of the Gospel are:

- 1) "Repentance from dead works."
- 2) "Faith toward God."
- 3) Skipping to the fifth that Paul mentioned: "Resurrection of the dead."
- 4) "Eternal judgment."

As I mentioned last week, there is both milk and meat in the Gospel. That is, there are simple truths and deep, deep truths. The simple truths are the basics, and this is what we have here.

What about "the doctrine of baptisms," and the "laying on of

hands"? How do they fit in?

Well, we must remember that Paul was writing to Hebrew Christians. They were inclined to hold on to the Law. But it seems that Paul was referring to "the doctrine of baptisms," or washings, and the "laying on of hands" (both of which were OT ceremonies), to show that the OT ceremonies were types, or pictures, of the Gospel, but that they pointed to greater and eternal truths. "The doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands" pictured "repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." And the connection between the two would show that salvation was the same in the OT that it is now in these NT times.

So what do we have?

We have four basic truths of the Gospel, with two OT types giving us illustrations of the first two. This is the foundation of our lives as Christians. And it is from these truths that we are to move on "unto perfection."

A. "Repentance from dead works."

Repentance is not just an OT doctrine; it is a NT doctrine as well. Paul told the Roman church that it is "the goodness of God" that "leadeth...to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). And he told Timothy not to strive and argue in presenting the Gospel, but to be patient if perhaps God "will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25).

We usually think of repentance as meaning we are sorry for something that we have done, but the main idea in repentance is a change. A persons repents when his thinking changes about his life and what he has been doing, and he shows a desire to be different from what he has been.

"Dead works" probably refers to what a person does before he is saved thinking that they will make him "perfect" with God. One of man's greatest sins is to try to earn the salvation which was purchased by the blood of the Son of God.

The OT doctrine of "baptisms" pictured the cleansing that always accompanies "repentance."

B. "Faith toward God."

Salvation is by faith, not by works. Salvation is a work of God, not a work of man. John 5:24 speaks of "faith in God." Most passages speak of faith in Christ, but faith in Christ is faith in God. We cannot have faith in One without faith in the Other.

And this was expressed in OT times when the priest or the people placed their hands on the head of the animal which was to be sacrificed. They were transferring their guilt to the animal ceremonially, and it portrayed what we are to understand about "faith in God." God took the curse which belonged to us, and placed it upon His Son.

C. "Resurrection of the dead."

There would be no Gospel without the resurrection of Christ. This testified to His finished work, that His sacrifice was accepted by God. But it also guarantees the resurrection of all believers in Christ, a resurrection to life eternal!

And the resurrection always includes the death of our Lord. He would not have been raised and glorified if He had not died. When Paul was describing the Gospel in 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, he said that Christ died, was buried, rose again, and was seen. No person can be a Christian who denies the bodily, glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again let me say that there is milk and there is meat in the doctrine of resurrection.

D. "Eternal judgment."

This explains the reason for the Gospel. The Gospel speaks of a salvation, and the word implies that there is something that we are being saved from! People need to be told that they are under divine judgment, and that divine judgment is "eternal."

John the Baptist warned people "to flee from the wrath to come" (Luke 3:7). And he called upon them to repent. It is doubtful if people will ever see the need to be saved until they see that they are destined to spend eternity in hell if they are not saved by Christ.

One final point in verse 3.

III. Divine Sovereignty (Heb. 6:3).

The Apostle sounded a note here which people have a hard time with who do not believe that "salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9b). Going on "unto perfection" is just as impossible as it is for us to save ourselves in the beginning. This is like saying, "If God wills." We are not only saved by faith, but we live by faith; we walk by faith. And we are not going to accomplish anything unless it is by the enabling grace of God. He wills it for His people; He does not will it for those who are not His people.

Therefore, if you have been convicted that you have been a lazy hearer, do not attempt to make the changes in your life by yourself. You and I can only do what the Lord enables us to do. Anything else will end in failure. And that is why we try and fail so often. But when the Lord is in it, we can be sure of His blessing, and we can be sure that His purpose in saving us will be fully accomplished—all to His glory, not to ours!

Concl: Why have you and I been saved? Because it is God's will. Why have we made the progress that we have made thus far? Because God has permitted it. How can we press on, go on, be carried on? Only as God permits and enables us to "lay aside every weight..."

Paul was giving expression to this great truth when he told the Corinthian church,

But by the grace of God I am what I am:
and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain;
But I laboured more abundantly than they all:
yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

We must not doubt but that the will of God is that we go on "unto perfection." But as we go, let us remember that every bit of progress was only made with the help and blessing of God. Without Him, we can do nothing. But by His grace we all are predestined to become like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CAN A PERSON BE SAVED TWICE?
Hebrews 6:4-8

Intro: There are two things which stand in the way of the ministry of the Word:

- 1) Problems with the teacher.
- 2) Problems with the hearer.

The teacher may not know what he is trying to teach. Or he may not be spiritually in the right condition for the Lord to bless and use him in the lives of his hearers. The hearer, on the other hand, may not be prepared to receive the Word. As we learned in the latter part of chapter 5, this was the problem with the Hebrew Christians to whom the Apostle Paul was writing this epistle. The reason for the condition was that they had become "dull of hearing; they were lazy hearers. They had been saved long enough to have been teachers themselves, but instead, they needed to be taught again the abc's of the Word of God. They were still babes. They needed milk, not solid food.

Then, as chapter 6 begins, we see that the Apostle told them what their basic need was. It was to "go on unto perfection." He said, "Let us...", not because he, too, was still a babe, but because every believer needs to be doing this as long as he lives. We will never be perfect, or spiritually mature, until we get to heaven. And so we need to be going on, or pressing on, or be borne along, anticipating that time when we will stand before God in the likeness of Christ.

To do this we do not need to be saved over again. We haven't lost anything that we had in Christ, we simply need to use what we have. But we need to build upon the foundation that we have in the Gospel of Christ. And those foundational truths are mentioned (at least in part) in verses 2 and 3. However, some of those believers may have needed further proof that they were still saved. Usually when we are living in disobedience to the Lord we begin to question our salvation. And so in our text for today, verses 4 through 8, Paul was actually dealing with the doctrine of assurance.

But let me recognize that this passage has been interpreted in several ways. Three are especially prominent:

- 1) One is that Paul was speaking of a person who had lost his salvation. But this cannot be because the teaching of Scripture is otherwise. Even in chapter 5 we read that our Lord, as the result of His sufferings, "became the author of **eternal** salvation unto all them that obey him." See verse 9. And we will read in Heb. 7:25 that our Lord "is able to save them to the uttermost" (completely) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever

liveth to make intercession for them." We could also add many other passages to these in the book of Hebrews. If a person is really saved, he will never lose his salvation. I hope that we all understand this. It is true that there are people who profess to be Christians, but who are not really saved. But Paul is not talking about that problem here.

- 2) A second way of looking at this passage is that it speaks of a person who is under conviction, but not really saved. The people who hold this view point, for example, point to word "tasted" and say that it does not speak of a true relationship with Christ. Well, we are going to examine those five statements in verses 4 and 5. And when we do we will see that they are far too strong to be descriptive of anyone but a true believer--not just one who professes to be saved, but one who genuinely possesses salvation! So, therefore, I am eliminating the interpretation that Paul was not speaking of a real Christian. But let me say that if it did, it would mean that a person once convicted of his need of Christ, who did not accept Christ, could never be brought under conviction again. We know that is not the case with many. Some have rejected Christ over and over before they finally have been saved.
- 3) The third view that I want to mention is the one which I believe gives us the true meaning of the passage. This is the one which says that Paul was speaking of something which could not really take place in order to prove his point. The key word in this interpretation is the word "if" found at the beginning of verse 6. And this interpretation recognizes the strength of the five expressions used in verses 4 and 5, as well as acknowledging the point which the Apostle was making in this passage. He was not insisting that they needed to start over; he was saying that they simply needed to "go on" from where they were. But let us examine what the Apostle wrote here in verses 4 through 8.

Let us determine, first of all:

I. THE PERSON PAUL HAD IN MIND (Heb. 6:4b, 5).

Note that the word "and" connects the five statements.

(Read.) So he did not have in mind the person who had experienced one, or two, or three, or even four, of these, but all five! I think that when you listen to what each means, you will agree that Paul could only have been speaking of a true child of God.

- A. "Those who were once enlightened" (v. 4).

This same verb is used in Heb. 10:32, and there seems to be little question but that Paul was speaking there about true salvation. A person who has been enlightened has come out of the darkness into the light. He, or she, possesses a saving knowledge of Christ. And this is such a drastic change that Paul said in writing to the Ephesian church,

For ye **were** sometimes darkness,
but now **are** ye light in the Lord:
walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8).

Cf. also 2 Cor. 4:6, "For God who commanded the light...."

Add to this the word "once," which means once-for-all, and we have the doctrine of salvation. When we are saved we are enlightened, or saved, once-for-all! It is an eternal word which never needs to be repeated because it is a permanent, eternal work.

B. "And have tasted of the heavenly gift" (v. 4).

What is "the heavenly gift" if it is not salvation? It is heavenly because it has come to us from God in heaven, and is heavenly in character. Salvation is not of human nor earthly origin, but from God in heaven. Cf. Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8, 9.

But what about the word "tasted"? Does this not suggest a sampling of this "heavenly gift," but not the actual possession of it?

Let me answer those questions by asking another question.

When it is said in Heb. 2:9 that our Lord tasted death, does it mean that He had a close brush with death, but did not die, or does it mean that He partook of death and all that was involved in taking our penalty upon Himself. I hope that no Christian would be satisfied with any interpretation except one in which we learn that our Lord actually died; He "tasted death" to the full. The Lord tasted death by dying! A true child of God tastes "the heavenly gift" of salvation by being saved—saved completely and forever!

So this speaks of true salvation as well. What about the third statement?

C. "And were made partakers of the Holy Spirit"
(v. 4).

To be a partaker of the Holy Spirit is actually to be brought into association with the Holy Spirit. Does this not speak of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Paul used this great truth as a means of drawing the Corinthian church back into fellowship with the Lord. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. See also

Rom. 8:9 and John 14:17. This may even be related to what Paul said about being sealed with the Holy Spirit in Eph. 1:13, 14.

And so the case gets stronger and stronger that Paul was speaking about one who was truly saved. What about the fourth point?

D. "Have tasted of the good word of God" (v. 5).

This word "tasted" is identically the same in the original language as "tasted" in verse 4. And it not only goes with this fourth expression in this series, but with the last one as well: "And the powers of the world to come."

So it does not just mean to sip from the Word of God, nor to sample the Word of God, but to drink of the fullness of the Word of God. To taste of the Word of God is to believe the Word of God. And the Apostle Peter wrote that we are "born again...by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

"The Word of God" here speaks of the spoken Word, and it has to do with a particular revelation. And that particular revelation in this context would mean nothing but the Gospel. And it is "good" because it is God's Word, and by it we are made fully acceptable to God. The new birth fits us completely for heaven. Nothing else is needed.

E. "Have tasted...of the powers of the world to come" (v. 5).

Lit. this is the powers of the age to come. This is what Paul was speaking about in Eph. 2:7. We are not there yet as far as our actual experience is concerned, but God in saving us has guaranteed our arrival by saving us from our sins.

And so all of these expressions not only speak of our salvation, but of our absolute security in Christ. We have none of this by nature. Nor do we have any of it because we have earned it, nor do we deserve it. All of it is by the grace of God and only because of the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us consider:

II. PAUL'S SUPPOSITION (Heb. 6:6a).

It is found in Paul's words, "If they shall fall away."

Paul was saying, "Now just suppose that a person who has all

of this in Christ should 'fall away.' What then?" Those five terms should show us that it is not possible for a person to be lost again after they have been saved, but just for the sake of proving his point, Paul said, "Suppose it could happen."

III. PAUL'S RESPONSE (Heb. 6:4a, 6).

The Apostle Paul, speaking with his authority as an apostle, said that it would be impossible to renew such a person again to repentance! Remember that "repentance" was mentioned in verse 1 as a part of the foundation of the work of salvation. So, if a person could not be renewed to repentance, it means that there would be absolutely no possibility of being saved a second time.

So those who are saying that they have been saved more than once are saying something that the Scriptures flatly deny! Paul said, "If you could lose your salvation, then do not think for a moment that you could be saved again."

Why did Paul give this answer?

Because the only way a saved person could ever be lost would be to lose, or use up, what he has in Christ. So in order for him to be saved a second time, it would be necessary for Christ to go to the Cross again. It would mean crucifying the Son of God again, and putting Him to open shame!

But this is contrary to all that the Bible teaches about salvation. It would mean that Christ's work was not really a finished work. It would mean that we could undo what He has done. It would mean that, after all, our salvation would be conditioned on what we do after the Lord saves us.

Read Heb. 9:11-15 and Heb. 10:9-14.

This is to show our security in Christ. It also shows that a true child of God will persevere to the end. So Paul was not speaking of those who merely make a profession of salvation. Nor was he teaching that a saved person could become unsaved again. But He was exalting the work of our Savior by pointing out that if we could be lost once we are saved, it would be because we have used up what we have in Christ, thus making it necessary for Him to come and die again—which Paul said in Romans 6 He cannot do. "Death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9b).

This section closes with:

IV. A TWOFOLD ILLUSTRATION (Heb. 6:7, 8).

Salvation is illustrated by the way the earth responds to the rain which comes upon it.

The background for this illustration seems to be Isa. 55:10, 11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven...."

The earth represents the people who are on the earth. And just as the same rain produces herbs, on the one hand, and "thorns and briers, on the other, so is the ministry of the Word. Some are saved; others are not. But there is no such thing as going back and forth from one to the other.

It would seem that Paul was actually teaching the doctrine of election here. If we see that salvation is, as those five terms in verses 4 and 5 suggest, a work of God, and that God's work never fails, it will help all of us to see that once we are in Christ, we can never again be out of Christ. This is truth that believers need to know in times of failure so that they will be able to see that the need is not to start over, but to "go on" from where they are "unto perfection." We may fail, but God never does. We may doubt that we know the Lord, but the Lord has no doubts about us.

Paul wrote to Timothy in second epistle:

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 2:19a).

And then he added:

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

We may fall even though we are in a state of grace, but we can never fall out of grace! We are not only saved by grace, but we are kept by grace. Therefore, what a true child of God needs is not to be saved again. There is no such thing. He needs to get going in this life of faith, pressing on toward the goal of being like our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

SOME MARKS OF TRUE SALVATION
Hebrews 6:9-12

Intro: We have seen how the Apostle felt constrained to turn aside temporarily from his subject when he got to what is Heb. 5:11 in our English translations. He knew that they would have difficulty understanding what he was going to teach them about the priesthood of Christ because they had become "dull of hearing," or, lazy hearers. They had become careless in the practical application of the Word of God to their lives. This made it difficult to understand what the Apostle wanted them to know about Christ and Melchisedec.

It is always difficult to know where people really are spiritually when something like this happens. It could mean that they have not been saved. On the other hand, it could mean that they were saved, but just not making any progress spiritually because of their failure to respond in a practical way to the teaching of the Word of God.

It seems very clear from this whole passage (Heb. 5:11-6:20) that the Apostle Paul had more than a casual acquaintance with the people to whom he was writing. He believed that they were saved. He knew that their need was to "go on unto perfection," not to think that they needed to start over. In fact, he showed them that they could not start over. If they could have lost their salvation (which was not possible), it would require a second death by the Lord for them to be able to be saved a second time. This, of course, was not going to happen. Nor was it necessary. Christ's death was a finished work. He did all on the Cross that was necessary to get every real child of God to heaven.

Therefore, as we come down to verse 9, we find that the Apostle Paul was expressing:

I. A STRONG PERSONAL CONVICTION (Heb. 6:9).

He did not believe that they fell into the condition described in verse 8. He called them, "Beloved," and said that he and his fellow workers had been convinced before, and still were (a perfect tense) that they, his readers, were truly saved. He probably did say this to indicate that this was true of all of them, but surely of the majority of them.

And his reason for saying this was that he had seen in their lives "things that accompany salvation."

What did he mean by this statement?

Well, he meant that there are certain things we can expect to

see in the life of a person who has been born again.

This past week several of us were on our annual bike trip. About 30 of us were in the group, and around 20 were bikers. Each evening I had the privilege of speaking to them, and I used as a theme, The Grace of God in Salvation. The first night I spoke on Election. The second night on Redemption. The third night on Regeneration. And the last night on what it means to be a new creature in Christ. We learned that the Father chose us for salvation in eternity past. We learned that Christ redeemed us on the Cross by His precious blood. We learned also that we are born again by the Spirit and become new creatures in Christ. But in my last message I spoke about some of the things the Apostle John mentioned in 1 John as accompanying salvation!

We learned that a person who is born again believes that Jesus is the Christ. We also learned that a born again person lives a righteous life, that he no longer continues in sin. He wants to do what pleases God; he does not want to do what displeases the Lord. We learned, too, that a true Christians loves other Christians. He loves the people of God. He wants to go to church so that he can not only learn more about the Lord, but have fellowship with others who love the Lord. And then we learned, finally, that a born again person overcomes the world. He does not live like the world lives; he lives like God wants him to live. These are all "things that accompany salvation." That is, if you want to know if you are a Christian, or if you want to know if someone else is a Christian, these are some of the things that you need to look for.

The list that the Apostle John has given us in 1 John is an excellent list, but there are other things that can be said about one who is a true Christian. And we are about to see three more in our text this morning. Paul had seen these in the lives of the Hebrew Christians to whom he was writing, and he had seen enough to convince him that God had done a work in the hearts of those to whom he was writing.

What are they?

There are three:

- 1) Love -- in verse 10.
- 2) Hope -- in verse 11.
- 3) Faith, and its companion, patience -- in verse 12.

Love, hope, and faith are three things that Paul says you will always find where you have a person who is truly saved, one who is a genuine child of God. They will not always be present in every person to the same extent, but they will

always be there, all of them. You cannot be a Christian without manifesting to some degree love, hope, and faith. These are the "better things" that Paul had in mind, the "things that accompany salvation." Whenever a person is saved, he (or she) always will possess and manifest **love, hope, and faith.**

Let us consider together:

II. THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN (Heb. 6:10-12).

A. "Love" (v. 10).

A Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul said in Rom. 5:5 that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." In Gal. 5:22 he said that "the fruit of the Spirit is love...."

We see a twofold love in verse 10 of our text: Love for God, and love for the people of God. We could translate this verse, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which you (plural) have shown to His name, having ministered in the past to His people, and continuing to minister to them."

A ministry is not necessarily a formal ministry such as a person would have in a church (although it could include that). It is doing anything, prompted by love, that will benefit another Christian in any way. The fact that it is called "work" is evidence that it would take both time and energy. It could be material help, or physical help, or spiritual help. A Christian is going to be thoughtful and helpful to all people, but he takes special delight in doing what he can for the people of God, "the saints."

A person who is not a Christian usually wants to stay just as far away from Christians as he possibly can. But that is not the case with a Christian. He loves the people of God. He wants to be with them, and he wants to help them, to minister to them in any way that he can. Paul said that they ministered in the past, and were continuing to minister. Serving the Lord's people becomes a way of life to a true believer. And the fact that this is a labor of love means that it is something that a Christian takes great pleasure in doing, that he would rather help other believers than do anything else, and that he is unwilling to stop it.

The Apostle John said in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

But the interesting thing about love shown to by one believer to another is that the Lord looks upon this as love shown to Himself.

Do you remember the Lord's teaching about the separation of the sheep and the goats in the judgment following His return to the earth to reign? He said to the sheep on His right hand, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). Love for God and love for the people of God go together. Again quoting the Apostle John: 1 John 4:20, 21:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother,
he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother
who he hath seen, how can he love God
whom he hath not seen?

And this commandment have we from him,
that he who loveth God love his brother also.

It doesn't speak very well of our relationship to the Lord if our best friends are non-Christians. We all have non-Christian friends, but a true Christian delight in being with and being of whatever service he can to the Lord's people.

And we need to note that God will not be unjust by forgetting our work and the love which we have manifested in our work, love for His people, and our love for the Lord Himself.

B. "Hope" (v. 11).

Cf. 3:6. See also 6:18, 19. And 7:19. Then 11:1.

Paul never said that he hoped that he was saved. He knew that he was saved. But he did say that "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24). What is the difference?

Well, if you say that you hope you are saved, you mean that you are not sure that you are saved. But if you say that you are saved by hope, you mean that you are saved now but that you have a special, certain, guaranteed expectation as far as the future is concerned. You mean that you are headed for something that is infinitely better than you have now, and that you expect some changes in yourself that will all be better than what you are now.

Cf. 1 John 3:1-3. Cf. also 1 Pet. 3:15. Also 1 Pet. 1:3-5. According to Titus 2:11-14.

Now Paul said that this is something else that we need to show, to manifest, to display, the same word that he used in verse 10. That is, this is something which others are to be able to see. They need to be able to tell by the way we live

that this world is not our home, our permanent dwelling place; we are bound for heaven and glory and perfection. This is our hope.

And to show "the full assurance of hope unto the end" means that we are absolutely convinced, entertaining no doubt, but that we will reach the goal for which we have been saved.

If we are convinced, then we will be using all of the means that the Lord has given to press on toward that goal--the Word, prayer, obedience, fellowship with other believers, trusting God when things go wrong. People ought to be able to tell by the way we live that we have a hope that we are looking forward to.

Is your hope in Christ being displayed in your life?

C. "Faith and patience" (v. 12).

The book of Hebrews is a book about faith. Chapter 11 is the faith chapter. In Heb. 12:2 the Lord Jesus is called "the author and finisher of our faith." In Heb. 10:38 we are told that "the just shall live by faith." To have faith is to believe, to trust.

This verse brings us back to the expression we had at the beginning of Paul's interruption of his own message, the interruption which began in 5:11. There he said that they were "dull of hearing," which can be translated, as we have seen, lazy hearers! A slothful person is a dull person, a lazy person.

Paul did not want them to be people who listen to the promises, but did no more. The promises of God are given for us to believe. And our faith is tested by patience. It seems that very few promises are fulfilled immediately when they are needed. We always have to wait.

But others have waited on God, and have found Him to be faithful! Chapter 11 is filled with illustrations of people who trusted God to be faithful to His promises, and who were not disappointed. They did not see their hope realized, but they were like Abraham in Rom. 4:20, 21:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;
but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised,
he was able also to perform.

We are not just to read about those mentioned in Heb. 11, and others mentioned throughout the Bible, but we are to become "followers of them." We are to imitate their faith, not just

pretending to do so, but really doing it. Paul used this same word in 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1 ("of God"); 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; and Peter used it in 1 Pet. 3:13.

Have you ever read your Bible paying particular attention to the promises of God? Do you believe them, really believe them? Remember: They are the promises of God!

Let me ask you another question: Who are you following? Do you want to talk like the people of the world? Do you want to act like the people of the world? Do you want to dress like the people of the world? Are you following people who do not know the Lord? Are they what you would like to be? Or are you following the example of godly parents? Are you following the example of people you know who really love the Lord? Is the Apostle Paul your pattern? Do you want to be like the Lord Jesus?

Paul's desire for every one of us is expressed here in verse 12. May God give us the grace to believe the promises of God and to follow those who have gone before us trusting God to do as He has promised to do in His Word.

Concl: Let me say to any of you who do not know the Lord that the greatest promises in Scripture have to do with the Gospel and with salvation. We begin the Christian life by trusting the Lord's promise to save us. We continue the Christian life by trusting the Lord's promises to keep us, to help us, and to perfect us until we are like our wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For those of you who do know the Lord, remember these three words: love, hope, and faith (with patience). Their presence in your life is evidence that you are saved. Their continuation will give you greater and greater assurance that what God has started in your life He will continue until the work is finally finished when you stand in His presence in the glory.

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL
Hebrews 6:13-20

Intro: Thus far in the book of Hebrews we have seen that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than:

- 1) Angels -- in chapters 1 and 2.
- 2) Moses -- in chapter 3.
- 3) Aaron -- in chapter 5.

And now we are to learn that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than:

- 4) Abraham -- in chapter 6, verses 13-15.

The reference that the Apostle Paul made to each one was with reference to salvation. And although we have references to salvation in the book of Genesis before we get to the life of Abraham in chapter 12, yet it was to Abraham that the original promise was formally stated.

We can see the significance of the promise given to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 by noting what the Apostle Paul said about it in Gal. 3:8. Before Moses' day, before the Law was given, and before Aaron was appointed as the first high priest, the promise of salvation was given to Abraham.

And so the first point in our text for today has to do with:

I. THE PROMISE OF GOD TO ABRAHAM (Heb. 6:13-15).

We have already seen that this promise, actually containing several promises (of a land, and of a nation) was a promise of salvation, of salvation not only for Jews, but also for Gentiles. The families, or nations, of the earth were to be blessed with salvation.

A promise is only as good as the one who makes the promise. Men make promises and may back down on them later, or for some reason are unable to fulfill them. But this is never the case with God. His promises are sure! His goodness will not allow Him to break them, and His power is such that He cannot fail. So, when God makes a promise, it is sure. We need have no doubts about His intention nor about His ability to do what He has promised to do.

And so a promise from God is a certain promise, and we can be sure that God would never have made the promise if He did not intend to keep His promise.

But here we have something very unusual.

God not only made a promise, but He backed up His promise with an oath! And to make His promise as strong as it could

possibly be, He swore by Himself. Verse 14 gives us the promise and the oath all in one.

Now God's oath did not make His promise more certain. A promise from God is as certain as it can be. But for the strengthening of the faith of Abraham, and of all His people from that day to this, God confirmed His promise with an oath. God wanted Abraham to know that there was not the slightest possibility that this promise could fail.

When a person appears in court he is required to take an oath that the evidence he will give is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." And then the one administering the oath adds the words, "So help me God."

The person taking the oath may be an habitual liar, but he is required under oath to tell the truth. He swears by One Who is greater than he is, and that One is God!

Now there is no one greater than God, and so, when God confirmed His promise with an oath, because there is no one greater than He is, He confirmed His promise by swearing by Himself! The promise alone was enough, but the promise and the oath made the promise appear to Abraham as absolutely certain of fulfillment. And this was in spite of all of the evidence to the contrary.

"And so," verse 15 tells us, "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." That is, the promise was fulfilled to him in the birth and preservation of Isaac.

We are told in Gen. 15:6 that Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

However, the promise of a Redeemer through the seed of Abraham was to be tested for twenty-five years before Isaac was born. In the meantime Abraham and Sarah got too old to have children. But they continued to believe God (even though their faith faltered at times). Eventually, under impossible circumstances, Isaac was born. And even after that God called upon Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham even trusted the Lord through that, "accounting," as we learn in Heb. 11:19, that God was able to raise him up," i.e., Isaac, "from the dead."

Up to that point in Genesis we have no evidence that anyone had ever been raised from the dead. But Abraham was so convinced of the faithfulness of God that he believed that if he would kill Isaac, and burn his body as a sacrifice, God would raise him up so that His promise could be kept. It probably was at this point that it could be said that Abraham

"obtained the promise."

At this point the Apostle went on to speak of:

II. THE PURPOSE OF AN OATH (Heb. 6:16).

When men take an oath they swear by One Who is greater than they are, that is, God! And they take an oath to put an end to all debate about the truth or falsehood of his testimony. An oath is take to end any uncertainty about what the witness is about to say.

That is the purpose that men have; that was also the purpose that God had in dealing with Abraham. And, we are about to see, that God's promise was supported by His oath for our sakes, too!

III. THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S OATH (Heb. 6:17-20).

It was not only for Abraham's sake, but for us also who are "the heirs of the promise."

To be an heir of the promise given to Abraham, you must be of the seed of Abraham. Let me read for you two NT passages:

- 1) Gal. 3:5-14.
- 2) Rom. 4:13-25.

The seed of Abraham are the heirs of God's promise to Abraham. They are the elect whom God chose before the foundation of the world. Nobody deserves it. Nobody can earn it. It is a gift of God's love and grace that we should be saved from our sins by the One Who was Abraham's greatest son, and also the Son of God: our Lord Jesus Christ.

So the purpose of God's oath was not just to strengthen Abraham's faith 4,000 years ago, but it is to strengthen our faith today. God confirmed His promise with an oath because He wanted to show us today "the immutability of his counsel."

What is "his counsel," i.e., the counsel of God?

God's "counsel" is His will, His purpose, His plan. God's counsel is what He has determined that He will do!

Let it be known this morning, if it has not been clear to you before, that God's will never changes!

The Apostle Paul wrote these grand words to the Ephesian church. You will find them in Eph. 1:11. Remember that we are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, heirs of the promise God gave to Abraham. This is what Paul wrote:

In whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance,
being predestinated according to the purpose
of him who worketh all things
after the counsel of his own will.

So God not only will never change His mind about salvation, but He will never change His mind about those whom He intends to save! And not only can we say that God's work will not change, but we can say that it will not fail.

"Immutability" means "not subject to change" (The American Heritage Dictionary, p. 644). It not only means that God's purpose does not change, but it cannot change! An immutable God makes immutable promises that have immutable purposes.

But, you might say, why do we need that added confirmation? Jesus Christ has come. He died, and rose again, and ascended back to the Father. We have the Gospel of God's grace. Why would we, the heirs, need encouragement like Abraham needed encouragement?

We need it for one reason, the same reason that Abraham needed it. And it has to do with "the hope set before us."

You see, Christ did come. And He died, and rose again, and went back to the Father. However, the purpose of God in salvation is not just to save us from sin's penalty (to keep us from going to hell). The purpose of God is to get us to heaven, and to transform us into the very likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is our "hope." And, by God's grace, we who would never have sought God for ourselves, have "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." We are like the Jews of OT times who fled to the cities of refuge, only our refuge is Christ. Once our eyes were opened to see our need, and to see Christ as the Supplier of our need, we may haste to get to Him as fast as we could.

Believers have forsaken every other hope, and have placed their hope in Christ. If He fails us, we have nothing. As Paul told the Corinthian church, if Christ did not rise from the dead, we are of all people most to be pitied. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:19.

But listen to me now. The future of our salvation is just as certain as that Jesus Christ came to die for our sins! It is "both sure and stedfast." What do these words mean? They mean that God's promise is absolutely certain and that it is impossible for anything or anyone to change it.

This hope which we have is our present "anchor of the soul." This is what those Hebrew believers in Paul's day needed, and

this is what every believer from that day to this has needed, "an anchor of the soul" which is both "sure and stedfast." And it is that "which entereth into that within the veil." And it is clear that Paul was speaking about "Jesus," who is our great High Priest, and our "forerunner." A "forerunner" is one who has gone to a place where others are to follow. When John the Baptist appeared as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, it meant that the Lord Jesus was close behind, and coming.

Christ spoke as our "forerunner" in John 14:1-3. (Quote.)

Philip Mauro, in his book, God's Apostle and High Priest, referred to a practice in OT times that may have been in the Apostle's mind as he wrote this passage. This is the way Dr. Mauro described it:

The figure is taken from the practice that prevailed in old times in the harbors of the Mediterranean and other inland seas. In every harbor, as may be seen indeed to this day, was a great stone (and usually a number of such) immovably embedded in the ground near the water's edge. That rock, as we understand, was the anchoria (Gr. agkura). It served ordinarily as a mooring for the little vessels of those days; but it also had another function. Sometimes the little ship could not, by means of its sails, make its way to a secure mooring within the harbor. In such a case, a 'forerunner' would go ashore in a small boat with a line, which would be made fast to the anchoria. That was 'sure and steadfast,' being of ample strength, and immovably embedded in the ground. Therefore, those on the little ship had only to 'hold fast' on the line, and by means of it, and by patient, persistent effort, gradually drew near to the shore (Griffith Thomas, W. H., Let Us Go On, p. 79).

Our hope for getting into the harbor, or into the veil, is guaranteed by our "forerunner," the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "within the veil." And we have an eternal assurance of an eternal hope because we have "an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." With our Forerunner already there, our arrival is "sure and stedfast."

Concl: Have you wondered why, in a passage in which the Apostle was concerned about spiritual lethargy and immaturity, he would deal so extensively with the assurance of salvation?

The answer seems to be very clear.

The assurance of salvation is an absolute necessity if a person is to be faithful in walking with the Lord. A person

who is unsure of his salvation is always going to be thinking that he might not be saved. Such uncertainty is one of the biggest hindrances to a growing and vibrant faith.

So it behooves us to make sure that we know the Lord. And in this we cannot afford to be wrong. Look for the evidences that we considered together last week from verses 9 through 12. Do you remember what they were? Love in verse 10. Hope in verse 11. And faith accompanied by patience in verse 12. Look also for the evidences which the Apostle John mentioned in his first epistle. Look for the testimony of the Spirit to your own heart. Perhaps the thing that is holding you back, is right here. If you are saved, you have "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." Make sure that you have it, and that the evidences are to be seen in your life, imperfect though they may be, and spiritual progress is certain to follow.

THE GREATNESS OF MELCHISEDEC
Hebrews 7:1-10

Intro: I hope that most of you remember that the Apostle Paul began speaking of Melchisedec back in Hebrews 5. He first mentioned him in chapter 5, verse 6; then in chapter 5, verse 10. At that point, however, the Apostle interrupted himself, and began to deal with a problem which was holding back the spiritual progress of those Hebrew believers. He said that they had become "dull of hearing," or, as I have been explaining it, they had become lazy hearers. By this he meant that, although they may have been glad to hear the Word of God, yet they were delinquent in applying the Word to their lives. And this is what made it difficult for the Apostle to teach them what he wanted them to know. They needed the milk of the Word, but they were not capable of digesting "strong meat," or solid food, as we could call it.

And so in the last four verses of chapter 5, and through all of chapter 6, the Apostle was dealing with this problem, and showing the people not only that they needed to change, but how to change. Paul did not believe that they needed to be saved; he felt that they needed to "get going," moving on toward real maturity in Christ. We see that in chapter 6, verse 1: "Let us go on unto perfection."

I am not going to review all that we have covered in the latter part of chapter 5 and all of chapter 6, but I hope that each of you will read that section frequently, thinking about your own relationship with the Lord as you do.

But now let us notice that in the last verse of chapter 6 Paul mentioned Melchisedec again. And you will find Melchisedec's name six times in chapter 7: verses 1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21. Hebrews 7 is about Melchisedec. But after Heb. 7:21 he is not referred to again in the book of Hebrews. However, what Paul wrote about Melchisedec and his relationship with Christ carries on right to the end of the epistle.

It would seem clear from what we have seen in Heb. 5:11 through chapter 6 that teaching the Melchisedec priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ is teaching solid food! But why is this solid food? John Owen suggested the answer to that question when he declared it is not possible to understand the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ if we do not understand His priesthood. It surely is clear that some of the simplest teaching of the Bible is that which has to do with our Lord. But it is also true that the Biblical doctrine of Christ is not only the most important teaching in the Bible, but the most profound! And it might be added that

there are comparatively few of the Lord's people today, who know anything at all about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, or who are even interested in knowing anything about it. And yet there is really nothing that is more important! We all need to be praying that the Lord will give us greater insight into this message of the book of Hebrews.

The book of Hebrews is the only book in the NT which speaks at all about Melchisedec. But He is mentioned in two books in the OT: in Genesis and the Psalms--but only in one chapter in each of those two books. We have him mentioned in Gen. 14, verse 18, and in Psalm 110, verse 4. Up to this point in Hebrews Paul's references have been to Psa. 110:4. But here at the beginning of chapter 7 we have a reference to what was said about Melchisedec in Gen. 14.

Some have distinguished between these three references to Melchisedec in three ways:

- 1) In Genesis we have the history.
- 2) In Psalms we have the prophecy.
- 3) In Hebrews we have the doctrine.

That seems to be an accurate description in each case.

Before we look at what is said about Melchisedec, let me answer the question:

I. WHO WAS MELCHISEDEC? WAS MELCHISEDEC CHRIST?

My answer to that second question is, "No, I do not believe that he was an OT appearance of Christ."

I believe that he was a real king over a real city, Salem, which probably was ancient Jerusalem. Paul quoted Psa. 110:4 six times in Hebrews 5, 6, and 7 saying that Christ was a priest "after the order of Melchisedec." I believe he was a type of Christ, but not Christ. He was unique in the sense that he was both a king and a priest. He appeared as a type of Christ because of this fact.

If you prefer to think of Melchisedec as Christ, I doubt if that changes the meaning of the truth we are considering here in Hebrews. But it seems to me that the language in Psalm 110 would indicate that there were two priests in that order: Melchisedec, the type; Christ, the antitype, or the fulfillment of the type.

Since Paul began with the prophetic passage in Psa. 110:4, let us look at that first. Please turn with me to that Psalm.

II. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING CHRIST (Psa. 110).

Psa. 110:1 is quoted in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt., Mark, and Luke), as well as in the book of Acts. And in each case it is applied to Christ. Our Lord Himself made this application. We could paraphrase it: "The Father said to the Lord Jesus," The latter part of verse 1 is quoted by Paul in Heb. 1:13. So there is no question but that Psa. 110 is a Messianic Psalm, i.e., a Psalm which speaks of the coming Messiah, or Christ.

Verse 4 tells us what we have already learned that the Lord confirmed with an oath our Lord's appointment to be a priest. It was an eternal appointment that never could be changed. So it was inevitable that our Lord would be both a priest and a king, like Melchisedec, and that He would occupy both offices forever.

My third point is:

III. THE MELCHISEDEC OF HISTORY (Gen. 14:17-20; Heb. 7:1-3).

Please turn with me now to Genesis 14. (Read.)

We see here:

- 1) Who Melchisedec was (Gen. 14:18—the first and last of the verse).
- 2) What Melchisedec brought to Abraham (Gen. 14:18m).
- 3) What Melchisedec said—and the place that he occupied as he said what he said (Gen. 14:19, 20a).
- 4) What Abraham gave to Melchisedec (Gen. 14:20b).

Now when Paul drew from Gen. 14 in writing Heb. 7 he did three things:

- 1) He mentioned most of what Moses had written in Genesis.
- 2) He did not mention the bread and the wine that Melchisedec brought. I won't speculate on the reason for that omission.
- 3) Paul mentioned some things which Moses did not mention.

Let us turn back now to Heb. 7 and notice these three details. We can learn a great deal about how to interpret Scripture from the way Paul treated Gen. 14 in this seventh chapter of Hebrews. (Read vv.1-3).

- 1) He mentioned that Melchisedec was both a king and a priest, actually a "priest of the most high God"! Just as a matter of passing interest, this had to mean that Melchisedec, what we would now call a Gentile (certainly not of Abraham's family), was a true believer in "the most high God." Cf. v. 1a.
- 2) Paul mentioned that Melchisedec blessed Abraham (v. 1b).
- 3) Paul alluded to the fact that Abraham gave a tithe to

Melchisedec (v. 2a).

- 4) He interpreted the meaning of "Melchisedec" and "king of Salem." This suggests that names in Scripture can have real significance. "Melchi" comes from the Hebrew word for king. "Sedec" comes from the Hebrew word for righteousness. Since the Hebrew language is a language of consonants, you can see that the name "Salem" comes from the Hebrew word shalom, which means peace.

So we have a king and a priest whose name and title gives us righteousness and peace. We will talk later about the significance of this.

- 5) Paul made a point out of some things which Moses did not mention in Gen. 14. See verse 3. This teaches us that omissions in Scripture often are significant.

We do not know who Melchisedec's father was, nor who his mother was, nor from what family or nation he came, nor when he was born, nor when he died. From the record in Genesis we could assume that he was just like our Lord. As the Second Person of the Godhead, our Lord had no parents, He was not a descendant of any family, He never began to exist, and will never cease to live. So, from just the facts given, we could say that Melchisedec was just like our Lord.

This does not mean that Melchisedec was not a true human being. He probably did have a father and mother, was born on a certain day, and died on a certain day. The point is that those things were not mentioned because Melchisedec's role in Scripture was to typify our Lord Jesus Christ. The point of this passage is not to tell us about Melchisedec, but to tell us about Christ. If we are interested in the solid food of Scripture, then let us focus our attention upon Christ, and learn of Him. There is nothing that we can do that is more necessary, nor more profitable. Learn of Him!

Now let me speak of:

IV. THE GREATNESS OF MELCHISEDEC (Heb. 7:4-10).

A. He was greater than Abraham (vv. 4-8).

The greatness of Melchisedec over Abraham is brought out by three things:

1. Abraham gave him a tenth of his spoils from his victory over the kings (vv. 4-6a).

This was a recognition on Abraham's part of the superiority of Melchisedec. We are not told why and how Abraham came to feel this way, but his actions indicated how he felt. And so to honor God, Abraham gave to Melchisedec, the "priest of the

most high God."

But there is a second way in which we see that Melchisedec was greater than Abraham.

2. Melchisedec blessed Abraham (vv. 6b, 7).

And the Holy Spirit led Paul to write here those words which we find in verse 7. (Read.)

3. Genesis 14 gives us the testimony that Melchisedec lived, but not that he died (v. 8).

We have the record of Abraham's death in the book of Genesis (ch. 25), but not of Melchisedec. So he appears as one who was never born and who never died. Thus, he was greater than Abraham as far as his record in Scripture is concerned.

I have one more point to make about Melchisedec:

B. Melchisedec was greater than Levi (vv. 9, 10).

Levi was a descendant of Abraham, a great grandson of Abraham. And so, although he was not yet born, he paid tithes to Melchisedec in what his great grandfather did. Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, was of the tribe of Levi. So we can say, and Paul will say, that Melchisedec was greater than Aaron. His position was higher; his authority was higher. And if Melchisedec were greater than Levi and Aaron, then his priesthood is greater than that which Aaron exercised all through those years that the nation Israel lived under the Law of Moses.

Concl: The whole point of what we are learning from this passage is that if Melchisedec were greater than Abraham, and greater than Levi (including Aaron), then our Lord, Who is a "priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" is greater than Abraham, greater than Levi, greater than Aaron, and even greater than Melchisedec because He is Melchisedec's successor, and will never be replaced!

If the book of Hebrews has taught us anything at all, it has taught us the unsurpassable greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is greater than angels, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua, greater than Aaron, greater than Abraham, greater than Levi, and greater than Melchisedec. He is greater because of Who He is, and greater because of what He has accomplished.

Let me just briefly review His greatness.

He is great because He is our High Priest to intercede and intervene for us with the Father. He is great because He is destined to rule the entire world as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is great because He is eternal. No king will ever conquer our Lord; no priest will ever replace Him. This is a major point in the book of Hebrews.

But as wonderful as all of this is, as far as we are concerned it is surpassingly wonderful that in our Lord Jesus Christ "righteousness" and "peace" have been brought together. The Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest has, by His death, provided righteousness for all of His people, taking our sins upon Himself. And this means that we are at peace with God. Cf. Rom. 5:1. Also Psa. 85:10:

Mercy and truth are met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

One final word:

Did you notice that the Lord is spoken of as the "**KING of righteousness**" and the "**KING of peace**"? He is not only to become the **KING of kings and LORD of lords**, but He now exercises complete authority concerning those who will be declared righteous before God, and who will find peace with God.

Therefore, if you belong to the Lord, all of the praise for your salvation belongs to the Lord. If He had left you alone, you would still be in your sins, without God, and headed for eternal judgment. But in grace He intervened, and your standing before God could not be better. It is perfect, and so you have peace. Even when it may seem that things are going wrong, and you have little for which to praise the Lord, you can always praise Him for the gifts of righteousness and peace which have met together in Christ, and upon you.

If you do not know the Lord, if you are not saved, if you are not right with God, there is only One Who can make you acceptable to God. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He died to provide full righteousness for all who put their trust in Him. And so I plead with you to forget your ideas about how you can make yourself right with God. You will never succeed. Not until you see yourself as utterly hopeless and lost without Christ will you come to Him, and trust Him, that the righteousness and peace of God Himself can meet together in your needy heart. May the Lord enable you by His grace to trust Christ as your Savior today.

WHY ANOTHER PRIEST?
Hebrews 7:11-19

Intro: I wish I could impress upon all of your minds the importance of reading the Bible by books--at one sitting! I am fully persuaded that you will get more out of your Bible reading that way than you will in any other way of reading. It might be difficult to find the time to read some of the longer books of the Bible at one sitting, but, if you can't do that, break up a book into sections, but read through the whole book as soon as you can. Do not let more than a day go by between the reading of each section.

The reason for this is that, as you read, your mind is being filled with what you have read so that you can relate what you have read with what you are reading. Of course we have to see the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we read, but this is a practical suggestion that I think you will find most profitable. And with each reading of the book the message of the book becomes clearer.

Try this on the book of Hebrews. It contains only 13 chapters, and, as I have said repeatedly, you can read it aloud in 45 minutes without any trouble. But don't speed read the Bible. Don't try to read it in less than 45 minutes just to be able to say that you have done it. Read for understanding! If you find that your mind wanders, go back and read over again what you have just read. But read, read, read!

I often think of the answer that D. L. Moody gave to the question, "What has been the greatest spiritual experience of your life?" Without hesitation that great evangelist said, "The month that I read the book of Ephesians forty-seven times." He read it once every day, and sixteen or seventeen of those days he must have read it twice. G. Campbell Morgan who preceded Martyn Lloyd Jones at the Westminster Chapel in London used to read a book of the Bible through 40 times before he began to begin a detailed study of the book. I would say for myself that one of the greatest mornings of Bible reading that I ever had was the morning that I read Psalm 119 five times.

We are living in a day when even professing Christians do very little Bible reading. Great blessings are promised in the Bible for those who meditate on the Word. And I don't know of a better way to cultivate the habit of meditating on the Word than reading it.

Reading whole books of the Bible will keep us from taking a verse here and a verse there without learning the connection

between the two. When we read the Bible by books we are getting an overview of the books and are able to relate one part of the book to another. In that way we are more capable of getting the true message of the book. Try this with the book of Hebrews. I guarantee that, if you know the Lord, reading the Bible by books will cause you to love the Word more than you ever have before.

But now let us get to the book of Hebrews.

In reading through the early chapters of Hebrews you will see that the Apostle presents the Lord Jesus Christ as unique and superior both as a Person and in His work. He is greater than angels. He is greater than Moses. He is greater than Joshua. He is greater than Abraham and greater than Levi. And, as we go on in the book, we will see that He is greater than Aaron. Compare the Lord Jesus Christ with all of the great people of the Bible, or all of the great people throughout all of human history, and He is greater than any of them, or greater than all of them put together.

He is greater because He is the Son of God. And so He is greater because He is eternal. He is the greatest of all of the prophets because in Himself He is the full, the perfect revelation of God. Right at the beginning of this epistle we were told that He is "the brightness of" God's "glory, and the express image of his person." He is great because in His hands is the sovereign control of nations and of men. He moves things along toward the fulfillment of God's purposes. And of all of the high priests of Israel our Lord is the greatest! We will see more of that in the latter part of this chapter 7, and then even more in chapters 8, 9, and 10. But the distinctive thing about our Lord's priesthood is that He is not in the priestly order of Aaron and his sons. He did not belong to the tribe of Levi. No, our Lord is a priest "after the order of Melchisedec." And this was not a temporary priesthood which He occupied until His death. He is a priest "for ever after the order of Melchisedec." He will never be replaced. He will hold that position eternally.

But Paul very logically raises the question in the first verse of our text, verse 11, WHY ANOTHER PRIEST?

I. THE QUESTION (Heb. 7:11).

Paul's exhortation to the Hebrew Christians to whom he was writing was, "Let us go on unto perfection." This exhortation is not limited to Hebrew believers; it is for all believers, whether Jew or Gentile. There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles in salvation. What applies to one

applies to the other as well.

But what did he mean by "perfection"?

He meant spiritual maturity. He meant that we should seek to become all that God intends for us to be in salvation. Stated in plain terms it means that we must seek by God's grace to become like the Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's purpose for us in salvation. The more like the Lord we are, the more spiritual maturity we have, the more we are going on toward perfection.

Now these Jews had been raised on the idea that the Law, the OT Law of God, the Law given through Moses, was the way of salvation. However, since they were believers, they knew that was not true. But it seems that while they had given up the idea of being saved by the Law, they were holding on to the idea that they could be sanctified by the Law.

So Paul was trying to get them to think correctly about the Law. Bound up in the Law was the Levitical priesthood. The Law would not have been the Law without Aaron and his sons. The sacrifices were offered by the priests. Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and even he could only go in once a year. Sin offerings were presented to God through the priests. There had to be a priesthood.

And so Paul's question was this: If perfection were to be attained through the Law, then how can we explain the priesthood of Christ, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedec?

I think that it is very interesting that this very question is a problem in the church today. There seems to be general agreement among believers that we are not saved, that is, not justified before God through the Mosaic Law. I am sure that you can find people here and there who think that we are saved by keeping the Mosaic Law, but that is not the main problem. We do have people in the professing church who think that works have a part in our salvation. Some would make it baptism. Some would make it membership in some particular church. Some would make it good works in general. But the doctrine, for example, that was being preached in the early church, that unless men are circumcised according to the Law of Moses they cannot be saved—that doctrine, if it is preached at all, is certainly not prominent.

But what is strongly advocated by many is that, while we are not justified before God by obedience to the Law of Moses, we are sanctified by obedience to the Law of Moses—particularly by obedience to the Ten Commandments. And if you disagree

with them, you are branded as being antinomian. This means that you are against the Law, and usually implies that the person so labeled believes that a Christian does not have to be concerned about the moral standards of the Law. But usually attention is focused upon observing the Lord's Day as the Jews observed the Sabbath Day. Such people are known as Sabbatarians. This speaks of a person who observes Saturday as the Sabbath, or of one who observes Sunday as the Sabbath.

But the point that I am making this morning is that we have true believers today who know that they are saved by grace, but they want to hang on to the Ten Commandments as a means of perfection, of sanctification.

Paul's raised the question that if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, that is, by the Law, they why do we have our Lord appearing as an high priest of any entirely different order?

II. THE PROBLEM (Heb. 7:12-17).

If He is to be a priest, then the Law regarding the priesthood must be changed. And if the Law regarding the priesthood is changed, then the Law as it was in OT times is no more as it was.

That is what Paul was saying in verse 12.

How do we know that our Lord could not function as a priest under the Law?

Paul's answer is given in verses 13 and 14. (Read.) That is certainly clear.

But something else is equally clear. Let me read to you verses 15 through 17.

This is clear because of what is stated in Psa. 110:4. It is mentioned only once in the OT, but Paul quotes that verse over and over in this section of Hebrews (5-7). It only has to be stated once in Scripture to be true. And that one verse would have to be classified as one of the most important verses in all of Scripture because it has to do with the high priestly position and work of the Son of God!

But back to verses 15 through 17 in our text.

Paul said what he did in verse 15 because of what is stated in Psa. 110:4.

But what he wrote in verse 16 tells us that it was not stated

in the Law that our Lord was to be a high priest, but this declaration was made after the Law was given and He is able to fulfill it because He possesses "an endless life."

Look with me at verses 23-25 a little farther on in this chapter. (Read.) It is very clear that only our Lord would be capable of holding such a high priestly office. And this is another reason why it is so important to believe in the Deity of "Jesus," as our Lord is referred to throughout this book of Hebrews. He became a man, to be sure, but He never for one moment ceased to be God!

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ is both indissoluble and unchangeable. Both of these ideas are included in the statement that the Apostle made here. The Lord Jesus is eternally the same. Lenski, the Lutheran commentator wrote:

No death could dissolve and destroy this life when this priest sacrificed himself as the Lamb of God (The Interpretation of the Book of Hebrews, p. 228).

And so verse 16 becomes a key verse in establishing the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the resurrection of Christ establishes the truth of His endless life.

Cf. Rom. 6:9 and Rev. 1:17, 18.

You can see from the truth we are discussing this morning how the great doctrines concerning the Person and Work of Christ all belong together.

But lastly we come to:

III. THE ANSWER (Heb. 7:18, 19).

"The carnal commandment" in verse 16 speaks of the law as demanding certain human and physical requirements for the priest. He had to be in the tribe of Levi, of the family of Aaron, with certain physical conditions, and ceremonies for purification. But our Lord was not a priest on the basis of those conditions. His was "the power of an endless life."

Thus, with the establishing of our Lord's priesthood, there had to be "a disannulling of the commandment going before." It was lit. set aside. Thayer interprets this verb as meaning that the commandment, the Law, was done away. It was abrogated, authoritatively annulled. The whole Law was set aside with the installation of our Lord as "a priest after the order of Melchisedec."

Why? Verse 18 tells us. It was "for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof."

Does this not sound like Rom. 8:3, 4? (Read.) There was nothing wrong with the Law, but the Law never saved anyone, nor has the Law sanctified anyone. The Law demands absolute obedience, and no child of God has ever been able to keep it perfectly. The righteousness of the Law is not set aside, but the Law, its Sabbath, its sacrifices, its priesthood, all have been set aside and replaced by the grace of God in Christ, our Lord.

Note also what the Apostle wrote in Heb. 10:1-4. (Read.)

It is through this "better hope" that we have in Christ by which "we draw nigh unto God." And it is this drawing nigh which will ultimately bring us to perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ. This "better hope" is not based upon what we do, but it is based upon the infinite value of the work of our great High Priest which He accomplished for His people when He died on the Cross. This is why there had to be "ANOTHER PRIEST."

Concl: I hope that you understand this. If it is still not clear to you, do as I encouraged you to do at the beginning of my message today: **READ AND RE-READ THE BOOK OF HEBREWS.** It is all here, and the Lord will make it clear to you.

Jerry Bridges has been talking to us this week about Transforming Grace. He has been speaking of holiness of life, about our sanctification. And he has stressed that it is not our performance that counts, but the grace of God. It is not what we do for the Lord that makes us holy, that perfects us, but it is what the Lord does for us.

The only hope that people had who were under the Law was that a Priest would come who would fulfill all of the pictures that were given in the Law, and establish a new order under which we would have hope. We have that better and perfect hope in Christ. Oh, how thankful we need to be for Him.

If you do not know Him as your Savior and Great High Priest, seek Him today. Those who seek God through Christ find Him. And those who find Him, He will never cast out.

CHRIST, OUR INTERCESSOR
Hebrews 7:20-25

Intro: One reason that I am trying to get all of you to read the Bible by books is because that is the only way that we can really see the message as a whole, and how one part of the book relates to the other parts. Note what the Apostle wrote in Heb. 13:22:

And I beseech you, brethren,
suffer the word of exhortation:

for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

This is what he called a letter that takes 40 to 45 minutes to read—perhaps a little less time if you are a fast reader.

There probably aren't many people you would appreciate hearing from if they wrote a letter to you as long as this is. But with some it would be different. If Lucille got a letter from our daughter, Carolyn, that was 45 minutes long, she would be absolutely delighted!

Perhaps one read the Apostle called this a letter "in few words" was because he could have written much more than he did about this great and glorious theme of the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, the thing that I want you to notice about what he said in Heb. 13:22 is that he called it "a letter." It was not a series of sermons; it was "a letter." That is why we call it an epistle. Therefore, it should be read as we would read a letter. And just as you read, and then re-read, any letter that comes to you from a loved one, you should read and re-read this as "a letter." It is "a letter" from God through the Apostle Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit TO YOU, AND TO ME! It is "a letter" to all of us who know the Lord.

So, when we come to a certain part of this letter, we do not take it out of the letter and try to understand it by itself. We see what led up to it and also what follows. We call that, as I mentioned last week, the context.

We are beginning today with verse 20. But I want you to notice verse 19 where Paul mentioned "a better hope."

In going through the first six chapters, and now into chapter 7, I hope repeatedly pointed out to you how the Apostle was comparing our Lord to others mentioned in the OT to show that He was better than they were. We have seen that He was (and continues to be) greater than angels, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua, greater than Abraham, greater than Levi, and greater than Aaron. I could just as well have used the

word, better. The Lord is greater and better than any of these even though they were all great when we consider the place each had in the plan and purpose of God. Our Lord was not being compared with the scum of the earth; He was being compared with the elite of the heavens and the earth. He was being compared with the elect angels and some of the elect among men. And He is greater and better than any of them, or greater and better than all of them combined.

If you have been reading through this epistle as you would read "a letter," you probably have noticed that the word "better" is one word which appears over and over throughout the epistle. We have it in the final verse we considered together last Sunday: Heb. 7:19. (Read.) "Better" also means, stronger, more powerful.

Such a verse would cause us to anticipate that the verses which follow would tell us more about this "better hope." A "hope" is a prospect for the future. Our goal as believers in Christ is perfection. At the present time we are being perfected. But there is no possibility that the goal of perfection will ever be reached by the Law. Therefore it was necessary for the Lord to provide "a better hope...by which we draw nigh unto God." This "better hope" is in Christ, and particularly in His Melchisedec priesthood! It is in this Melchisedec priesthood that our Lord is not only Priest and Sacrifice, but Intercessor.

Why does the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ provide us with a greater prospect, "a better hope," that we will reach our goal of being made like our Lord Jesus Christ?

The Apostle gives us three main reasons in our text. They are:

- 1) The oath of God.
- 2) "A better testament."
- 3) The eternal nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us look, first of all, at:

I. THE PROOFS FOR OUR "BETTER HOPE" (Heb. 7:20-24).

A. THE OATH OF GOD (Heb. 7:20, 21).

We have already learned about the oath of God at the end of chapter 6. Do you remember that God not only gave His promise concerning the priesthood of Christ, but He backed it up, "he confirmed it by an oath" (Heb. 6:17b).

God did not do that with Aaron and the OT priests who served as high priests after him. Why? Because the priesthood of Aaron was never intended to be permanent. But God confirmed

the appointment of Christ as "a priest for ever because He did intend for it to be permanent. It would be permanent because it would be through Christ that the hope of every Christian would become a reality. That hope being made sure, there was no need for another high priest after Christ.

Let me give you a statement on this point from Charles Simeon whom I have quoted before. This is what he said in his sermon on Heb. 7:24 (Vol. 19, p. 217):

The Mosaic economy was never intended to be either universal nor perpetual; not universal, because many of the principal rites prescribed by it could never be performed by those who were far distant from Judaea; nor perpetual, because whilst it was yet in all its force and grandeur, its dissolution, and the establishment of a better in its stead, were expressly and frequently foretold. The appointment of another priesthood to supersede that of Aaron, was of itself, as the Apostle teaches us, sufficient to prove that the abolition of the Aaronic priesthood and of the whole Levitical law was to take place, as soon as that better priesthood after the order of Melchizedec should be established.

Now to confirm that statement by Charles Simeon, let me read what the Apostle Paul himself wrote in chapter 10 of this epistle. Let me read beginning with verse 1. (Read Heb. 10:1-18.)

This brings me to my second point:

B. "A BETTER TESTAMENT" (Heb. 7:22).

We learned last week that if there were to be a change of priesthood, there also had to be a change from the Law. This is because the Law made Aaron and his sons high priests, but said nothing about a priesthood from the tribe of Judah to which our Lord belonged.

Those who have translated the Scriptures, as well as those who have attempted to interpret the Scriptures, have differed as to whether the translation here should be "testament" or covenant. There are probably reasons for using either one of these. God originally made a covenant which was also a testament because it required the death of the testator before it would go into effect. That is what I read to you a moment ago in the quotation from the work of Charles Simeon. In the book of Hebrews we have this discussed in Heb. 9:11-17.

Why is the new testament a better testament than the old testament?

To answer this question let me read for you Heb. 8:6-13.

These are very important words. The Law told the Jews what to do, but there never was a person who succeeded in keeping all of the Law until our Lord came. The new covenant, on the other hand, is written in our minds and hearts, and carries with it the enabling power for us to obey it.

But you might say, and say correctly, that we do not keep the new covenant perfectly. And that is right. But this is where verse 22 is so important. We are not the surety of the new covenant; our Lord is!

What does "surety" mean? This is the only time this word is used in the NT.

A "surety" is the one who responsible for the fulfillment of the covenant. He guarantees what God the Father has promised. It is up to Him to see that every person who is under the new covenant is finally in heaven, and perfectly conformed to the image of Christ. You are not the surety for your salvation. Christ is! I am not the surety for my salvation. Christ is!

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
(Rom. 8:3, 4).

This is why Paul could write Phil. 1:6. (Quote.) This is also why Paul could write 2 Tim. 2:13, "If we believe not...

And so we can truly sing,
My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

How thankful we can be for the Lord Jesus Christ! And if you are worried about the OT saints, remember that when He came, He became their "surety," too! One salvation, one Savior, and eventually, all one people of God.

But there is one more proof for our "better hope":

C. THE ETERNITY OF CHRIST (Heb. 7:23, 24).

Let me read these verses to you.

We know that the Lord Jesus lived on the earth, He died on the Cross, and then He was raised from the dead. But He did

not do what others did who were raised from the dead before Him; He did not die again!

Do you remember what the Lord told the Apostle John when He appeared to Him on the isle of Patmos, those words found in Rev. 1:18? Listen, and I will read them to you. He said,

I am he that liveth, and was dead;
and, behold I am alive forever more, Amen....

And what did Paul write in Rom. 6:9, 10?

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead
dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
For in that he died, he died unto sin once:
but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

We also read in Paul's message at Antioch in Pisidia that he said,

And as concerning that he raised him up
from the dead, **now no more to see corruption,**
he said on this wise,
I will give you the sure mercies of David.
Wherefore he saith also in another psalm,
**Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One
to see corruption** (Acts 13:34, 35).

Christ will never die again because He is the Son of God. He will never die because He successfully put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. He will never die because the work of salvation was fully completed by His death on the Cross. Do you want assurance of salvation? Don't look at your work. Look at the work of Christ, and then see Him as the risen, glorified, and as the One Who lives forevermore. If that doesn't make you feel like praising the Lord, nothing will.

But now I come to the glorious truth of:

II. CHRIST, OUR INTERCESSOR (Heb. 7:25).

Now let me be as sure as I can that we are all together in our thinking. What is an intercessor? What does it mean "to make intercession"?

An intercessor is one person who meets with another person on behalf of a third person. He is one who acts as a mediator on behalf of a person who is in trouble.

Now get the picture.

The Father is the Judge. Although we are saved and guaranteed that we will be in heaven, and made like Christ, yet we sin. Most of the time we know when we sin; sometimes we do not. But whenever we do, it is not necessary for Christ to go to the Cross to die for us again. He simply

pleads the effectiveness of His work on the Cross. Then we are restored to fellowship with God, our heavenly Father. We don't lose our salvation when we sin, but our fellowship is interrupted. And it is our Savior who pleads our case, always effectively, before God.

Cf. 1 John 2:1, 2.

"He is able" to do what no person could do under the Law. "He is able" to do what no person could ever do for himself, or herself. "He is able to save to the uttermost," i.e., completely! That is, he justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies every sinner who comes to God through Him. There is no other Savior, no other Mediator, no other who can successfully intercede for us. He intercedes for us! No one will ever get to heaven except through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, and who are kept by His faithful intercession before God.

Concl: (Read the words of Charles Wesley's Hymn, #223, in our Trinity Hymnal.)

The people of Israel in the OT knew that their only hope of acceptance with God was in the high priest and the sacrifice that he would present before the Lord in the Holy of holies. This portrays the work of our Lord and our acceptance with God. The chief difference is that the high priest in the OT had to go into the Holy of holies every year. Not so with our Lord. He died once for us, and never needs to repeat His sacrifice. And so when the Lord pleads for us He pleads the merit of His own precious blood. He is both our High Priest and our Sacrifice. We are not forgiven because of our ignorance, nor because of our weakness, nor because we may promise never to grieve the Lord in a certain way again. We are forgiven because of the precious blood. Our Lord's mediation for us is always effective so that there is no possibility that God would ever cast us away because of our sin.

If your hope is in any other person (including yourself), or in any other work except the work of Christ on the Cross and now at the throne of God, your hope is vain. If you have not come to Christ, come to Him now. Believe on Him as the One Who is able to give you perfect and eternal acceptance with God.

THE KIND OF A HIGH PRIEST WE NEED
Hebrews 7:26-28

Intro: When you speak to different people you find that they have different ideas as to what it takes for us to get right with God. Most people do not think in terms of a high priest. I heard a man this past week tell a group of people that they were capable of saving themselves if they would only do all that they could to help others. Some people who have some knowledge of the Bible believe that our salvation is the result of what Christ has done plus what we do. In other words, God does His part, and we need to do our part. But the Bible does not teach either of these ways that are supposed to bring us to God and to heaven. And what a tragedy it will be when people suddenly discover that all of their good works mean nothing to God.

What does the Bible teach?

The Bible teaches that man does not want to be saved. It teaches also that there are none good enough to be saved. And so it teaches that it is impossible for us to save ourselves, or even contribute to our salvation. To state it briefly, the Bible says that our condition is so bad, and so hopeless, that unless God saves us we will never be saved. Ephesians 2:8, 9 tells it as clearly as it can be said. (Quote.)

Our text speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as being THE KIND OF A HIGH PRIEST WE NEED. The Apostle presented Him as the One Who is becoming to us. What did he mean by this?

This is a word which we often use with respect to a lady's dress, although I have heard it used of men, too. If we are speaking of a lady we would say that her dress is very "becoming" to her. We mean that it is just right for her, the right color or colors, and a style which makes the dress look like it was made just for her.

And so when the Apostle said that "such an high priest became us," he meant that the Lord Jesus Christ was just right for us sinners. You take our need, on the one hand, and Christ, on the other hand, and we can say that He is becoming to us!

When Mr. Jerry Bridges was here for our Family Camp he gave us an acronym on the word grace. He said that GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Let me give you one on our Lord's Name, JESUS. I wouldn't be surprised if many of you have heard it. It is this: Jesus Exactly Suits Us Sinners.

I don't know who first made that up, but when I heard it the

first time it was stated as meaning that we sinners are pleased with Jesus. And, of course, we are. But I don't want you to think of it in that light for the moment. Instead I want you to think of it as meaning that Jesus exactly meets our needs. "Suits" is a good word if you let it mean suitable. I put my needs as a sinner over here, and I place the Lord Jesus and the merits of His Person and His work over here on the other side, and what I need is exactly what He can provide for me and do for me. That is what this expression means when we say that "such an high priest became us," or becomes us! If I am ever to be right with God, Jesus Christ is the One, and the only One, I need. What He can do for me corresponds exactly with what I need to be accepted by God.

But let me go back to what I was saying about a lady's dress being becoming to her. We know that it is not absolutely necessary for her to wear that particular dress. She might try it on in a store, and the clerk might say, "Oh, that dress is very becoming to you," and yet our lady might not buy it. Whether or not she buys it and wears it, will not have any profound effect upon her. She can be just as nice a person, and just as attractive, wearing some other dress.

But this is not the case with our Lord. He is not optional if we are to make our way to God. He not only is suitable as far as our need is concerned, but He is absolutely necessary! He is not One among many high priests that we could have. In fact, in this passage the writer of this epistle was comparing our Lord with Aaron. Now Aaron was a great and good high priest, but he never saved a single Jew. He did not even save himself. And so as great as he was, he is not becoming to us! But this statement the Apostle Paul was saying that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only high priest who can bring us to God.

Peter stated this same truth using other words when he wrote what he did in 1 Pet. 3:18. Listen to what he had to say:

For Christ 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.

We need someone who can "bring us to God." This is what it means to be saved. This means being accepted by God, being justified in His sight. Only Christ can bring us to God. In John 14:6 our Lord Himself said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

You and I have many sins which keep us from God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One Who exactly meets every need we have,

and removes every barrier which stands between God and us.

That is a tremendous claim for the Apostle to make. This means that there is only one Savior, and that, if people do not approach God through Christ, they will never get to God.

Why is the Lord Jesus Christ **THE KIND OF A HIGH PRIEST THAT WE NEED?**

We find the reasons given in our text, verses 26 through 28. And the statements that are made here of Christ cannot be made about any other human being--because we need to remember that He was and is a Man! See verse 24 (and read verse 23 with it).

Let us examine the reasons.

I. JESUS IS "HOLY."

This is not the usual word for holy. This is a special word which draws attention to the fact the Lord never violated that which was right in the sight of God. As he said in John 8:29, He always did that which was pleasing to God. Or, to state it another way, we have the Father's testimony concerning the Son at His baptism when He spoke these words from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Jesus Christ was perfect before God in His heart, and perfect in His behavior. He lived here on earth in total submission to the Word and will of God.

You and I are not "holy," but we need to be. Many times we have violated the Word of God, often knowing that we were being disobedient. Search all through history in every country of the world, and you will never find another person about whom this statement can be made.

II. JESUS IS "HARMLESS" (Heb. 7:26).

We could translate this as meaning that our Lord was sinless. It is the counterpart of the word, "holy." "Holy" means that our Lord is all good, as God is: "harmless" means that He is totally without evil of any kind. The Lord not only pleased the Lord always, but He never displeased the Lord. It is not just that He did not sin, but, being Who He was, He could not sin!

We are disqualified here also. And so was Aaron. But not so our Lord. Here, again, His record is perfect--no violations!

III. JESUS IS "UNDEFILED" (Heb. 7:26).

The very fact that the Lord Jesus became a man has led many to conclude that He could not have done this without being defiled in some way.

Just this past week in our Scripture reading we read 1 Cor. 15:33 which says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The NKJV renders it, "Evil company corrupts good habits." Prov. 22:24, 25 says,

Make no friendship with an angry man;
and with a furious man thou shalt not go:
Lest thou learn his ways,
and get a snare to thy soul.

You who are parents are very careful about the friends your children have. Why? Because you do not want them to be corrupted and defiled. A lot of sin comes right out of our own hearts, but some sin we learn. I have heard a lot of language in the world that I never heard at home. All of us have been defiled by our contact with the world. If we are not careful we begin to talk like people in the world do. We begin to act like they do. We want to dress like they do (or undress). We can be tempted to cut our hair like they do. We are tempted to have the same goals, to see the same possessions. Everybody, Christian or non-Christian, has been defiled in some way by someone else--EXCEPT FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! He lived in this world for a little over thirty years, but never spoke a defiled word, never thought a defiled thought, never committed a defiled act. You and I don't have a record like that. And, since we have been thinking of Aaron, do you remember how he was defiled by the Israelites when they wanted him to make a golden calf--and he did!

What a testimony it is to our Lord to be able to say, and to say truthfully, that He was "undefiled."

IV. JESUS IS "SEPARATE FROM SINNERS" (Heb. 7:26).

In the reading of the Gospels I am sure that you have noticed how often people noticed that the Lord was different and better and wiser and more powerful than men usually are--as when He was teaching, or when He was performing miracles (such as the calming of the sea). Even at the time of His death we have the testimony of the centurion, of Pilate's wife, of Pilate himself, of Judas, of the thief on the cross. Sinners separated Him from the ordinary run of men, and that was never clearer than at the time of His trials and death. Even nature itself displayed that her Creator was different from all others.

We fail at this point, too, don't we? We find ourselves

inclined to make ourselves just as much like other people so they will not detect who we are.

V. JESUS IS "MADE HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS" (Heb. 7:26).

There is no question but that the Apostle was speaking here about the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man glorified. This was proof of His Sonship. This was evidence that His work was finished and accepted by the Father. This is the emphasis of the book of Hebrews, not only in 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; and 12:2, but also verses like this, implied in 7:25, and clearly taught in 9:24.

Saints who die go to heaven, but our Lord is One Who is "made higher than the heavens," meaning that He outshines all of the glory of heaven itself. He has put away our sin. He has finished the work of redemption. No angel has a glory like that of the Son of God. He stooped to the lowest depths, and now has ascended to the greatest heights.

You and I do not have this place, nor will we ever occupy His place. But surely the One Who has this place is One Who is uniquely prepared to be our Great High Priest.

Two more reasons remain to show why He is the One Who is suited to meet our needs.

VI. JESUS OFFERED NO SACRIFICE FOR HIMSELF, NOR WILL HE EVER NEED TO REPEAT WHAT HE HAS DONE (Heb. 7:27).

Cf. Heb. 9:7. Also 10:1-4.

These are two aspects of the death of our Lord which qualify Him to be our High Priest. He accomplished by His one death what the high priests of the OT never were able to accomplish by their countless numbers of sacrifices.

When we observe the Lord's Supper, we are not crucifying the Son of God again. By His one death He provided eternal redemption for all who ever have or ever will put their trust in Him for salvation.

VII. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HIGH PRIEST FOREVER (Heb. 7:28).

We see this over and over in the book of Hebrews. We have an ever-living High Priest. He will never need a successor. Death has no more dominion over Him. Aaron died, and had to be replaced. This will never be the case with our Lord. He offered a sacrifice of eternal value, and He ever lives to make sure that He will never lose one of His own.

Concl: Here we have seven wonderful reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest we need. They are seven things which are absolutely necessary for our salvation, and seven things which can only be said of our Lord.

Three things stand out to me from what we have learned in these three wonderful verses.

First, how awful, how terrible, how hopeless is our condition because of our sin. If no one but Jesus Christ was sufficient for our needs, then our need was horrible beyond all description. We can look around us every day and see how terrible, how hopeless, sin is, and the damage that is being done all of the time because of it.

Second, we see how gloriously wonderful our Lord Jesus is. Words cannot begin to picture to us how marvelous our Lord is. Even though you may be overwhelmed because of your sin, you will never need to worry about forgiveness when you understand how great the Lord is and how satisfying to God and sufficient for us was His work at Calvary.

Third, we should never put our need together with God's provision in Christ without marveling at the love and grace of God. Truly salvation is GOD'S RICHES AT CHRIST'S EXPENSE. Truly can we sing, "I stand amazed in the presence..."

If you know Him, I am sure that your heart has been blessed by what we have seen today—and I trust that you will worship and praise Him in a deeper way than ever before because of what you have in Christ.

If you do not know Him, I urge you to turn to Christ now. Forsake whatever you may have been trying to do to earn your salvation, or to contribute to it. I hope you have seen that your need is so great that you could never meet it. But Christ is the One you need. Turn to Him in repentance and faith right where you are. He has promised that He will not turn you away. And I can tell you that, if you are convicted of your sin and your need of Christ, it is because He is seeking you and drawing you to Himself.

THE MAIN POINT
Hebrews 8:1-6

Intro: One thing that we all need to guard ourselves against is letting the message of salvation become something that we have heard so often that it fails to amaze and delight us as it should. And probably the only thing that will keep it as the greatest of all blessings in our hearts is the remembrance of what our need was, and continues to be, and the provision that has been made for us by Christ and in Christ.

It is interesting also to see the different ways that the books of the Bible deal with this same message of salvation. When the Apostle wrote Hebrews he did not spend a lot of time dealing with the awfulness of sin, such as we find in the book of Romans. But we are immediately introduced to the work of Christ in the first verses of chapter 1, and we are told that Christ "by himself purged our sins." And the subject of sin comes up repeatedly throughout the epistle.

However, the main emphasis in Hebrews seems to be directed toward the subject of our sanctification. This is what we can call the present tense of salvation. We were justified in the past, and will be glorified in the future, but in the present time we are being sanctified. Or, the word that is used in the book of Hebrews is perfected. At least one verse in Hebrews puts both of these words together. It is Heb. 10:14,

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever
them that are sanctified.

That latter part of the verse could be translated, "Them that are being sanctified."

We have seen Paul's exhortation in Heb. 6:1. (Quote.) And his prayer in Heb. 13:20, 21 leave little doubt but that his main concern was for their spiritual growth, their sanctification, their perfection in Christ. (Quote.)

The reason that most people are not overwhelmed with the doctrine of salvation is because they do not understand how great and, humanly speaking, how hopeless their condition is. Even we as Christians are lacking in the understanding that we ought to have. It is in seeing our need that we marvel at the provision that God has made for us in Christ. The Lord by His death has done everything necessary for our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification. And when I say that, I am saying more than any of us can fully comprehend.

Great charges are laid against us in the court of heaven, but

through Christ we cleared of all charges and declared righteous before God. This is justification. But having been justified, we need to be made holy. This is sanctification. We are holy in God's sight when we are saved, but we need to become practically holy in our character and in our daily living. Christ has made provision for this also. The work of salvation will finally be completed in us when we stand before the Lord and we are glorified. As you might guess, this is glorification—when we will be like the Lord.

The only way any person can ever truly hope that he can be transformed from a guilty, vile sinner into a saint is through the grace of God given to us in Christ.

When Christ came to provide salvation for us He undertook the work of a high priest. A high priest, according what we learned in Heb. 5:1 is one who represents us, who acts as a mediator between God and us. The qualifications for such a high priest were stated in the passage we considered last Lord's Day. Look at them again in Heb. 7:26-28. (Read.) The only high priest that could adequately represent us before God would be one who could fulfill all of those qualifications. No person could qualify, and this is why God sent His Son, and why His Son willingly came. He alone has the qualifications because He alone, among all people who have ever lived, was without sin. Cf. Heb. 4:15.

This leads me to:

I. THE MAIN POINT (Heb. 8:1a).

The KJV say, "The sum," but the word means, the head, or the chief thing, or the main point.

The main point that Paul was making is that the kind of a high priest we need is the kind of a high priest we have. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only fully qualified for the full salvation of every sinner who trusts Him, but He is the only One Who ever has been, or ever will be, qualified for such an office. As I told you last Sunday, Jesus Exactly Suits Us Sinners.

None of us deserves to have Him. He is the gift of God's love and grace. And in Him we have a High Priest Who has provided for our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification. If your hope for heaven is in yourself, or in your good works, or in your giving, or in your church, or in what others might do for you, you have a false hope. Christ is the only High Priest Who can get us to heaven. Ask God to show you your need, and you will need no convincing that

Jesus Christ is your only hope. How wonderful it is to be able to tell you this morning that the kind of a high priest that we need is the kind that we have--IN CHRIST!

What are the reasons that we can make such a statement?

Well, the first reason which is not a part of our text today, but it was our text for last Sunday, has to do with His Deity. I hope that you understand the Lord Jesus was a very unique Person. He was the Son of God, but, after His birth, He was also a man! As I said last week, and have indicated the same today, the last three verses of chapter 8 describe only one Person, and His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me give you the reasons that are given in the text.

II. THE ADDITIONAL REASONS OUR LORD QUALIFIES AS OUR HIGH PRIEST, or, AS OUR SAVIOR (Heb. 8:1b-6).

First,

A. Where He is now (v. 1b).

He is "set [seated] on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

Several years ago Lucille and I went with several other people to visit the Holy Land. It was a trip we will never forget. While we were in Jerusalem we were taken to two different sites which different groups claim to have been the tomb in which our Lord was buried. Which one is the true site, I do not know. But I do know this: our Lord's body was not in either tomb. After He was crucified, He was buried, but then on the third day He was raised again, and shortly after that He ascended bodily into heaven. And it is revealed to us in the Scripture that He is now seated "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heavens."

"The Majesty" is God, "the most high God" of Heb. 7:1. It speaks of God in His greatness and His glory. The same word is used in Heb. 1:3, and in Jude 25 where we read,

To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and **majesty**, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen.

What does this mean? (The following, in part, is adapted from John Flavel's sermon on Heb. 1:3, Vol. 1, pp. 514-524.)

This is the third phase of our Lord's exaltation. His resurrection was the first, His ascension was the second, and being seated at the Father's right hand was the third. This

is what is indicated by the statements in Isa. 52:13b: "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

This speaks of the high honor given to the Lord Jesus by the Father. When the Lord was here on earth He said this concerning Himself and His Father in heaven:

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
(John 5:23).

It means that our Lord's work on earth was finished. He had completed everything that the Father had sent Him to do.

And, what is just as important, for Him to be seated at the Father's right hand meant that the sacrifice of the Son of God was fully accepted by God.

It speaks of the nearness of the Son to the Father. Only Christ occupies that place. No angel is there. No saint from the OT is there. At the Father's right hand is Christ, and Christ alone.

But, at the same time, we need to notice this additional truth.

In Eph. 2:4-7 we learn that we have been raised with Christ and seated together with Him in those heavenly places. Therefore, our place before the Father is just as secure and just as exalted as the Son.

This amazing fact of Scripture is expressed in that little chorus which some of us used to sing years ago:

Near, so very near to God,
Nearer I could not be,
For in the Person of His Son
I am as near as He.

And as a final point, let me mention that it marked the continuation of one part of our Lord's ministry that He did here on earth: His intercession for His own. Cf. John 17.

This is a major theme in book of Hebrews: where Christ is now, and what He is doing.

I have mentioned the four passages which are very similar with regard to this fact, but let me now read the other three to you as we consider this one. They are:

- 1) Heb. 1:3.
- 2) Heb. 10:12, 13.

3) Heb. 12:1, 2.

What is He doing there? See Heb. 7:25.

Thomas Manton, one of the Puritans, wrote, speaking of our Lord:

We have a friend in court, Jesus the true and great high priest, who hath the names of his people graven upon his breast and should, to show how much they are in his heart, and to represent them and their necessities to God (Vol. 12, p. 330).

That is a wonderful thought, isn't it? We have a Friend in the court of heaven, there to intercede for us and to make sure that some day we are there, too.

But there is a second reason:

B. His place of ministry and His sacrifice (vv. 2-5).

"A minister of the sanctuary" could be translated, a minister of the saints. The angels and the saints in heaven see that our Lord is openly engaged in serving His people on earth. The Tabernacle on earth was only a copy of the true Tabernacle in heaven, and as the heavenly always surpasses the earthly, so our Lord's place of ministry surpasses that of the high priests of the OT. And, while our Lord's offering is not specifically mentioned here, it is mentioned elsewhere frequently in the book of Hebrews. See Heb. 7:27.

Our Lord could not have acted as a high priest on earth because, of we have seen, He was not of the tribe of Levi nor the family of Aaron. But He is the only high priest who is permitted to act as a high priest in heaven!

And then we come to a third reason which introduces the theme which will occupy our attention next week in the latter part of this chapter.

C. Our Lord is the mediator of "a better covenant" (v. 6).

Notice that in this passage our Lord is called a high priest, a minister, and a mediator.

What is a mediator?

As a Mediator our Lord established "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." But He also mediates on our behalf with the Father when there is the need to restore fellowship and peace. It is not that the Father is looking for ways to be offended with us. He is not! But

this means that peace with the Father is always maintained by the mediation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest.

When the Apostle called it "a better covenant," what was he comparing it with? Obviously the covenant that was made with Israel under Moses. He was the mediator of that covenant.

However, while there were wonderful promises given under the Law, we do not think of promises particularly in connection with the Mosaic Law. We think of commands. But even the promises under the old covenant are not to be compared with the promises under the new covenant. The old covenant was one that was conditioned upon obedience. It told the people what to do, but did not enable them to be obedient. It showed them their sin. The new covenant, which is founded upon the grace of God is one that is dependent upon the faithfulness and intercession of our great High Priest. It rests not on the blood of bulls and goats, but upon the precious blood of Christ, as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.

We will learn more about the new covenant next week.

Concl: But for now, are you beginning to understand more about the sufficiency of Christ, our great High Priest? Our acceptance is in Him, our security is in Him, and our hope is in Him. It is no wonder that Paul made that wonderful statement in writing to Timothy, the words which we find in 2 Tim. 1:12b:

...I know whom I have believed,
and am persuaded that he is able to keep
that which I have committed unto him
against that day.

In every way the New Covenant surpasses the Old. Christ by His sacrifice perfectly satisfied God concerning the sins of all who will ever trust in Christ, thus guaranteeing the promises which contribute in one way or another to the final perfection of every child of God.

Take Jude 24, 25 as an example of the "better promises" which are a part of the New Covenant. Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 4:13 are the same.

A very touching scene is revealed for us in Acts 7:55 where at the time of Stephen's death he saw the Lord Jesus "standing on the right hand of God." Perhaps this is the case whenever any child of God goes to heaven: the Lord arises from His seat to welcome that child of God into heaven! How we need to praise God for His wonderful grace given to us!

THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF CHRIST
Hebrews 8:1-6

Intro: When I was a student in Seminary year ago, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the Seminary President, said more than once that the most neglected subject concerning the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ was His present ministry in heaven. We frequently hear messages dealing with types of Christ and prophecies of Christ in the OT. Probably more sermons are preached on the life and ministry of Christ as recorded in the Gospels than on any other phase of our Lord's work. We hear much, too, but never too much, about the death and resurrection of Christ. And, although Christians are sadly divided about the return of Christ and what will follow, yet the subject of the return of our Lord is a subject of continuing interest to the people of God. But what the Lord is doing NOW, His present ministry in heaven, is a subject that seems to take the last place in sermons about Christ. And yet this is a subject of tremendous importance, and one that should be high on the interest-list of every child of God. A study of the book of Hebrews helps to correct this deficiency among believers because it is impossible to teach Hebrews without dealing with THE PRESENT MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN. That is our subject for today as I ask you to come back with me to the first six verses of Hebrews 8. We were in this section last Sunday, but all of our time was taken up with verse 1 and similar statements found throughout this book of Hebrews. I refer to Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2, as well as 8:1.

And so, for the present ministry of Christ in heaven, we can say that He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and, according to Heb. 7:25, He is there to make intercession for us. What a wonderful truth this is!

In our text, however, I want you to notice that our Lord's present ministry in heaven is presented in connection with three titles which belong to our Lord:

- 1) In verse 1 He is called "an high priest."
 - 2) In verse 2, "a minister of the sanctuary."
 - 3) In verse 6, "the mediator of a better covenant."
- These are the three titles I want to consider with you today in the hope that through understanding them we will be able to appreciate more of what our Lord is presently doing in heaven, doing for us in heaven.

Let us look, first of all, at the title:

I. "AN HIGH PRIEST" (Heb. 8:1).

The statement that the Apostle made is actually, "We have

such an high priest." Therefore, we can say that He is OUR HIGH PRIEST!

We have become familiar with this office in coming this far in the book of Hebrews. But let me take you back to Heb. 5:1 for just a moment to refresh all of our minds on what was Paul's definition of an high priest. (Read.)

We can express this inspired definition of an high priest by separating it in four parts:

- 1) He had to be a man.
- 2) He had to be ordained.
- 3) He represented men, that is, men, women, and children.
- 4) He represented them to God.
- 5) It was his responsibility to "offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

In the OT book of Exodus, chapter 28, we find the Lord's description of the high priest, his work, and his garments. Please turn to that passage with me: Exodus 28.

The whole chapter is important because it deals with the various garments which the priest was required to wear when He went in to minister before the Lord. But we are told at the beginning of the chapter that the Lord chose Aaron, the brother of Moses, and Aaron's sons, to minister as priests. But the specific nature of their ministry is stated four times in the chapter: in verses 1, 3, 4, 41. (Read.)

So his ministry was a God-ward ministry, in contrast with the prophet who had a man-ward ministry.

But let me show you an especially important part of the high priest's garments.

The first had to do with the onyx stones which were on the high priest's coat, which was called an ephod. Let me read to you from Ex. 28:9-12.

There were twelve tribes in Israel. The names of six tribes were on one onyx stone, and placed on one shoulder. The names of the other six tribes were on the other stone, and placed on the other shoulder.

Now let me read to you from Ex. 28:15-21, and then verse 29.

Here we see that every tribe was represented by a very precious stone, a different stone for each one, and they were carried upon the high priest's chest, over his heart, whenever he went before the Lord.

The high priest had every tribe represented on his shoulders, and he had them all represented again over his heart. Their names on the onyx stones would indicate that in the Lord's sight we are all equal; their names on the breastplate were on different stones, all precious, but all different. And they were placed on the breastplate, which was one span square (a span being approximately 9.5 inches—from the tip of your thumb to the tip of your little finger when your hand is spread out).

In one sense the Lord looks upon all of us as equally precious; in another sense we are all precious, but different. And every tribe was there. Not a single name was missing.

While our Lord was not a high priest in Aaron's order, yet these facts are significant for Him as a High Priest. He represents us all. All of us are equally precious, and each of us is precious though different from the others. And our Lord has been chosen as our Great High Priest to represent us before God, and to do away with that which has alienated us from God; namely, our sins. But instead of offering some animal sacrifice, or sacrifices, He offered Himself, a sacrifice so effective that it only needed to be offered once!

The Apostle Paul was speaking of our Lord's high priestly ministry in Rom. 8:34 where he wrote,

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.

But now let me go on to consider with you our Lord's second title in this passage:

II. "A MINISTER OF THE SANCTUARY" (Heb. 8:2-5).

This is really another name for a high priest, but it brings out another phase of that ministry.

The word that is translated "sanctuary" is found only in this book of Hebrews. The total list of occurrences is 8:2; 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11. Four times it is translated "sanctuary" (8:2; 9:1, 2; 13:11). But it is not always translated "sanctuary." Twice it is called "the Holiest of all" (9:3, 8). Twice "the holy place" (9:12, 25). Once "the holy places" (9:24). Once "the holiest" (10:19).

Reading chapters 8 and 9 you will see that a comparison is

drawn between the earthly tabernacle which Moses made, and the heavenly tabernacle into which our Lord entered and where He presented His own sacrifice. We know that it was always a very solemn thing for the high priest to enter into the earthly tabernacle at any time, yet it was especially so on the Day of Atonement when he entered into the inner sanctuary, the Holy of holies. But as awesome as that may have been, it was not to be compared to what our Lord did, entering into the heavenly sanctuary, into the presence of the Father in heaven! I am sure we would all agree to that. Our Lord was "a minister of" THAT "sanctuary"!

What does it mean that He was "a minister"?

This is the word that is used for the work of angels in Heb. 1:14. And there is a related word here in our text. See "ministry" in Heb. 8:6.

This is a word which indicates that in our Lord's ministry as our Great High Priest He was primarily serving God! He was doing God's will, God's pleasure, accomplishing God's purpose. It shows that first and foremost, in our Lord's death and in His present ministry in heaven, our Lord's aim was to do the will of God and to please God. The first thing was not to meet our need, but to do God's will. No wonder Isaiah was directed by the Holy Spirit to write, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isa. 53:10a). How can we possibly measure the love of God for us, His people, when it could only be expressed by the sacrifice of God's beloved Son for us. Christ put God first and God put us first! Read Heb. 9:24, and notice those words, "for us." The Lord Jesus is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle" because He is there "for us" by the will of God!

In this light let me read Rom. 8:31, 32:

What shall we then say to these things?

If [since] God be for us, who can be against us?

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?

What wonderful truth this is! The Lord Jesus Christ is in the very presence of the Father as "a minister of the sanctuary," devoting Himself exclusively to any and everything that will be for our good before God.

But I have one more title in my text:

III. "THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT" (Heb. 8:6).

What is a mediator?

Secretary of State James Baker is a mediator. He is trying to get Arabs and Jews to talk peace. A mediator is one who intervenes between two parties or individuals, seeking to make peace.

Perhaps the best example we have in everyday life of a mediator is a lawyer pleading the case of his client before a judge.

A mediator is a peacemaker. He is a negotiator, trying to for a compact or covenant between two parties which will be satisfactory to both.

Two men in the Bible are spoke of as mediators: Moses and Christ. Moses is called "a mediator" in Gal. 3:19. But we have a most interesting verse in Gal. 3:20—a verse which has been given as many as 300 different interpretations, and perhaps by now, even more.

But it seems to indicate that there is a vital difference between the mediation of Moses, and the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Secretary Baker spends time acting as a mediator between Jews and Arabs, he wants the Arabs to do certain things, and he wants the Jews to do certain things. And if both sides will agree to a settlement, and each agree to do his part, then hopefully there can be peace.

That is what the Law did. God's part was conditioned on man's part. If man failed, then God was released from His part. But when it comes to the new covenant, it is based upon the promise of God. The new covenant does not depend in any way upon man. The Lord Jesus on behalf of God has by His death negotiated a better covenant because it is based upon better promises—promises that are unconditionally dependent upon God alone!

Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Tim. 2:5, 6:

For there is one God, and one mediator
between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;
Who gave himself a ransom for all,
to be testified in due time.

Remember what we learned in Heb. 7:19? (Read.) Why is it "a better hope" and "a better covenant"? Because it is "established upon better promises." Why are they "better"? Because they depend solely upon the faithfulness of God to what His Son has done! When people come to God through Christ, they become the heirs of a salvation which cannot be revoked, and can never fail.

Cf. 1 John 1:9. "Faithful and just" to whom? To us? He does not owe us anything. He is not obligated to us. He is "faithful and just" to His Son. It is the Son Who guarantees our salvation by having perfectly satisfied every righteous demand of God through His terrible death upon Calvary's Cross.

Concl: How wonderful it is that we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest, as our Minister in the heavenly sanctuary, and as our Mediator with God.

To understand any one of these brings peace to any believers heart. But to understand them all bring a peace and a joy that is beyond anything that we could ever have expected from a holy and sovereign God. Let us praise Him every day for all that we have in Christ, and "let us go on unto perfection in the assurance that our Lord Jesus Christ has done, and is doing, everything necessary to make us like Himself.

In the future I trust that we will revel just as much in the present ministry of Christ as much as we do in His past ministry on earth and His future ministry when He comes to take us to be with Him in heaven.

Is He your Great High Priest? Is He your Minister in heaven? Is He your Mediator? If not, come to Him now. Trust in Him for all of your salvation. Remember that He is the Savior. That is not our work. We serve Him not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. And we glorify Him for a salvation that rests upon God's faithfulness to His Son and to His promises, not upon any work that we might do.

THE OLD AND THE NEW
Hebrews 8:7-13

Intro: In the early part of this chapter the Apostle repeated the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ is our High Priest, our Great High Priest, the kind of a high priest that we need! In addition he gave our Lord the titles of "minister of the sanctuary" and "mediator of a better covenant." So we have a total of three titles in this one chapter which apply to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him alone.

The expressions in verse 6 of chapter 8, "a **more excellent** ministry," "the mediator of a **better** covenant, which was established upon **better** promises," suggest that what our Lord initiated, or established, was better than what His people had before He came into the world.

We have two different expressions in our text for today with regard to the two covenants to which the Apostle was referring:

- 1) In verse 7 he spoke of the "first covenant," and the "second" covenant.
- 2) In verse 13 he called the same covenants, "new" and "old."

When we put these together we can see that the first covenant is the old covenant, and the second covenant is the new covenant.

To simplify this for you let me say that the first covenant, the old covenant, was the Law. The new covenant is the Gospel of the grace of God. This is the distinction which the Apostle John made in the first chapter of his Gospel when he wrote in verse 17,

For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The word that is translated "covenant" in the NT is the Greek word διαθήκη. It is sometimes translated "testament." The translators of the KJV used "testament" in Heb. 7:22, the first time the word is used in Hebrews. But they translated the same word "covenant" in Heb. 8:6, as they did also in verses 8 and 9 of this chapter.

Is there any difference between these two translations?

Not really! It is just that the two words bring out two different aspects of the meaning of this covenant that the Apostle was telling his readers about in this book.

A covenant is a promise, an agreement. It is sometimes referred to as a contract. A covenant is also a testament when it requires the death of the one making the covenant in order to make it effective. This is why, apparently, the translators of the NT used the word "testament" in Heb. 9:15-20. (Read.)

Now let us return to our text in chapter 8. And let this be my first point:

I. WHY WAS A SECOND COVENANT REQUIRED?

The answer to that question is found in Heb. 8:7. (Read.)

The first covenant was faulty. What does this mean? Did it not come from God? Certainly! Could there be anything wrong with it if it were the Word of God? Absolutely not! Why, then, did the Apostle say that it was faulty.

It was faulty because it could not bring a single child of God to perfection. It never justified a sinner; it never sanctified a saint. And Paul tells us why in Rom. 8:3, 4. Let me read those verses for you.

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.

You see, the problem was not actually with the Law itself; the problem was with man. He was unable to keep the Law in a perfect way. Therefore, the Law exposed man's sin, but did not take his sin away. And that is exactly what God intended for the Law to do.

Paul pointed this out earlier in the book of Romans. In Rom. 3:19, 20 we read these words:

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.

And to make it even clearer that life under the Law was never intended by God to be a permanent arrangement, we have Paul's words to the Galatian churches in the third chapter of that epistle. Listen to what he wrote:

Wherefore then serveth the law?
It was added because of transgressions,
till the seed should come
to whom the promise was made... (Gal. 3:19a).

Who was that "seed"? It was CHRIST!

Paul went on a few verses later to say this:
But before faith came, we were kept under the law,
shut up unto the faith
which should afterwards be revealed.
Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster
to bring us to Christ,
that we might be justified by faith.
But after that faith is come,
we are no longer under a schoolmaster
(Gal. 3:23-25).

If it had been possible for man to measure up to God's
standard of righteousness, then there would have been no need
for Christ to come. But he could not keep the Law. There-
fore man needs a Saviour. And that was why Christ came—to
establish the new, second covenant.

Paul raised the question in Gal. 3:21,
Is the law against the promises of God?
And then he answered his own question saying,
God forbid: for if there had been a law
which could have given life,
verily righteousness would have been by the law.
And he went on to say in Gal. 3:22,
But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,
that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ
might be given to them that believe.

God cannot lower his own standards to make salvation
available on terms that man could comply with. He has to
save in accordance with His own righteous standards. The Law
revealed what those standards were, and man could not measure
up. Therefore, man the sinner needed Christ the Savior not
Moses the Law-giver.

But now our text goes on to show that the coming of a new
covenant should not have taken any Jew by surprise, and for
one important reason found in:

II. THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH (Heb. 8:8-12).

Notice how verse 8 begins: "For finding fault with **them**,"
not it. God did not find fault with the Law; He found fault
with His people who, because of their sin, were unable to
keep the Law. And, as far back as Jeremiah's day, which was

six hundred years before Christ, the Lord had told Jeremiah to tell the Jewish people that there would be a new covenant, and that it would replace the old covenant of the Law! So they should have been expecting it.

What happened under the old covenant, the covenant of law?
See verse 9.

What was one important difference between the old covenant and the new covenant? See verse 10.

What added light is given about the new covenant in verses 11 and 12?

Unless I am sadly mistaken, I think that the Lord was saying here that the saving knowledge of the Lord would not be in the hands of human teachers, but that our Sovereign God would personally see to it, even though He would use human instruments, that all of the elect of Israel would know Him, and know Him through Christ. The new covenant is a revelation of the mercy of God and carries with it the eternal forgiveness of sins.

The Law tells us what to do; the Gospel tells us it is done!

Philip Doddridge captured the thought of this passage when back in the 1700's he wrote:

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On thee my Saviour and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all above.

'Tis done! the great transactions done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.

But now let me go back for just a moment to verse 8.

The Lord said, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Where does this leave us? I am not of "the house of Israel," nor of "the house of Judah." Is there any hope for those of us who are Gentiles? Must we say that Paul was teaching here that we are now spiritual Israel, and that is the way we get in?

There is nothing in Scripture to say that Israel became the Church, and that the Church now is spiritual Israel. You let Israel be Israel, and the Church be the Church. Otherwise you are going to be hopelessly confused with your Bible.

The Apostle here was writing to Jews who believed, but who were inclined to hand on to the Law. And so he quoted from Jeremiah's prophecy to show that this new covenant with a Great High Priest was foretold in their own Scriptures. But the answer for us who are Gentiles is that the new covenant was not just made with the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed of Judah, but with the redeemed of the Gentiles as well.

Let me prove this. Please turn to the verses that we read every time we observe the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11, beginning with verse 23. (Read, and notice the words "for you" in verse 24. And then read verse 25, 26.)

To whom was Paul writing? He was writing to a Gentile church. And he was teaching them that the new covenant was for them, too.

And to give you further proof, note what Paul told those Gentile Corinthians in 2 Cor. 3:3. Listen to these words:
Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared
to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us,
written not with ink,
but with the Spirit of the living God;
not in tables of stone,
but in fleshy tables of the heart.

How is it that we have come to know the Lord? Is it because we deserve it, or have earned it? No. We are just as bad in our hearts as any Jew who ever lived. The Lord sought us out and brought us to Himself and wrote His Word upon our hearts.

Is there a new standard of righteousness under grace? No! But now the Word has been written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and through the Spirit the righteousness demanded by the Law is fulfilled in us because we are trusting the Spirit, not ourselves.

Let me say one other thing about the new covenant before I get to the last verse of my text.

I believe that the new covenant is an enlargement upon the original promise given to Abraham. And when we wonder about that promise in Gen. 12:1-3, it seems to me that when the Lord was talking about the nation and the land, He was speaking to those who would be the redeemed of Israel. But in the last statement of that promise to Abraham we have these words, "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." That is where we come in. The "families of the earth" are the Gentile believers. The redeemed of Israel in OT times, and after the Church is gone, will be the nation,

and they will have the land. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are going to reign with Christ, but our place is in heaven. I feel sure that there is not going to be the difference between heaven and earth in the eternal state that there is now, because we are all to be one people of God, all the children of God, all saved by grace through faith in Christ, all under the new covenant.

We probably don't know as much as we think we know about how things will be in eternity, but let us rejoice today that we can know that we are saved because we are not under the old, but under the new.

Now for Heb. 8:13.

III. THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER (Heb. 8:13).

The word "new" here means new of a different kind. It is not the old worked over, nor the new added to the old, but a new covenant of a different kind. The old "decayeth" and "is ready to vanish away," i.e., it is abolished, it has ended. No more tabernacle or temple, no more Aaronic priesthood, no more sacrifices, and let me add, no more Sabbath Day.

Concl: How this passage ought to make us rejoice in the Lord! What we could never earn for ourselves, our salvation, is ours by the mercy and grace of God. And by the new covenant, confirmed and established by our Lord Jesus Christ, God is able to do what we cannot do—at least, not yet: He no longer even remembers our "sins" and our "iniquities." (The latter word is not in some of the Greek MSS, but it is in the Hebrew text, and probably belongs here.)

The new covenant is our only hope for salvation. Only by the new covenant can sin be removed and forgotten. Christ is the only Savior from sin. If you would come to God, you can only get to God through Christ. Therefore, let me urge you to believe on Him today.

THE IMPERFECT AND THE PERFECT
Hebrews 9:1-12

Intro: My subject for today is, THE IMPERFECT AND THE PERFECT. By IMPERFECT I am referring to the ministry of the high priest under the Law. And I call it IMPERFECT because under the Law the high priest was not able to do what needed to be done for sin. We already have had that taught very plainly in this epistle to the Hebrews. For example, look at the first statement in Heb. 7:11, and then read verse 19 in the same chapter. See also Heb. 8:7, 8.

As I have said before, getting right with God (justification) was not possible through the Law, neither was the perfection of the people of God (sanctification). To state it another way, the Law never saved a sinner, nor has the Law ever sanctified, made holy, a person who is saved. These are extremely important statements of truth, and I hope every one of you understands them.

Then people might very reasonably ask the question, "why, then, did God give the Law at all?" I want to give you three answers to that question. Two I have pointed out before; the third is in our text today. Here they are:

- 1) Rom. 3:19, 20.
- 2) Gal. 3:19.
- 3) Heb. 9:8-10.

This latter point helps to explain why the Apostle would take the time to describe the OT Tabernacle. It was "a figure" (v. 9), actually, a parable. And by this word he meant that he was placing the work of the OT priest along side of the work of Christ so that we would be able to compare the two. We need to see where the two priesthoods were similar, and where they are different.

Calling the OT Tabernacle "a figure," or, a parable, would also indicate that the OT Tabernacle was something of a signpost which pointed on to something that was coming later. That is why we can teach the Tabernacle, pointing out the various types which point ahead to Christ and to His work for salvation.

Perhaps I should point out to you that in chapter 7 we have an emphasis upon the Person of Christ, that is, Who He was. And then in chapter 8, 9, and 10 up through verse 18, we have an emphasis upon the Work of Christ, that is, what He did. Aaron and his sons ministered on earth in an earthly sanctuary. Our Lord died on earth, but He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary. It is good to keep all of these distinctions well in mind.

But now let us look at chapter 9, the first 12 verses.

In this part of the chapter we have three divisions. The Spirit of God has marked these out very clearly in the Greek text, and actually extends the third division down through verse 14. But I did not feel that I could get that far this morning, and so I am only including verses 11 and 12 of the third section.

The words to which I refer in the original text are words which are translated, "Then verily" in v. 1; "Now" in verse 6; "But" in verse 11. We could translate them, "On the one hand... But... But..." So he told us about the Tabernacle, then what the priest did in the Tabernacle, and finally how Christ did by one sacrifice what they were unable to do with countless sacrifices.

And so our divisions are these:

- I. The Tabernacle (vv. 1-5).
- II. The Ministry in the Tabernacle (vv. 6-10).
- III. The Ministry of Christ (vv. 11, 12).

I. THE TABERNACLE (Heb. 9:1-6).

Here we have the only detailed description of the OT Tabernacle that is found in the NT. It was constructed while the children of Israel were on their way from Egypt to Canaan. You will find the description in the latter part of the book of Exodus, starting with chapter 25 and going to the end of the book. First we are told how they were to build it, and then we are told that they built it exactly according to the plan that God had revealed to Moses.

Although it is not mentioned here, the Tabernacle was always set up so that the entrance to the Tabernacle faced east. It had two rooms. The first was called the Holy Place; the second was called the Holy of holies, or, as we have it inverse 3, "the Holiest of all." These rooms were separated by a veil, a large curtain.

In the Holy Place the table of shewbread was on the north side, or the right. The lampstand was on the south side, or on the left. Directly ahead, in front of the veil was the altar of incense, called in verse 4, "the golden censer."

One difference between the record here and the description in the OT is that our text here in Heb. 9 seems to indicate that the altar of incense was in the Holy of holies. One explanation that has been given for this is that the one time the high priest could enter the Holy of holies was on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and Lev. 16:12, 13 tell us that

the priest did this on the way into the Holy of holies:
And he shall take a censer full of burning coals
from off the altar before the Lord,
and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small,
and bring it within the veil:
And he shall put the incense
upon the fire before the Lord,
that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat
that is upon the testimony, that he die not.

It may have been that the altar of incense was looked upon as belonging more to the ceremonies surrounding the Holy of holies, than it did to the Holy Place. Whatever may be the right explanation, we do not need to be bothered by the description here. We can be sure that there is a reason.

But let me go on.

Inside the Holy of holies, and we are told here in verse 4 that there were three things in it originally:

- 1) The pot that had manna.
 - 2) Aaron's rod.
 - 3) The tablets on which were written the ten commandments.
- And verse 5 speaks of the mercyseat and "the cherubim of glory" on each end.

But having finished his description, he said, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly." The Apostle apparently would like to have taken the time to teach the meaning of the Tabernacle, but that was not his purpose in mentioning the various pieces of furniture. He just wanted to mention that which was within the Tabernacle, not the laver and the altar of burnt offering on the outside. Perhaps there were Gentiles among the Hebrew believers to whom this book was written, and so this description would have been for them, too.

So much for the place where the OT priests ministered. Now let us go on to:

II. THE MINISTRY IN THE TABERNACLE (Heb. 9:6-10).

This is the second division in the chapter.

It begins, "Now when these things were thus ordained." He meant by this that every article was described as to how it was to be made, and where it was to be placed. It was all "ordained" by God! It was important for Moses and those who built the Tabernacle to adhere to every detail because of its relationship with the work of Christ, the Messiah, which was to come.

The priests went into the first room, the Holy Place, every day, many times a day, do what God had instructed them to do "accomplishing the service of God." We read about the sacrifices and offerings in the OT book of Leviticus.

On only one day could the high priest enter the Holy of holies. When he did he offered a blood sacrifice "for himself" as well as "for the errors of the people." "Errors" is a word which speaks of the ignorance of the people, that is, sins which were not done presumptuously. The Law made no provision for the person who sinned thinking that he could then go to the priest with a sacrifice and have his sin forgiven. The penalty for such sin was physical death. This also shows us a limitation of the Law.

But notice that the priest had to be covered by a sacrifice as well as the people.

Now we are ready for the message which we need to learn from what they did in OT times. See verses 8-10. And the message comes from the Holy Spirit Who was not only the Author of those OT books, but the Interpreter as well. (We are learning more about the Holy Spirit as our Teacher in our study of John's Gospel on Tuesday mornings.) How wonderful it would be if the message were as clear in every passage as it is here. It must be that the meaning is given here because of its tremendous importance.

(Read verses 8-10.)

What did the Apostle mean when he wrote that all of this meant that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." It was not yet clear how sinners could be brought to God, and certainly it was not yet a present reality. Salvation is being brought to God. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:18, "For Christ hath once suffered for sins..." Also John 14:6.

The statement means that all of the OT sacrifices could not bring sinners to God. They could not even bring the OT high priest himself to God. Every time he went in he had to offer another sacrifice for himself.

But the Holy Spirit also meant by the words "not yet" that the ways would be provided.

While the first Tabernacle was standing, while Aaron and his sons were officiating as high priests, the permanent solution for human sin had not been provided. Something more and something better was needed. There was a "time of reformation" coming. "Reformation" means a time when things are set right, put in order, and crooked things are

straightened out. When would that be?

This brings us to our third and last division:

III. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST (Heb. 9:11, 12).

The permanent solution for sin was to be provided by Israel's promised Messiah. They were looking for a King; they should have been looking for a Savior!

We are going to learn more about the sacrifice of Christ in the verses which follow, but I could not close with verse 10 and run the risk that there might be anyone here who does not know the answer for man's sin. People do not read like they should today, and you might be one who would go away thinking that there is no answer for man's need of forgiveness and cleansing.

The "good things to come" that were anticipated by the Law have come and are provided in Christ! And He did not take His blood to temple; the merit of His sacrifice has been presented in the heavenly Tabernacle--a Tabernacle far greater and more glorious than the one which was set up in the wilderness. "Not of this building" is, lit., not of this creation.

While, as I have said, we are going to learn more about the sacrifice of Christ, at least seven things are made clear here:

- 1) Our Lord is the High Priest we have been looking for.
- 2) He is a High Priest of a greater Tabernacle than that which Moses made.
- 3) He entered God's presence with His own blood, not with blood of animals. And so he was not only the High Priest, but the Sacrifice, too.
- 4) His sacrifice was once-for-all. It will never need to be repeated.
- 5) He has entered into "the holy place" of heaven, the very presence of God.
- 6) He "obtained" our redemption before He went in.
- 7) The redemption he obtained is "eternal."

Concl: Isaac Watts wrote those wonderful words:

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ , the heav'nly Lamb
Takes all our sins away,

A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.

Spurgeon once mentioned in speaking of the OT Tabernacle that it portrayed God as being separated from man by sin. But he went on to point out that the divider between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was not a brick wall, nor even like much of the Tabernacle furniture: wood overlaid with gold. It was a curtain which once a year was pushed aside by one man as a message from the Holy Spirit that the day was coming when even that would be torn into two pieces thus opening the way into the very presence of God. He said that for three hundred and sixty-four days the teaching was, "No admission." But on that one day hope was evident as though a message were even printed on the veil: "A way of access will yet be shown." (Adapted from Spurgeon's sermon on Heb. 9:12, Vol. 35, p. 145.)

Through Christ the veil was rent. The way is open for guilty sinners to come to Christ. The long awaited Savior came some two thousand years. Since then it has been clear that the way to God is through Christ, through His blood. Have you come? If not, come today. Come now. There is no other way for you to find full and free acceptance with God, no other way that you can become what God wants you to be.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST
Hebrews 9:11-22

Intro: I have taken my subject from the first two verses of the twelve verses that I have chosen as my text for today. (Read.)

From the very beginning of this epistle it has been apparent that the Apostle was teaching us about the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. Heb. 1:3.

But when we get to Heb. 2:9 we see that the Lord is not only the High Priest, but He is also the Sacrifice. (Read.)

This twofold emphasis is one of the major points of emphasis in this book of Hebrews. The rest has to do with why it was necessary for our Lord to come, and what was accomplished by the priestly ministry of our Lord.

In the early part of the epistle (mainly the first seven chapters) we see that no creature, earthly or heavenly, is greater than our Lord. He is:

- 1) Greater than angels--in chapters 1 and 2.
- 2) Greater than Moses--in chapter 3.
- 3) Greater than Joshua--in chapter 4.
- 4) Greater than Abraham--in chapter 7.
- 5) Greater than Levi--in chapter 7.
- 6) Greater than Aaron--in chapter 7.

Then, beginning with chapter 8, speaking on the basis of Who He is, and how great He is, we begin to see more in detail the nature of His work and the results of His work. We saw in chapter 7 that if our Lord were to officiate as a High Priest, there had to be a change in the Law which God gave through Moses. Moses, in obedience to God, designated the tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe, and, more particularly, the family of Aaron as the priestly family. Therefore, if our Lord were to be the High Priest, the Mosaic Law could no longer be in force! This is a very important part of what the Apostle Paul was saying. And it is a point which many in the Church today do not understand, nor accept. But how anyone can read chapters 7 and 8, and come up with any other idea, I do not know.

The differences which the Apostle has been pointing out between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ finds its further difference in the fact that Aaron was an earthly high priest having to do with an earthly Tabernacle. Our Lord Jesus, on the other hand, is a heavenly High Priest, and His work is done in a heavenly Sanctuary. The earthly Tabernacle which was made under

Moses' direction was a copy, made as a pattern of the heavenly Sanctuary. The earthly Tabernacle was temporary; the heavenly Sanctuary is permanent and eternal. The same is true of the priesthood. The OT priesthood was temporary and typical. The NT priesthood of our Lord, after the order of Melchisedec, is eternal. And, since there had to be a change in the covenant regulating the priesthood, that is what we are learning about here in chapters 8 and 9. We have the Law spoken of as the first covenant, and the old covenant; we have the grace of God spoken of as the second covenant, and the new covenant.

Let me read again verses 11 and 12 of chapter 9 with these things in mind. (Read.)

As we consider our text for today, let me call your attention, then, first of all, to:

I. THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST (Heb. 9:11-14).

Here our Lord is called, "an high priest of **good things to come.**"

Cf. Heb. 10:1. The Law was just "a shadow." The dictionary defines a shadow as an image that is cast when an object blocks the rays of illumination. You go out in the sun, and you can see your shadow. It is shaped like you are, but there is a difference between you and your shadow. The sun goes down, or you get out of the sun, and your shadow disappears.

The Law and the Tabernacle and the priesthood of Aaron were shadows of that which was to come, but, as Heb. 10:1 tells us, they were never intended to be permanent. Our Lord was, and is, "an high priest of good things to come." Our Lord came to accomplish what never could have been done by the "shadow."

He did not come to a tabernacle made with hands. He entered "a greater and more perfect tabernacle" in heaven. Nor did He come to enter the heavenly tabernacle with a sacrifice again and again (like the OT priests did). Nor did He come with "the blood of bulls and goats."

He came with His own blood. He did a work when He died which never needs to be repeated. And He has entered into the very presence of God in heaven.

And what did He accomplish by His work? He "obtained **ETERNAL REDEMPTION** for us"! By His work on the Cross, through His death, by the shedding of His blood, He obtained our release

from the punishment that would have been ours if He had not died for us. We are redeemed! We are set free! "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1a). It is not "eternal" because we will always please the Lord ever afterwards; it is "eternal" because the Lord's death is of eternal value in meeting every demand which God, the righteous God, made with regard to our sins.

But this is not all that we have through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look with me at verses 13 and 14.

The sacrifices of the OT were ceremonial, and had to do with the purifying of the flesh. Those sacrifices were offered in faith as shadows of the coming sacrifice of Christ. But they did not cleanse their consciences; they did not testify to those who made the sacrifices, either the priest or the people, that a final solution had been made for sin. But we have this now! To purge is to cleanse from all defilement, every stain, everything that makes us discolored and corrupted in God's sight. When God is satisfied, our conscience is clear! And if our conscience is not clear, it is evidence that we are not trusting in the only sacrifice which satisfies God. Then, and only then, can you truly serve God. Before a sinner is cleansed by Christ, all of the good works he may do are only "dead works," i.e., they accomplish nothing!

Paul expressed this in a slightly different way in the book of Romans 8:16, 17a when he wrote,

The Spirit himself 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...

Such a witness will only take place in the heart of one whose conscience is purged by the blood of Christ.

So the Apostle was saying here, "If the blood of bulls and goats could ceremonially purify a person's body, how much more will the blood of Christ purify his heart, his soul, his whole being!"

The Law would always tell the one making a sacrifice, "You are going to have to come back again!" The death of Christ we can say,

'Tis done, the great transactions done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!

But let us go on to what else our text has to say. Look at verse 15. Here we come again to the truth which the Apostle declared in Heb. 8:6. (Read.)

III. THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Heb. 9:15-22).

It was by our Lord's death that he mediated "the new testament."

What is a mediator?

He is one who is able to resolve differences which exist between two or more conflicting parties.

I heard on the news yesterday that Secretary of State James Baker has made eight trips to the Middle East since the end of Desert Storm trying to set up a peace conference that will be satisfactory to both Jews and Arabs. He is seeking to act as a Mediator.

Perhaps a better illustration of the kind of mediation our Lord did when he died on the Cross would be that of a criminal being taken to court. He is guilty, and he faces the judge to find out what will satisfy the court concerning the crime that he has committed.

Jesus Christ has mediated a new testament, which required His death to go into effect, by which guilty sinners can be cleansed from their sin and delivered forever from the judgment which should have fallen upon them. And our Lord did it by His death in order that sinners might be delivered from hell by grace, not by works. The Law told the people of Israel what they had to do; the New Testament, the Gospel of the grace of God, tells us what Christ has done.

But the whole point is that it required our Lord's death. The Lord did not mediate forgiveness and peace for us by persuasive arguments with God. He mediated forgiveness and peace by taking on Himself the punishment which should have fallen upon us.

But notice a wonderful expression here in verse 15. I am referring to that phrase, "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament."

Perhaps you have been thinking as I have been describing the new testament, the new covenant, that, because the Law could not save, therefore everybody who died before Christ died would go to hell, not heaven.

This expression tells us that when Christ died, He not only died for those who would believe after He died, but He died for those who believed before He died!

The death of Christ is like a great canopy which covers

people from divine judgment from the beginning of time to the end of time.

Does it cover all people? Was it Christ's purpose that everyone would be saved? No! If it had been, all would be saved; you can be sure of that! Remember that our Lord is "the mighty God." He does whatever He wants to do in the heavens above, and here on the earth.

What does our text say about the extent of the work of Christ?

Listen to the answer to that question: That "they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

There is such a thing as a general call which we are authorized to issue to all people everywhere. It has to be general with us because we do not know who the Lord is going to save. But there is also that call, an effective call, when God calls sinners to Himself through the preaching of the Gospel. The only reason any of us has come to Christ is because we were personally, sovereignly, omnipotently called by our God to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course it is true that whosoever will may come, but no one will to come apart from the call of God in the soul.

Listen to what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:9. He was speaking of God,

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.

And what has the Lord called us to? An "eternal inheritance."

Do you remember what Peter said about our inheritance? See 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

You see, our salvation is not anything that we work for. It is not something that we deserve. It was purchased for us by the Lord Jesus Christ when He died for us on the Cross.

Now to conclude.

To emphasize the importance of the blood of Christ the Apostle really concludes this part of his epistle by reminding us that even the old covenant was ratified by death. In that case it was the blood of animals. Notice what the Apostle wrote in verses 16-22. (Read.)

Please turn to Ex. 24, and let me read to you verses 3-8.

Blood was required under the old covenant--as a shadow of the good things that were to come in Christ. Blood was also required for the new covenant to be in effect--the blood of Christ which was anticipated by those OT sacrifices.

And then the Apostle said that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). The obligation that every sinner is under in his relationship to God cannot be paid for except by blood. And the Apostle has made it clear that it has to be the blood of Christ.

Again let me remind you of words which the Apostle Peter wrote. They are words found in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19;

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow
that makes me white as snow
No other fount I know,
nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Concl: What makes the blood of Christ so precious? Because there is no other way that any sinner can possibly be saved.

For a few years I taught a course at Multnomah on the cults. And I remember running across the statement of a man who obviously was not a Christian, but he was commenting on the blood of Christ. And he said that we should never teach any doctrine that would offend the sensibilities of a little child. Have you ever known a child who was offended when you told him or her that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son," God's Son, "cleanseth us from all sin"? I never have. It is usually some would-be theologian who thinks that he knows more than God knows, or is smarter than the Word of God.

There is no salvation except through Christ--not through His teaching, nor following His example, but through His death on the Cross where He did all that God requires for even the chiefest of sinners to be saved.

THE THREE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST
Hebrews 9:23-28

Intro: I trust that our consideration of the book of Hebrews is giving all of us a greater understanding of the great issues involved in providing salvation for us:

- 1) Whatever was done had to be satisfactory to a holy God. Salvation is required because of sin. Sin is an offence to God, and must be judged by God. Therefore, salvation must fulfill every demand which God makes.
- 2) A qualified Savior must do what God requires. All people are disqualified from such a work because every person is a sinner, under divine judgment, unable to save even himself, and, therefore, most certainly unable to save anyone else.

The only One Who can possibly qualify is the Son of God Who became a man. He is the only Person who has ever lived in human flesh who is not a sinner by nature. He is the Son of God Who became a man without ceasing in any way to be God. He alone is qualified to be our Savior.

- 3) However, a perfect Man cannot save just because He is without sin. God has decreed that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). God told Adam when He put him in the Garden of Eden that, if he ate of the forbidden fruit, he would "surely die." When he and Eve disobeyed God, they immediately died spiritually (being separated from God), they began to die physically, and they faced the terrible prospect that when they died at the end of their lives here on earth, they would suffer eternal death.

I mention all of this show that the death of Christ was absolutely necessary, or no sinner would ever have been saved. Salvation would have been out of the question, utterly impossible.

Therefore, it was by the death of that one qualified Person that salvation was provided by God. And that Person was our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation from sin's penalty is attributed in Scripture to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. To deny His Deity, to deny His sacrificial death, and to deny His bodily resurrection, would be to leave us without a Savior.

- 4) But then the question arises: How complete was the saving work of Christ? How complete did it need to be? Did He leave anything out? Remember: You and I are disqualified because of our sin from having any part in this work of salvation. How complete was the work of Christ? Did He do everything necessary to save us, to save us completely from our sins?

The angel of the Lord who spoke to Joseph said that He would. Let me remind you of what the angel said. Here are his words. He said, speaking of the child that was

to be born to the virgin Mary,
Thou shalt call his name Jesus:
for he shall save his people from their sins
(Matt. 1:21b).

The angel did not go into any more detail than that, but his statement implies, and later statements of Scripture confirm, that our Lord did the full work of salvation. He left nothing undone. He is the complete Savior.

But suppose someone is here today who would ask the question, "What is the full work of salvation?"

I would not have the wisdom to answer that question if God had not told us in His word what salvation includes. Salvation is the big word that includes it all, but it is made up of three things:

- 1) It includes that all important work of getting right with God, and being saved from the penalty of sin.
- 2) It also includes being delivered now from the power of sin. Before a person is saved he is a slave to sin. After he is saved, he is no longer a slave. He still can sin, but sin is no longer his master.
- 3) It must also include the eventual deliverance from the ability to sin at all. In other words, the purpose of salvation ultimately is to make us perfect, to make us like our Savior.

When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, and then was raised from the dead, He had provided for our full salvation. He provided for our salvation:

- 1) From sin's penalty.
- 2) From sin's power.
- 3) From sin's presence.

Now there is a Bible word for each part of salvation:

- 1) The first is called justification.
- 2) The second is called sanctification.
- 3) The third is called glorification.

Justification means that we are right with God and no longer under condemnation. Sanctification means that the Lord has delivered us from sin's power so that we can live holy lives. We are not perfectly holy yet, but headed in that direction. Glorification speaks of what we will be when the Lord Jesus comes again.

Now I have gone into all of this because this is what our text for today deals with. The Apostle in this passage spoke of THE THREE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST. But he did it in this order:

- 1) The first one he referred to is PRESENT. You will see

this in verse 24.

- 2) The second one is PAST. This is in verse 26.
- 3) The third one is FUTURE. This is in verse 28.

Or to state it another way:

- 1) The first one, being present, has to do with our **SANCTIFICATION.**
- 2) The second one, being past, has to do with our **JUSTIFICATION.**
- 3) The third one, being future, has to do with our **GLORIFICATION.**

Although time-wise they are not in the order in which they take place, we will take them as they come in the text.

Let us consider the first.

I. CHRIST'S APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD (Heb. 9:23, 24).

The Apostle had just said in the verses that we considered last week that the shedding of blood was required for forgiveness under the Law, under the Old Covenant, and it is required also under the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant which had to do with an earthly tabernacle, the blood of bulls and goats and other sacrificial animals or birds, was temporarily sufficient. But the sacrifice under the New Covenant was to be presented in the heavenly tabernacle, and therefore it required better blood than that of animals. It required the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the merit of His own precious blood our Lord "now" appears "in the presence of God FOR US."

Do you remember what we learned in Heb. 7:25? (Read.)

And I would remind you of those wonderful words of the Apostle John in 1 John 2:1, 2. (Read.)

Today as we meet here, our Lord Jesus Christ in His physical body has appeared personally and visibly before the Father on behalf of you, on behalf of me, and on behalf of every other child of God. He is there to plead the merit of His blood to keep us from sinning, and to restore us when we do sin.

This is why the Apostle Paul could speak so positively about the future of the Philippian believers. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

What a marvelous truth this is! The Lord Jesus is in heaven representing you and me. What could be better than that?

II. CHRIST'S FIRST APPEARANCE ON EARTH (Heb. 9:25, 26).

The OT tells us that the high priest went into the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle once every year, and many other sacrifices were brought into the outer court and the Holy Place over and over again every day, and day after day, year after year. Nobody could possibly calculate the number of animals and birds which were sacrificed in OT times for the sins of the people.

But Christ came to earth as a man, shed His infinitely valuable and precious blood with a view to entering the heavenly sanctuary, BUT THIS HE ONLY HAD TO DO "ONCE"!

That which the blood of all of the sacrifices which were made in OT times could never accomplish, the Lord Jesus did by His one, never-to-be-repeated death. We ought to be able to understand this when we remember Who He was, and still is!

And by His death He "put away sin." What does this mean?

This means He abolished sin, and the consequences of sin, which includes death. He did away with it. He lit. put it from Him as a defeated foe. Isaiah's prophecy in Isa. 53:6 was the God the Father would lay upon the Messiah, Christ, "the iniquity of us all." And He did away with it. He provided for its ultimate and complete defeat. We do not see the full result of Christ's death with regard to sin, but this is what makes it possible for the Father to forgive us and to declare that we are righteous in His sight.

The Lord Jesus did what He came to do.

(Read 2 Tim. 1:8-11.)

This is the Gospel. This is the good news of salvation. That which we could never have done for ourselves, nor could anyone else have done it for us, Christ did when He came the first time to put away sin. Nothing can be more wonderful than this.

But not let us go on to:

III. CHRIST'S THIRD APPEARANCE--WHEN HE COMES AGAIN (Heb. 9:27, 28).

The Apostle did not get into the details of our Lord's coming in this passage. He simply indicated that there is one more appearance that we can most certainly expect.

"It is appointed unto me once to die." We all know this. We may try to ignore it, but it is true. If the Lord tarries, we are all going to die, and this is something that it laid

up in store for us. We have one life to live, and one death to die. After this is judgment. And this is no anything to ignore. But this is why Christ came and died. And in His one death, He bore the sins of many. He specifically died having been charged with the sins of many. He died that those for whom He died would never have to suffer the penalty that was rightly due them because of their sins. This is that grand doctrine of particular redemption. The Lord Jesus did nore than make a provision for sinners when He died; He guaranteed the salvation of the "many."

We are not going to be lonesome in heaven. There will be "many" there.

But what about His appearance?

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvaiton."

Many years ago this verse gave rise to a doctrine which was known as the partial rapture. Those who held it said that when Christ comes, He would only take those who were looking for Him. But there really is no such teaching in Scripture.

Who are those who are looking for the Lord to come? They are those who know the Lord. We may be looking for Him with differing degrees of fervency and patience, but believers in Christ are people who know that there is more to our salvation than we have yet experienced.

Cf. Tit. 2:11-14.

Don't you get weary of this world with all of its sin--the crimes, the constant bickering of different groups of people who think they know the solution to the world's ill. Don't you get weary of the trials that we experience in this world. Don't you look forward to the time when you will never be able to displease the Lord again? How wonderful when we will not be able to sin in thought, or word, or deed! That day is coming when our Lord returns.

He will come "without sin unto salvation."

I have been telling you today, and many times before, that "salvation" is the big word. It includes our justification before God, our sanctification from sin, and our ultimate perfection in glory. This expression, "without sin unto salvation," means that when the Lord comes again, He will not come to deal with sin. He did that the first time. He is not coming to die again. He is coming to bring His people to the full realization of what it means to be saved.

Back in Heb. 2:10 we had this teaching. (Read.) Notice the expression, "in bringing many sons unto glory." This does not mean that He intended to bring His sons to heaven. He will do that. But He is bringing us to our glorified state!

What will this mean?

We do not have all of the answers, but the Apostle John has told us a little of what it will be like. Cf. 1 John 3:1, 2.

We also have Paul's words in Phil. 3:20, 21.

See also 1 Cor. 15:48-58.

And so when the Lord comes again, when He appears for the third time, it will be to bring His people to the fulness of their salvation. Then it will be clearer than ever before that He is a complete Savior, confirming what the Word of God tells us today.

Concl: Such truth should cause us to humble ourselves before the Lord, and to praise Him every day that what we do not deserve, and could not do for ourselves, He has by His own death made certain for all who believe.

For those of you who do not know the Lord, I trust that you have seen today that He alone has the credentials to bring you from perfect acceptance with God to ultimate glory. Trust Him today. There is no other Savior but God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE
Hebrews 10:1-10

Intro: It is usually the case that when people begin to get concerned about their relationship to God, they have a very faulty view of what is required. A feeling of guilt is often accompanied with a feeling of need, but not always of hopelessness. In fact, people are ordinarily under the impression that they can do something to make God forgiving in His attitude toward them. And so they want to do something.

In the 18th chapter of Luke's Gospel we are told of "a certain ruler" who approached the Lord, asking him, "Good Master, what **shall I do** to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). It is not quite clear as to why Luke called him a "ruler," but some feel that he was possibly the president of the synagogue. He appears to have been a religious man, and he was very wealthy, as verse 23 of Luke 18 tells us.

Whatever else may have been true of this man, it is apparent that he was concerned about his relationship to God. His religious activities did not give him a feeling of peace. Plummer in his commentary on Luke said that this man's question indicated that he felt that there might be one special thing that he could do that would give peace to his soul. Bishop Ryle says that the question could be more literally translated, "What, having done, shall I inherit eternal life?" His idea of salvation was that it was dependent upon what he did, but he wanted to be sure that he was doing the right thing. And his question indicated that if he should do that one thing, perhaps making a special gift of money, he would then be certain to have eternal life.

It is impossible for us to reconstruct all that may have been in his mind, but he does represent the feeling that people have about getting right with God. They would admit that they have not always done the right thing, but perhaps there is one good thing that would cause God to assure them of a place in heaven.

In other words, people are naturally legalistic. We have the idea that, if we can only find the right thing, or things, to do, then God will be obligated to us. And we will have earned our right to eternal life.

The Lord was very gracious in dealing with that man, but if that man were ever saved he had to learn that salvation is not a reward for some good thing that we do. The question reveals a twofold ignorance:

1) It reveals an ignorance of the holiness of God.

2) It reveals an ignorance of the terrible nature of sin.

If we are going to do something to inherit eternal life, it has to satisfy God, and it has to be great enough to pay the penalty for sin. The person who wants to do something in order to be saved, does not know how great God is, how holy He is, how glorious He is. Nor does that person know how despicable sin is to God.

Man needs to know what Paul told Timothy about God and about Christ in 1 Tim. 6:16. Speaking of God Paul wrote,
Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light
which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen,
nor can see: To whom be honour and power everlasting.
Amen.

Man needs to know that sin is not something that God can overlook. The Bible tells us that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a).

Isaiah 64:6 says,

But we are all as an unclean thing,
and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;
and we all do fade as a leaf;
and our iniquities, like the wind,
have taken us away.

To make our situation even more hopeless, we read in Prov. 15:8 that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." An abomination is something that God detests, something that he loathes. Rather than commending anyone for trying to work their way to heaven, God thoroughly abhors it all.

People have a lot of different ideas as to how they can get peace in their hearts with God. Some think that they can be saved by going to church. They pick up their Bible on Sunday morning and head off to church, and then feel good about themselves for the rest of the week. But they don't give that Bible any attention until it is time to go to church the following week.

Some think it is by being baptized, or by joining a church. Some do what they call good works in church; others do what they consider good without ever going to church. Some think that salvation is the result of giving money, or saying prayers. But Solomon said that if you turn your heart away from the Word of God, even your prayers are abominable to God. Cf. Prov. 28:9.

We are considering the book of Hebrews. The problem that the

Jews had was that of thinking that they could be saved by keeping the Law. They misunderstood God's purpose in giving the Law. Look again at Heb. 10:1. (Read.)

And so I come to my first point:

I. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF BEING SAVED BY THE LAW
(Heb. 10:1-4).

I have mentioned some of the ways that people try to save themselves, try to make themselves acceptable to God. They all amount to some law that people put themselves under. But not one of them produces the desired effect.

However, we ought to agree that, if it is possible for man to save himself by earning his salvation, it would surely be by the law of God. When the apostle spoke here of "the law," he had in mind the Law which God gave to Moses. But instead of providing a way of salvation, it pointed the people ahead to one who could more than compensate for their sinful inadequacy.

When Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he said this:

For if there had been a law given
which could have given life, verily righteousness
would have been by the law (Gal. 3:21b).

But, you see, that was impossible because a law that would satisfy God would be out of reach for man. And anyway, man being a sinner by nature as well as by choice, is already under the judgment of God. And that is why Paul added in the next verse to the Galatians,

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,
that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ
might be given to them that believe (Gal. 3:22).

God did not give the Law to the Jews so they could save themselves. He gave the Law to them to restrain them and to show them that what they needed was a Savior, not some work for them to do. No work yours or mine could ever make us acceptable to God.

This is what verses 1 through 4 of our text tells us.

In verse 1 we have:

A. The truth declared (Heb. 10:).

This is not for us to discuss to decide whether nor not we are going to believe it. It is not for us to vote on. It is the truth of God whether we believe it or not. But woe to us if we say that it is not true.

Note the words, "can never," "can never," "can never." Say them over until they get into your heart and your soul. All of the sacrifices that were ever offered never saved anyone, never made anyone holy before God, never perfected a single sinner. Believe that about the Law of God; believe that about any law that man makes for himself. Those sacrifices pictured a greater sacrifice to come, but in and of themselves they were powerless to change even one sinner into a child of God.

Verses 2 through 4 state the evidence that the Law never could, and never did, save.

B. The evidence for the truth stated in verse 1 (Heb. 10:2-4).

1. The sacrifices continued to be offered (v. 2).

Not only were they offered year after year, but each Jew would come again and again offering the same sacrifices over and over and over. The fact that they did this was evidence that their consciences told them they had not found a permanent answer for their sins.

They were doing what God told them to do, but they knew there had to be something else, something that was pictured, shadowed in what they were doing, but not those sacrifices by themselves. If they were true of the Law of God, it is even more so about any law that any person sets up for himself.

2. Instead of taking away the sins, they reminded the people each year of their sins (v. 3).

In some respects this is a re-statement of verse 2, but it means that the people had no permanent peace regarding their sins.

And then in verse 4 we read of further evidence:

3. Animals could not provide salvation for the Jews (v. 4).

Again, they were pictures, shadows, types, pointing ahead to the real answer, but they were not the answer.

If you were reading for the first time from chapter 9 into chapter 10, you might be inclined to ask yourself the question, "Why would the Lord Jesus Christ have to do all that He did for our salvation?" That question should be answered by the time we get down through verse 4 of chapter 10. It was because there was no other one who could save us,

no other way that you and I could possibly be saved from our sins.

Now let us look at the remainder of our text. Here we have:

II. SALVATION POSSIBLE (Heb. 10:5-10).

The beginning of verse 5 ought to remind us of Heb. 1:6, and both passages speak of the same Person, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are about to learn that THE IMPOSSIBLE has been MADE POSSIBLE. And one interesting thing about verses 5 through 9 is that they are taken right out of the Old Testament, the book of Psalms, Psa. 40, verses 6-8.

So the coming of the Messiah should not have been a surprise to any Jew. Not only was His coming predicted in Psalm 40, but in many, many other OT passages of Scripture.

Notice that verses 5, 6, and 7 give us the quotation from Psa. 40:6-8. Then in verses 8 and 9 the Apostle went back to emphasize the part of the quotation that he wanted the Hebrew believers to notice.

I want you to notice in passing how carefully the Apostle Paul supported his teaching with Scripture. We ought always to do the same. He was not promoting a new doctrine; he was explaining what God had revealed in His Word, in the OT.

Now what does the quotation say?

It says that the Son of God was not sent to offer the same kind of sacrifices the priests of the OT had offered from the days of Moses down to the time of Christ, but a body was prepared for Him. The Son of God became incarnate. He was born of the virgin Mary. He became a real man.

And this was true because God had not taken pleasure in all of those animal sacrifices as though they were the answer to man's sin.

Instead, our Lord came to do that which had been the will of God from the very beginning. We see it even foreshadowed in the sacrifice that God made to clothe Adam and Eve before He put them out of the Garden of Eden. The advent of Christ, and the death of Christ, were not after-thoughts with God. He was, as we learn from Rev. 13:8, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

In John 6:38 we have these words spoken by our Lord Jesus

when He was here on earth,
For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will,
but the will of him that sent me.

In verse 8 we read, "Above when he saith..." I like the way the NASB renders this. It reads at the beginning of verse 8, "After saying above..." Then verse 9 begins, "Then He said..." So in verse 8 and 9 he was emphasizing the parts of Psa. 40 that he wanted his readers to notice. When the Lord Jesus came to earth, suffered, and died on the Cross, God the Father was taking away the Law and setting up the new covenant. THIS WAS THE WILL OF GOD.

And now we come to the good news. This is the Gospel. It is by the will of God (not by your will, or my will--not by the will of the apostles) in the coming of Christ that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (v. 10, NASB).

The Apostle was speaking here of that work which the Lord Jesus accomplished on the Cross by which our sanctification is looked upon as completed while in actual experience it is still going on. This statement emphasizes that Christ's death was not simply a provision, but an certain accomplishment in all of its fulness for those for whom He died.

Concl: Can we save ourselves by any means? No! Could the Law save us? No! It was not given to save. Our only hope of salvation is in the death and resurrection of Christ. That which is utterly impossible to us and to all others in every generation, has been made possible by our Lord Jesus Christ. If He is not my Savior, I am not saved. If He is not your Savior, you are not saved. But we can be thankful that the Good News is still being proclaimed.

And so I say today in the words of Isaiah the prophet,
Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,
call ye upon him while he is near:
Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts,
and let him return unto the Lord,
and he will have mercy upon him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Those of us who know the satisfaction of Christ for our sins gladly sing Augustus Toplady's great old hymn, written in the 1700's, and just as true to day as ever:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee,

Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilty and power.

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

May we praise the Lord every day that we live that the things which are impossible with us, the salvation of our souls, is not only possible with Him, but accomplished once for all and for ever for all who are trusting in His redeeming blood.

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE OF CHRIST
Hebrews 10:11-18

Intro: A couple of nights ago before Lucille and I retired for the night, I said to her, "Let me read you the passage that we will have next Sunday morning in Hebrews." When I finished she said, "Haven't you preached on that passage before?" The reason she said that was because it does sound much like other passages that we have had earlier in this epistle to the Hebrews.

The Apostle made no apology for repeating himself. There were certain truths that he wanted to get across to his readers, and that always requires repetition. Sometimes we may repeat things just because we forget that we have said them before, but repetition is a very legitimate way of teaching.

Paul used repetition in Gal. 1:8, 9 when he wrote:

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.

And then in verse 9 he said,

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.

That is repetition! Paul wanted the Galatian believers to know that he was making an important point, and he wanted them to remember it.

Probably the greatest example of repetition in the Bible is the one we find in 2 Pet. 1. And actually, in pointing this out I am repeating what I have pointed out many times before. Look with me at verses 12 through 16. Peter was not just filling up space in his epistle; he was telling them things that he had told them before, but he was doing it intentionally because he did not want them to forget it.

So when we come to our text for today in Heb. 10, verses 11 through 18, we are not hearing for the first time that the OT sacrifices could not save. The Apostle Paul had said that before, and more than once. Nor are we learning for the first time that Christ offered one sacrifice, and only one sacrifice, an effective sacrifice, for sins. We have heard that before. We are not even learning for the first time that our Lord is seated at the Father's right hand. That has been stated twice before very clearly.

Nor is it news that believers are perfected by the sacrifice of Christ. We have heard that before. The Apostle has even

said before that our Lord is now waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. He even quoted from Jer. 31 before, in chapter 8, like he did here in verses 16 and 17. And verse 18 says practically the same thing that was said in the beginning of our text.

So it seems that everything that has been said before is repeated here. How are we to explain this?

Let me give you two answers to that question:

1) These truths are repeated because they are very, very important. The Apostle does not want us to forget a single one of them. And yet there are people who read this book, and who even teach it, who still want to tell us that there are things that we need to do in order to be saved.

But there is a second reason:

2) The Apostle is concluding the first part of the book, the part that is particularly doctrinal, and he is getting ready to move on to the practical section. And he wants to make sure that we do not forget doctrine when we go on to practical matters, ways in which the doctrine is to be worked out in our lives.

There are people who do this, too, you know. When it comes to practical Christian living, you would think that they had never learned any truth. Perhaps that is true of some who claim to be Christians. But Christian living must never be separated from Christian doctrine. You find many strange things of a practical nature that are being taught today to the Lord's people, and those strange things reflect that the teacher is either ignorant of Christian doctrine, or that he sees no relationship between doctrine and practice.

If you believe that the sacrifice of Christ was perfect, that by it Christ accomplished everything that was necessary to satisfy God by purging us from our sins, then you will live one way. But if you think that Christ did part of what would satisfy God, perhaps most of what it takes to satisfy God, but not all, then you are going to live in another way. Therefore, what you believe about the death of Christ is extremely important, and the truth about His death needs to be said over and over and over again. If you heard it every day for the rest of your life, you would not hear it too much.

So we are dealing with truth today that has been taught before in this epistle. But Paul was summing it up, and possibly even among us today there are truths that will get into our hearts that we may have missed before. Or some of the truths mentioned here will draw from our hearts praises to God which we have not given Him before. And next week,

beginning with verse 19, we will enter into the practical application of the truth that we have been learning for the last nine and a half chapters.

All right! Are you ready for our review? If any of you are here for the first time today since we started this book of Hebrews, you have come at a good time to find out what we have been learning. I have tried to express it in the subject I have taken for my message: THE PERFECT SACRIFICE OF CHRIST. It is perfect because it is complete in itself; it needs no additions from you, nor from me, nor from anyone else! It is perfect because by it Christ accomplished everything that the Father sent Him to do.

I want to discuss it with you under five headings:

- I. THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:11).
- II. THE OFFERING OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:12, 13).
- III. THE SUFFICIENCY OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:14).
- IV. THE PREDICTION OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:15-17).
- V. THE FINALITY OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:18).

And, of course, when I speak of "such a sacrifice," I am speaking of the One Who was the Sacrifice, and the nature of the sacrifice that He made.

The first point:

- I. THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:11).

When the Apostle said, "Every priest," he probably meant every high priest. Those OT high priests, who offered all of those sacrifices during OT times, could never deal completely and finally with sin. They could not take away sins.

It was not that they could have been successful if more had been offered. No, it was that those sacrifices "can never take away sins." A Jew would sin, bring his sacrifice, be forgiven, go out and sin again, come back with another sacrifice, and so on and on. It was not the nature of those sacrifices to be able to settle the sin question once and for all. That is why they were repeated. And remember that those sacrifices were for sins of ignorance, not for deliberate sin. It was a temporary arrangement, but not the final answer for sin. This is why there was a need for a sacrifice that would take away sins, a sacrifice that would not have to be repeated.

And let me point this out. The Law with all of its sacrifices was given by God, was it not? So, if we were to try to work for our salvation, there would be no greater standard for us to reach for than that which God had expressed in His Law. Therefore, if salvation is not by the

Law, nor by the sacrifices commanded by the Law, then it must follow that all lesser ways of salvation are just as ineffective. My money can't buy it. My works can't earn it. My character is not good enough because I am a sinner by nature and often by choice. So, if my salvation is any way dependent upon me, I have not the slightest hope that I will ever be in heaven. Jesus Christ came to meet a need that could NEVER have been met in any other way.

Let us go on.

II. THE OFFERING OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:12, 13).

The original text does not say, "But this man." It says, But this, probably meaning, But this priest..." This puts it in contrast with verse 11. He was speaking of our Lord.

Our Lord did not die over and over. He did not even die twice. He "offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever.**" He did not just talk about it, or come close to it. He did it! He made the sacrifice. He offered Himself to God. He really died, but He died as a substitute for others. And regardless of how long the world may go on, the death of Jesus Christ is fully sufficient for all who ever have believed, and for all who ever will believe. We are not talking about something that still needs to be done; we are talking about a necessary sacrifice which was actually made approximately 2,000 years ago.

Therefore, the Apostle Paul was saying that we do not have to look for someone in the future to do what it requires to save guilty sinners. The work has already been done, and done so completely, so perfectly, that it never needs to be repeated. Let Mohammed and his followers make all of the claims they want to. The truth is we don't need him, and he couldn't help us anyway. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come, has died for sinners, and He is seated at the Father's right hand awaiting the fuller outcome of His death when "his enemies" will "be made his footstool."

Now we are ready to talk about:

III. THE SUFFICIENCY OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:14).

This is really a wonderful verse. And it describes salvation as something that is already accomplished for us as well as something that is in the process of being completed. Let me read the verse for you as it is given in the NKJV:

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

"He has perfected," meaning that the work is done; "are being

sanctified," meaning that it continues to go on.

What does this apparent contradiction mean? How can something be finished, and yet unfinished? Gary dealt with this in one of his messages last week.

If we are trusting in Christ, we are perfect. We are all that we need to be in His sight. This is our standing before God. The work obviously is not finished yet, but it is so certain that it will be finished that we can speak of believers as having been perfected forever.

However, at the same time, from a day by day practical point of view, we are being sanctified. We continue to grow in the Lord. We are becoming more and more like we eventually will be. So, according to verse 10 "we are sanctified"; according to verse 14 "we are being sanctified." Both are true.

But before I leave this verse let me point out that neither perfection nor sanctification (which ultimately amount to the same thing) are what we do for ourselves. We have been perfected, and we are being sanctified. God is the One Who does the work through Christ by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Christians are not self-made, **THEY ARE GOD-MADE!** Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

IV. THE PREDICTION OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:15-17).

If you will consult the marginal references in your Bible, you will find that verses 16 and 17 are a quotation of Jer. 31:33, 34b.

When did Jeremiah live? When did he make this prediction? In round numbers we can say that he lived and prophesied about 600 years before Christ. He predicted that God would make "a new covenant" by which He would "forgive their iniquity, and...remember their sin no more." That is, under the new covenant there would be a final and complete answer for man's need because of his sin. Jeremiah was speaking of Christ, and what Christ would be able to do.

But now look at verse 15 and see how the Apostle referred to these words. Although they were written, we know, by Jeremiah, Paul said here that they are words spoken by the Holy Spirit.

Do you remember what Peter said about the OT scriptures and how they were written. You will find his words in 2 Pet. 1:21,

For the prophecy came not in old time
by the will of man, but holy men of God spake

as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

This means that what Jeremiah wrote was actually spoken by the Spirit. And the same needs to be said about the writings of the Apostle Paul. These men were instruments in the hand of God by which we have the Bible. This book is the Word of God. Neither Jeremiah nor Paul nor any other writer of Scripture had the wisdom to write what they did. The Holy Spirit told them what to write, and so, as far as this quotation from Jeremiah, as far back as 600 years before Christ that something better was coming, something that was pictured by the sacrifices that they were offering, but a work which would bring about the everlasting forgiveness of sins. How wonderful it is to see the complete harmony between the OT and the NT!

This brings me to my last point:

V. THE FINALITY OF SUCH A SACRIFICE (Heb. 10:18).

"Remission" means forgiveness.

Do you know what forgiveness is? It is a release. It is pictured by a prisoner being released from jail after he had served his time. The law is satisfied, and so he goes free. And Thayer says that is it as though the crime had not been committed.

Now if you and I have forgiveness, if we are released from the charges against us, there is no need for us to continue to look for some way to be forgiven. But how are we forgiven? Do we serve time so that it is the result of what we do--that we have actually earned our own release.

Absolutely not! Isaiah, 700 years before Christ and 100 years before Jeremiah, wrote in 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.

We are released from the penalty of our sins because the Lord Jesus Christ died in our place. And by his death we are forgiven, and what is wonderful beyond anything that we could have imagined, the charges which were once registered against us have been met by our Savior, and they will never be brought up again. Cf. John 5:24.

Concl: There are two Psalms that we can put together when we think about forgiveness. They are Psalm 32 and Psalm 103. And I have reference to the way those Psalms begin. Psalm 32:1 says,

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered.

Psa. 103 begins like this:

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:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities...

Psa. 32 tells that we are blessed by God when He forgives our sins. In fact, that is the blessing upon which all other blessings rest. Psa. 103 tells us that we need to bless God, to praise God, when our sins are forgiven, **ALL OF THEM!**

If our sins have not been forgiven by God through the death of Christ, they are not forgiven. If Christ is not your Savior, then you have no savior. If Christ is not your Savior, let me urge you to come to Him, believe in Him, and know that your sins are forgiven and that you will be in heaven some day.

If you are forgiven, let Psa. 103:3 be to you what Spurgeon said it was to him, the first note in his song. As we pray and praise God for all of His blessings to us, let us never forget the blessing that opens the door to all other blessings: the forgiveness of all of our sins. Our search for peace of conscience ended when God showed us that Christ is the One we need, and that He saves us by his **PERFECT SACRIFICE--nothing more, nothing less, and certainly, nothing else!**

THE NEW AND LIVING WAY
Hebrews 10:19-25

Intro: We have reached an important point in this epistle as to come to Heb.10:19. In the preceding section the Apostle has been concerned with the high priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has done this for believing Jews in order to show the sufficiency of Christ for our salvation in contrast with the insufficiency of the Law. As he came to what is the nineteenth verse of chapter ten in our versions, he began to show the practical responsibilities connected with the Gospel. It was his purpose to show that the Gospel is not just something that we accept as true and trust for our salvation. It is life-changing in its effect upon us. The book of Hebrews is in agreement with the other epistles of the NT in showing that holiness of life always follows a genuine acceptance of Christ and the Gospel. If the change is not there, there can be no certainty of one's faith. Belief in the Gospel, belief in Christ and His sacrificial work on the Cross, affects behavior. And the Apostle Paul left no question as to the nature of that change in behavior. It is not just change that we need to look for, but the kind of change that is described in Scripture.

In these verses, going down to verse 25, we see that the Apostle was doing two things:

- 1) First, he spoke of two blessings that we have. This takes us down through verse 21. Matthew Henry spoke of these as honors or privileges which the Lord has obtained for us at the cost of His own precious blood.
- 2) Second, he spoke of the duties, or responsibilities, we are under because of these blessings. We see these in verses 22 through 25. And I might just as well point out to you now that there are three things that the Apostle said that we need to do. The first has to do with faith (v. 22). The second has to do with hope (not faith, according to the best textual reading). This is in verse 23. The third has to do with love (vv. 24, 25).

And so we will be thinking to day about (1) two blessings that we have in Christ, and (2) three things that we are to do because we have those blessings.

Neither one of these is exhaustive; that is, we have more than two blessings in our salvation. And there are more than three things that we need to do. However, the point that Paul was making here is that these are basic blessings and basic things for us to do in the light of what he has taught us in this epistle.

And so let us look first at:

I. TWO BLESSINGS WE HAVE IN CHRIST (Heb. 10:19-21).

They are clearly marked by the two times that Paul used the word, "Having." (Read.) Actually the second "having" which is in verse 21 is implied, and follows from what Paul said in verse 19.

We ought to note that Paul was not talking about blessings we ought to have, or blessings that would come in the future. He was speaking of blessings which are a present possession for every true child of God.

This is the first:

- A. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, or into the Holy of holies (vv. 19, 20).

Let me take just a moment with that word "boldness." It is a word which is used differently from the way we usually use the word bold. A bold person can be a fearless, courageous, daring person, but he can also, in another sense, be brazen, forward, obnoxious. Paul's use of the word may have some connection with a courageous person, but certainly not with one who is brazen, overbearing, and overly self-confident. Paul used the word to designate a person who has assurance that he has the right to do something. And that assurance does not make him overbearing and repulsive, but it makes him humble and thankful that such a blessing is his.

The same idea is in Heb. 4:16, "Let us therefore come **boldly** unto the throne of grace..." We come before God in humility, but we can come with the greatest possible assurance that the Lord wants us to come, and has provided that special privilege for us.

So it is here. That which no one except the high priest would ever dare to do, and he only once a year, we are assured that we can do any time we want to. We can come into the very presence of the living God, not fearing that we will be struck dead, but assured that the Lord wants us there. Using the figure of the scepter which Ahasuerus held out to Esther, God has His scepter extended to us all of the time.

How did we get such a privilege, such a blessing? It was purchased for us at Calvary, "by the blood of Jesus." It was our Lord Who "consecrated" it "for us." He made this possible. He initiated it. Our Lord introduced this. He started it. And He did it by His death. If it had not been for our Lord, we would not have this privilege which means so much to us. Every time you and I pray we are exercising this privilege which we have through Christ.

And notice that this is "a new and living way." It is "new" in a twofold sense: (1) It was different from what the people of God enjoyed before; (2) It will never be replaced. It is "living" because it leads to life, and a growing life. This is the only way, but it is an abundantly satisfying and permanent access that we have to God through our Lord.

This privilege that we have was shown to be related to the death of our Lord because, when He died on the Cross, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, indicating that the way into the holiest of all was now open to all of the Lord's people.

This is what we have. The youngest Christian has this. It can never be taken away from us. And, as long as we live, regardless of how mature we might become, we never will outgrow our need for it.

But what else do we have?

B. We have "an high priest over the house of God" (v. 21).

In the latter part of chapter 7 Paul described the kind of a high priest that we need. And then at the beginning of chapter 8 he said, "We have such an high priest."

There are many people who don't think that they need a high priest, that is, someone to represent them before God, someone to take up their case with God. They think that they can be their own high priest. That is what it amounts to when they claim "take their chances" if and when they have to stand before God. Or if they think that they can satisfy God by their own works.

But God, graciously, mercifully, has provided the kind of a High Priest that we need in the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is "over the house of God." What is "the house of God"? Paul told us back in Heb. 3:6 when he spoke of the faithfulness of Christ "over his own house; **whose house we are**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Our Lord's position "over" us suggests not only His greatness, but His sovereignty.

So we do not go into the holiest of all "on our own." Our great High Priest escorts us into the very presence of the living God!

BOTH OF THE BLESSINGS WE HAVE ARE OURS BY GRACE, AND BOTH

WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR OUR SAVIOR AND HIGH PRIEST WHO SHED HIS BLOOD TO PURCHASE THESE BLESSINGS FOR US.

Now think about these blessings for just a moment. And I hope that you will think about them more when you get home today. These are blessings that you and I have THIS VERY MINUTE, blessings we do not deserve, blessings that we will never lose.

Now a very logical question for anyone to ask, in the light of these blessings, is, What should we do about it? This leads us to the duties described in verses 22-25.

II. OUR PRACTICAL RESPONSIBILITIES (Heb.10:22-25).

I have already mentioned that there are three, and that they have to do with faith, hope, and love. Now let us look at these verses in which Paul told those Hebrew Christians what they must do. And their message is for us as well.

A. "Let us draw near" (v. 22).

"Draw near" to what, or to whom?

Verse 19 gives us our answer. We have the God-given assurance that it is our privilege to enter into "the holiest," into the very presence of God. What a tragedy it would be if we never went! In fact it is a tragedy if we only go occasionally. This is where we ought to be living.

James told us that if we draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us. Cf. Jas. 4:8a). He is expecting us. He is waiting for us. He wants us to come to Him first, not after we have exhausted every other possibility for help.

But how must we come? "With a true heart" - (see opp. page)
Cf. Prov. 4:23.

"In full assurance of faith." We are going to learn in Heb. 11:6 that "without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God..." And we can come with the greatest assurance of acceptance and help because we can be described as "having our hearts sprinkled..."

Do you remember that earlier in this chapter Paul told us that those sacrifices in OT times could not purge their consciences? See Heb. 10:1, 2. But in Christ we are cleansed inwardly and outwardly--our consciences and our bodies! "Sprinkled" speaks of the blood of Christ; "washed with pure water" speaks of the cleansing power of the Word. Salvation not only cleans up our souls, but it cleans up our

bodies--our eyes, our lips, our hands, our feet--every part of us.

Have you entered into the presence of the Lord yet today? Have you sought Him? Did you yesterday? Or the day before? Whenever it may have been, draw near to the Lord right now IF you know Him. If you do not come through Christ as your Savior, you cannot come. But if He is your Savior, you can come at any hour of the day or night. And you need to come. And the more you come, the more you will want to come. But COME! "Let us draw near."

What is next?

B. "Let us hold fast" (v. 23).

"Hold fast" to what? Lit., the confession of our hope. Cf. "hope" in Heb. 3:6; 6:11, 18, 19; 7:19.

"Hold fast" -- See the same word in Heb. 3:6, 14. This is both a mark of a true believer, and yet something that we need to be exhorted to do. It means to get a firm grip on something so that no one can take it away from you.

What is our hope? For the immediate time it is that God will help us. For the future it is that we will one day be like the Lord Jesus. Why do we draw near? We draw near to get help, but we draw near to be with God so that we can become more like our Savior.

What right do we have to expect that the Lord will help us? What right do we have to expect that we are going to be like the Lord? The answer to both questions: "For he is faithful that promised."

Oh, how wonderful it is to know that our God is a faithful God. He cannot be otherwise, even when we are unfaithful. You see the faithfulness of God in the messages of the prophets. A promise from God is a guaranteed blessing! As we often say about other things, "No doubt about it!"

So don't let anyone rob you of the verbal confession of your hope!

We have one more thing, one more duty:

C. "Let us consider one another..." (Heb. 10:24, 25).

Looking at the three of these duties that the Apostle placed upon all believers, I think we can say:

1) The first has to do with God.

- 2) The second has to do with ourselves.
- 3) The third has to do with other believers as well as ourselves.

Here in this third duty Paul told them to do the same thing toward each other that he told them to do with the Lord in Heb. 3:1.

To "consider" means to think about, to consider attentively. And the Apostle meant that we are to think about other people as well as ourselves from the standpoint of our spiritual lives. We are to be encouragers of one another. Do you ever stop to think of the trials that others are going through, the difficulties they have had this past week, and how much they need encouragement, or even just a comment that you are praying for them?

And in the light of this we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. To put this in everyday language, this means that you and I are to go to church. We all need each other IF we are thinking spiritually.

Now let me tell you something that has been impressed upon my heart from this verse as I have studied it again. If we do not get together with the people of God, and do it regularly, it not only means that we are getting careless about our own walk with the Lord, but it means that we really are not too concerned about how our brothers and sisters in Christ are getting along. You need blessing this morning, but there are people here to whom you can be a blessing if that is what you are really thinking about. Do you just come to church to receive blessing, or do you also come to be a blessing?

Then look at how Paul concluded this twenty-fifth verse: **"And so much the more as ye see the day approaching."** What day? Cf. 2 Tim. 1:12, 18; 4:8. It is the day when the Lord will come. And Paul tells us that things will get worse and worse as we get closer to that time.

Therefore, the nearer we get to the coming of the Lord, the worse the days will be in the world, and the more we will need to get together to worship the Lord, to hear the Word, to pray and to sing, and to minister to each other.

Concl: Now let us be doers of the Word, and not hearers only. Let us draw near to God. Let us hang on to our hope. And let us consider each other, remembering how important it is for us to be in church. In fact, to stay away from church is sinning against God and sinning against each other. May God enable us to be faithful to Him in this difficult days in which we are living.

THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN
Hebrews 10:26-31

Intro: There could hardly be any greater difference between two passages of Scripture than there is between verses 19-25, on the one hand, and verses 26-31, on the other. In verses 19-25 we see what it means to walk in the light; in verses 26-31 we see what it is to walk in darkness.

And one thing needs to be pointed out: Everybody is walking in either one or the other of these two ways. The one leads to heaven and the glories of life eternal; the second leads to the eternal judgment of God.

However, one interesting thing about this passage is that it is clear that the Apostle Paul was addressing the same group of people when he wrote this passage. I do not mean by saying this that it was possible for a person to be in both categories. But I do mean that the passage would suggest that it carries with it the idea that people can think that they are in one group when actually they are in the other.

So, as I begin today with verse 26, an important question is, "To whom was the Apostle writing?"

I believe the answer can be seen in the wording of the text itself. Paul was addressing his "brethren," according to verse 19. Then he kept saying in verses 22, 23, and 24, "Let us..." And, as we come to verse 26, he wrote, "For if we sin wilfully..."

Some would explain the message of this passage as meaning that it is possible for a person to be saved, and then through willful sin to lose their salvation. But we know from the Scriptures that this cannot be. The Bible does not teach that we can go in and out of salvation. We learned in Hebrews 9 that the Lord by the shedding of His blood has obtained "eternal redemption" for us. Salvation is a work of God, not a human work, and not a combination to be worked out by God and man. Salvation is of the Lord. And Solomon said in Ecc. 3:14,

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever:
nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it:
and God doeth it that men should fear before him.

And so it should not surprise us that Paul told the Philippian church those words found in Phil. 1:6,
Being confident of this very thing,
that he which hath begun a good work in you
will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

John 10:27-30 is another good passage which speaks of

salvation as being eternal. The Lord was speaking, and this is what He said:

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.

And so it cannot be that the Apostle was teaching that it is a person who has really been saved to be lost.

Neither do I think that the Apostle was presenting a hypothetical case in these verses like he did in Hebrews 6 when he assumed, for the sake of the point that he was trying to make, that a person could be lost.

Therefore, it seems clear that the Apostle was addressing himself to a church, probably, as I have said, in Jerusalem, where the people were all professing Christians. However, we see in many parts of Scripture that the work of the Lord here on earth is never pure. There is always the possibility, and usually it amounts to more than that, that there are those in any true church who profess to belong to the Lord, but who are not really saved. They do not possess salvation!

Some of you have probably read the life of Asahel Nettleton. He was an American evangelist who was born in 1783 and died in 1843. I mention him today because he spent a great deal of time in his ministry warning professing Christians of the danger of being self-deceived. He lived and worked at a time when it was very popular, as it is today, to use certain methods to pressure people to make a profession of faith. And he knew that no method can produce a Christian; only God can save us. Mr. Nettleton felt that having people in the church who were not saved, even though they thought that they were, was one of the major problems of the church in his day. It was like this in our Lord's day, and it surely is a major problem in the twentieth century church.

We need to keep telling people to examine themselves to make sure that they are really saved. Cf. 2 Cor. 13:1-9. Look also at what the Apostle wrote about Esau in Heb. 12:15-17. Note the Apostle John's words in 1 John 2:19. And in 1 John we have the distinguishing characteristics of a true child of God point out for us with great clarity.

But let us look at our text. While Paul was dealing with a different aspect of the truth here, verse 26 really flows out of what he had written in the verses we considered last

Sunday. He had spoken at the end about going to church where there would be exhortation and encouragement--for what, or against what? We go to church to hear the Word so that we can learn more about the Lord, and learn what He wants us to be, and to learn how we should live if we are going to please Him.

Therefore, the first danger sign for ourselves, or for us to see in the lives of others is:

I. THE WILLFUL SINNER (Heb. 10:26, 27).

The word for "sin" is in the present tense, and it points to something that is going on continuously. He is speaking of a person who persists in willful sin as a way of life, meaning that they do it voluntarily, by one's own personal choice, and with complete disregard for the consequences.

It doesn't have to be some gross sin; it only has to be sin--anything that is displeasing to the Lord. Unfortunately, little acts of sin soon grow into greater acts of sin, and the willful sinner finds himself, or herself, doing things that he or she never expected to do.

The Apostle John wrote twice in his first epistle, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John 3:9a), and, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." He was not saying that a Christian never sins, but he was saying that a Christian does not live in sin. He is bothered by sin, and wants to be delivered from his sin. If he keeps living the way he wants to live in contrast with the way God wants him to live, his salvation is suspect, very suspect.

Look out for the person who tries to justify his sin by explaining why is it OK for him to do what God says he should not do, or why it is OK for him not to do what God says that he should do. And if that person happens to be you, you should seek the mercy of God in salvation as fast as you can.

Now it seems that Paul had in mind the person who knew a lot of truth. The word that he used here for "knowledge" is the Greek word for full knowledge. And I believe I am right when I say that this is the only time he used this word in the whole epistle to the Hebrews. He was speaking to people who had been well-taught in the Word of God. And in their case he may have been speaking of the tendency some people have to say that there is more than one way for a sinner to be saved.

But Paul said that if you have that idea (and many people do), then you need to know that, if you turn away from Christ, there is no other one to whom you can turn who will

save you. This is what Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other..." So we don't have many choices, not even two. If we are not saved by Christ, we are not saved. It is just as simple as that. People don't like to be told that, and there are people in churches today who don't believe that. But John 14:6 still stands as the truth—and it was our Lord Who said it. "I am the way..."

What does the person without Christ have to look forward to? A "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." And this is THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN. Nothing can possibly be as bad as this because it is final and eternal! There is no possibility of escaping the judgment of God apart from the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, to emphasize how dreadful such a condition is, Paul drew a comparison with which they as Jews would have been familiar.

II. A COMPARISON OF JUDGMENTS (Heb. 10:28, 29).

A. Under Moses' Law (v. 28).

Every Jew knew this to be true. And they could read it in Num. 30, 31 and Deut. 17:6 and 19:15.

At this point we need to remember that back in the third chapter of Hebrews the Apostle had shown that our Lord was, and is, greater than Moses. So, that being true, if physical death were the penalty for willfully disobeying Moses' Law, what should be expected if they rejected Christ?

B. With the rejection of Christ (v. 29).

When Paul spoke of despising Moses' Law in verse 28, he had in mind treating the Law as though it did not even exist, and he expressed it in such a way that such treatment final and decisive. It amounted to the rejection of the Word of God.

But now he was dealing with Christ. And he laid three charges against the willful sinner.

1. He has "trodden under foot the Son of God."

To do this is to reject Christ, to reject His authority, His words, to treat Him as though He were only a human being. It is treat Him as though your idea is better and truer than anything that He said. You despise Him when you reject Him.

2. "Hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."

To whom was Paul referring in this statement. Following from the reference to our Lord as "the Son of God," it appears that he was speaking here about the Lord. The OT priests were set apart for their work by sacrificial blood. Our Lord had to be anointed for His priestly ministry, too. But since His was a far greater priesthood than Aaron's, as we have seen, His consecration to His priestly office was by infinitely better blood: His own!

And it was by His blood that the New Covenant was established.

So the person who rejects Christ says, in effect, that He is not a Priest, and that His blood is of no more importance than anyone else's blood! Such a charge makes the blood of Christ "an unholy thing." This, of course, is the greatest blasphemy. This is a denial of verses 19-21 in this chapter.

3. "And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

"The Spirit of grace" is the Holy Spirit. He ministers grace to our hearts--the only basis on which God can have anything to do with us. To do "despite unto the Spirit of grace" is to reject His testimony in the Word, and to deny His work in bringing us to Christ.

John Owen made the comment in his commentary, referring to what Ananias and Sapphira did (cf. Acts 5:1-11),

And if lying unto the Holy Spirit is so great a sin, what is it to make the Holy Spirit a liar?

Along this same line the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:10,
He that believeth on the Son of God
hath the witness in himself:
he that believeth not God **hath made him a liar;**
because he believeth not the record
that God gave of His Son.

These are the charges which are laid against the person who has heard the truth, and may claim to believe it, but who continues on in sin.

Now I come to my final point:

III. THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE (Heb. 10:30, 31).

The person who, having heard the Word, yet continues on in sin, is a person who actually rejects all that the Scriptures teach regarding sin and salvation and judgment.

But do you know what that changes? Nothing! I am sure I have told you, perhaps more than once, a statement I heard long ago which was made by D. L. Moody. He said that when he was speaking to someone who did not believe that the Bible was the Word of God, he kept giving it to them anyway because what they believed didn't change that fact that the Bible is the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul was like that. Let people despise Christ. Let them despise the Holy Spirit. Let them despise the Word of God. How did he prove that judgment was ahead for the willful sinner? He quoted two verses from Deut. 32, and you find them here in our text in verse 30. (Read.)

God is the One Who judges us; we are not the ones who judge Him, or judge what He has said. We need to get our thinking straight on this point. And, if we are not trusting in Christ, it ought to make us fearful because the Apostle went on to say by way of conclusion, **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."**

We had this word "fearful" in verse 27. Let me repeat: This is **THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN** to anyone, to fall into the hands of the living God." This means to face God without Christ. This means to face God without being cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. This means facing God while you are still in your sins.

Concl: These are very solemn words we have been considering today. They tell us a lot about the people who have been taught the Word, and yet continue on in their sin. If anything, a greater judgment awaits them.

Just yesterday many of us read 2 Pet. 2 for our NT reading in going through the Bible. Let me read those words for you again as I close my message. They are found in verses 20-22 of 2 Peter 2. (Read.)

I ask each of you today, Are you saved by the blood of Christ? If you say, "Yes," let me ask you another question, Does your life back up your claim? Or are you what Paul called, a willful sinner. You know what you should be, but you aren't what you should be. You know what you should do, but you aren't doing it. Oh, let me charge you this morning to seek the Lord and His mercy, to ask Him to make you a new creature in Christ, so that you will turn from your sin and escape the judgment of God. Cf. Heb. 9:27, 28.

THE ROAD TO HEAVEN
Hebrews 10:32-39

Intro: If you have been reading the book of Hebrews, I hope that you have noticed that there is a real change in the book beginning with chapter 10, verse 19. This is usually pointed out as being the beginning of the practical section of the epistle--and that is what it is!

However, there is another way in which the epistle changes at this point.

Up to Heb. 10:18 the apostle has been concerned with the truth of salvation through the high priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has not only been concerned that the Hebrew believers to whom he was writing understand this truth, but he has shown his concern about their spiritual growth and development. We saw that in the latter part of chapter 5 and all of chapter 6. He wanted them to know that their perfection, that is, their spiritual maturity, could not be attained through the Mosaic Law, but through the work of Christ as our great High Priest. And when he spoke of the work of our great High Priest, he made it very clear that he was speaking both of our Lord's work on the Cross and His present ministry at the right hand of the Father in heaven. They as the Lord's people, and we as the Lord's people today, cannot make ourselves spiritually what we ought to be. That is only possible through Christ. Hebrews 7:25 says that our Lord is able to save us completely because He ever lives to make intercession for us. Therefore, to ignore Christ is to remain in a state of spiritual infancy.

I hope each one of us understands these great truths. If not, let me encourage you to go back over those first nine and one-half chapters of Hebrews. Read them prayerfully and carefully and repeatedly, asking the Lord to show you the sufficiency of Christ as our Savior. And if I can be of further help to you, I hope you will let me know.

Now, as we come to the latter part of chapter 10, and then move on to end of the epistle, we learn another thing about the Hebrew believers to whom this letter was first sent. We learn that they were having a hard time. They were not finding THE ROAD TO HEAVEN easy! In fact, they were finding it hard. That is apparent in our text for today. It also explains why the apostle delved into sacred history in chapter 11, and why he had so much to say about the Lord's chastening in chapter 12. And even in chapter 13, verses 12 and 13, we see that the apostle wrote,

Wherefore Jesus also,
that he might sanctify the people with his own blood,

suffered without the camp.

Let us go forth therefore unto him with out the camp,
bearing his reproach.

The point is that the Lord suffered here on earth, and if we are related to Him, we need to expect suffering in this world also. Those of us who are studying the Gospel of John in the Tuesday Bible Class have seen how the Lord warned His apostles to expect the same kind of treatment from the world that He had received from the world.

And so, going to our text, let us notice, first of all,

I. THE APOSTLE'S CALL TO REMEMBRANCE (Heb. 10:32-34).

His reference to "the former days" points back to days of some time in the past. He was speaking to believers who had not just been saved, but who had been saved for some time-- perhaps long enough to forget what things were like when they were first "illuminated." He wanted them to remember that they had immediately become embroiled in "a great fight of afflictions." They found themselves in a warfare, a spiritual warfare, which caused them great suffering, both physically and emotionally.

And there were two reasons for this as we learn from verse 33.

First, they "were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions." They soon found out that they were a marked people. They were like actors on a stage who were the objects of verbal disgrace and abuse ("reproaches"), and they were put under all kinds of pressure ("afflictions")-- probably to renounce their faith in Christ. They found out immediately that THE ROAD TO HEAVEN was not easy! In fact, it was very, very hard.

This is quite different from the picture that is sometimes given to non-Christians about what it means to be a Christian. It is not unusual to hear well-meaning Christians promise those who are not Christians that if they will receive Christ, their problems will all be solved, they won't be lonely any more, they will have lots of friends, life will be full of joy and prosperity, and on and on the promises go. How different this is from the salvation which the early Christians experienced.

Let me ask you, have you ever known a husband who divorced his wife because she became a Christian, or vice versa? I have. Have you ever known parents to disown a child because he or she became a Christian? I have. Have you ever known a

Christian to lose his job because he refused to tell lies or do dishonest things in dealing with customers? I have. Have you ever known of a young person whose friends deserted him when he became a Christian? I have. Perhaps some of you have experienced some of these things, and just because you took the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. It may not have come right away as it did with the Hebrew believers we are reading about this morning, but it doesn't take long for the world to find out when a person has trusted Christ. Then friendships end. Families are divided. And persecution begins, sometimes with the silent treatment; sometimes with active opposition.

Cf. what the Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Pet. 4:1-5, esp. v. 4.

We read in our text that there are two reasons for this treatment.

First, because they "were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions."

This means that they were like actors on a stage who were publicly and verbally abused, ridiculed, disgraced, and put to shame. This is the meaning of "reproaches." By "afflictions" he meant pressure that was put on them, probably to renounce their faith in Christ. A Christian by the very fact that he is a child of God exposes the sins of the people of the world, and they lash out at the Christian in self-defence.

The second reason for the trouble was that they "became companions of those that were so used." Instead of joining in the ridicule of Christians, those who had trusted the Lord sided with those who were being persecuted. And this only adds to the fury of ungodly people. You can see how quickly the friends of Saul of Tarsus wanted to kill him after he became a believer in Christ. Cf. Acts 9:23.

The word "companions" is from the same root in the original language as the word for fellowship. There is a bond of fellowship among all true believers which makes them stand together even when it means suffering, and possibly death.

Now the proof of what Paul was saying was confirmed by the way they had treated him, and by the way they reacted when their earthly possessions were taken away from them. See verse 34. They "had compassion" on the Apostle. They were sympathetic with him even though their sympathy might cause them to be imprisoned for their faith.

And the reason for such behavior in the presence of such

terrible opposition was that they knew in their own hearts that they had "in heaven a better and enduring substance."

We are going to learn more about this when we get into chapter 11, but let us note here that the only way we can be joyful and persevering in this world is for us to treasure what is heavenly more than we do what is earthly.

And so it is not surprising that at the beginning of our text we read that in those "former days" they had "endured a great fight of afflictions." In their new-found love for the Lord, they persevered. They were not intimidated and made to renounce their faith. They proved that their faith was genuine by remaining under the sufferings in spite of what the consequences might be.

Verses 32 through 34 tell about their behavior in those "former days." In the last five verses of our text for today we have:

II. THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION FOR THE PRESENT (Heb. 10:35-39).

It seems as though these Hebrew believers had a rough start when they first became Christians, then things may have quieted down for a while. But perhaps one reason for the writing of this epistle was to help them when persecution had started again. It may have taken these believers by surprise. And so the apostle was writing to encourage them to be faithful to the Lord.

We ought to note that past faithfulness does not mean that we will necessarily face new troubles with the same determination that we have in the past.

The word "confidence" is the same word in the original which is translated "boldness" in Heb. 10:19. The same word is used in Heb. 3:6 and 4:16. It means assurance. They were not to cast their hope aside as though it were a worthless thing. He was speaking of their assurance that God's promise was true. See "promise" in Heb. 10:36.

This takes us back to Heb. 6, verses 11-20. "The promise" has to do with our salvation, the ultimate completion of all that God has provided for us through the high priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is to this promise that all of the other promises of the Word for the people of God are related. It is a sure promise, a promise which carries with it a great reward. Paul told Timothy that "godliness" has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

What those Hebrew Christians needed, and what we need day by day, is "patience." This is the God-given ability to persevere in trusting God even when faced with the greatest trials and sufferings for one's faith in Christ. It is exactly the same thought that we had in the word "endured" in verse 32.

And what we need is what God supplies: "patience."

"Having done the will of God" here has to mean trusting in Christ as Savior. We trusted Him when we were first saved, and we continue to trust Him, looking forward to the time when we will "receive the promise," meaning that we will fully experience all that our great High Priest has provided for us by His death and by His present ministry in heaven.

Cf. Heb. 9:15.

To confirm that this is what he was talking about, Paul then quoted two verses from the prophecy of Habakkuk: Hab. 2:3, 4. He may also have borrowed a phrase from Isa. 26:20. He adapts his quotation to suit his purpose here, and that is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit Who was guiding him.

In verse 38 we have that statement from Habakkuk which is quoted three times in the NT: here, in Rom. 1:17, and in Gal. 3:11. The repetition shows that it is one of the most important texts in all of Scripture--and here the Apostle was preparing his readers for that which would follow in chapter 11: "The just shall live by faith." And to live by faith is to live in hope. When our faith is turned to sight then we will no longer need to hope.

The just do not begin by faith, and then continue on in some other way, but they "live by faith." They start by faith, and they continue by faith. To live by faith is to live trusting God, not in ourselves and what we can do, nor in others and what they can do for us. We trust in God, and in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage is full of the kind of evidence we need to look for to confirm the reality of our faith. Some will draw back, but not those who are truly born again. We believe to the saving of the soul, i.e., all of the way through until the work of salvation is completed.

Concl: This passage brings before us four very important truths:

- 1) We must expect suffering for our faith as long as we are in this world. The intensity of the persecution will

differ from time to time, but Paul's words to Timothy still apply:

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

If things go easy for us in the world, we need to examine our lives to see how godly we are.

What should be our reaction to testings and trials? Cf. Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12, 13.

- 2) Perseverance under trial is evidence that a person has really been saved.

There is a danger that we place too much confidence in a certain time when we professed faith in Christ. That is never cited in Scripture as reliable proof of salvation. Instead, it is always when is going on in our lives from day to day. We can fail the Lord, and we all do, but a true child of God will persevere to the end.

- 3) Persecution has a purifying effect upon the professing church. Individual believers are made more holy by such suffering. Those who are not true believers will "draw back" and away from God and from His people, and ultimately to eternal judgment.

However, our text shows that we need to encourage each other to be faithful to the Lord when trials and persecution come our way.

- 4) The absolute necessity for faith.

I hope that it can be said of all of us as Paul said about those who first received this epistle: "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that **believe** to the saving of the soul."

Charles Simeon, whom I have often quoted, concluded his message on this passage with the following words:

But, notwithstanding all that is said of [faith] in the Holy Scriptures, and the indispensable necessity of it to the salvation of the soul, how few condemn themselves for their [lack] of it! How few pray to God for it, or are even conscious of their need of it! What greater proof can there be of the blindness with which Satan has blinded the whole world! Men will readily enough acknowledge their need of holiness; but of faith they feel no need: they think they have as much of it as is necessary for their salvation. But, if they would only see how totally inoperative their supposed

faith is, they would see at once that they are as destitute of real faith as are even the beasts that perish. Dear brethren, be aware of this: and cry mightily to God to impart unto you this spiritual gift. It is, in all who have it, the gift of God. No man can produce it in his own heart: it is not a mere conviction founded upon reasoning, but a principle infused into the soul: and it is by that living [faith] alone you can ever be brought to a state of acceptance with God in this world, and of the enjoyment of his favour in the world to come. May God in his mercy create it in all our hearts! and may its fruits within us now be a pledge and earnest of its yet richer blessings in the realms of glory (Vol. 19, p. 366).

"The just shall live by faith"—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died for our sins, and Who lives forever to make sure that every single one of us who is trusting Him gets home to glory.

And so THE ROAD TO HEAVEN is not always easy. In fact, sometimes it can be very, very hard. But the Apostle Paul who probably knew more about the difficulties along the way than anyone else ever has, with the exception of our Lord, has written words of great consolation for us—many of them. One is found in Rom. 8:18:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

The Lord will never leave us, nor forsake us. He watches over us and cares for us, promising that His grace is sufficient for us, and that through our trials we are being made ready for heaven and glory. Therefore, in the midst of our trials we can have perfect peace and the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. How wonderful it is to belong to the Lord.

WHAT IS FAITH?
Hebrews 11:1, 2

Intro: Probably not many of you will recognize the name of Dr. Brooke Foss Westcott, but he was a Church of England minister and professor in the last century who is primarily remembered for his outstanding work in the Greek New Testament. He was a priest who served in Westminster, and he was also a professor of King's College in Cambridge University. But more important than all of these positions of distinction which he held is the fact that he was a devout believer in the Word of God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote a very excellent commentary on the book of Hebrews, and I have profited a great deal from his writing.

I give you this brief introduction to Dr. Westcott to tell you that, as he began his comments on Hebrews 11, he said that in the latter part of chapter 10 the writer of this epistle had pointed out that faith is "the characteristic of the true people of God" (p. 349). He was referring to Heb. 10:38, 39. (Read.)

It stands as a basic doctrine of the Word of God that whenever and wherever you find a child of God, you will find a person of faith. A well-known Scripture like Eph. 2:8-9 confirms that. (Quote.) John 1:11-13 gives us added proof. (Quote.) To receive Christ is to believe in His name. When the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", they responded, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30, 31). John 3:16 gives us that same clear teaching.

But not only are we saved by faith, but we live by faith. Paul said that in 2 Cor. 5:7 when he wrote, ("For we walk [or, live] by faith, not by sight.") So he contrasted living by faith with living by sight.

Paul expressed the same truth in a different way in Rom. 8:24, 25 where we read,

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?
But if we hope for that which we see not,
then do we with patience wait for it.

In Hebrews chapter 11 we are going to get acquainted, or better acquainted with many people of God who lived in OT times. They were people who are remembered for their faith. The words, "through faith," or "by faith," occur 24 times in chapter 11, and faith is only referred to 8 other times in the whole book of Hebrews. In fact, there is no chapter in

all of Scripture where we find the word faith more than we do in Hebrews 11. So we can rightly claim for this chapter the title, The Faith Chapter of the Bible. These were people who had faith. They are remembered for their faith, and we see some of the main things which they did "by faith." And I trust that in the coming weeks we will have some very wonderful times together seeing what they did so that we can benefit from the example of their lives.

In order to get us started the Apostle Paul has given us here what we can call a description of true faith, or a statement of the main characteristics of truth faith.

Most people would probably be able to tell us that faith means trust, or that it means to believe, but beyond that there are many different ideas as to what faith is. Some people will talk about simply having faith. They do not seem to recognize that faith has to have some kind of an object. We cannot just have faith; we have to have faith in some thing, or someone. Sometimes you will hear people talk about trying to have faith, as though faith were something that we have to work up within ourselves. Still others are like the Apostle Thomas who, when he was told that the Lord was alive, said,

Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails,
and put my finger into the print of the nails,
and thrust my hand into his side, **I will not believe**
(John 20:25).

That attitude is correctly described in the words, Seeing is believing.

But the Apostle Paul in this passage tells that
Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of **things NOT seen** (Heb. 11:1).

A moment ago I read to you from Rom. 8:24 where Paul said that "hope that is seen is not hope." So one of the characteristics of true faith is that we believe in that which we have not see.

But I think all of us can understand that if we simply take that definition of faith, it can easily lead us into all kinds of fanaticism. There are people, you know, who think that faith is making something come about just by believing strongly enough that it will. And so faith for them becomes a kind of magic.

But this is not what the Apostle said. He said,
Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.

Let me examine with you the words of this verse so that we can hopefully become clearer in our understanding of what the Bible is speaking about when it speaks of faith.

I. A DESCRIPTION OF TRUE FAITH (Heb. 11:1).

Let us look first at the word "substance." What did the Apostle mean by using this word.

"Substance" means that faith is a foundation. It is confidence. True faith does not waver. It is assurance that what we believe is true, and/or that what we expect will actually happen.

But what do we have the right to expect? Anything that we might want to expect? No; absolutely not! This is why we have to notice those words that are lined with "substance"--
"Faith is the substance of things hoped for."

"But," you might say, "I can have faith that the things which I hope will happen, will happen." But you are not going to say that if you have been learning what we have already seen in this epistle to the Hebrews. Please turn back with me to Hebrews 6, verses 11 and 12. (Read.)

Now listen to me carefully. The "things hoped for" which we read about in Heb. 11:1 are those promises which we are to believe, promises in which we are to trust, promises in which we can confidently have faith.

Whose promises are they? Are they promises which some man has made? No. They are the promises of God as Heb. 6:13 ff. clearly indicate.

Where do we find those promises? We find them in just one place: in the Word of God!

So we see that faith, true faith, has an object, and that object is GOD, and specifically it has to do with the promises that God has given to us in His Word.

So faith is our confidence, our assurance, the foundation stand which we take that the things which God has caused us to hope in because of His promises will actually be seen although we may not for the present be able to see them. And by seeing them I mean that the fulfillment of the promise is realized. That is why some of you who are using the NKJV will find as a note on Heb. 11:1 that "faith is the realization of things hoped for." Faith considers the promises of God so certain that they are looked upon as being fulfilled.

Let me give you a familiar illustration.

When we attended our granddaughter's graduation at Biola, the commencement speaker took his text from Acts 27. That is the chapter that tells us about the story of the storm that Paul and his shipmates experienced on their way to Rome. It was a severe storm, a life-threatening storm. Let me pick up the reading at verse 19, and read down through verse 25. (Read.)

Paul did not say that he had "faith" that everything would be all right. He said what we find in verse 25. (Repeat.) God had given Paul a promise, and Paul declared his faith in God and in God's promise while they were still in the midst of the storm! This is faith!

Some weeks ago I gave you an acrostic on the name JESUS. Let me give you one today on FAITH. This is not original with me, and you probably have heard it before. This is it: F-A-I-T-H, Forsaking All, I Trust Him.

Now let us look at the last part of verse 1 where we read, "The evidence of things not seen."

This is a second description of faith to go along with the first part of the verse.

"Evidence" means proof. By faith we prove the reality of those things which are "not seen."

I hope you realize that those of us who call ourselves Christians are a strange breed to the people of the world. We believe in a God we have never seen, and in a Christ we have never seen, and in a Holy Spirit we have never seen, about a place, heaven, we have never seen. And we believe in promises which can only be found in one Book which we claim was written by men who were directed by God the Holy Spirit in what they wrote.

We are all like Moses who is described in verse 27 of this chapter where we read,

By faith he [Moses] forsook Egypt,
nor fearing the wrath of the king:
for he endured, **as seeing him who is invisible.**

Paul was describing those of us who are trusting in Christ when he wrote in 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 love not at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are unseen:

for the things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are unseen are eternal.

When Peter spoke of our Lord in 1 Pet. 1:8, this is what he said,

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.

Such language as this sounds like insanity to the people of the world, but it demonstrates to the world the reality of a living God, and the power and truthfulness of the Word of God. Here we are a people who are putting our hopes for all eternity upon the promises of a God we have never seen, and upon the work of His Son Whom we have never seen. How can we trust in an unseen God and in such a Book as the Bible? How could the people that we are going to learn about here in chapter 11 believe what they did when generation after generation that which they hoped for did not take place? Where does faith come from? Is it something that we produce in ourselves? If we are honest, we all know that such a thing is impossible. Our faith is often so weak and faltering that if it came from us, we would have lost it long ago.

Let me read ahead in this book of Hebrews for our answer. Please turn to Heb. 12:1, 2. (Read, paying special attention to verse 2.) The Lord Jesus is "the Author and Finisher of our faith." The Christian who wants to strengthen His faith needs to keep "looking unto Jesus."

And let me remind you of how our Lord works. You can see it in Rom. 10:17. (Read.) The Word of God produces this faith in our hearts. How often in the heat of our trials our hearts are comforted and we are strengthened to keep trusting the Lord by the work of the Word upon our hearts.

Faith means that we believe God. Faith means that we trust His promises. Faith treats the promises, though unfulfilled, are so certain to be fulfilled, that they can be treated as already fulfilled.

Now let me take just a moment on verse 2.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH (Heb. 11:2).

(Read.)

Who were the elders, and what does it mean that "they obtained a good report"? When we look at verse 39 it seems that the Apostle was speaking of the people mentioned here in

Hebrews 11. They were not super saints. They were people just like we are. They had their faults. They had their times when they failed the Lord. But one thing that characterized them all was that they believed God—not always as they should have, and could have, but they trusted Him nevertheless.

And it was their faith, above everything else, that caused God to give them "a good report." It was not the miracles that they performed. It was not the great numbers of people that they influenced. It was not the exercise of great gives, nor the great victories which they may have won. It was their faith. It was the way they trusted God throughout their lives and in their trials. The greatest victory of any saint is the victory of faith. In fact, the Apostle John said,

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).

And link with this the statement that we have in Heb. 11:6. (Read.) Nothing we do can actually please the Lord except that which is done in faith.

Concl: Are you discouraged about your own walk with the Lord? Are you discouraged because of unanswered prayer? Are you discouraged because you don't see the Lord working in the lives of those you love? Are you discouraged because of the apparent fruitlessness of your life? Does it seem like God has deserted you? Are you discouraged because of uncertainties in your future? Are you discouraged by the sinfulness of the days in which we live?

We all can answer "yes" to some of these questions--possibly to all of them. What is our answer? Our answer is to keep on trusting the Lord. He is too great to fail. He is too wise to wait too long. And He loves you so much that He does hear your cry, and will not let your prayers go unanswered.

Asaph, who wrote Psalm 73, has told us about an especially difficult time in his life when he became envious of the wicked who seemed to be having such a good time while he was having a bad time. And he said in verse 2 of his Psalm,

But as for me, my feet were almost gone:
my steps had well nigh slipped.

Have you ever felt like that? I have. Maybe you feel like that today, although not for the same reason that caused Asaph his distress. But you feel ready to give up. Look at how the Psalm is concluded in verses 16 through 28. Note especially verse 26 and 28.

Cf. Isa. 26:3, 4.

Over and over again we are encouraged just to trust the Lord. That is what He wants us to do.

Tell about Prov. 3:5, 6--and then getting it written out in calligraphy by Martha for Christmas.

Just yesterday I got out Derek Kidner's little book on Proverbs to see what he had to say about Prov. 3:5, 6. There I read of how another commentator interpreted the word trust. He said that the word used there "had originally the idea of lying helplessly face downwards" (p. 63). The Lord often lets our circumstances get to the place where all of our self-confidence is shattered so that we will really learn what it means to trust Him. Remember our acrostic:
Forsaking All, I Trust Him.

May the Lord enable each one of us to keep trusting Him today, regardless of what our own trials might be.

FAITH AND CREATION

Hebrews 11:3

Scripture Reading: Psalm 19.

Intro: It is my intention, the Lord willing, to go through Hebrews 11 devoting one message to each person mentioned until we get down to Abraham. Then we will take several Sundays on the lives of Abraham and Sarah, probably four. After that we will have one Sunday each on Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. That will bring us down to Moses, and we will spend three, and possibly four, Sundays on him. After Moses comes Joshua (although he is not mentioned by name). Rahab is the last one to whom the Apostle gives particular attention. Starting with verse 32 the Apostle began to summarize, and does so to the end of the chapter.

Therefore, if you will stay with me, we will have a good review of early OT history looking especially at the faith of those people the Apostle mentioned.

They are remembered especially for their faith. We learned from verse 2 last week that it was primarily because of the way they believed God, the way they trusted God, that they were given "a good report" by God Himself. That is what the Lord wants us to do more than anything else--to trust Him, to believe His Word.

I pointed out to you last week that there is a vital connection between the latter part of chapter 10 and chapter 11. The chapter division sometimes keeps us from seeing the connection. But if you look back into chapter 10 you will see that the Apostle had exhorted them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, i.e., going to church, because it was there that they would hear the Word so as to continue trusting the Lord. He warned against falling away. He told them that they needed patience. They were to live by faith, and faith always calls for patience. You may remember that I called your attention to Heb. 6:11, 12 where the Apostle wrote,

And we desire that every one of you
do shew the same diligence to the full assurance
of hope unto the end:
That ye be not slothful,
but followers of them who **through faith and patience**
inherit the promises.

John Calvin once wrote that "faith can no more be separated from patience than from itself" (Vol. XXII, p. 260). Faith without patience is not real faith. So when the Apostle quoted Habakkuk who said, "The just shall live by faith," he

was saying that this is one of the main the distinguishing marks of a true child of God. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Furthermore, faith is exercised in patience.

Then we come to chapter 11 in which we have all of these illustrations from the OT which show us what the OT saints did "by faith."

At the beginning of chapter 11 the Apostle Paul described faith (at least in part). As we saw last week, Faith is the confidence we have in things hoped for, things promised to us in the Word of God. Faith is the realization of things not seen. We treat the promise of our salvation, and all other promises of Scripture as though they were already fulfilled because it is absolutely certain that God will keep every promise He has ever made. We may have to wait, but God will in His own time bring His promises to fulfillment.

Now today we are read for verse 3. (Read.)

No name is mentioned here because nobody was living at the time to see what happened. Two of the greatest things that ever happened were not seen by any man. One was the creation of the world; the other was the resurrection of Christ. Angels probably saw the Lord come out of the tomb, but no human being saw it.

Therefore, we are left to faith for our understanding of how this world came into being. And so let me take as my first point:

I. THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

Faith, to be true faith, is founded upon the Word of God. And it is the testimony of Scripture that the universe was brought into existence by God, the true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what we heard in Psalm 19 a few moments ago.

This is the testimony of Genesis 1, and of many, many passages in the Bible. E.g., Psa. 100:3,

Know ye that the Lord he is God:
it is he that hath made us,
and not we ourselves...

Psalm 33:6 and 9 tell us this:

By the word of the Lord
were the heavens made;
and all the host of them
by the breath of his mouth...

For he spake, and it was done;
he commanded, and it stood fast.

But some might respond by saying that there are people who do not believe the Word of God who nevertheless believe that this world was created by someone, that it did not just happen. That is true, but they do not believe that our God did it. They do not believe in the God Who is revealed in Scripture. Nor do they believe all that the Word of God teaches about God's relationship to His creation. The only people who truly believe what the Scriptures teach about creation are the people of God, those who know God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And before I get through today I think that you will be able to see what I can make such a statement. It is only "by faith" that we can truly "understand" that the universe "was framed by the Word of God." And when the Apostle said that "we understand" he meant that we agree with all that the Bible has to say about creation. He meant that it makes sense to us; we see that it could not be any other way.

Now for my second point let me ask the question:

II. WHAT DO WE "UNDERSTAND" ABOUT CREATION?

First, let me say that we do not "understand" everything that God has revealed in His Word about creation, but, as we grow in the Lord and in our knowledge of His Word, we understand more and more. And faith does not falter before the Word of God. Faith accepts the testimony of Scripture, and is assured that the testimony of Scripture is absolutely true in every detail.

I want to limit myself today just to what we have in this third verse of Hebrews 11. If we "understand" what is taught here, we will go a long way toward a true understanding of God and creation. It seems that the Apostle began with creation because an understanding of God's relationship to creation is vital to living a life of faith.

All right, what is the first thing that we "understand"? Let me use our translation to identify it.

- A. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God."

One meaning of the term, "the worlds," is that it relates to the whole universe. "By faith we understand" that the universe is not eternal. It did not always exist, that is, the heavens and the earth. It did not just happen by some evolutionary process. It was not something that happened by

chance, or by fate, as some would have us to believe. The universe was brought into being by the spoken word of God according to the Greek word that is used here. We read over and over again in Gen. 1, "And God said..." A moment ago I read to you from Psa. 33:9, "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

This is the truth about the origin of our universe. This is what you believe if you are a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No other explanation is acceptable to a person of faith.

But there is more to be found in that statement, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." I would call your attention to the word, "framed." This is a word which can be illustrated in different ways.

We might say that the universe is like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Although instead of cutting up a picture into little pieces which we try to put together. The verb "framed" means that God made all of the pieces so that they would fit together in perfect relationship with each other.

Or think of all of the parts of an automobile engine laid out on a large table. The parts have been made, and now we are looking for a mechanic who can take all of those parts, put them together in their right places so that the motor will run and move a car down the street.

This verse pictures God as making all of the parts of the universe, the world, the dry land, the seas, the sun, moon, and stars, the grass, the trees, the animals, the birds-- everything. Then He put them together so that everything worked as it was made to work, and everything worked in perfect harmony with everything else. "The worlds **were framed** by the word of God." Sin has affected the universe so that we do not see that framing like Adam and Eve did before the Fall, but we can see much of it nevertheless. There is a wonderful harmony about the universe, each part working with every other part, that is traceable to God alone. You would never have that oneness, that harmony, in creation, if it were not the work of almighty God.

But this is not all that we learn about creation from the Word of God.

Now I would call your attention to that word "worlds." Have you wondered why it is plural? We have only one world, and yet this says "worlds."

It is plural because it is the translation of the Greek word

_____, which means ages. It is the same word that the Apostle used in Heb. 1:2 where he said, "By whom also he made the worlds," speaking of our Lord. This is a word which views the world from the standpoint of time.

Now it is perfectly proper to translate this word ages as "worlds." But we need to recognize that when God created the heavens and the earth, He laid out the course of human history. So that our statement here in Heb. 1:3 not only means that God created the universe, and that He put all of the parts together so that they worked in perfect harmony with each other, but He laid out the course of history. We see in this statement that God did not create the heaven and the earth, and then leave it to function by itself and take any course it might want to take. God made the universe. God is preserving the universe. God is seeing to it that His purposes in the universe are being carried out in every detail. The Apostle, speaking by the Holy Spirit, has given us a statement of creation here which clearly affirms the sovereignty of God in His creation. The world and the universe are not governed by fate, nor by chance, nor by the actions of men or angels, but by God! "By faith" we understand all of this. And you can see, then, how important it is to have the Bible's account of creation if we are to live a life of faith. God has made us. He has redeemed us. He is working out His purposes for the universe, but also in each little part that He has made.

Now I think that we can begin to see how disastrous it is for anyone to be teaching that this world came into being in some way other than by divine creation, or that God is not really sovereign in our world today.

I tell you today, as I told you when we first started Hebrews, that the Lord Jesus Christ is "upholding all things by the word of his power." He is seeing to it that every purpose of God is being carried out in accordance with the plan and purpose of God.

That ought to bring great comfort to every one of us who knows the Lord.

But this is not all that we have in this verse. There are still two other things that I want to point out that we "understand" "by faith" about creation if we know the Lord and believe the word of God.

The last part of this verse says, "So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

The usual translation of this part of the verse is that God,

by His infinite power, made this world out of nothing. And this is certainly true. He made all of the parts, but He had no material to begin with. So He made the material, and then made the parts.

However, there are some who believe that this part of the verse teaches another very important truth. Calvin felt that the Greek text should be translated this way: "So that they became the visibles of things not visible." (Repeat.) What did he mean by this?

He meant that God so created the universe that the things which we can see, "the visibles," were a revelation of Him Who is "not visible."

Is this not what Psa. 19:1 tells us?

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Paul wrote essentially the same thing in Rom. 1:20 where we read,

For the invisible things of him
from the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being **understood** by the things that are made,
even his eternal power and Godhead;
so that they are without excuse.

God so designed the universe and everything about it, that it might be a powerful and continuing testimony of His existence, His glory, His wisdom, His power, His love, and even more of His marvelous attributes. We cannot learn everything that we need to know about God from creation, but we can learn a great deal. This is the way that God has designed it. It is a testimony so strong that actually no one will be able to stand before God and say that he did not know that there was a God.

Concl: Now let me summarize this for you. What do we "understand" from creation. What do we "understand" "by faith" because it is revealed to us in the Word?

"By faith we understand" that God made us and every part of this universe in which we live. "We understand" that He made all of the parts, and then put them together so that they would function in perfect harmony with each other. "We understand" that to do all that He did He had only to speak the word, "and it was done." He made it out of nothing, but He also made it that it might be a testimony to Himself. As Calvin wrote,

Now the faithful, to whom he has given eyes, see sparks of his glory, as it were, glittering in every created thing.

The world was no doubt made, that it might be the theatre of the divine glory (Vol. XXII, p. 266).

What should all of this mean to us as the Lord's people?

King David of Israel suggested in Psalm 8 that it should mean two things, and I want to suggest a third thing from our text.

- 1) It ought to have a very humbling effect upon us. See verses 3, 4.
- 2) It should move our hearts to worship the Lord. See verse 9.
- 3) From our text we can see that it ought to be a great encouragement to all of us to trust the Lord, and to wait patiently for Him.

Remember that our faith comes from the Lord Jesus, as we look to Him, and as we feed upon the truths and the promises of His Word.

ABEL'S SACRIFICE
Hebrews 11:4

Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:1-8.

Intro: Today we begin a brief journey through the pages of the OT as we look into the lives of several people who are remembered because of their faith. They are mentioned in chronological order. There are others that could have been mentioned, but the Spirit of God has, for His own reasons, chosen those to whom reference is made here in Hebrews 11.

You will notice that in the case of some, like Abel, we are given his name and one particular thing that he, or she, did "by faith." In other cases, their names are given, but no particular event in their lives is given with their names. See verse 32. And then beginning with verse 33 we are told what people did, but we are left to fill in the names from our own knowledge of the OT. You will notice that in speaking of what people did "by faith," some experienced great victories while others, "by" the same "faith," were called upon to go through great trials. We learn from this that to live "by faith" does not always mean what we call blessing, but it can mean severe testing, and even death.

I would like to call your attention, too, to the fact that the same amount of space is not given to those who are mentioned. We have one verse for Abel, two for Enoch, one for Noah, and then twelve for Abraham and Sarah. Following Abraham we have one verse for Isaac, one for Jacob, and one for Joseph, to be followed with six verses for Moses, two verses for the nation Israel (not mentioned by name), although we could give verse 29 to Moses, and verse 30 to Joshua. This part of the chapter is concluded in verse 31 with one verse devoted to Rahab who was not only a woman, but also a Gentile, and one who became, by her marriage to Boaz, an ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

Having pointed out all of this to you, we now turn our attention to Abel. The book of Genesis, chapter 4, gives us the background of this report in the book of Hebrews. Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve. Why neither Adam nor Eve was mentioned here, we do not know. I believe, and I think that it is generally agreed among Christians, that Adam and Eve were saved. I would cite as support for that view the fact that the Lord made coats of skins, and clothed them (see Gen. 3:21). This seems to typify at least that they were covered with divine righteousness as God's provision for them through an innocent substitute, pointing ahead to the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Lamb

of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The writer of the book of Hebrews has given us a great start in understanding faith. Now let us take what we have learned, and see what else we can learn from the faith of Abel. (Read Heb. 11:4.)

It seems to me that we clearly have three divisions in this verse. First, we are told WHAT ABEL DID, the particular thing in which we see his faith. Secondly, we are told WHAT IT MEANT THEN, that is, to Abel himself, as well as to his generation. And, thirdly, the last part of the verse tells us WHAT IT MEANS NOW, today, for you and for me.

Let us look then at:

I. WHAT ABEL DID.

I am referring to the first part of verse 4 which read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

Let me call your attention to a point that we will see repeatedly throughout this chapter. It is that from the beginning faith caused the people of God to be active. There is no question but that faith often means waiting upon God and waiting for God. There are those times when to act would be sin. We wait until the Lord does something, or until He shows us what to do.

But when God reveals His will, then it is a sin not to act. We act, but what we do, we do in faith, or "by faith." We will see this over and over again in Hebrews 11. In the case of Abel we read, "By faith Abel **offered** unto God..."

Many have tried to excuse Cain by saying that he probably did not know what he should have done in bringing his sacrifice to God. But that does not harmonize with what we have learned thus far about faith. The very first words of this chapter tell us that faith, to be faith, is our response to what God has told us to do, or our trust in what God has promised to do. We only have the right to hope for those things which God has promised to us in His Word. We only should do what God has told us to do in His Word. Therefore, the only way that Abel could have acted "by faith" was for him to know exactly what the Lord wanted him to do.

Abel had the example of what his need was before God when, as I have already mentioned, the Lord made coats of skins and clothed his parents. Those skins came from an animal, and those skins cost that animal its life. But, in addition to

that, those words "by faith" indicate that Abel, and Cain, both knew that they had to approach God by the sacrifice of an animal. It is true that we get more details about that sacrifice as we go on through the Word of God, but let there be no question in any of our minds that God had made known to Adam, to Eve, to Cain, and to Abel exactly what they were to do when they approached God. It could only be by sacrifice.

Now we read here that both men brought sacrifices (as we are told also in Genesis 4:3, 4), but the important thing about Abel's sacrifice was that it was "more excellent" than Cain's sacrifice. What did the Apostle mean by those words, "more excellent"?

A. T. Robertson (V, 419) says that it literally means "more sacrifice." Matthew Henry, who was well acquainted with the Greek text, says that it means a fuller sacrifice, "a more... perfect sacrifice," in the sense that Abel brought all that God required; Cain did not bring all that God required. In fact, we know that Cain left out the most essential part. It was not wrong for Cain to bring "the fruit of the ground." Such sacrifices were required later under the Law. But it was wrong for him not to bring an animal sacrifice. Can was approaching God as a good man who wanted to thank God for blessing the works of his hands. Abel, on the other hand, was approaching God as a guilty sinner, like his parents, who needed forgiveness. Abel knew that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission," as we read in Heb. 9:22, no forgiveness! Both men knew what to do. Abel did it; Cain did not do it. Cain represented those people who will bring their own works to God; Abel represents those people who know, who have learned, that they are sinners deserving of divine judgment, who can only escape that judgment through the death of an innocent substitute. Abel's sacrifice was offered "by faith" not only because he knew that this is what God wanted him to do, but it had to be "by faith" that One was coming Who would offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins. I believe that the Spirit of God was telling us here in Heb. 11:4 that Abel was looking for the coming of a Redeemer. God had promised such a Redeemer to Abel's parents; Abel believed the promise, but Cain did not. Abel's sacrifice would have meant nothing if it had not been offered "by faith" in the promise of God.

But let us go on to the second part of the verse. I have called this:

II. WHAT IT MEANT THEN.

I am now referring to those words, "By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts."

In passing note that the word "gifts" is in the plural, suggesting that Abel probably brought more than the animal sacrifice. And linking this with the word "also" in Gen. 4:5, it may mean that Abel brought the firstfruits of the field, but that he covered it all with a blood sacrifice.

There are several interesting things about that statement in the middle of our text.

In the first place, we learn from it that the important thing about man's approach to God is that we do it God's way, and that we do that which is pleasing to God. Many years later Solomon wrote those now very familiar words,

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death
(Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

People who do not believe the Word of God think that they can come to God any way they choose to come. So they come with their works. Or they bring their money. But they do not come as guilty sinners needed a Savior. They do not come "by faith" in the promise that God gave of a Redeemer, the promise which was fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer and die for the salvation of sinners.

So Gen. 4:4b, 5a tell us,

And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering:

But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect.

In some way, we do not know how, the Lord showed that He was pleased with what Abel did, but He was displeased with what Cain had done. He accepted Abel's sacrifice; He reject Cain's sacrifice.

But notice this also.

The Lord respected, or did not respect, the man first, and then his offering. What does this mean? It meant that Abel was not saved by that offering which he presented to God, but because his offering was an expression of his faith in the promise of God. In other words, Abel already had been saved when he presented his offering. His offering was evidence that he believed that God would eventually provide a Redeemer. God had saved Abel, and Abel came to present his offering as a testimony to God that his faith was in what God had promised to do for him as a guilty sinner.

And so this means that we are not actually saved by our faith. That would make faith a work on our behalf by which we complete what Christ did on the Cross. No God sovereignly and miraculously and graciously saves us; our faith is a gift from God by which we express to God and to men that we are

saved, that we are trusting in Christ as our Redeemer and Lord.

And when God testified concerning Abel's gifts, God was saying that Abel was right and that Cain was wrong. Cain did not like that, and, as we are told in Genesis 4:8, Cain killed Abel, making him the first martyr.

The Apostle John, in 1 John 3:11, 12, explained the meaning of Cain's murder of Abel. This is what he said:

For this is the message that we have heard
from the beginning,
that we should love one another.
Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one,
and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?
Because his own works were evil,
and his brother's righteous.

Not only did Cain not come God's way, but he hated Abel because Abel did come God's way. Cain may have been sincere in what he did, but he was sincerely wrong. And it is probably wrong even to say that he was sincere, because he knew what he should have done, but refused to do it.

Now let us go to the last statement of our text: "And by it he being dead yet speaketh." I have called this:

III. WHAT IT MEANS NOW.

That is, What does it mean to us today?

Some people think that the Bible is unimportant, that it is an old book that is so out-of-date that we don't need to pay any attention to us. Others feel that way about the OT by itself. They feel that we need only to be concerned with the NT.

What does the Spirit of God say?

He said, and still says, that Abel, although he has been dead for a long time, is still speaking to every generation by what he did so long ago. Abel continues to speak to us, not by what he said, but by what he did. He will teach us some very important things about salvation if we only have ears to hear and eyes to see. He is not the only one in Scripture who speaks to us. Many others speak, too. And they all convey to us the same message. However, since we are thinking of Abel today, what does he tell us? Let me mention six out of many things that could be said, six things which are extremely important.

First of all, Abel tells us that we all need to come to God.

Our text says, "Abel offered unto God..." Abel tells us that we need to come to God. God is the One we need. People today are living God-less lives. He is not in our thoughts. We are not concerned about pleasing Him; we are content to forget all about Him (until we run into some kind of trouble). We are a generation of people who are out to get what we want to have, to do what we want to do, to go where we want to go. We blame our President for our troubles. Or we blame God. But there is no great movement today toward God. With all that Abel may have done during his life, he is remembered as a man who sensed his need for God, and who came to God.

Secondly, Abel tells us that we have to come to God the way He wants us to come. It is not enough that we come, that we come to church. It is not enough that we come sincerely. We need to be sincere, but we all should know that we can be sincerely wrong.

Abel teaches us what the remainder of the Word of God confirms, that there are not many ways to come to God, to find God, to come to God--just one!

But along this same line there is another thing, a third thing that Abel says to us. He tells us that we need to come to God, not to find out what we need to do for God, but to learn what God has done for us. He would tell us that it is folly to think about our merits (because we have none); we need to be thinking in terms of God's mercy and God's grace. What we need is completely beyond what we can do, or what we could ever deserve.

In the fourth place, Abel teaches us that we need to come to God as guilty, defiled, helpless, sinners who need to be cleansed and made righteous before God. Sin is our problem, and only God can forgive our sins. We do not come to negotiate with God as though He could be the beneficiary of anything that we might do. We come seeking his mercy. We come seeking His forgiveness. We come seeking cleansing. We come seeking righteousness. We come seeking all of those things which we could never provide for ourselves, and which can only be found through Christ and His death on the Cross.

As a fifth point, Abel teaches us that believing the Gospel will probably cause people to hate us, maybe even want to kill us (as Cain killed Abel). Being dead he speaks, and he even speaks through the way that he died. Others have been martyred for their faith, but Abel was the first. And even though we live thousands of years later, the attitude of people generally toward the Gospel has not changed. People do not like to be told that they are sinners, and in need of

a Savior. They may believe that they are not as good as they ought to be, but neither do they think that they are bad enough to deserve the judgment of God.

The sixth and last thing that I would point out, is that Abel teaches us the importance, not only of faith, but of faith in Christ. Abel may not have known all that we now know about the Redeemer, but by his sacrifice he expressed that he believed in a coming Redeemer. You will never find a true child of God who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. A true child of God believes in the Deity of Christ. He believes that salvation is through the death of Christ. He believes that Christ was raised from the dead, and that there is absolutely no other way for anyone to be saved except through the Lord Jesus Christ. It was "by faith" that he offered a sacrifice, and that it was the kind of a sacrifice that it was, because it pictured the Savior Who would come, and the death that He would die.

Concl: In conclusion, let me ask if you have really heard the message that Abel has continued to give to every generation down to the present? If you have really heard it, then you, too, are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation. The Apostle Peter was saying the same thing when he said those words which we find in Acts 4:12. (Quote.) Abel's message from the past remains unchanged today. Let me encourage you to believe Abel, and to put your faith in the same One Who saved Abel. He had not come when Abel did what he did. But He has come now, and we know Him to be our Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me ask you who believe a question. What kind of a message are you giving to our generation, and how will people remember you when you are gone? Every person leaves a message. What is yours? Is it a clear message because people can see from your life, as well as from what you say, that you belong to the Lord?

We do not know how long Abel lived. It probably was not very long in comparison with the long lives that people lived in those days. But he did more in a short time than others did who lived much longer. And the story of Abel, having come down to the present day, teaches us that the message he proclaimed is a message that will never, never die. The Gospel will never die even though those who bear the message do die. Let us be faithful by our lives and by our words in spreading the message that cost Abel his life, but which provided him a sure place in the favor of God, and in heaven.

ENOCH AND THE LIFE OF FAITH
Hebrews 11:5, 6

Scripture Reading: Genesis 5:18-24.

Intro: The placement of the account of Enoch's life in the OT should impress upon our hearts the importance of reading all of every chapter in the Bible. To skip Genesis 5 just because it follows a rather monotonous pattern and contains many unfamiliar names, is to rob ourselves of one of the choicest passages in all of the OT. So, when you are reading the Bible, don't skip anything. It would not be there if it were not important to God. And if it is important to God, it ought to be important to us.

I have said it is a rather monotonous chapter--and it is. We are just given the plain facts about every person from Adam down to Noah, with one exception: Enoch. And I think that we are safe in assuming that what was said about Enoch could not be said about any of those other men. We are told in Gen. 6:9 that Noah was a man like Enoch in that he, too, "walked with God." But that was not true apparently of any of those other men. They lived long lives, almost three times as long as Enoch lived, but it is not said that any of them "walked with God."

So we certainly are led to believe that Enoch was a man who was different from his ancestors, and different also from most of his descendants. He "walked with God."

Therefore, in order to awaken every reader of Genesis to something that is very important to God, we are not just told that he was born, lived so many years, had children, and then died (which is true of most men). Enoch was different. He did not live as long as they lived, but neither did he die. The simple statement of Scripture is that "he was not, for God took him." See verse 24. (Read.)

The word that is used in Hebrews about his being taken is that he was "translated." He was removed from earth and transferred to heaven. He was transported from earth to heaven. The old English expression is that he was raptured! Nothing like this had happened before, and it did not happen again until Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire "by a whirlwind." You can read the account of that in the book of 2 Kings, chapter 2.

However, there is a day coming when a whole generation of the Lord's people will be translated, transferred, transported, raptured, and taken to heaven. We read about this in 1 Thess. 4:15-18. It begins, "For this we say unto you by

the word of the Lord..." Those of us who know the Lord are looking forward to that day. It might be today. No one on earth knows when it will be. But we need to be ready for the coming of the Lord and our translation to heaven at any time.

Now it would seem that when you put the account of Enoch's life and his translation together with the promise that we will be translated at the coming of the Lord, the most important thing for us to be concerned about is that when the Lord comes, He will find us walking with Him. If not, we may be ashamed before him at his coming, as John has warned us in 1 John 2:28. Therefore, it is very important that all of us who know the Lord should know what it means to walk with the Lord, and I hope that this is what we will learn in our time together today.

So let us turn our attention to those two verses in Hebrews 11 which tell us about Enoch: verses 5 and 6. (Read.)

First of all, let us engage in:

I. A COMPARISON OF THE OT AND NT RECORDS.

If you can open your Bible to both passages so you can look back and forth from one to the other, it might be helpful.

Enoch is described two times in the Genesis account as a man who **"walked with God."** In the NT account here in Hebrews a different expression is used—twice! Here it is said that **"he pleased God."** What are we to learn from this?

I think the meaning is very clear. To walk with God means to live a life that is pleasing to God. If we are going to walk with God, if we are going to live in fellowship with Him, we have to live the way He wants us to live. We are not to expect the Lord to live our way, but we are to live His way. We are to please Him.

Last Sunday we considered the lives of Cain and Abel. Basically, what was the difference between those two brothers? It could be stated this way, couldn't it, that Abel pleased God with his sacrifice; Cain did not please the Lord with the sacrifice that he brought.

How do we know what is pleasing to the Lord? There is only one way. If we are living by the Word of God, we are pleasing the Lord. If we are not living by the Word of God, we might be very sincere in what we do, and very diligent, but we cannot possibly be pleasing the Lord.

Many of you are involved right now in our Bible Memory work.

One of the verses we are memorizing is Joshua 1:8. That verse tells us what the Lord said to Joshua after the death of Moses as Joshua was beginning to lead the people of Israel. What did the Lord tell him? (Quote the verse.)

What was the Lord telling Joshua?

The Lord was telling him this: "Joshua, your chief responsibility as Israel's leader is that you walk with me. That is the way, and the only way, that you are going to have my blessing upon your life and work."

In the Apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church, he told them what his life purpose was. You will find it in 2 Cor. 5:9 where we read,

Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent,
we may be accepted of him.

The NKJV gives us a little clearer translation of the verse. This is the translation in the NKJV:

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent,
to be well pleasing to him.

What was Paul saying?

He was saying that it was his aim, his ambition to walk with God, "to be well pleasing to him."

How did the Apostle Paul pray for the Colossian believers? We see that in Col. 1:9, 10 and following. Listen to what he wrote to them:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it,
do not cease to pray for you, and to desire
that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will
in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Now listen:

**That ye might walk worthy of the Lord
unto all pleasing,**

being fruitful in every good work,
and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Do you know what that expression, "unto all pleasing," means? It means that Paul was praying that the Colossian believers would walk so as to please the Lord in everything that they did. In other words, he was praying that they would walk with God.

There is nothing that you and I have to do today, nor on any other day, that is any more important than this. We need to walk with God. We need to live lives pleasing to the Lord. He needs to be pleased with what we do, what we say, what we think, with what we are! That is the way Enoch walked. We have no evidence that any other lived like he did. But that

made no difference to him. He walked with God. He sought to please God. That was his primary purpose and goal in life.

Now let us look again at:

II. THE UNIQUE END OF HIS LIFE.

In the Genesis account we read simply that "he was not; for God took him." Notice what the apostle wrote in Heb. 11:5. (Read.)

Notice those words, "And was not found." This means that one day, when he was 365 years old, his wife and his sons and his daughters were looking for him, but could not find him. And then somehow, we are not told, they learned that God had taken him.

Why was his life cut short?

We are told in this same verse. "For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." God did this remarkable thing to bear witness to his generation, and to all succeeding generations, that He, God, was pleased because Enoch lived to please Him.

Now let me call your attention to those words, "That he should not see death." They mean, that he should not die. Does this tell us anything of importance about Enoch. I think that it does.

We all know that "the wages of sin is death." There would be no death if sin had not been committed. We die physically because of sin. Now if the Lord translated Enoch before he died, then this means that, because Enoch walked with God, he had become like God. He had become holy. It did not mean that Enoch was perfect, nor that he was not a sinner. But it does mean that his life had become so God-like that God used him to portray to us the fact that the people of God will one day be delivered from death and that all of the evidences of sin will be gone forever.

So, thus far, we have seen that to walk with God is to please God, and to please God is to become like God. Now we are going to learn something else about this walk with God.

We might be inclined to ask, How could Enoch live this way when it seems that no one else was interested in pleasing God? He had been born in sin. He was by nature just like everyone else. Where did he get the desire to walk with God, to please God? This is a question of supreme importance if we find in our hearts a desire to please God.

The answer is found in the first two words of our text, words which have already become familiar to us in the this chapter. I am referring to the words, "By faith..."

This is another expression that we need to add to the expressions walking with God and pleasing God. To walk with God is to please God, and to please God is to walk by faith. These are not three things, but three expressions that mean the same thing. To walk with God is to walk by faith. To walk with God is to please God. To walk by faith is to please God. Faith turns our attention from Enoch to God. The words "by faith" teach us that Enoch was a man who trusted God to make him what he ought to be. Enoch was not passive about his relationship with the Lord. He used the means that the Lord had provided so that he could please God. And that is what we are told in verse 6. Look at that verse with me in the time that remains.

In verse 6 we see:

III. THE INDISPENSABLE NATURE OF FAITH.

This verse tells us that Enoch's faith was not related just to his translation, but that his faith was his life. He could not have pleased God if he had not had faith. Therefore we can say that he could not have walked with God if he had not had faith. His walk with God was a walk of faith, a walk in which daily, moment by moment, he was trusting God.

Now just what is involved in trusting God.

The apostle here said that it means two things.

First, it means that the man of faith believes that God is. His faith in God is not just his agreement with the fact that there is a God, but he lives in the reality that God does live, that He sees us, that He knows us, that He loves us, that He cares for us, guides us, protects us, teaches us, sovereignly working out His purposes in us.

I would be surprised if there were one person here today who does not believe that there is a God. The Bible teaches that our consciences bear witness to the existence of God, and that creation itself provides us with indisputable evidence that there is a God. But, by the grace of God, faith takes us farther than our consciences, farther than creation; faith brings us into a personal relationship with this living God. Faith makes the living God a reality to us. Faith makes us aware of His presence in our lives, and the unspeakable privilege that we have of knowing Him and walking with Him. And yet there is more.

We not only believe "that He is," but we believe that we cannot seek Him in vain. We know that He has not only told us in His Word how to please Him, how to walk with Him, but He has also told us what we can expect from Him. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

This has to do, first of all, with seeking the Lord for salvation.

Cf. the wonderful OT passage, Isa. 55:6, 7, where we find these words:

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,
call ye upon him while he is near:
Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts:
and let him return [turn] unto the Lord,
and he will have mercy upon him;
and to our God,
for he will abundantly pardon.

You can't walk with God, or please Him, unless you know Him. And you cannot know Him unless you come to Him through Christ. But if you seek God through Christ, believing that Christ did everything necessary for the salvation of your soul when He died on the Cross, then you cannot seek Him in vain.

But what about us as believers? We don't stop seeking the Lord after we are saved. We need to seek Him every day because we need Him. We need Him when things are going well, and we need Him when things are not going well. Can we seek Him and His blessing in vain? Cf. Matt. 7:7, 8:

Ask, **and it shall be given unto you;**
seek, **and ye shall find;**
knock, **and it shall be opened unto you.**
For every one that asketh **receiveth;**
and he that seeketh **findeth;**
and to him that knocketh **it shall be opened.**

Do you know what the latter part of verse 6 in Heb. 11 tells us about Enoch? It tells us that he was a man who had sought the Lord for salvation, and that he was a man who, as a child of God, continued to seek the Lord, day after day, in prayer.

You see, a man who walks with God, believes God, trusts, God, seeks to please God. And he is a man who seeks the fellowship of the Lord and the blessing of the Lord, knowing that he cannot seek the Lord in vain. Oh, the faithfulness of our living God!

Concl: Now the question is, Are you a person like Enoch? Do

you want to be like Enoch? Are you walking with Him? Are you seeking to please Him?

Well, you say, I try to please the Lord, but I fail all of the time and so I don't try like I should. Then let me ask you, Are you trusting Him to enable you to walk with Him, or are you trying to do it in your own strength. When the Bible says that "we walk by faith," it means that we are trusting the Lord to make it possible for us to walk with Him. We trust Him to teach us His Word. We trust Him to strengthen us to obey His Word. We trust Him to help us to believe His promises. We trust Him to help us where we would fail and fall.

The other morning I read along with many of you that wonderful story in Matthew 14 of Peter walking on the water. It took place after that busy day in which the Lord had taught, healed, and then fed the 5,000. Afterwards the Lord sent His disciples in a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee while He went into a mountain to pray. While they were crossing the sea, a great storm came up suddenly as it can on that Sea. But the Lord came to them sometime after 3 in the morning. The disciples were more terrified by His presence than they were by the storm, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. When they cried out in fear, He said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

Then it was that Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And so the Lord said, "Come." Peter began walking on the water, but then when he started to notice the high waves, he began to sink, and he cried out, "Lord, save me!" The Lord took hold of him, and then both got into the boat. But the Lord asked Peter (and this is what got to me), "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

At that point the storm suddenly stopped, and the disciples had a worship service right there in the boat. This is what they said: "Truly You are the Son of God."

You see we easily fear for ourselves or for others or for the Lord's work because we forget that God is God, and that our Lord is the Son of God. If we are going to please the Lord, if we are going to walk with Him, really trusting Him, then we must "believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

He cannot fail, for He is God,
He cannot fail, He's pledged His Word.
He cannot fail, He'll see you through.
He cannot fail, He'll answer you.

NOAH AND THE ARK
Hebrews 11:7

Scripture Reading: Genesis 6:5-22.

Intro: Genesis 5:28, 29 tells us that Noah's father was Lamech, and that Lamech was 182 years old when Noah was born. He called his son "Noah" for the reason expressed in verse 29 of Genesis 5. (Read.)

Actually "Noah" means rest. Gesenius (p. 656) said that the primary idea in the name is to take a breath. Gen. 5:29 indicates that Noah was born at a very difficult, a very hard time, in the history of the world. Somehow, evidently speaking by the Spirit of God, Lamech discerned that the Lord had a special purpose for his son, that God was going to use him to bring a fresh start to the human race. Our Lord's reference to Noah (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27) indicated that the days in which Noah was born were God-less days. People were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage until the flood came and utterly destroyed them all. They had no time for God, nor for any man of God; they simply wanted to do what they wanted to do and acted like they had all of the time that they could possibly have wanted. And the Lord said that the days prior to His coming would be just like that.

Peter was the only writer of the NT epistles who referred to Noah. He wrote in 2 Pet. 2:5 that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." And in his first epistle, chapter 3, verse 20, he said that the days of Noah, when he was preparing the ark, were days when the longsuffering of God was manifested. The reference to "an hundred and twenty years" in Gen. 6:3 probably indicates the time that Noah was preparing the ark as well as the time he was preaching.

Noah was certainly a faithful man because there is no suggestion that anybody was saved during the long time that he preached and prepared for the flood. When the flood finally came, only Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives, entered the ark. As Peter also said, only "eight souls were saved." He probably meant saved from physical death because it is doubtful if all of his sons were saved spiritually.

There are two other references to Noah in the OT that we need to get the picture clear as to the kind of a man Noah was. Both of those references are in Ezek. 14, verses 14 and 20. There Noah is listed with Daniel and Job. They were men of the same kind, godly men, righteous men, men who loved God and who walked with Him throughout their lives. Therefore,

And, our text says, they did it "by faith."

I will come back to this expression later in my message, but right now I want to point out two things that are firmly established by this verse:

1) Both Amram and Jochebed were saved. They could not have done anything "by faith" if they were not among the true children of God. There probably were Jewish people in that day, as there are today, who felt that being an Israelite made them the children of God. But Amram and Jochebed knew better. They knew that Abraham had been justified by faith, and they also knew that "by faith" was the only way anyone could be justified. And so it is very important for us to realize that, if we are to do anything "by faith," we must previously have received the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord. So this expression tells us that Moses had parents who knew and loved and trusted the Lord. How gracious the Lord was to Moses to give him godly parents.

Has the Lord blessed you the same way? He blessed me that way. My Dad and my Mother both knew the Lord. I know that was true of many of you. We have something very special for which to thank the Lord every day that we live. If you had only one parent who was a Christian, you can certainly be grateful for that. If neither parent was a Christian, but you are, you can praise Him for His grace is saving you.

Those of us who are parents and who believe in Christ, should realize that the Lord has given us our children so that we will bring them to Christ. American homes would not be in the deplorable state that they are in today if there were more parents who know the Lord, and would raise their children in the faith.

Anyway, we can say without any doubt that the Word of God testifies to the salvation of both of Moses' parents.

2) Moses had parents who were agreed with each other. They believed that God wanted them to stand together to protect their baby boy. Aaron was old enough to be safe, but not Moses.

Unfortunately not every Christian home today is like the home into which Moses was born. One of the biggest reasons for trouble in Christian homes is that the parents disagree and argue about how their children are to be raised. The effect of such disagreements, if it is allowed to continue until the children know what is going on, is very unfortunate. Jacob and Esau lived in a home where the parents were divided over which was the best child. Isaac preferred Esau, and Rebekah preferred Jacob. It is no wonder that the children had trouble with each other. Moses was born into a home where his parents were not only saved, but where they walked

together in their faith. I am sure that their home was not perfect. They must have had their differences from time to time. But they did not let those differences continue. And they apparently made it a habit to come to an agreement with each other as to what they should do in particular instances.

God blessed Miriam and Aaron and Moses in a very special way by giving them the parents that they had.

But let us notice a second thing about our text.

II. WHAT THEY DID "BY FAITH."

Here I want to take a suggestion that I got from Charles Spurgeon. He pointed out how differently Amram and Jochebed's faith was manifested in comparison with those who, for example, "subdued kingdoms" (v. 33), or who "stopped the mouths of lions," or who "quenched the violence of fire" (v. 34), or who "turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Any of those would have made front page headlines in the newspapers of the day. But Amram and Jochebed made headlines, so to speak, in this chapter of faith, because they took care of their son, Moses. And the Holy Spirit placed them in the same list with Biblical people whom we do know, like Noah and Abraham and Samuel and David and Daniel, and others!

What does this tell us?

It tells us that people, whose names we may not even know, who devote their lives to the raising of their children, are doing that which ranks along with all of the spectacular things that others have done. When you mothers have to check on some questionnaire that you are "only a housewife," or "a homemaker," do it with thanksgiving to God that He given you such a high place of honor. And you fathers, when your friends are inclined to kid you, or ridicule you, because you spend so much time with your family, don't be ashamed or afraid to tell them that you don't have anything more important to do. As we have already seen this eleventh chapter to Hebrews, the home is given a very high place in the economy of God—even the highest! The Lord doesn't call all of us to be like Moses. But remember that every Moses has to have a father and a mother, an Amram and a Jochebed. Hebrews 11:23 places special honor upon the home.

But let me point out a third thing in this wonderful verse. It has to do with:

III. WHAT MOSES' PARENTS "SAW."

Our text says that "Moses...was hid three months of [by] his parents, because they saw that he was a **proper child.**"

What is so unusual about that? There never have been parents who are worthy of the title who have not thought that their child was the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most promising child that has ever been born! I would be ashamed of you if you didn't feel that way about your children. And we can be just as bad about our grandchildren, can't we? That is the way it should be.

But why, then, do Amram and Jochebed get their names among the heroes of faith because they thought that the baby Moses was "a proper child"?

The word used in Exodus 2:2 is "goodly." Jochebed saw that her baby was "a goodly child." In Acts 7 we learn that Stephen called the baby Moses "exceeding fair." What do these words mean?

In the Greek text the same word was used by Stephen that is found here in our text. It is the Greek word _____. And in the Greek translation of the OT, this same word is used in Exodus 2:2.

Without getting into the technicalities of the word, let me say that this word indicates that there was something special about this child. Archbishop Trench in his Synonyms of the New Testament says that this verse has a slight ethical tinge to it. See p. 387. Normally it would mean that this baby was to have a special place of significance, more than what would normally be expected.

Another interesting thing about the text of Stephen's sermon is that there are some Greek MSS that have the words "unto God" after Stephen's comment that Moses was "exceeding fair." And so it would read that Moses was "exceeding fair **unto God.**"

When we put all of these facts together we can see that somehow--exactly how we do not know--but somehow the Lord made Amram and Jochebed know that the hand of God was on this child for a special ministry.

Keep in mind that this verse is introduced with the word, "By faith..." This means that we are not just reading about a couple of doting parents who thought that their child was the sweetest and the best. They probably felt that way. But more than that is here. The Lord made them realize that this child was destined for a special role in the plan and purpose of God for His people.

I have pointed out to you that Amram and Jochebed were true believers. It would have been quite unusual if they were not acquainted with the prophecy which had been given to Abraham about the four hundred years that the descendants of Abraham would be in a strange land, greatly afflicted. And they must have been able to figure out that those four hundred years were just about over, so that God was getting ready to move His people out of Egypt.

Amram was undoubtedly one of those men who went to work every day making bricks for the Egyptian cities. He was one who cried out to God because of the great bondage that they were under as a nation. And so when their third child was born, the Lord made them understand that this child was going to be a part of God's answer to their prayers. The baby Moses was "a proper child" to his parents, but, what was more important, he was "a proper child" unto God!

The birth of Moses was an act of God which was to go far beyond anything that Amram and Jochebed could have expected before he was born. Perhaps they were afraid that they would have another boy, only to lose him to the cruel Egyptians. But it all looked differently to them after Moses was born. They knew that their third child was a special gift from God!

Now we come to the last statement in this verse: "For they were not afraid of the king's commandment." This speaks of:

IV. PEACE, THE FRUIT OF FAITH.

The power of Pharaoh was something which everyone, Egyptian and Israelite, feared. The Pharaoh's were ruthless. They would stop at nothing to maintain their power and their control over the people. So to be able to say that "they were not afraid of the king's commandment" would have been like saying something that was not true. But it was true! It was true because they knew that all of the power of the Egyptian Pharaoh was no match for the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--the one true God, Who was their God! This statement tells us a great deal about the spiritual life and understanding of Amram and Jochebed.

You can imagine the task that they had before them in trying to hide a baby for three months. I have heard of newborn babies who cried for three months, but I have never heard of one who was quiet for three months.

Some in dealing with this text have tried to portray how Amram and Jochebed lived under constant fear lest some Egyptian going by the house would hear Moses crying, and send the authorities to find out if it were a boy. Or, that they

might have been fearful that Miriam and Aaron would say something to the neighbors about their baby brother. Or, that some visitor would come to the house only to discover that they had a baby boy.

However, I cannot quite harmonize that with this statement that "they were not afraid of the king's commandment." It is true that Moses in writing about his own childhood said that his mother made that little basket "when she could no longer hide him," but I believe those were three very happy months when that little Jewish family thoroughly enjoyed their newest arrival. Peace reigned in that home because they were trusting God to carry out His purposes for that little baby. Amram and Jochebed had seen the hand of the Lord with the Hebrew midwives in that they did not cast the baby Moses into the Nile River, and they knew that the Lord would continue to care for Moses. I am sure that they were not careless about their lives. And I would not doubt that there were times when the baby Moses cried. But he was quiet when it was important for him to be quiet because the Lord kept him quiet at such times. One of the greatest fruits of faith is peace. This certainly would have been a real test of faith for that family, but they kept the Lord and His promises continually before them--and so they had peace.

Concl: What was the end of the story? The day came when Jochebed could no longer keep her baby as she had, and so she made a little "ark of bulrushes," made something like Noah's ark. She put it among the flowers in the river where she must have known that the princess would come to bathe herself in the river. She came, found the baby Moses, knew that he was a Jewish baby, decided to keep him for herself, and that is where Miriam stepped out and offered to get a nurse for the baby. Miriam got her mother, Jochebed, and Jochebed took the baby home to care for him. All expenses were paid for by the princess, and there was no longer any reason to be cautious about little Moses. He was finally taken to live in the royal palace as the son of the princess. But Jochebed knew that she was not giving her son to the Egyptians. She was giving him to the Lord. And every detail of her son's life was carefully carried out as the following verses in Hebrews 11 tell us.

What is the lesson for us? There was no written record of the Word of God at the time. The truth was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Yet Amram and Jochebed believe with all of their hearts that the promises of God were true, and that the purposes of God would most surely be carried out in every detail. So they believed God, and enjoyed the peace of God in the midst of some of the worst conditions the people of God have ever been under.

We have the written Word of God. We have all of it. We live on the other side of the Cross from Amram and Jochebed. They had a little light; we have a tremendous amount of light. And yet it seems that we have a harder time trusting the Lord and resting in Him than Moses' parents did. May we not count any position too lowly to be a place where we can please God and experience His faithfulness. The passage of time without some action from God tends to make us give up. Only God can keep us faithful. As we walk with Him and do what we know from His Word that He wants us to do, we, too, can experience His peace as we wait to see how He will work to carry out His will for us, and bring glory to His most holy Name.

THE "GREATER RICHES" OF MOSES
Hebrews 11:24-26

Intro: The story of Moses is neatly divided into three forty-year periods. During the first forty years he lived as a member of the royal family in Egypt, and was able to benefit greatly from the privileges he had. He was well educated. He was very wealthy. On very good authority it seems that he was in line to become the next Pharaoh in Egypt. For forty years he was learning to be somebody.

During the second forty years he was in exile. He had killed an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite, and so he had to flee into Midian for his life. It has been said that during those years he was learning that he was nobody.

The final forty years of his life were spent in leading the nation Israel. He led them out of Egypt, through the desert, and up to the border of the land of Canaan. During those years he was learning that God uses those who realize that they are nobody.

Stephen marked out these divisions in Moses' life in the message that he gave in Jerusalem, and which is recorded for us in Acts 7. See verses 23, 30, and 36. Deuteronomy 34:7 tells us that Moses was 120 years old when he died.

In our text for today, Hebrews 11:24-26, we are looking at what Moses did at the end of the first forty years of his life. Verse 24 speaks of it as the time when Moses "was come to years." The NKJV translates it as "when he became of age." The Greek text lit. means, when he became great. The passage in Exodus (2:11) to which this expression refers says, "When Moses was grown."

This all may mean that the Lord began to work in a special way in Moses' heart at the time when he was faced with some decisions which were to determine the course of his life for the rest of his days. We cannot say for sure. It is true that Joseph began to serve in Egypt when he was 30, but it could have been that it was 40 years of age for one who, under normal conditions, was in line for the throne of Egypt. The expression may mean no more than that Moses was a grown man, a mature man, capable of making his own decisions.

Whatever may be the real meaning, at 40 years of age Moses made a decision which, from a worldly statement, was the most foolish thing that he could have done. We learn what that was in verse 24. (Read.)

Verse 25 tells us what Moses chose instead of the place that

he had held for forty years. (Read.)

Finally, in verse 26 we see why he made the decision that he did. (Read.)

Let us examine these verses, and seek to learn from them the lessons that they contain for us.

First, we see:

I. WHAT MOSES TURNED DOWN (Heb. 11:24).

Our verse simply says that Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Stephen summarized those first forty years of his life by saying,

And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22).

Most men then and now would have given anything to be where Moses was. He was in the highest society of Egypt. He held a position in the royal family which meant that he was heir to the Egyptian throne. He had wealth. He had the finest education that it was possible for a man to have in those days. And it is clear that he had taken full advantage of the training which he had received. He was "mighty in words and in deeds."

We know practically nothing about those first forty years except for what Stephen said in his message. But it is clear that, from a human standpoint, Moses had everything that any man could possibly want: social standing, wealth, training, authority, and a secure future. And yet he turned all of that down. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

Now let us remember that Moses owed a great deal to Pharaoh's daughter. She had taken him as a baby, had protected him, and provided for him. She had brought him up as her own son, and had given him everything that Egypt could provide for him in those days—which was a great deal!

Her name, according to the historians, was Thermuthis. She was the only child of the Pharaoh. She had no other child but Moses. And so Moses was in line for the throne. Not only did Moses owe a great debt to the royal family, but they were depending upon him to carry on the family line even though he was a grandson of Pharaoh by adoption. Therefore, what Moses did appeared as the ultimate in ingratitude! We can be sure that it caused much commotion in the royal family and throughout Egypt.

Although his decision is stated very abruptly in our text, let us not think that Moses arrived at this decision overnight. Nor should we think that he was hateful to his adopted mother when telling her of his decision. The word "refused" means that he was turning down something that had been offered to him. The actual meaning of this statement may very well be that he was saying "no" to the throne. Moses evidently was greatly loved by everyone in the royal family, and his decision blasted the hopes that had been centered in him for the forty years he had lived up to this point.

It is very important for us to understand who Moses was in Egypt, and the bright future which lay before him, in order to appreciate the fact that he was turning his back upon all of it.

Now let us look at:

II. WHAT MOSES CHOSE IN EGYPT'S PLACE (Heb.11:25) .

This is where Moses' decision appears to be idiotic, especially to the worldly wise. He chose what he did, not as a sudden impulse, but after careful consideration. Looking at the alternatives before him, what he chose was what he actually preferred.

He was changing royalty for poverty because that was the condition of the people of Israel at the time. He fell from high society to the other end of society. He left his educated friends for a people who had no education. And what made Moses' decision even more incredible was that he was changing his place as a free man to identify himself with slaves. And the people of Israel were not a particularly attractive people in those days. They justifiably were complainers. They were leaderless. They were suffering because Pharaoh was suspicious of them. Moses, humanly speaking, was trading a great future for no future at all. And he did what he did knowing that it was going to mean suffering for him. However, our text clearly indicates that he wanted to identify himself with the people of God, not because they were particularly attractive, but because they were, as our text says, "the people of God." To be numbered with "the people of God" meant more to Moses than to be a member of the royal family of the greatest nation in the world at that time. He would rather "suffer affliction" with them "than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season."

The more we think about what he did, the most amazed we can be that he did it. Nobody could talk him out of it. His mind was made up.

How can we account for such behavior?

There is only one way: GOD HAD BEEN AT WORK IN HIS HEART FROM THE TIME HE WAS BORN—AND EVEN BEFORE! Do you remember what we considered last Sunday, thinking about the baby Moses. His parents saw that he was "a proper child." They understood that God had a particular place in His plan for their little baby. And since their understanding came to them "by faith," we can be sure that Moses' parents did not think that God's particular place for their son was to be the king of Egypt! Most parents would have been delighted to see their son attain such a position. We all like to see our children excel in what they do. However, Amram and Jochebed, Moses' real parents, knew that God had a greater work for their son than being the reigning monarch over all Egypt.

How and when the Lord began to impress upon Moses' mind higher things than what he had in Egypt, we do not know. But we can certainly say that by the time he was forty he had been saved. He was a new creature. Things that once were important to him, were no longer important. Things that had not been important to him, now became increasingly important.

It is important for us to see that when the Lord had done a saving work in our hearts, we have new values, new desires, and new hopes. Suffering with the people of God held more attraction for him than being able "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Think with me about that statement for a moment, "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

There is nothing in Scripture that would lead us to think that Moses lived a life of sin, as we would think of such a life. There is nothing to indicate that as a young Egyptian prince he was a party boy, a heavy drinker, or an adulterer. That is not what the Spirit of God meant by the expression, "the pleasures of sin." The meaning of the word "sin," as you have been told is missing the mark. Sin is anything that takes us away from God. Moses had somehow learned that as great as his position in Egypt was, he was missing the real purpose in life. The object of life is not to see our own pleasure. It is not that we be able to get as much money as we can. It is not that we become famous, or powerful. Moses had learned that we are here in this life to glorify God. That was the reason that God created man. And Moses did not want that which lasts only "for a season" to deceive him so that he would forget that eternity is ahead!

As I have said, we do not know how long, and with what intensity, the Lord had been working in Moses' heart. But we

do know that by the time he was forty he was seeing life as it really is. And he would rather suffer affliction with the Lord's people, and go where they were going, than to give his life to Egypt, and end up in hell.

A decision like Moses made ought to make all of us stop and think. Which way are we going? Are we going to cast our lot with the world, and keep on going in the wrong direction. Or are we really seeing that "the pleasures" we experience in going the wrong way are only "for a season," and lead to eternal ruin.

You know, when I was a young man, I used to hear people say how fast time goes by. But now that I am old, I know what they were talking about. It only seems like yesterday that I was living in Tacoma, Washington, a member of the Custis family, going to high school. And then came college. And then Lucille and I were married--almost fifty years ago. And after we were married, our children came along, and we had those very happy years as they grew up. Now we are grandparents, and we look back and wonder how time has passed so quickly. How much time any of us has left, we do not know. But the big question is, Who are we living for? Are we living just to have as much fun as we can have, or are we living to glorify God. I am very sure that Moses' real parents left their mark upon Moses who was taken away from them early in life. It was through them that they learned for the first time that the happiest life, even if it be in slavery, is when we live for the Lord, not for ourselves.

Let me remind you of those important words of the Apostle John, written in his old age, and found in 1 John 2:15-17. (Quote.)

And add to those Paul's words in Rom. 12:1, 2.

May the Lord use Moses' testimony to awaken us all to the right way to go. Moses did not know when he was 40 that he still had 80 years to go, but, whatever time he did have, he wanted it to be given to the Lord Who had saved him.

But now I come to my last point:

III. THE REASONS MOSES MADE THE CHOICE HE MADE (Heb.11:26).

I can state it very simply so that all of us can understand. Moses did it "by faith," and he did it for a Person.

At the risk of being tedious, let me say one more time that the words "by faith" link Moses' action, as well as the action of the others mentioned before him in this chapter, to

the Word of God! God had revealed to Moses in some special way the true purpose of life. And, best of all, God had told Moses about the coming Messiah, i.e., CHRIST! What all Moses had learned about Christ, we cannot tell. We do know that when the Lord Jesus Christ was with his disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection, He began at Moses in the OT, and showed them what Moses had written about Himself, the Christ.

I do know that Moses knew that the Messiah was coming to provide salvation for sinners, and that without Him everybody whoever lived with be doomed eternally in hell. He knew that the Lord would not be popular when He came, but that He would suffer and die at the hands of men. "The reproach of Christ" does not mean silent rejection; it means open, active opposition. And yet Moses believed that when he considered ("esteemed") what Egypt had to offer and compared it with his need, and what Christ had to offer him, there was no question as to what the right choice was. As wealthy, as extremely wealthy, as he was in Egypt, he knew that there were "greater riches" in Christ than in all of the Pharaohs that there would ever be in Egypt! Moses carefully considered his choices. As a result, he felt very strongly what he should do. And no one could have persuaded Moses to do otherwise.

Concl: Our Lord asked two questions when He was here on earth which He could have impressed upon the mind of Moses. Here are the questions:

For what shall it profit a man,
if he shall gain the whole world,
and lose his own soul?
Or what shall a man give in exchange
for his soul? Cf. Mark 8:36, 37.

Somebody might be inclined to say, "But look at the influence for good that Moses could have had if he had become Pharaoh!" Many people think that way. In fact, they will compromise with the truth in order to hold on to a position. And there have been many who have stayed in the world presumably for the sake of a testimony only to be pulled down in trying to do that. Remember Lot in Sodom.

God's ways are not our ways. Our ways are the ways of men, which lead to death. Our ways are usually the ways of compromise. They look good, but they never work out the way we think that they will. God's ways are the right ways, and although they may involve suffering and reproach, yet they are the ways of blessing which bring glory to His holy Name. May none of us choose Egypt with all of its pleasures instead of Christ. Christ meant more to Moses than all that Egypt could ever have provided for Him. Be sure to choose Christ.

FAITH AND THE EXODUS
Hebrews 11:27, 28

Scripture Reading: Exodus 5.

Intro: It has been three weeks since we last considered a portion of the book of Hebrews. Two weeks ago Dr. Waltke was with us. Last Sunday was Easter, and I spoke on the resurrection. And so today we get back to our studies in the book of Hebrews.

We have been considering the life of Moses.

We saw in Heb. 11:23 what Moses' parents saw in him, and what they did for him.

Then in verses 24 through 26 we saw what had become of Moses by the time that he was 40 years of age. He had seen the emptiness of social standing, of money, and the power that goes with both, if they leave God out. He knew that he could not experience the greatest blessings in life from material things. And so he made a very life-changing decision. (Read verses 24-26.)

Today we come to verses 27 and 28 of Hebrews 11. These verses tell us about two more phases in Moses' life. Verse 27 tells us about Moses' relationship to Egypt; verse 28 tells us about his relationship to God. Verse 27 tells us what led up to the exodus; verse 28 tells us how the exodus took place. Actually in these two verses the Spirit of God has covered everything from the latter part of Exodus chapter 2 through the 12th chapter.

Let me give you two points which we will be considering together from these two verses:

- 1) In verse 27 we have MOSES AND PHARAOH.
- 2) In verse 28 we have MOSES AND THE PASSOVER.

I. MOSES AND PHARAOH (Heb. 11:27).

The question immediately suggests itself from this verse, What did the apostle have in mind when he spoke of Moses forsaking Egypt?

He really could not have been speaking of the time when Moses killed the Egyptian, and hid his body in the sand. When he left Egypt that time he did fear the wrath of the king. He left because he knew that he would have been killed if he had stayed. He had not endeared himself at all to Pharaoh's family by refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and it probably would have delighted them to kill

Moses for any reason they could find. No, the verse does not fit into that situation.

Neither could it refer to Moses leading the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. If we, then we would have the exodus in verse 27 coming before the Passover in verse 28, and historically it was the other way around. They observed the Passover, and then left Egypt.

One thing that we should have noticed about Hebrews 11 is that everything in it has been arranged chronologically up to this point. That is, he spoke of Abel, then Enoch, then Noah, then Abraham and Sarah, and then Moses--all in the order in which we come to them in Scripture. So it would not seem that the Apostle would mention the Exodus before the Passover.

So what does it mean, then, that "by faith" Moses "forsook Egypt." What is the time that the Apostle was referring to? When was it that Moses showed fearlessness in his relation to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt?

Now this might sound a little far-fetched to you when I say this, but it seems to me that the Apostle was speaking here about the time that Moses came back to Egypt from his exile in Midian. In other words, I am saying that Moses "forsook Egypt" when he came back to Egypt! And you have every right to say, How could that be?

Well, there are two ways in which Moses could forsake Egypt. He could forsake Egypt geographically, or he could forsake Egypt in his heart. I do not think that the Apostle was talking about the time when Moses left Egypt physically, either to go to Midian or to go to Canaan. I believe that we are reading about what happened in Moses' heart. And actually this took place, first of all, when Moses decided not to stay on as a member of Pharaoh's family.

You see, all of the wealth and power and prestige of Egypt meant nothing to Moses. His sights had been turned to higher things. He was not seeking the things of earth, but the things of God and glory. His heart did not belong to Egypt; it belonged to God. He had no desire to live for his own glory or advancement; he was a man intent on bringing glory to God. The Greek word which is translated here, "forsook," means to regard something as unimportant.

Let me draw a contrast for you from the NT.

The Apostle Paul had a co-worker by the name of Demas. He is mentioned three times in the epistles of Paul. He must have

been with Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome because when Paul wrote to Colosse from Rome, he included greetings from Demas to the Colossian church. And when Paul wrote to Philemon from Rome, again Paul included greetings to Philemon from Demas.

However, when we come to the last chapter of 2 Timothy, and verse 10, probably written some three years later, Paul had this sad comment to make about Demas:

Demas hath forsaken me,
having loved this present world [age],
and is departed unto Thessalonica...

What does 1 John 2:15 tell us? (Quote.) Then add verses 16 and 17. (Quote.)

What does this tell us about Demas? It tells us that the world meant more to him than the Lord did, and, consequently, it was proof that Demas was not, and never had been, saved.

On the other hand, you have Moses who was raised in the lap of luxury, so to speak. He had all that the world could ever offer anyone. But that did not satisfy him. That was not what he wanted. He wanted to live for the Lord. He did not want to live just for time, but for eternity.

Now the big question for all of us is, What is the most important to us--the world, or the Lord? What is your ambition in life? Is it to have a good time and to get as much of this world's pleasures that you can, or do you love the Lord so much that you want to live to please Him?

A real Christian actually has no choice. Remember Paul's first words to the church at Rome when he came to the practical section of Romans. They are found in Rom. 12:1, 2. (Quote.)

Remember it is not a sin to be rich. Nor is it sinful to work for money. But our hearts are not to be set in that direction. We cannot serve God and mammon [money], is what our Lord said in Matt. 6:24. Every day, and often many times a day, we have to decide who and what we are going to serve. May God always give us the grace to serve Him.

But let us look at the rest of this verse.

We read that it was "by faith" that Moses "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

Moses came back to Egypt, not to reclaim his place in Pharaoh's family, but to serve God. But have you ever

wondered how Moses had the courage to keep going to Pharaoh and to say the same thing over and over? And have you wondered why Pharaoh didn't kill Moses instead of putting up with him all of that time during the plagues?

Our text tells us that Moses wasn't afraid of Pharaoh. And do you know why he was not afraid of Pharaoh? I will tell you why. Remember that those words always have to be related to something that God said. Moses went back "by faith" to do something that was utterly ridiculous from a human standpoint, but absolutely certain from a divine standpoint because Moses was acting in obedience to the Word of his God!

Let me read to you what the Lord said to Moses out of the burning bush: Exodus 3:7-10. (Read.)

Moses went not only once, but twice, and three times, and up to ten times, to tell Pharaoh what to do, and he "endured," that is, he was strong enough spiritually to keep it up until Pharaoh said, "Go." Why? Because he was a superhuman being? No. It was because he kept his eyes on the One Pharaoh knew nothing about. "He endured as seeing..."

When God puts His Word in our hearts, and we keep our eyes on Him, the power of a Pharaoh is brought to nothing. Let us put God first in our lives, to live for Him, that we may have no regrets later that we have spent our lives doing the things that don't really matter.

But now let me go on to the second verse:

II. MOSES AND THE PASSOVER (Heb. 11:28).

The background for this verse is, of course, Exodus 12. Let me read the first thirteen verses of the chapter so that we will all know what the Passover was. (Read.)

I hope all of you know the story of how the Lord delivered Israel from the land of Egypt. We have been thinking about Moses and the ten plagues. Well, the Passover had to do with the tenth plague. The Lord told His people, and He told the Egyptians, through Moses that the destroyer would pass through the land of Egypt on that special night. The firstborn in every house, Egyptian and Israelite, would die if the blood of the Passover Lamb were not sprinkled on the upper part of their doors, and the two side posts of the door.

There was only one way that any household could escape death, and that was through the blood of the Passover Lamb. It made no difference what people may have thought, or whether they

fully understood it or not, the blood of the lamb had to be there, or the firstborn in the family would die! There were no exceptions. God would pass over the land that night, and wherever He saw the blood, He would protect that family from the work of the destroyer. This was not Moses' idea; it was God's.

The lamb which the people chose had to be perfect. They had to observe it for four days to make sure that it was perfect. The lamb had to be killed, and the blood had to be applied. Never before, nor since, in the history of the world, has there been such a judgment as the land of Egypt witnessed that night.

The results were just exactly as God said that they would be. The only way of escape from such a terrible judgment was by the blood.

Our text says that "through faith he (Moses) kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them." God told Moses, and Moses told the people. And Moses told the people because God had told him, and he believed what God had said to him! And Moses found, as he knew he would, that the Word of God was true. Death did come to every home where there was no blood, but to none of the homes where the blood was upon the doorposts of the home. All they had to go on was the Word of God.

Now let me make the application of this event to us today.

Paul said in 1 Cor. 5:7b, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

That OT story of MOSES AND THE PASSOVER has very important significance for us today because that OT Passover Lamb was a type, a picture; it represented CHRIST! When Paul called Christ our Passover he was declaring that all of us are in the same condition spiritually that the Israelites and the Egyptians were physically that night. We are under the sentence of death because we sinners. Either we have to die for our own sins, or someone must die for us who is acceptable to God. It is not for us to say how we are going to be saved; that is God's prerogative. And, according to the Word of God, unless we are protected by the Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, death, eternal death, will be the result for us.

There was only one way for the people in those days to escape death, and that was through the Passover Lamb. A family may have been a good family, very upright in every way, but the

blood was required just as much for them as the worst family in Egypt.

The application is obvious, isn't it? We have already learned in our study of this wonderful epistle that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission," no forgiveness. That was stated in Heb. 9:22b. When Christ died on the Cross He died as a Substitute for all people who will ever be saved. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:18; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11, 12.

Concl: One wonderful thing about these two verses which we have considered today is that one is for those of us who know the Lord; the other is for those of you who have not yet received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, your Passover Lamb. So one or the other of these verses applies to every one of us here today, because this is the only real division that we can make among people that really amounts to anything. Some are saved; some are lost. Some have Christ; the others do not. Some are on their way to heaven; some are on their way to hell. Which is it for you?

If you are saved, evidence that you are will be seen like it was with Moses, he forsook the world to live for God and for his Redeemer. May the Lord enable us to live for Him in this present evil age in which we find ourselves. If we see that we have been headed in the wrong direction, seek the grace of God to change.

If you are not saved, how foolish to let even another minute go by without trusting in Christ. "Seek ye the Lord... (Isa. 55:6, 7).

FAITH AT THE RED SEA
Hebrews 11:29

Scripture Reading: Exodus 14:1-18.

Intro: If you have been noticing the faith that has been exercised in the verses preceding our text in Hebrews 11, you will notice as we come to verse 29 today that this is the first verse that speaks of the faith of the nation Israel. Always before it is the faith of individuals, and just single individuals, with the exception verse 23 which speaks of two individuals: Moses' father and mother. But here in verse 29 we are not told that it was the faith of Moses that got the children of Israel across to the other side of the Red Sea, but it was the people's faith.

The faith of the people was certainly a factor at the time of the Passover. Any home that was not covered by the blood of the Passover Lamb was doomed for judgment in the death of the firstborn. But verse 28 tells us about Moses' faith, not the faith of the people. Here in verse 29 it is the people's faith that is recognized. So this marks a distinct change from what we have had before.

This certainly was one of the most amazing things that ever happened to the children of Israel. Later, when they went into the land of Canaan across the Jordan River, the same thing happened. And that was miraculous, too. But it was not what the passage through the Red Sea was because the Red Sea is a much larger and much deeper body of water than the Jordan River. So we can say that nothing like this had ever happened before, and nothing of this proportion ever happened afterwards. It was truly a miracle of God, a most amazing miracle!

The story is given to us in Exodus 14, although we really need to include the first twenty-one verses of chapter 15 to have the full chapter. Chapter 15 gives us what I like to call the first psalm in Scripture. It is a song written by Moses in which he and the people of Israel praised the Lord for their wonderful deliverance through the Red Sea. If I had been writing the book of Hebrews, I probably would have felt that such an event deserved more attention than one verse could give it. But the Holy Spirit Who is infinitely wiser than I am led the Apostle to give us just one verse on that remarkable victory. It is very instructive for us because it not only points to a very special event in the history of Israel, but it contains many wonderful lessons that can help us in our walk with the Lord today.

Let me call your attention to those two words which we have

seen fifteen times before this in Hebrews 11. And this will give you the first point that I want to make.

I. THE FAITH OF THE ISRAELITES.

We have learned that faith means believing God. It means trusting God. But we have also learned that faith is not a passive word which causes us to sit back, fold our arms, and wait for God to do something. No, faith is a word which leads to action. It was by faith that Abel offered the right sacrifice to God. It was by faith that Enoch walked with God. It was by faith that Noah built the ark. It was by faith that Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to follow the Lord to a new land. And so we could go on and on through the chapter. It is "by faith" that the people of God did things in OT times that they would not otherwise have done. In fact, it meant doing things in many instances which otherwise they could not have done. And such a case is before in our text.

Why is it said that these people from the OT did what they did "by faith"? There is just one answer: They were doing what they did because God told them to do what they did. They all had the Word of God to go on. God told them what to do. They believed that was what God wanted them to do. And so they did it. They did it believing that God would help them do what they were supposed to do, that He would take care of them in doing it, and that blessing would result. We would have to say, too, in the light of verse 6 of this chapter, that they did it because they wanted to please God; they wanted to glorify Him.

Now let me review for you the account which we have in Exodus 14 where we have the full account of that which our text verse is referring to.

The people of Israel had been told to get out of Egypt. The tragic deaths of the firstborn throughout Egypt was the event which finally broke the stubborn will of Pharaoh.

To guide the people the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day which turned into a pillar of fire by night. You read about that in Ex. 13:21, the last verse of Exodus 13. It would be interesting to know how the cloud changed into light each night, and then back into a cloud the next morning. Perhaps as the light of the sun grew dimmer, the cloud turned gradually into a fire which gave light to the whole camp of Israel. We are not told about that. But we do know that the Israelites were never left in the darkness. And God guided them day and night by means of that cloud. When the cloud moved, they moved. When the cloud stopped,

they stopped.

You will have to remember that all of the people of Israel in that procession had been born in Egypt. They never had been to Canaan. A few may have known the general direction in which it was located, but they were a people who needed the guidance that the Lord was providing for them or they never would have gotten where they were going.

However, it was the guidance that the Lord gave them that gave them their first test of faith. It appeared that the Lord had led them into a trap.

It was not long before Pharaoh regretted that he had let the children of Israel go. In fact, the reason for his regret was that the Lord hardened his heart, and caused him to go after the Israelites with his whole army—men, horses, six hundred chariots, all armed for war. The children of Israel would have been helpless to defend themselves against such a mighty army.

That situation by itself would have been bad enough because with horses and chariots the Egyptians would soon have been able to overtake the Israelites.

But to make matters worse, the cloud led the children of Israel to the shores of the Red Sea where as Spurgeon said, were "the craggy steeps of Pi-hahiroth on the right, and the fortresses of Migdol and Baal-zephon frowning on the left" (Vol. 9, p. 650). As I said earlier, they were trapped! And what made it so hard to take was the fact that they got there following that cloud. So you can see why they would feel rebellious against the Lord. The Lord had hardened Pharaoh's heart (although they may not have known that for a fact), and then He led the people into a geographical situation from which there was no escape! Pharaoh knew this, and so he set out to bring them all back to Egypt. But think how you would have felt in a situation like that.

And so I am not surprised to read what was read to us earlier in verses 10 through 12. They were blaming Moses because he was their leader. They had been doing what he said, and at that moment it seemed like it was a big mistake, and that they were all going to be killed. (Read verses 10-12.)

If you remember the first three verses of Exodus 14, you know that the Lord had told Moses that he apparently did not tell the Israelites. It was that He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart to go after the Israelites, but that Pharaoh and his men would be destroyed in trying to re-capture the Israelites. Thus, Pharaoh had one purpose, but the Lord had

another purpose. This is one of the many places in Scripture where we see the truthfulness of Solomon's words when he wrote,

There are many devices in a man's heart;
nevertheless the counsel of the Lord,
that shall stand (Prov. 19:21).

Later still Isaiah wrote these two great verses:

The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying,
Surely as I have thought,
so shall it come to pass;
and as I have purposed,
so shall it stand (Isa. 14:24).

And in the same chapter, verse 27,

For the Lord of hosts hath purposed it,
and who shall disannul it?
and his hand is stretched out,
and who shall turn it back.

The mightiest king on the face of the earth was very, very slow to learn about the sovereignty of God. In fact, he never did learn it, and he paid for his foolishness with his life.

However, what did Moses tell the people to do?

(Read verses 13 and 14.)

What do these verses tell us about Moses? They tell us that Moses believed God. As far as the record is concerned, we do not know that Moses knew how the Lord would deliver them, but he had no doubt about the faithfulness of the Lord.

However, his advice was good advice. When you don't know what to do, stand still. Or, we could say it another way: When the Lord does not tell you to change what you are doing, keep doing what you have been doing. And that is exactly what the Lord told the people to do! (Read verse 15.)

It must have sounded like foolishness UNTIL the Lord told him the words that we have in verses 16, 17, and 18. God was going to do what He had never done before, as far as we know. He was going to make a path through the Red Sea, and, at the same time, dry it out, so that the Israelites would have no trouble at all going across the Red Sea. What greater proof do we need that our God is sufficient, and more than sufficient, for any and every need that can arise in our lives?

After that, the cloud changed its position, and went behind the Israelites, to stand between them and the Egyptian army. Then the Egyptians were in darkness, but the Israelites were in the light.

And it was at that moment that Moses did what the Lord had told him to do. (Read verse 21.) Moses did not make the waters roll back; God did in response to Moses' faith. You see, Moses did what he did because the Lord told him to do it, and so we can say that he did it "by faith." But verse 22 is the verse that the writer of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote our text for today. Let me read it to you. (Read verse 22.) With the water piled up on each side like two walls, the children of Israel went through on dry land. This was "by faith." The Lord told them what to do. He opened the way. And then He gave them the faith to do what they had been told to do.

What a glorious day that was in Israel! By the miraculous power of God they got through the Red Sea, and to the other side. And what a day it was to glorify the Lord.

But the story is not finished. We also must consider:

II. THE PRESUMPTION OF THE EGYPTIANS.

The difference between faith and presumption is the Word of God. The Israelites were acting on the Word of God, and what they did was "by faith"—by faith in God and in His Word through Moses. But the Egyptians had no word from God. They simply saw what the Israelites did, and assumed that they could do what the Israelites did. However, they did not know that what was the path to freedom for the Israelites was to come the path to death for them.

Our text says, "Which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." This means that they tried to do what the Israelites had done. They probably said, "If they can do it, so can we! Let's go!"

However, they did not know that they were dealing with the God of heaven and earth whose patience with them was exhausted. Little did they know when they walked into that pathway through the sea that they would never walk out on the other side! By their persistence in disobeying God, they sealed their own doom. The grieving families in Egypt had grief added to grief when their finest men did not come home from their pursuit of the Israelites.

What did this mean to the Israelites?

Look at the last two verses of Exodus 14--verses 30, 31.

To obey God by faith leads to greater faith. Israel was learning some of the greatest lessons about God that it is possible for anybody to learn.

And so what did the Israelites do?

They sang. But they did not sing to each other. They sang "unto the Lord" (Ex. 15:1). And what a song this was! It would have been impossible to hear any singing like this, this side of heaven. It must have been more than glorious. The people had something to sing about, and they knew it. It was the song of Moses which all of the people sang.

It was what is called antiphonal singing. The men sang, and then the ladies, led by Miriam (see Ex. 15:20, 21), responded. It was like a mighty echo, making the earth ring with the praises of the Lord. And how the Lord must have listened to that singing with great joy. Sad to say, during all of their journey from Egypt to Canaan, things never got greater than they were at this time. It was a glorious moment in the history of Israel when the people poured out their hearts to God in grateful praise for the mighty deliverance He had given them. No word of glory was given to Moses; all of the glory was given to God, the only One Who deserved it!

Concl: There are more lessons in this one verse and the history which is behind it than I can point out to you, but let me, in closing, point out a couple of the most obvious.

I would not be surprised if there are not several here today, perhaps more than I think, who feel trapped in their circumstances. And you may be where you are, facing an impossible situation, even though you have been trying to do the will of God. There may be bitterness in your heart to the point that you might feel in your despair that it would have been better if you had never been saved. That is the way the Israelites felt.

What are you going to do--get angry with the Lord? Or get angry with His people who have encouraged you to trust the Lord?

I am sure that most of us know the feelings that were expressed by the children of Israel when they got to the Red Sea, and had no hope that they would ever get out of the trouble they were in.

Let me encourage you to do three things:

- 1) Stand still.
- 2) Listen to the Word of God.
- 3) Keep going on with what you have been doing (providing you are not living in some sin). Keep going on, trusting the Lord to deliver you. Consider His greatness, His

wisdom, His record with His people. We have all thought that we would see the Lord fail, but He never has! He may not do all that we would like for Him to do, but His way is best. His Word said that His way is perfect, and we must keep on with our lives, waiting for the waters to roll back, and for the path for our deliverance to open up.

But there is a word of warning here also. And now I want you to think about Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Here was a whole generation of Egyptians who will never be able to say, when they stand before the Lord, "You never gave me a chance." Think of God's patience with Pharaoh. Think of how God exposed him to the light. Yet never did he cry out to God for mercy. Never did he seek repentance, nor plead with the Lord for faith to trust in Him, the living God. Day after day when by, and Pharaoh kept telling the Lord, "NO!"

Do I need to remind you that the day came when the Lord told Pharaoh, "Your time is up! Depart from me into everlasting darkness and eternal night."

The Egyptians tried to do what the Israelites did when they went through the Red Sea. What a difference it would have made if they had tried to do what the Israelites did when they took the Passover Lamb, and sprinkled the blood on the doors of their homes. It is at the Cross that our relationship with the Lord finds its start. Unless we start at the Cross, we will never stand in glory with the Lord.

There are many people today, even in our churches, who are trying to walk with the people of God, but their hearts have never been cleansed by the blood of Christ. If that is your case today, I trust that the Lord will open your eyes and your heart and lead you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you won't just try to walk like the people of God; you will walk as a child of God because you will be one of them, one of us. May God grant it in your case, for His glory!

TBC -- 5/10/92 a.m.
Mothers' Day

Hebrews #52

FAITH AND THE WALLS OF JERICHO
Hebrews 11:30, 31

Scripture Reading: Joshua 6:1-16, 20-23, 24.

Intro: Our text for today is two verses in Hebrews 11 which have to do with the city of Jericho. In fact, they both have to do with the city wall of Jericho. The verses are 30 and 31 in Hebrews 11. (Read.)

The verses, like all of the others up to this point in the chapter, are in chronological order. We learn about the conquest of Jericho, and the deliverance of Rahab and her family, in Joshua 6. However, we first meet Rahab in Joshua 2. It is there that we learn about the two spies which Joshua sent to Jericho prior to Israel's attack upon the city. There it is that we learn why the life of Rahab, the harlot, was spared, along with the lives of the members of her family. That was a most unusual situation which the spies found, and the manner in which the city was conquered was also very unusual. And the Apostle, in writing the book of Hebrews, introduced the conquest of Jericho and the deliverance of Rahab and her family, with the two words which we have seen throughout this chapter: "By faith..." This means that the Israelites and Rahab acted on the Word of God, and thus experienced the blessing of the Lord. And it is also evidence that these were people who belonged to the Lord. It is impossible for people to live "by faith" if they are not trusting in the promises of God for salvation.

However, even though we will have to go back to Joshua 2 when we consider the story of Rahab, I am going to begin with the conquest of Jericho and then Rahab's deliverance since they come in that order in Hebrews 11.

I. THE CONQUEST OF JERICHO (Heb. 11:30).

From verse 29 to verse 30 we cover 40 years. The children of Israel passed through the Red Sea soon after they left Egypt, but, because of their repeated rebellion against the Lord, the entire generation of adults which came out of Egypt was forbidden to enter the promised land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. Those 40 years were years of unbelief, but with the crossing of the Red Sea and Israel's entrance into the promised land, we see a remarkable evidence of faith.

Jericho was the first city of Canaan to fall to the Israelites. But it was conquered in a most unusual way.

We have heard in our Scripture reading that the Lord told

Joshua that "the men of war" were to march around the city once a day for six days. They were preceded by seven priests each of whom was carrying a ram's horn. The daily march was made with no commotion. The priests were to keep blowing their trumpets as the procession moved around the city of Jericho.

However, on the seventh day they were to walk around the city seven times. Then the priests were to blow a long blast with their trumpets, the people were to shout, and God's promise was that "the wall of the city shall fall down, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him" (Josh. 6:5b).

By this time the people must have been accustomed to seeing things happen for the first time. That is what they saw when they crossed the Red Sea. That was a first. That is what they saw when God first gave them manna and quail to eat. Those were firsts. That is what they saw the first time the Lord gave them water out of the rock. That was a first. And so when these directions were given to them, that was the first time they had been told to do anything like that! And, as strange as it might seem, the people did not seem to question what Joshua told them to do. I am sure that none of them had ever heard of a battle being fought this way, but then we have to realize that the ways of the Lord are very different from the ways of men.

The ark of the covenant was also to be carried around the city each day. And Joshua 6:7 seems to indicate that the people followed the army around the city every day. It must have been a very unusual sight, and very disturbing to the people in the city, to say the least.

However unusual this was, the will of the Lord was done each day. That large procession moved around Jericho, and then the people waited to do the same thing on the second day, then on the third day, and so on for six days.

The seventh day must have been a day of great excitement although the Scriptures seem to indicate that it was just like the other days. The main difference was that the people went around the city seven times on that seventh day. And then at the proper moment, the priests blew a special signal with their trumpets, the people shouted, the walls fell, and the city was taken. The people of the city were killed by the Israelites, old and young. Gold, silver, and other valuables were taken to be placed in the treasury of the Lord's house, and then the city was set on fire. It was a glorious victory with apparently no loss of life for the Israelites.

When we think of the destruction of the people, even the children, remember two things:

1) Like all of the other Canaanites, the people of Jericho were guilty of the grossest sins. The children had become so corrupt that there was no way of changing the terrible situation that existed in the city. The children would continue the sins of their parents, and do even worse things.

The second thing to remember is this:

2) Since Abraham's day the Lord had been waiting for 400 years until the iniquity of the Canaanite nations was full. See Gen. 15:16.

Therefore it was a city most deserving of judgment, a city which had not paid any attention to whatever the Lord had been doing to awaken them to the awfulness of their sin, and the tragic results which sin always brings.

This ought to serve as a warning to us in our country. I do not know how the Lord had been ministering in Jericho, but I know that He was doing something--and had been doing it for a long time. But the people did not listen. They did not pay attention to the warnings. Suddenly it was too late.

Our country has had the light, probably much more than Jericho ever had. But we have rejected the light. We face disaster after disaster, but very few seem to recognize the hand of God. We are like Pharaoh who did not realize that Egypt was being destroyed. We are the same way. We have first one calamity, and then another, but all it seems to do to us is to make us more determined to work our own way out of our troubles.

We are like the Israelites to whom Isaiah prophesied. Listen to what is written in Isa. 9:8-10:

The Lord sent a word into Jacob,
and it hath lighted upon Israel.
And all the people shall know,
even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria,
that say in the pride and stoutness of heart,
The bricks are fallen down,
but we will build with hewn stones:
the sycomores are cut down,
but we will change them into cedars.

Doesn't this sound like what America is saying? But what was the result for Israel? The hand of the Lord got heavier and heavier upon them, until they were carried away into captivity. And why? For just one reason: They refused to listen to God!

But let us look at what God was doing with His people Israel in order to give them the land.

He gave them His Word. He was teaching them to trust Him. He made them wait. And then He was showing them the absolute importance of obeying the Word that was given to them.

There are times when we wait in faith. But there are other times when we act in faith. Every day the Israelites did both. They were being tested as to whether or not they believed the Word that God had given them through Joshua. It is important that we know when to do both of these--wait, or act! But when we act we need to be sure that we know what it is that the Lord wants us to do. He will always guide us by His Word. It is not going to be as specific as it was for the Israelites, but we can depend upon the Lord to make His way clear before us. THE IMPORTANT THING FOR EACH ONE OF US IS THAT WE ARE TRUSTING THE LORD, AND DOING WHAT HE WANTS US TO DO! This is personal for each one of us. And if we are not learning anything else from Hebrews 11, I hope we are all learning that we can never go wrong when we act in obedience to the Word of God! But when we disobey the Word of God, nothing will go right. God withholds His blessing, and we are left to ourselves. And that is the worst place for us to be.

What does our text tell us? (Read Heb. 11:30.)

They walked, then they waited, and then they won! That is the message for us. Do what He says. Wait for His time. And then there will be victory and blessing. Let us learn to do things the Lord's way. It will save us a lot of time and trouble.

But now let us go on to verse 31:

II. THE DELIVERANCE OF RAHAB (Heb. 11:31).

Who was Rahab? She was a woman. She was a Canaanite, a Gentile. And she was a harlot. She made her living by sin, specifically, by fornication. She had lived a bad life.

She deserved what all of the people of Jericho got: death, and eternal punishment. She was the kind of a person who made matters worse, never better.

But a very unusual thing happened to her. (Our verses abound in unusual things.) She had heard about the Israelites, and by her own testimony to the spies (see Josh. 2:9) she had been terrified by what she heard. The hearts of the people of Jericho had melted with fear, and her heart had done the same.

However, something additional happened to her. She had come

to believe in the God of Israel. She believed that Israel's God was the true God, and that He was "God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." See Josh. 2:15.

What did all of this mean? It meant that the God of all grace had chosen that prostitute, and that she had been saved before the spies ever got into the city. Where and how and when she learned her theology, we do not know. But we do know that she learned it. The truth of God had gotten into her heart some way, and she was saved.

Four things tell us that she was saved in addition to her testimony:

- 1) As our text says, "she...received the spies with peace." We may question the way she protected them, but she was the one used to make sure that the spies got back safely. She sided with the spies because she knew the Lord was with them.
- 2) She was concerned for the members of her family. This inevitably happens when anyone comes to the Lord.
- 3) She immediately did what the spies told her to do. A true believer will be characterized by obedience. She did not argue about the scarlet cord, or rope. She immediately put it in her window and over the wall. A true child of God does not argue about obeying the will of the Lord; he or she will simply do it.
- 4) She spent the rest of her life with the Lord's people in Israel. One sure sign that a person has passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life is that he or she wants to be with the Lord's people. The Apostle John stated it even stronger than that. He said we not only want to be with the Lord's people, but we love the Lord's people. Cf. 1 John 3:14.

It seems as though she had so little light to go on, and yet the Lord ministered in pure grace to the heart of this sinful woman, and she was forever changed into a child of God.

But I will tell you what else the Lord did for Rahab. He gave her a wonderful Jewish husband, named Salma, or Salmon. And one of the most wonderful things about that marriage was that Salma was in the family line which led from Abraham to Christ. Rahab was the mother of Boaz who also married a Gentile by the name of Ruth. And Rahab became the great great grandmother of King David.

What encouragement Rahab ought to be to anyone who feels that he or she is too great a sinner ever to be saved! Although her sins were scarlet like that cord she put out of her window, yet the Lord made her as white as snow. Many see in that scarlet thread a type of the blood of our Savior.

Why did she not die with the rest of the people of Jericho? Because she was trusting in the Lord Who not only saved her from physical death, but also delivered her from her sins and from eternal death. And we can be sure that because she was forgiven so much, she loved the Lord very, very much. You would not have to convince Rahab that the doctrines of grace are the truth. She knew it, and knew that apart from the grace of God she would have had no way to be saved.

Concl: You know, while we know that the Lord still can save prostitutes, yet you don't have to be a prostitute in order to be saved. "All have sinned," and therefore we all need a Savior. We all were born with the capacity to commit the worst of sins, and if we have not disgraced ourselves in sin, we have only One to thank--not ourselves, nor our families, nor our environment, BUT GOD! Therefore, if you have never trusted Christ, He is the only One Who can save you. May the fear of the Lord be in your heart so that you will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing Him as your Savior.

I get another word of encouragement from Rahab. Who testified to her? Who led her to the Lord? As far as the Scriptures are concerned, there was no human being involved in her salvation. God usually works through His people, but not always! And so let us be encouraged to believe that the Lord is working today in the people we would least expect to see turn to Christ. Even those family members and friends that you pray for, but hardly ever see, don't be surprised if you see them in heaven some day. And you may learn about their salvation before you get to heaven.

What an amazing God we have! How marvelous is His grace! Think of how Rahab would have sung,

Amazing grace--how sweet the sound--
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found--
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

If you don't know the Lord, it is my prayer that the Lord will draw you to Himself today as He did Rahab so long ago. If you do know the Lord, let us show it every day by living our lives in obedience to what He has told us to do in His Word. That is where the blessing is, and that is where we will become useful instruments in His hand for His glory.

OLD TESTAMENT FAITH
Hebrews 11:32-40

Intro: Today, the Lord willing, I plan to finish our studies in Hebrews 11. We have been in this wonderful chapter since the first of the year. This will be my eighteenth message on this chapter alone. If you have profited from it even a fraction of the profit I have received from preparing and delivering these messages, then I am very happy indeed--and thankful to the Lord for His blessing. There is no question but that Hebrews 11 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.

The first thirty-one verses of this chapter are actually a brief survey of the first six books of the Bible. We have looked into the lives of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, Moses, Moses' parents--Amram and Jochobed (although they are not mentioned by name), Joshua and the Israelites (although none of them is mentioned by name), and Rahab.

We are told what all of them did "by faith"--with the one exception of Esau. And just to know what each one did "by faith" is to have an excellent foundation in the study of the OT.

However, when we come to verse 32 we see that the writer of this book, who I am inclined to believe was the Apostle Paul, was like a preacher running out of time. And so he began at this point to summarize.

This chapter is a great encouragement to pastors and anyone else who teaches the Word of God. Lucille used to get after me because I would spend so much time on the first point of my messages that I would not have time to finish. She hasn't mentioned that recently to me. Either I have improved, or she has just given up on me.

I have notice in reading Spurgeon's sermons that often he was guilty of spending a lot of time on the first points of his message that he had to be very brief on the last point, or points. So this must be a common failing of preachers.

It is possible that the Apostle could also have meant that the examples he had given were sufficient to prove that the people of God in the OT were characterized "by faith." They believed God, and acted upon His promises.

Anyway--this is what the Apostle was doing here. He had run out of time, and so he was summarizing.

Now let me point out what he did in these nine verses, and then we will seek to learn the lessons that have been placed in our text by the Holy Spirit.

I. MEN OF FAITH (Heb. 11:32-40).

The first four that he mentioned were:

A. Judges in Israel (Heb. 11:32):

1. Gedeon, or Gideon. We learn about him in Judges 6-8.
2. Barak. We learn about him in Judges 4, 5.
3. Samson. The story of Samson is given in Judges 13-16.
4. Jephthae (spelled Jephthah in the OT). Here we must go back to the book of Judges, chapters 11, 12.

Next we come to one of the greatest of all men in OT times:

B. David. The story of his life starts in 1 Samuel 16, goes through 2 Samuel and into the first two chapters of 1 Kings. Then the life of David is repeated in 1 Chronicles.

C. Samuel. The story of Samuel is one of the greatest and best in the OT. To learn about him you will need to read 1 Sam. 1-4, 7-13, 15, 16, 19 (where we have the record of his death), 25 (his death), 28 (brought back to talk to King Saul). Samuel bridges the gap between the judges and the prophets, and he belonged to both groups.

And then the Apostle summarized again when he said,

D. "And the prophets."

There were writing prophets and non-writing prophets. The Apostle probably had both in mind. Elijah and Elisha were examples of non-writing prophets; Isaiah, Jeremiah, both major and minor prophets who wrote the concluding books of the OT.

The order here in verse 32 is not chronological. If it had been, the order would have been like this:

- 1) Barak.
- 2) Gideon.
- 3) Jephthae.
- 4) Samson.

- 5) Samuel.
- 6) David.
- 7) The prophets.

It seems to me to be useless to speculate on the order in which the names appear here in verse 32, or even in what they did. He linked their names with the actions mentioned in verses 33 through 38, but did not necessarily limit himself to those whose names were mentioned.

Now we come to what we can refer to as:

II. ACTS OF FAITH (Heb. 11:33-38).

I would like for you to notice that the Apostle gave us a double list. In the first we have those who experienced great victories through faith. In the second we see victories also, but victories of a different sort--involving death, suffering, humiliation, destitution. We must not link faith with just the first, but not the second. The words "by faith" must be attached to every action mentioned in this entire section from verse 32 through verse 38.

We are inclined to think of what Gideon did, or what David did, or the way Jeremiah lived and died, as acts of faith. But we are not so inclined to think about those who were martyred, or those who suffered long, but saw no deliverance. The Word of God speaks of the latter as being done "by faith" just as much as the former.

Look at the list. (Read verses 32 through 38, noting the change in the second statement of verse 35.)

We can fill in some of the details regarding some of the acts that are mentioned here, but not with all of them. Obviously there was much suffering which is not recorded in Scripture, terrible suffering. But there never has been, and never will be, a single instance of suffering which has not been noticed by God! The Lord does not deal with all of us the same way. His ways are "past finding out." And yet, even though we may not be able to see it now, God's ways are perfect. They are higher and better than ours ever could be.

The saints of the OT teach us that whatever our circumstances, it is never a mistake to trust God. Some trusted God, and saw great blessing. Others trusted God, and died. But their faith was the same faith. Our responsibility is to trust God; it is His to do with us as He deems best for the glory of His Name, for the blessing

of His people, and for the fulfillment of His purposes.

And so we come at last to:

III. THE DIVINE CONCLUSION (Heb. 11:39, 40).

Some died prematurely according to our human calculation, but the statement made in verse 13 could be extended to include those beyond that verse as well as those before. Hebrews 11 tells us about people in OT times who lived "by faith," and who died "by faith." Some lived long lives; others had their lives cut short. Some died natural deaths; others died violent deaths. But they all died, and they died "in faith."

Not only that, but all of them who are mentioned by name, and those who are not mentioned by name, "obtained a good report." That is, they had a good testimony, and they had it "by faith." This was faith in OT times! What examples they have left for us to follow. They did not just trust God when things went their way, but they trusted the Lord just as much when things went against them. They trusted the Lord in life, and they trusted the Lord in death. The circumstances of no two lives were exactly the same, but they all had the same God, and He was just as faithful to one as He was to another.

But now look!

After the wonderful record of that which was done in OT times by faith, the Apostle said that none of them "received...the promise." What did he mean by this, especially when it is declared in verse 33 that the OT saints "obtained promises"?

Notice the difference between "the promises" (plural), and "the promise" (singular). They saw many promises fulfilled, but their was one special promise to which they were all looking forward, and no one of them saw that singular promise fulfilled. What was that promise? Sometimes it is referred to as "the promises," but the singular binds all of the promises together into one promise, the promise of our salvation.

To clarify the meaning of "the promise," let me ask you to turn back to the last verses of chapter 10, the verses which led the Apostle Paul to write this eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Let me begin reading with Heb. 10:32, and I will read through the end of the chapter.

(Read Heb. 10:32-39).

The promise which the OT saints looked forward to was the

coming of a Redeemer. Their faith did not just have to do with the particular circumstances, the needs, the dangers, of their lives at those times and in those places. No, they trusted God, believing His promises, and obeying His Word because they had before them a glorious destiny. And I doubt if there was one of them who did not think that he might live to see the fulfillment of the promise of God.

In our Pastor's Class which I have the privilege of teaching we have been talking about salvation, and I have told them more than once what I have said to all of you many times. Salvation is threefold. It includes:

- 1) Justification--a right relationship with God through Christ.
- 2) Sanctification--a right relationship with the Holy Spirit Who makes us holy.
- 3) Glorification--our complete transformation into the likeness of Christ.

The saints of the OT knew that they were sinners, not fit to stand in the presence of a holy God.

They also knew that a Redeemer had been promised by God, a Savior Who would come to die for their sins that they might be acceptable to God.

But they also knew about what their final state would be. David spoke of awaking in the likeness of God Himself. They loved the Lord so much that they were anticipating the day when because of their glorification they would never again be able to grieve Him with their sins.

They may not have known all that we know because the Lord has come, has died, has been raised from the dead, has gone back to the Father, and is coming again, but I firmly believe that they understood in part what was to be involved in our salvation.

Not a single one of them, mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11, lived to see the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when He came the first time. But they were looking for Him! But they did not receive the promise. Why?

Verse 40 gives us the answer. (Read.)

Do you remember that we have seen that word "better" in the book of Hebrews before? Let me read some of the verses where we have seen that word before.

- 1) Heb. 7:19. We have a better hope.
- 2) Heb. 7:21-28. We have a better Priest.
- 3) Heb. 8:6. We have a better covenant. It is established

upon better promises.

- 4) Heb. 9:23. We have a better sacrifice.
- 5) Heb. 10:34. We have in heaven a better and enduring substance.
- 6) Heb. 11:35. We have a better resurrection.

You see, we are not just trusting the Lord to get us through each day, to help us in our needs and in our trials. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers,

If in this life only we have hope in Christ,
we are of all men most miserable (1 Cor. 15:19).

The faith exercised by the OT saints was a faith that sustained them in daily life because of the hope which they had in the promised Redeemer. And regardless of all of the trials and testings which they went through, that hope never died! But we live since Christ has come. We have seen more than the people of God in the OT ever saw, but we also await that glorious day when our faith will be turned to sight. Then, and not until then, will we, along with the saints of all ages, enter into the full realization of the promise of salvation given by God, because then, when the Lord returns, our faith will be turned into sight, and we will all have received the promise in full!

Concl: What, then, can we say about OLD TESTAMENT FAITH?

We can say that it was:

- 1) An enduring faith. It continued on generation after generation.
- 2) A suffering faith.
- 3) A victorious faith.
- 4) A sufficient faith.
- 5) A faith to live by.
- 6) A faith to die by.
- 7) A like precious faith with ours.
- 8) A God-given faith. We will see more about this as we come to chapter 12 next week, the Lord willing.

My question, as I close my message today, is, Is this your faith? Let us take this time to examine our own hearts to make sure that we are in the faith! Are you living for time only, or are you living for eternity? Are you so occupied with life here on this earth that you are oblivious to the fact that there is an eternity ahead? You parents have done everything you can to secure the future here on earth for your children. And this is commendable. But what have you done to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, and for heaven?

Heb. 11:32-40 (7)

You may know that you are on your way to heaven, but what are you doing to make sure that the people you know are on their way to heaven. We can't save anyone, but we can tell them about the One Who can save them--the only One!

What a shame it is that OLD TESTAMENT FAITH was often lived on a high plane than NEW TESTAMENT FAITH, even though we have more light upon the truths which meant so much to the saints of the OT that they would rather die than give it up. OT saints did not seek happiness; they sought holiness. But it was in seeking holiness that they found the secret of true and lasting happiness. May the Lord give us grace to follow in their steps as we await the coming of our Lord!

RUNNING THE RACE
Hebrews 12:1-3

Intro: Since I was a young boy, I have always been interested in sports--and I still am! My Dad was a baseball fan. He played semi-professional baseball in Cincinnati, and all through his life he was an ardent supporter of the Cincinnati Reds. So his boys caught his interest in baseball.

I have always liked football, basketball, swimming, tennis, golf. I have participated in all of them, but never really excelled in any of them. But the one sport that I have not been interested in was track. I don't know why, but I have never been attracted to it. Oh, I enjoy watching the various events during the Olympics, but if there were never another track meet, it would make no difference to me.

I gather from the Pauline epistles of the NT that the Apostle Paul was interested in sports, but one of the many differences between him and me is that he seems to have like track events the best. We have no evidence that he ever participated, but he is like most of us--an interested spectator. But more than that, he saw some lessons in running a race that applied to him as a Christian, and to every other child of God. In fact, he spoke of each of our lives as a race, and running to him was one of the ways he illustrated what it meant to live by faith!

More than that, the Apostle Paul blended together his daily life with his daily work, and he called it his walk. He never separated the two. Whatever he was doing, he was always serving the Lord. He was not just serving the Lord when he was preaching, but when he was making tents. When he spoke of living by faith, it included every detail of his life. He would tell you men that when you go to work, you are serving the Lord. He would tell you mothers that when you take care of the children, do the laundry, prepare the meals, you are serving the Lord. Those of you who are students, are serving the Lord in your studies. Whatever you do during the week--doctors, dentists, teachers, secretaries, mail carriers, bank clerks, and even with those who are not able to work at all, or who are retired, all that you do is a service to the Lord, and all that you do constitutes your walk, your life. If you have a questionable job which cannot be done for the glory of God, then you had better get another job. When the Lord calls us to Himself, He does not necessarily call us to change our occupations. We are expected to serve the Lord where we were when we were saved, whether it is in school, or in the home, or whatever our work may be.

Paul thought that our walk could be pictured as a race.

Now when you think of a race, do not think of a stadium with a track down in front of the grandstand. Think of a cross-country race, up mountains, down valleys, sometimes through beautiful country, sometimes through arid deserts, sometimes the weather is hot, sometimes rainy, sometimes cold. That is the way Paul would describe our lives. Think of a runner racing with all of the energy that he has, all geared to finishing the race to obtain the winner's crown.

However, one difference in this race is that we are not in competition with each other. I am not running to beat you, and you should not be running to beat me. In fact, we are to help each other in this race. There is a victor's crown for all of us, and, as Paul said to the Corinthians, "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. 9:24b).

But let me tell you another thing about your race, and my race.

Notice that expression in Heb. 12:1, "And let us run with patience **the race that is set before us.**" That expression, "**the race that is set before us,**" does not mean that we are all running the same distance, nor are we running the same course. This expression means that each one of us has a course which has been divinely appointed especially for us. We are not like some person who goes out for track and who chooses the events he wants to enter. The Lord has chosen the race course for each one of us, and we are to run where the Lord has placed us, and doing the work that He has given us to do. We must accept the difficulties which we face as a part of what the Lord has appointed for us. We must not wish that we had an easier race. We need to face the trials that are in our particular course because they have been appointed for us by God, our heavenly Father. There are times when you and I may get off the course, but the troubles we find there are far greater than those we face when we stay "on track." So if you are off the course today, let me urge you to get back on track with the Lord as soon as possible.

I hope that I have given you the picture that the Apostle was presenting in this text. He is writing like a coach except for the fact that he was a participant in the race, too. I may not be interested in participating in a track event in school, but in the race Paul was talking about there are none who are allowed to be just spectators. I will qualify that in a moment. But for now let us think of the instructions our coach is giving us concerning the race which we all are running. What are his instructions for us, helpful instructions, to keep us running so that we will win?

First, let me call your attention to:

I. THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES (Heb. 12:1).

The Apostle is obviously speaking about the people he had mentioned in chapter 11, both named and unnamed. They are called a cloud because they are many, because they are united, and because they are now in heaven. But there may also be the thought here that they are in some way observing us to see how we are running. A moment ago I said that there are no people who are just spectators. The exception to that statement should be those who have finished their race. We watch each other as we run, and the people of the world who are not in this race, watch us. But if we have true spectators, they are the runners who are now in heaven. I would not press that idea that they are watching us, but it may be a part of what the Apostle was saying.

He said here that we are "compassed about" with these witnesses. What did he mean by that?

Well, he meant that just as he had taken us through many parts of the OT to speak of many of the people we read about there, so everywhere we turn in Scripture we find people who ran well. There were many who did not run well, but there were many who did. And everyone is an encouragement to us to obey the Lord, to trust Him, and to seek to do His will for His glory. Just like an athlete finds help and encouragement from those who have been successful athletes before him, so we find much of our encouragement from Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Sarah--and right on down through the OT to Malachi! In times when the race seems especially difficult, go back to your Bible and get some important help from those who have run the race before you. The more intense you become about winning in this race, the more you are going to need your Bible. It is The Runner's Handbook! If you want to know how to be a better Christian, read your Bible. There you will find outstanding examples of runners we can and should follow.

Much more could be said about that, but let us go on to think about:

II. OUR PERSONAL PREPARATION (Heb. 12:2b-3).

As I have told you, I have not been particularly interested in track events, but I do know one thing that is characteristics about every serious athlete. He never stops his training. He is always seeking to improve. Performance in any sport is dependent upon training. When training stops, efficiency begins to go down.

So, in the Christian life, our preparation is never over. We should always be doing those things that will help us to be better runners in this life of faith. What does it call for?

The Apostle gives us four important prerequisites for the Christian runner, four requirements if we are to live a life of faith. A life of faith is not a life in which we have no job, but it is a life in which everything we do is marked by our desire to trust God.

Here is the first requirement:

A. "Lay aside every weight" (v. 1).

These words might be better translated, "Having laid aside every weight..." But the idea in either case is the same. A weight is anything that hinders us in our running. We all see that in a runner. He or she wears only enough clothes to be modest. Excess baggage must be left behind.

Weights in the Christian life are those things which take our time unnecessarily, or things which we do which are positively detrimental to our performance as Christians. The wrong kind of a friend can be a weight. Reading the wrong kinds of books can be a weight. Looking at the wrong things on TV can be a weight. Men, too much time given to sports can be a weight—whether you are watching, or participating.

We all need diversion. We all need recreation of some kind. But let our relaxation or recreation be of the kind that brings us with renewed strength and enthusiasm to the race that the Lord has given us to run.

I can't tell you what your weights are, but I think you know. Whenever you hear a person say that he doesn't have time to pray, or to read his Bible, or to go to church, you are listening to a person who doesn't want to give up his weights. A hobby can be beneficial, but when it becomes all-consuming, it becomes a weight. Weights are not necessarily bad in themselves, but they are bad if they hinder us in our race.

Cf. Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:15-17.

The second requirements is:

B. "The sin which doth so easily beset us" (v. 1).

What is it to be "beset" by something?

It is to be under attack. It is to be troubled, harassed,

assailed. We hear a lot about besetting sins, but I want you to know that all sin is besetting. The words "which doth so easily beset" are the translation on one word in the Greek. But I don't think that the Apostle was saying that we need to lay aside that particular sin which so easily places us under attack and can so easily defeat us. He was going beyond that. He was saying that we need to lay aside all sin, actually our sin nature!

To lay aside the sin nature is to do what we are taught to do in Romans 6. We know that we will never reach a state of sinless perfection in this life, but the Lord has provided a way for us to live victoriously over sin. We are to renounce sin. We are not to have anything to do with it. At the first sign of temptation we are to run away from it.

Sin, all sin, is our opponent in this race. You and I will never finish our course as long as we are tolerating some sin, any sin, to turn us aside. Whatever may be hindering you by way of sin, put it away. Be done with it. Depend upon the Lord to give you victory over it.

Requirement #3:

C. "Run with patience" (v. 1).

This does not fit in with our present-day idea of running a race, does it? And I doubt if it would fit in with the idea of running in a race in Paul's day. But it does fit in with the race you and I run every day as Christians.

The Greek of this statement actually reads "with patience, let us run," thus giving the emphasis to patience.

"Patience" is lit. a remaining under. It means that when the race gets tough, we are not to quit. We are not to try to get out of what we are in. We are to continue on knowing that the difficulty, whatever it might be has been appointed by the Lord for us. He knows what we need. He is preparing us for heaven. And He will see us through. He will turn what appears to be a curse, into a blessing. So we must not quit, and we must not faint. But we must keep on persevering in the race that the Lord has appointed for us.

That is a lot easier to say than to do, but by the grace of God it is possible for all of us to run and to finish "with patience."

The fourth and last requirement is the most important, and really that which makes the others possible. It is simply stated, and then explained in verses 2 and 3.

D. "Looking unto Jesus" (vv. 2, 3).

The idea in this expression is that of looking away from all other things to focus our attention upon "Jesus." This is the name of our Lord which is very prominent in the book of Hebrews. This was the name given to the incarnate Son of God when He became Man to save us, His people, from our sins.

"Looking unto Jesus" will cause us to lose interest in our weights. "Looking unto Jesus" will make sin extremely distasteful to us. "Looking unto Jesus" will provide us with a constant supply of patience. The idea in the verb is that we are to look, and to keep looking, and to keep looking, as long as we are running the race. And when our race is over, then we will see Him face to face.

However, in addition to the reasons I have already stated, why is it important for us to be constantly "looking unto Jesus"?

1. Because He is the One from Whom our faith comes (v. 2).

He is "the Author," the Originator, "and the Finisher," the Perfecter, "of our faith." And the only place where we can see the Lord today is in the Word of God. That is why the Apostle Paul also said in Rom. 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

If your faith is weak, it is because you are suffering from poor spiritual eyesight. Take your Bible, and look at Him. Look at Him every day, and throughout the day. When you see Him, faith will come. And you will be able to walk by faith, running the race He has appointed for you.

What is another reason we should be "looking unto Jesus"?

2. Because of the attitude He had in His terrible suffering and death (v. 2).

Notice those words, "Who for the joy that was set before Him."

What was "the joy...set before Him"? It was a twofold joy:

- 1) The joy that He had in doing the Father's will so as to glorify the Father's Name.

- 2) The joy He had in providing salvation for sinners.

We see these ideas brought out in the latter part of verse 2.

The Lord kept His eyes on the goal. We need to keep our eyes upon Jesus not only because our faith comes from Him, and

everything else we need comes from Him. We need to keep our eyes upon Him because some day we will like Him, and that change in part needs to be taking place NOW!

The last point that the Apostle made in our text, and the final reason he gave here as to why we should be continually "looking unto Jesus" was:

3. Because we need to come to our own evaluation of what the Lord accomplished in the light of what He suffered (v. 3).

Notice the word "consider." It means to give serious thought to someone, or something. It is the word which the Lord told His disciples to "consider the ravens" and to "consider the lilies" in Luke 12:24, 27. It is what Peter did when he had the vision in Joppa. Cf. Acts 11:6. It is what Abraham did when the Lord told him he would have a son by Sarah. Cf. Rom. 4:19.

But here it has the idea of evaluating the work of Christ. When you consider what the Lord went through with what He accomplished by what He did, was it worth it?

And also we have the idea here of comparing your sufferings in your race with His sufferings in His race. And when you do, will you faint and quit, or will you go on running?

Regardless of how severe our trials may be, we would all agree, I hope, that our trials are nothing compared with His. And when we see what He accomplished by His sufferings, we can take courage and believe that God is accomplishing far more through our sufferings than it is possible for us to understand now.

Oh, how important it is for us to keep "looking unto Jesus." Look for Him in the Word; you will find Him everywhere. And don't think that you have done enough just because you have had your morning Bible reading and meditation; keep looking into the Word to see Him throughout the day.

Concl: Now do you understand a little better why the book of Hebrews was written, and why we have all of those names and all of those circumstances mentioned from the OT in chapter 11? From a practical standpoint it does us little good to learn of Christ if we forget what we have learned. We need to keep looking at Him, realizing that He can be touched with all of the feeling of our infirmities because He is not only the Lord. He is not only Christ, the Messiah. But He is "Jesus." "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear..."

"LOOKING UNTO JESUS"

Heb. 12:1-3

Part 2

Intro: Last week I found out that there is too much to consider in the first three verses of Hebrews 12 to complete in one message, and so I come back to that same text today to finish what I started last week.

We learned that the Apostle in writing this chapter was comparing the life of every Christian to a race, not a race in some kind of a stadium, but a cross-country race. This is a race that has its mountains and its valleys, its good weather and bad, its smooth roads and its rough roads. It is a race with many difficulties in the way which calls for a great deal of perseverance. The Apostle brought that out when he said that we must "run with patience." There will often be the temptation to quit, but we need to keep going to the end.

We also learned that we do not all have the same course. The Lord has ordained the race course for each one of us. Some have a long course; for others, the course is not so long. But whether long or short, we must all continue running until we reach the end of our course.

Sometimes in Scripture the Christian life is likened to a walk. Here it is likened to a run. Here we are called upon to put forth our greatest efforts continually so that we may not only reach the end of our course, but win the prize that the Lord has for us.

Just before the Apostle got to this point in his epistle (which is obviously very practical), he told us in chapter 11 about certain OT saints and at least a part of the course they had run. When this book was written, everyone in chapter 11 was with the Lord. Their race was run. But what examples they have left for us to follow. They are "witnesses" to us that their race was worthwhile. They are "witnesses" of the faithfulness of God. And there is the possibility at least, that they are watching us in our race. They are called "a cloud" because they are many, even more than are named in Hebrews 11. They are "a cloud" because they are one in their witness. And they are called "a cloud" because, as I have indicated, their race is finished and they are "with the Lord."

Furthermore, we learned that if we are to run and win, we must put off "every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Weights can be good things in themselves, but they keep us from running our best. Sin is our greatest

problem, and we must lay aside sin in every form. We are to run in holiness of life.

There is much for us to remember about this race, isn't there? You can see why we did not get finished with these verses last Sunday.

I had just touched on the first part of verse 2 when I had to quit because my time was used up. Let me begin today by calling your attention to what I want to call:

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTTO (Heb. 12:2a).

What is a motto?

My dictionary defines a motto as "a brief statement used to express a principle, goal, or ideal" (The American Heritage Dictionary, p. 817).

As all of the conditions of verse 1 are being met, there is nothing more important for the Christian runner to do than to be "looking unto Jesus." This is sine qua non of the Christian life. By that I mean that there can be no real running in this race without "looking unto Jesus." This is the first thing we need to be concerned about every morning-- "looking unto Jesus." This should be our main concern throughout the day, every day--"looking unto Jesus." This should be our final concern at the close of every day-- "looking unto Jesus."

The verb the Apostle used here means, according to Thayer (p. 90), "Turning your eyes away from other things" to fix them on "Jesus." And the verb is in the present tense, meaning that this "looking unto Jesus" should be continual, habitual, unceasing.

Why should we be "looking unto Jesus"? The primary reason given here is because he is "the author and finisher of our faith." Our faith originates with Him, and our faith is fulfilled in Him. Our faith is finished or perfected when we see the desire of our faith satisfied.

Now, if we are to live up to this motto of the Christian life, how can we do it?

First, let us recognize that the only place we can actually see the Lord today is in the Bible, the Word of God. He is the subject of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. So, if we are to be "looking unto Jesus," we must be reading our Bibles, meditating on what we read, and seeking specifically to see "Jesus" in the Word. Our main concern in our Bible

reading should be to see the Lord.

Second, we are to see Him as the incarnate Christ. That is the idea in His Name "Jesus." This means that while it is important to see Him in OT prophecy, and to see Him in His OT appearances before He became a Man, we are to be especially concerned about the Lord as He is now! Remember also that He is still going to be "Jesus" when He comes again. The angel told the disciples who had watched the Lord ascend into heaven, "This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11b).

Therefore, we need to spend much time reading the Gospels. We need to see the moral purity of our Lord. We need to see Him in the display of His power. We need to learn from His wisdom. We need to see Him in the exercise of His mercy and His grace. Come back to the book of Hebrews again and again. Our Lord is called "Jesus" in this epistle some ten times.

Always remember what the humanity of our Lord means to us in our times of testing, as we learn so clearly from Heb. 4:14-16. As you run in your race and as I run in mine, our strength will continually be replenished and increased the more we keep "looking unto Jesus." I could spend the rest of the time today speaking of what it means to be "looking unto Jesus," but I hope that I have been able to say enough to show you in part what it means, and how essential it is for our blessing, our strengthening, and our progress in "the race that is set before us."

However, to help us understand more fully what it means to be "looking unto Jesus," the Apostle has described for us:

II. THE RACE COURSE ON WHICH OUR LORD RAN (Heb. 12:2b).

I want you to notice two similar expressions in verses 1 and 2. The first has to do with us; the second has to do with "Jesus."

In verse 1 the Apostle Paul exhorted us to "run with patience the race **that is set before us.**" That same expression is used in verse 2 when it speaks of "the joy **that was set before him.**"

I hope you remember that I said last week that the expression in verse 1 means that our race course has been sovereignly laid out for each of us by God. We do not choose the course where we will run. We do not determine where it will take us, nor do we have a say in how hard or easy it might be. That is all in the hands of God.

Now apply that to our Lord.

When He came to earth, He had a race to run. But He did not choose the race course; that was chosen for Him by the Father. His led to the Cross, and ultimately to the throne "at the right hand" of God. That is where He is now. We have been told that four times in the book of Hebrews: in 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2.

One major difference between the race we run and the race the Lord had appointed for Him is that He knew every aspect of His race before He ever came to earth. In fact, He had known all about it since before the earth and man were ever created. And yet notice how the Apostle described our Lord's attitude toward His race. It is described in two ways:

A. "Who for the joy that was set before him."

What a strange way to think of the race He had to run. How could He ever think in terms to the Cross as "joy"?

Well, it all had to do with what was being accomplished through our Lord's work of the Cross. What was there about the Cross made the Lord anticipate it with "joy"?

Two things:

1. It was total joy for our Lord to do the will of the Father.

This is hard for us to understand in our present state. In fact, sin has made us suspicious of God. And so we are inclined to look upon the will of God with a certain amount of fear. Not so with our Lord! From the beginning of time there never had been a single human being who had always done that which was pleasing to God! Not one! And it seemed that the Lord was anticipating the high honor and great joy of being the first to do the will of God perfectly, even though it meant **the Cross!** How it ought to shame us that we do not take such delight in doing the will of God!

Remember those wonderful words of Christ recorded for us in Psa. 40:7, 8, and quoted in Heb. 10:5-7. Listen to these words of our Lord:

Then said I, Lo I come:
in the volume of the book it is written of me,
I delight to do thy will, O my God:
yea, thy law is within my heart.

The second reason was this:

2. It was total joy for the Lord to lay down His life for the sheep, and thus to guarantee our ultimate deliverance from every trace of sin.

If Heb. 2:9-18 means anything, it means that the Lord was not reluctant to die, but He anticipated it with joy because of what it was going to mean to us! It will take a long time before you and I will be able to comprehend that. We can take a little of it in now, but most of our understanding of this point will have to wait until we get to glory.

But what does it mean?

It means that the Lord loved us, and loves us, far more than we can now understand. I can understand how He would take great delight in doing the will of God, but I have trouble understanding how He would take delight in dying for a sinner like I am. Can't you say the same? And yet it is blessedly true! We should not wonder that the Lord refused to let His disciples keep Him from going to the Cross.

And so, because what was to be accomplished by the Cross, how did He consider the Cross?

B. He despised "the shame."

He was crucified as a sinner, as a malefactor. It was a disgrace for anyone to die by crucifixion. And yet He treated that shame as though it did not exist. He treated "the shame" of the Cross the way the people considered Him. They "despised" Him; He despised "the shame." Isaiah made that awful prediction found in Isa. 53:3,

He is despised and rejected of men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
and we hid as it were our faces from him;
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The shame was as nothing to the Lord because of what He was accomplishing through His death, first, for His Father; second, for His people.

We are truly treading on holy ground in this passage. We probably all should take off our shoes and prostrate ourselves in worship before our wonderful Savior Whose Name is "Jesus."

But now, at this point in the chapter, the Apostle Paul made:

III. A PRACTICAL APPLICATION (Heb. 12:3).

I asked Mr. Mathison, in reading the Scripture for us today,

to read down through verse 11, which he did. I wanted all of us to see that the Apostle was going on to speak about the chastening that we would experience as we run our race, or, to state it another way, as we live our lives. Chastening came to everyone mentioned in chapter 11, and chastening comes to all of us. If you don't experience chastening, it means that you are not His child. Good fathers always chasten their children, regardless of the psychological nonsense that is being handed out by many counsellors today.

The Apostle has mentioned the chastening which our Lord experienced for one real purpose, according to the last part of verse 3: "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Notice: Paul was concerned about what would go on in the minds of believers when they experienced the difficulties of their race. Bad things go on in our minds first. Nobody can see what is happening to us, but we know. And eventually, if it is not corrected, everyone can see that we are not running any more.

To get weary is to be so discouraged and pressured by the trials of life that the Christian is inclined to give in to his weariness and fall out of the race. When he faints, he does fall out. Faith is no longer exercised. He does not read the Word, nor pray. He neglects his duties. He does not obey. He does not persevere. And this opens the door for all other kinds of sins. It does not mean that he loses his salvation; that is impossible. But it does mean that, for the moment, he is not running! He has quit "looking unto Jesus."

Are any of us like that today? Do you have problems in your mind which you haven't told anybody about, not even those who are the closest to you? Have you concealed your true feelings so far? Remember: You will not be able to conceal them much longer. That is why you need to get those problems straightened out today!

What does the Apostle Paul advise?

You have his exhortation at the beginning of verse 3: "For **consider him** that endured..."

What does it mean to "consider him," that is, to consider our Lord Jesus Christ?

It means to start looking again at Jesus. It means that you are going to ask yourself what value you place on the Lord Jesus and His sufferings. Were they meaningless? Did they fail to produce anything for God or for man, or even for Himself? Were His sufferings worthwhile?

Force yourself to answer these questions. Where would you find what you have in Christ if you were to turn away permanently from Him?

Some of our Lord's disciples faced that question during His time here on earth. They saw others going away, and the Apostle John tells us that they never came back. They were not true disciples, or they would have come back. But the Lord asked His apostles this question: "Will ye also go away?" Do you remember what they said? Peter answered for them when he said,

Lord, to whom shall we go?
thou hast the words of eternal life.
And we believe and are sure
that thou art that Christ,
the Son of the living God (John 6:68, 69).

Who could say it better than that? Peter, in writing his first epistle equaled it when he said, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Pet. 2:7).

Concl: If the sufferings of Christ accomplished such great and wonderful purposes, then this is meant to be an encouragement to each one of us. "The contradiction," the gainsaying, "of sinners against himself," was fierce at times, and even led to His death. But God was accomplishing some mighty things through His sufferings. He did not suffer in vain. And neither will we! We may not understand the Lord's ways with us now. It may even appear that He likes to see us suffer. But we know that is not the case. God has a purpose in all that He does, and in all that He allows others to do. The Cross proves that. So let us look back to Him if we are feeling weary and faint, our faith will be revived, and we will get back into the race.

Remember our motto! We are always to be "looking unto Jesus..." Never lose sight of Him. Never allow yourself to forget the Cross. And remember where He is today: "At the right hand of the throne of God." All of this is meant for our encouragement and for the renewal of our faith in God, our Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD
Hebrews 12:4-11

Intro: The prominent word, or words, in my text for today are the various forms of the verb chasten which are found throughout the passage.

In verse 5 we read about "the chastening of the Lord." In verse 6 we see that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In verse 7 we have "chastening" and "chasteneth." In verse 8 we come to the word "chastisement." In verse 10 the Apostle used the word "chastened" again, and in verse 11 "chastening."

In addition to all of these, look at verse 9 where you see the word "corrected." This, in the Greek text, is the same word that is translated "chastened" in the other verses.

This means that we have this word in some form in every verse from 5 through 11, and twice in verse 7, making a total of eight times that some form of the word chasten is used in our text. And it is translated either as a chastening or a correcting.

Therefore, it is very important that we understand the meaning of this word.

When we consult a Greek lexicon, or dictionary, we are told that it has to do with the training of children. The object is the cultivation of moral character. It certainly has to do with the right kind of behavior, but behavior that is the product of what a person is. This word includes instruction. It includes correction. It includes punishment where punishment is needed. But punishment is a last resort. It is all that a father and mother will do to make their children what they ought to be. Often children do not understand the training that they are given, or they may even rebel against such training. However, wise parents will be faithful in training their children in order that their children will grow up to be responsible, mature adults. Training the children is the primary responsibility of parents.

Now it should not be news to any of us that when we are saved we become members of the family of God. This is the teaching of such passages as John 1, Romans 8, Galatians 4, and the entire first epistle of John, as well as other passages of Scripture including the one before us now. And so this means that our training is in the hands of our heavenly Father. It is He who is working in us to make us what He wants us to be. He not only wants us to behave righteously, but He wants us to be righteous. Holiness of character is God's purpose for

each one of us. And to accomplish this, He disciplines us. He teaches us. He reproveth us. He corrects us. Sometimes He punishes us. But His purpose is to make us holy in heart and in life.

We as human parents try to protect our children the best we can. We would like it if they never got sick, if they never had any trouble with their friends, if they always got along well at school. But life is not like that. They do have their troubles. They aren't able to do all that they would like to do. There are many things that we cannot give them. And so a major part of our job as parents is to help them to cope with their troubles, to help them to develop into the kind of people that we want them to be. Verse 9 in our text deals with what we all have experienced as children, if we had the right kind of parents.

Unfortunately not all children have parents who are trying to help them to become the right kind of people. They don't teach them. They don't encourage them. They don't warn them about the wrong things. They don't point out the right way to go. And so we have a generation of children growing up, and some are grown, who know nothing about child training. And their lives show it.

Now let us relate all of this to our lives as Christians.

I have said many times that we are never told in the Word of God that our lives as Christians would be easy. In fact, we are told just the opposite. One of the last things that our Lord told His disciples before He went to the Cross was, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Paul told Timothy that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Job who knew this so well said, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). None of us ever has a day that is exactly what we would like for it to be. There is always something going wrong. We as Christians are not protected from that. If I were to ask how many of you would change something in your life if you could, every hand would go up. There are probably several things you would like to change. There are many things that we can't change (some we can), but the important thing for all of us to learn is that, in the hand of our heavenly Father, those things are designed to change us. THIS IS WHY WE NEED TO LEARN TO LIVE BY FAITH!

Let me remind you that every person mentioned in Hebrews 11, and those who are not mentioned by name, had troubles. Many of them had serious troubles. Some of them gave their lives for their faith.

When we get into the first part of chapter 12, the Apostle began speaking about our Lord. Nobody had troubles like He had. No one ever suffered like our Lord Jesus Christ did. And we are exhorted in verse 3 of chapter 12 to "consider HIM"! And we are to do this so that we will not get weary and fall out of this race. The race is never easy, but it can be profitable, and it can be a joyful race. WHY? No one like to suffer. No, we don't. But when we see what God is doing in our lives through our trials, that is what makes it all worthwhile.

We today know very little about suffering for the sake of Christ. That is probably because we are so careful not to offend other people by talking about the Lord. But troubles come our way in spite of us, and it is often because we are Christians. Some of our troubles come from other people, and it is easy to get resentful against them and fail to see that God is using those people to make us more holy, more like our Savior.

In the verses before us today we have several things that the Apostle has written for our encouragement. And just as we face troubles every day, we need encouragement every day—most often many times during the day. What encouragement is there for us in our text? Let us examine it and see.

I. OUR TROUBLES ARE NOT AS BAD AS THEY COULD BE (Heb. 12:4).

You couldn't say that about many of the people who are mentioned in Hebrews 11. Nor could we say that about our Lord! NOTE: Their enemy was sin. Sin is our problem. It is because we are sinners that we need this child training in the family of God. But it ought to be a source of great encouragement to us today to realize that while some have laid down their lives as the people of God, we are still here. The Lord Jesus died, but we continue to live. So our troubles are not as bad as they could be.

II. WE NEED TO REMEMBER WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE WORD OF GOD (Heb. 12:5-8).

Here the Apostle was quoting from the book of Proverbs in the OT, Prov. 3:11, 12. And let me just mention in passing that this is a good text to show that you and I should not neglect the OT. If you do, you would miss the encouragement of these verses.

What do they tell us?

Solomon was telling his son, and we need to learn the same thing, that the trials we face, regardless of how they may

come to us--from our circumstances, from other people, or even as a result of our own stupidity or sin, are "the chastening of the Lord." The Lord has ordered them in order to teach us what He wants us to know, and to make us more like He wants us to be. That is a tremendous encouragement. We never go into any trial but what it is the purpose of God for us to come out of it better than when we went into it.

And so we are not to "despise" our trials. They are "the chastening of the Lord." We are not to regard them lightly, but we are to take them seriously. We are not to attribute them to chance, nor just to people. We are to see the Lord in them, to submit to Him, and to seek to learn all that He is would teach us through them. If we do this, then we are not going to "faint."

John Owen in his commentary on Hebrews says that fainting can include four things:

- 1) Despondency, dejection, depression.
- 2) Complaining, by which we not only increase our own troubles, but discourage others.
- 3) Neglecting our responsibilities.
- 4) Misjudging the ways of the Lord--either the length of the trials, or God's purpose in them.

And, if we do not know the Scriptures, we will not realize that chastisements, reproofs from the Lord, are actually a proof that He loves us and that we are His children. See Heb. 12:6. We are not called to discipline all of the children in our neighborhood--even though at times we might want to. We discipline our own children. We discipline them because they are ours, and because we love them. That is the way it is in our relationship with the our God. He disciplines us because we are His children, and because He loves us.

This same truth is brought out in verses 7 and 8.

What a lot of added trouble we would be spared if we would only train ourselves to keep "looking unto Jesus" even when things are going wrong! We are not in some enemy's hands; we are in the Lord's hands, and no one can take us out! In times of distress we are inclined, not only to forget the Word of God, but, what is just as bad, to forget the Lord Himself.

There is much for our encouragement and learning in those four verses.

But let us go on to verse 9. Here we have an encouraging word of exhortation.

III. WHAT WE LEARNED IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR PARENTS WE NEED TO PRACTICE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR GOD (Heb. 12:9, 10).

The problem that many Christians face in connection with a verse like this is that they never learned submission to their parents. And so they are not prepared to be submissive to the Lord. There is a message here for parents as well as for children. Parents, if you are not teaching your children obedience at home, then don't be surprised if they turn out to be rebels in their relationship with the Lord. One of the greatest things that parents can do to help their children maintain a right relationship with the Lord is to teach them to be obedient at home.

And children, listen to me. If you have parents who care what you do, where you go, how late you stay out, who you are with, if you are not thankful for them now, you will be later on. They discipline you because they love you, and because they want you to learn to walk in submission to the Lord.

The reasoning in this verse is, if we have been submissive to parents who did what they thought was best (even though on occasion they may have been wrong), should we not be submissive to our heavenly Father? They did what they thought was right; the Lord does what is profitable for us. He is "the Father of spirit," that is, the One Who is preparing us for eternity, and the glory that will be ours when we are made like our Lord.

Our heavenly Father's purpose for all of the trials that come into our lives is that through them He might make us more and more "partakers of his holiness." That is why the Apostle Paul could say what he wrote in Rom. 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time..."

Now for the last verse: verse 11.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISE (Heb. 12:11).

The emphasis changes here from the home and the family to the gymnasium. The verb that is translated "exercised" in the latter part of this verse is the Greek word from which we get our word gymnasium. A gymnasium is a place where we go to exercise. You may work out in the weight room, or swim, or play racket ball, or basketball, or do a lot of calisthenics.

We are living in a day when people are concerned about exercise. None of us really gets enough, but some get much more than they need. It becomes an obsession with them.

However, even though many do more than is necessary, yet knowledge alone does not profit us. The same is true in the spiritual life. If you expect to be spiritually healthy, you must exercise spiritually. This is the same as saying that you can know the truth but it does not profit you until you live the truth. I could spend all day up here telling you the things that are written in this passage, but if you don't practice the truth, the truth will not profit you.

If you do not cultivate the habit of looking for the Lord in your trials, your trials will not benefit you. If you are not submissive to the Lord in your trials, your trials will not benefit you. If you ignore what the Lord is telling you, or you treat it lightly, then don't expect to profit from your trials.

The Lord tries us to keep us from being proud. He tries us to teach us patience and to make us meek. He tries us to teach us to pray. He tries us to make us obedient to His Word. He tries us to make us fruitful. He tries us to get us thinking more about heaven than we do about this world.

How does the Lord try us? Sometimes with failure. Sometimes with sickness. Sometimes with death—either our own, or the death of those who are dear to us. Sometimes with His desertions. Sometimes with opposition and persecution. Sometimes it is a combination of several of these.

Whatever may be the reason, and whatever may be the nature of our trials, or trials, the important thing is for us to be exercised by them. We need to be listening to the Lord. We need to be willing to change. We need to desire His glory more than we do our own comfort or blessing.

The present trials may be very "grievous" to us, that is, they may hurt us deeply within, but usually the things that hurt us the most, do us the most good if we are exercised by them.

Exercise can be painful, and it can be monotonous. But we are to look for the long-term benefits. And that is "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," used here as a synonym for "holiness" in verse 10.

Concl: Whenever you go outside these days, you can usually find someone jogging, or biking, or engaged in some kind of physical exercise. And if you go to some athletic club, you will find people there at all hours of the day, getting exercise. Often as I see them, I ask myself as a Christian, "Am I as anxious to stay in good spiritual condition as they are to stay in good physical condition?"

I am not say that we as Christians do not need to exercise physically. We do! But I am saying that we have another reason for another kind of exercise. We need to be exercised spiritually as we deal with our trials. God would make us more humble, more holy, more loving, more faithful, more zealous for His glory. He cares for us because He is our heavenly Father. Let us be responsive to what He is doing in our lives, remembering that whatever trials we might be experiencing, it is the Lord Who is dealing with us to make us spiritually strong that we might worship and glorify Him.

What is the thing in your life that you would like to get rid of, that trials, that burden, that trouble? You may have brought it on yourself, or it may be that someone else has done it to you, or it is a circumstance in your life that you would like to get out of. Before you do anything else, see that the Lord is in it. Recognize that He has a purpose for it. See that it is designed to change you in some way for the better. Be exercised in your own soul to submit yourself to the Lord so that you can profit and find peace even while the trial still remains. When God's purpose for that trial is completed, He will take it away. Until He does, don't despise it, nor faint, but trust and learn and change. That is the Lord's way to the very blessings that you may have been seeking from His hand.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Hebrews 12:11-17

Intro: Although I included verse 11 in my message last week, I asked Mr. Wierson to read it again today because the emphasis in that verse carries over into verses 12 through 17, which are the verses I want to consider with you in this message. I am thinking especially about the next to the last word in verse 11, the word "exercised."

I hope that all of you who were here will remember that I pointed out that this is the Greek word from which we get our English word gymnasium. The word is _____. You can hear the basis of gymnasium in it. The purpose of a gymnasium is to give people a place to exercise, and so it is fitting that it should be translated as it is in this verse: "are exercised." Actually the verb is in the perfect passive tense in the original language, and so it should be translated, repeating the last part of the verse: "Nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them **which have been exercised thereby.**"

This means that in experiencing the chastening, the training, the disciplining of the Lord, you cannot expect to see good results unless you have been doing your exercises, your SPIRITUAL EXERCISES!

The apostle used this word once before in this epistle. It is found in the last verse of chapter 5--verse 14. (Read.) Spiritual maturity cannot be attained except through SPIRITUAL EXERCISES!

All of this means that we must put into practice in our daily lives the truth which we have been taught.

This is nothing new in Scripture. This was taught very clearly in the OT, and it is emphasized again and again in the NT. It is not enough to know the truth. Nor it is enough to believe the truth. We must obey the truth. We must live the truth! When the Lord Jesus had washed His disciples feet, He said,

If ye know these things,
happy are ye if ye **do** them (John 13:17).

I am sure that most of you are familiar with those words of James in chapter 1 of his epistle, verse 22:

But be ye doers of the word,
and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.

When Moses was giving his last messages to the people of

Israel, he placed a strong emphasis on obeying the Word of God. Let me read for you his words found in Deut. 8:1, 2:

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye **observe to do**, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, **whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.**

Let me say very emphatically, and I hope all of you are listening, that there is nothing more important for us as Christians to be concerned about than our obedience to the Word of God.

Your gymnasium is your daily life. My gymnasium is my daily life. Just as the Lord gave the Israelites trials during their journey from Egypt to Canaan, so He gives us our trials day by day. Our trials are to humble us, to prove or test us, for us to see if we will obey the Lord through all of the circumstances of our lives, or if we will not obey Him. It is only through continual exercising that we can stay spiritually healthy and strong.

There are probably more people today who are exercising than at any time during my lifetime. People who are involved in various sports have to exercise in order to be able to participate in their particular sports. And so you will find out that tennis players, football players, basketball players, baseball players, do not just go and play their particular game, but they jog, they lift weights, they do calisthenics, they jump rope. In short, they exercise!

To get men ready for war, they exercise. They engage in vigorous exercise.

In school, from grade school through college, or whatever professional school a person may attend, exercise is usually required. If not required, it is strongly recommended. Exercise, even if it is moderate, is good for all of us. It keeps our bodies and our minds functioning better than they would otherwise. Paul told his younger brother in the ministry, "Bodily exercise profiteth little," that is, for a little while. It is profitable for us during our brief sojourn here on earth. All of us should be involved in some form of physical exercise.

I have said all of this to illustrate the point that the

apostle was making here. And it is this: JUST AS WE NEED PHYSICAL EXERCISES FOR OUR BODIES, SO WE NEED SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR OUR SOULS. And it is important for each of us to find out the right kind of physical exercise that will best meet our needs. There are many things that can be done. Use some of the exercises you did when you were in school. Or read books about exercise, talk to people who can help you. But exercise!

However, when it comes to SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, there is only one place to go for help, and that is to the Word of God. It is in the Bible that you and I find out what we ought to be doing by way of getting the right kind of exercise spiritually so that we will stay in good spiritual condition.

Now let us turn to our text, and I am obligated to say about the Hebrew Christians to whom this book was written that they were spiritually out-of-shape! How do I know that? Look at what he wrote in verses 12 and 13. Let me call this:

I. GETTING BACK INTO GOOD SPIRITUAL CONDITION (Heb. 12:12, 13).

Notice that Paul was speaking about their hands, their knees, and their feet. Their hands were hanging down. Their knees were weak. Their feet were not steady.

Trials can do one of two things to us: (1) They can strengthen us, or (2) they can weak us. If we are not careful, they can incapacitate us. Therefore, this passage is written for those who are out of shape, and who need to get back into shape.

A person is in bad shape if his hands hang down, his knees are weak, and his feet are not carrying him where he ought to go. What was the Apostle speaking about when he referred to these three parts of the body? What do they have to do with our spiritual health?

Let me try to answer those questions. THIS VERSE IS A QUOTE OF ISA. 35:3.

A. "Lift up the hands that hang down" (Heb. 12:12a).

The best illustration I know of that has to do with weak hands is found in Ex. 17:8-16. When Joshua was fighting with the Amalekites, Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to a high hill overlooking the battlefield. And we are told that as long as Moses held up his hands, Israel would prevail. But when his arms go tired and he let his hands go down, Amalek would begin to win. And so Aaron got on one side of Moses, and Hur got on the other side, and together they held up his hands

until the forces of Israel were victorious.

What does that story teach us, and how does it help us to understand Heb. 12:12a?

Lifting up the hands is descriptive of a person in prayer. Let me give you an illustration of that.

When Solomon had finished the temple, and prepared to lead the people in a prayer, a wonderful prayer of dedication, this is what is said about him in 1 Kings 8:22, 23a:

And Solomon stood before altar of the Lord
in the presence of all congregation of Israel,
and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

And he said, Lord God of Israel...

And then he went on with his prayer.

Holding up the hands in Scripture is one posture to be taken in prayer!

So, if your hands are hanging down this morning, it means that you are not praying, and so spiritually you are out-of-shape. And to get back in shape, you need to start praying again--not saying prayers, but really praying! I am sure that most of you know the difference.

The burdens and trials of life, especially when they continue, have a way of interrupting our fellowship with God in prayer. Whenever you see a child of God out of fellowship with the Lord, you know that his, or her, hands are hanging down. The remedy is to start praying again. Confess your sin to Him. Ask Him to help you to make prayer and your relationship with Him the very foundation of your life.

Let me ask you today: Where are your hands, extended upward daily toward God, or hanging down? If you are spiritually out-of-shape, start with your hands in getting back into good spiritual condition.

B. "And the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12b).

To lift up your hands is to strengthen them, and to lift up your knees is to strengthen them.

If your knees are feeble, how does it affect you? It means that you have trouble standing. If your knees are weak, your legs are probably useless. In our daily lives we need to be able to stand!

Please turn with me to Ephesians 6. Let me begin reading to you from verse 10 of Ephesians 6. (Read.)

Notice the word "stand" in verse 11, verse 13, and verse 14.

It is clear in this passage that if you cannot stand, you cannot fight, and if you cannot fight you are going to be defeated by the Devil. So the prerequisite to being able to fight victoriously against the Devil is that you learn to stand.

But how can we stand?

Only one way: BY PUTTING ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD. And how do we do that? We put on the armor of God by putting on the Word of God! Every part of the Christian's armor has to do with the Word of God! Therefore, and listen carefully to me, if your knees are weak so that you cannot stand against temptations and all of the trickery of the Devil, and thus are incapable of fighting, it is because you are neglecting the Word of God.

If you want to strengthen weak knees so that you will have legs that can stand, then you need to put on the armor of God, you need to put on the Word of God.

This means that you need to read it, but it means more than that. It means that you need to live it! But the way to get back to the Word is to start reading it again, reading it attentively, reading it so you will know the truth, and will live according to the truth. Whenever you see a Christian who cannot stand against the wiles of the Devil, you can be sure that there is something wrong in that Christian's life about his relationship with the Word of God!

What kind of condition are your knees in today spiritually? Are you defeated by some sin? Are you continually falling before some temptation? Or perhaps, before more than one? If your hands are hanging down, your knees are weak, too. And you had better lose no time in getting back to the Lord in prayer, and get back to your Bible--reading it, believing it, obeying it!

But now let's talk about:

C. "Your feet" (Heb. 12:13).

Nobody should have to tell us that our feet are used for walking.

You will notice that the Apostle in talking about hands, knees, and feet, does not say hands OR knees OR feet, but he put an "and" between them. If your hands are hanging down, then your knees are week, and your feet taking you astray.

Illus: Allison's call from England when she pulled her first tooth, telling us in her cute English accent that her tooth was so "wobbly" and she pulled it out, and it was "blooding" and she was brave. That is the way we can describe the walk of a Christian whose has quit praying, and who can't stand any longer; his walk, or her walk, is going to be "wobbly," and probably quite a bit "wobbly."

What did the Apostle tell them to do?

He said that they should "make **straight** paths" for their feet. "Straight" is the opposite of crooked. The Greek word is _____, from which we get the first part of our word orthodox. It can be illustrated by the tracks made by a wagon. The "straight paths" are pointed out for us in the Word of God. And the exhortation means that they were to live according to the Word of God, which was the right way.

The first and main reason that we need to get back into the right paths is so we can be pleasing to the Lord. But the Apostle gives us another reason in latter part of this verse, the first of four times that we have the word "lest" in our Authorized Version. See two more in verse 15, and a final one in verse 16. The second reason that we need to be right in our walk is that there are a lot of "lame" Christians in every generation. Some of them are probably watching us. If our walk is right, it can have a healing effect upon them. If our walk is not right, it can cause them to continue to be lame, and perhaps to get worse.

It is clear that the way for us to be the greatest blessing to others is to make sure that our hands, knees, and feet are spiritually in good condition. To keep them in good condition we need to give them their proper spiritual exercises which are prayer, the Word, and an obedient life. If we were all careful about these three things, what a different there would be in the church, and how much greater our influence would be in this ungodly world in which we live.

Concl: Let me ask you again about your hands, your knees, and your feet. I am not speaking of their physical condition, but of their spiritual condition. Are you spiritually healthy, or are you out of shape because you have not been taking your exercises? You know the answer to that question. If you are exercising, keep it up; if not, begin today.

Remember that I have been speaking to believers today. If you are not a Christian, you need life before you can live, and you can only have life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that you will trust Him today.

GETTING OVER THE HURDLES

Hebrews 12:14-17

Intro: Today is Father's Day. I am not turning aside from our studies in the book of Hebrews to give a message especially to those of you who are fathers, but I really don't need to. The passage we are to consider is an excellent passage of Scripture for fathers.

The Bible has a great deal to say about fathers and their responsibilities. It is a shame that so many fathers are ignorant of what God has told us in His Word about what it means to be a father. But let me say this for the present: The father is "the head" of the family. According to the Bible, the father is to be an example for his wife to follow, and for his children to follow. It is good for us to tell our children what they ought to be and how they ought to live, but that teaching is much more effective if our children can see that we are living the way we want them to live.

As most of you know who have been here each Sunday, we are in the practical section of the book of Hebrews. We have been seeing how the Apostle taught those early Hebrew Christians that they were to live by faith. They were to trust God just like the people mentioned in chapter 11 trusted God, people with whom we get acquainted in the OT. But we have also seen that living for the Lord is not easy. We live in a world that is not sympathetic with the Lord's people. We as Christians have trials just like people do who are not Christians, and our trials usually make us prone to discouragement. Sometimes they get so severe that we feel like quitting. But we can't do that. We need to find the answer to our problems so that we can keep doing what pleases the Lord until He calls us home.

In showing us what we ought to be doing, the Apostle has used sports to illustrate his teaching, and most fathers have some interest in sports. He used track in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12: "...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us..."

Then we have seen that in verse 11 he spoke of about exercise--not physical exercise, but spiritual exercises, things that we need to be doing to keep in shape spiritually. Last Sunday we saw how he spoke of our hands, our knees, and our feet. And I believe that I was following what the Apostle had in mind as I related that to our need for prayer, learning about the Word, and living by the Word of God. These are the exercises that all of us need, and we as

fathers ought to take the lead in all of this because this is what the Lord wants us to do, which will be for our own spiritual benefit, but also for the good of our families. I hope all of us have not only been thinking this week about what we saw in the Word last week, but that we have been doing some spiritual exercising this week, especially if we have been careless in any of these areas.

In the passage which I want to consider with you today, verses 14 through 17, the Apostle went back to his first idea about running. It might not be apparent in the English translation, but it certainly is in the original Greek. I am talking about the word at the beginning of verse 14, the word "Follow." John Owen, in his commentary on Hebrews, said that the Syriac version of this verse uses words which mean to "run after" peace. And the Vulgate refers to this following as "a vehement pursuit" of peace.

Peter used this word in 1 Pet. 3:11 where he was quoting from Psa. 34:14 where we read,

Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and **pursue** it.

The KJV says "ensue," but that is an old English expression for pursue.

It might help us to understand the intensity of this word to know that Paul used it when he was giving his testimony before King Agrippa which is recorded for us in Acts 26. In verse 11 of that chapter he said this about his life before he was saved, speaking of how he treated Christians:

And I punished them oft in every synagogue,
and compelled them to blaspheme;
and being exceedingly mad against them,
I **persecuted** them even unto strange cities.

The word "persecuted" is the same word that is translated in our text, "pursue." Although Paul used it before Agrippa in a bad sense, the way he persecuted Christians before he was saved gives us a good idea about how we are to go after "peace, and holiness." Thayer in his *Lexicon* says that this word means "to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing" (p. 153).

It means to run like you fathers would run to rescue your child if you saw that he was in immediate danger of falling or of being hurt in some other way. Run after "peace, and holiness" like you would go after something very precious which was about to get away from you. It could be illustrated by the way in which a young man pursues a young lady with whom he has fallen in love. He does not want her to get away. Whether used in a good sense, or bad (such as, persecution), it calls for intense effort now to get

something which is about to get away.

Now when we related this to our lives as Christians, we obviously cannot undertake such a spiritual pursuit if we are not spiritually in shape. In fact, you won't even be interested in such a pursuit if you do not have some spiritual conditioning. One of the sad commentaries on our day is that there seem to be very few Christians, or at least professing Christians, who are interested in "peace, and holiness." What about you? Does this sound like something you are interested in? Or would you rather fight with people, and hang on to your sins?

Let us think for a few moments about:

I. THIS TWOFOLD PURSUIT (Heb. 12:14).

(Read.)

These are two qualities of life which always seem to be getting away from us. Perhaps it would be better to say that we know so little about them because we are not running after them. They are not a real priority with us. There may be other things that we are more interested in.

Let us think first about:

A. "Peace."

According to the Word of God we are to "follow peace with all men," that is, with all kinds of men! Or, all kinds of people! Our object in dealing with all kinds of people is that we want to be on good terms with them. We want to live harmoniously with everybody. When troubles begin to develop, it ought to be our intense desire to get them settled as soon as possible. We are to be peacemakers, and then people will call us "the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). We ought to dislike intensely any thought of being "on the outs" with people.

Illus: Abraham with Lot in Genesis 13.

But the Apostle Paul realized that this is not always possible because he wrote to the church at Rome,

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you,
live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18).

Sometimes people will not make peace with us, but we must be sure that we are not the ones who stand in the way of reconciliation.

And yet this is not to be "peace at any price" because the

Apostle went on to add something else that we need to run after. It is.

B. "And holiness."

Real peace is only possible if it is based upon a holy foundation. We cannot compromise with sin. We must never lose sight of that which is pleasing to God. The Apostle did not say "peace, OR holiness," but "peace, and holiness."

The object of our spiritual exercises is holiness of character and holiness of life. To be holy is to be like Christ. This is the ultimate goal of our salvation. Therefore, we cannot compromise with anything that would keep us from being what the Lord wants us to be. We are to hate sin and to love righteousness.

And so the two things that we need to be primarily concerned about in our relationships with each other are "peace, and holiness." How different our lives would be, and how different the church would be, if these objectives were what we pursue most of all every day that we live. And to the contrary, it ought to be a solemn warning to all of us if we are not really concerned about "peace" in our relationships with people, and if "holiness" of character and of life is not at the top of the list of things that we are running after. The Apostle added most solemnly that "without" holiness "no man shall see the Lord."

Fathers, let these be your main concerns in your family, with your wife and with your children. If peace and holiness are not in our homes, we cannot expect to have them in our churches. But, of course, the Apostle was not just writing to fathers. He was writing to all Christians. But the greater place of authority that the Lord has given us, the more important it is for us to see the pace for those who are looking to us for leadership and guidance.

The rest of our text, verses 15, 16, and 17 give us:

II. THREE HURDLES (Heb. 12:15-17).

Paul was speaking here about some of the hurdles that we have to get over in the race that we are running. We have hurdles in the world in dealing with people who do not know the Lord. We face temptations of various kinds every day that we live. But we also face many hurdles in our relationships with the Lord's people. I think we have all felt at some time, perhaps many times, that we would make more progress spiritually if we did not have to deal with people, and sometimes the Lord's people.

What is wrong with that kind of feeling?

Well, the first thing that is wrong with it is that it is selfish. We are thinking of ourselves, not of others. And that is the second thing that is wrong: we are not thinking of ways that we can be of help to others, perhaps to those very people who seem to be standing in our way so that we cannot make the spiritual progress that we would like to make.

If you look at these last three verses carefully, you will see that we are encouraged here to think of how we can help others, and the emphasis seems to be upon those who are in the church. Sometimes we are more concerned about people in the world than we are about people in the church. The Apostle indicates here that we need to be even more concerned about people in the church than we are the people who are in the world. If things are right between us in the church, then there is must more of a possibility that the Lord will bless us in our testimony in the world.

At this point in our text we come to three more times where the Apostle used the word "lest" in this chapter. (The first two times are in verses 3 and 13.) The three in verses 15 through 17 give us three hurdles. Let us see what they are.

A. "Lest any man fail of the grace of God" (v. 15a).

Now this can happen to any Christian; it can also happen to you! What does it mean to "fail of the grace of God."

Well, it seems to point to those people and those circumstances when a child of God does not draw upon the grace of God to help him in meeting the needs that he faces in his life. And this can be a hurdle in our lives which may cause us to stumble.

If we are really concerned about peace, and really concerned about holiness, we are going to have to recognize our need for the grace of God. There is no other way that we can have either peace or holiness. Paul has taught us in 2 Cor. 12 that the grace of God was the great need that he faced in his life, and he wanted us to learn from his experience that only the grace of God is sufficient for any of us.

And if there is somebody close to you who "bugs" you, remember that they obviously stand in need of the grace of God, too. But if they can see the effect of God's grace in your life, they may realize that is where they can find help as well.

Let us go back to the figure of speech that Paul was using about our lives. It is a race. But not a race in which we are competing with each other. It is a race in which we can all win. But we must all remember that we are not only to be seeking to become better ourselves, but we are also to help others become better in their running of the race. So when a fellow-believer is having trouble, how important it is that he be able to see where you are getting help in running your race. Cf. Psa. 121.

The second hurdle:

- B. "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (v. 15b).

How easy it is to become bitter! It is a root which bears many different kinds of terrible fruit. It produces rebellion, resentment, despondency, unbelief, wickedness of any and every kind. Notice how quickly it can arise, and how infectious it is: "And thereby many be defiled." Paul told the Galatians, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9).

A person who is bitter is not pursuing "peace" nor "holiness." It can be someone near you, or it can be you. It can be me! It can be any of us. Do you remember how quickly the spirit of bitterness spread through the whole nation of Israel on their way to Canaan until they were ready to go back to Egypt?

This is a hurdle that we all have to deal with. God doesn't do what we want Him to do, and so we get bitter. Remember that you need to pursue peace with God in your heart. The person who is running after peace is not going to be bitter. How we need to help each other with this common plague among the Lord's people.

But let us go on to the third hurdle:

- C. "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau..." (vv. 16, 17).

Esau was not the only one of his kind in the history of Israel. Nor was the Esau type limited to Israel. They are to be found in the professing church today.

We have no evidence that Esau was a fornicator even though he, like many others, had more than one wife. But he was "profane," probably meaning here an unregenerate man. He did not know the Lord although he was closely identified with the Lord's people. He was raised in a godly family. Although

his twin brother was not perfect, yet he gave evidence that he was a man of God. But that was not the case with Esau. He was a worldling. He cared not for the covenant of God. He was more interested in food than he was in the things of God. And yet later on when he wanted the blessing, he could not have it.

What a difference there is between the "afterward" in verse 11 as compared with the same English word in verse 17! (They are different words in the Greek, but their meaning is the same.)

Remember that some people are never going to be saved. But it is especially bad when unregenerate people get into the church. But it is always true that the more a church is concerned about "peace" and "holiness," the more uncomfortable unsaved people are going to feel. Nevertheless, they are a hurdle. They cause confusion. They are not headed in the same direction. They bring reproach upon the church, and often can be very influential in the wrong way.

We can be thankful that sometimes people like this are saved, but not usually when they come to church for other reasons, and fail to make the message of the Gospel personal in their own lives. Let the very mention of Esau cause us to search our own hearts to make sure that we are not like he was, but that we really know the Lord.

Concl: May I remind you fathers, and everyone else as well, that verses 14 and the first part of 15 have things for us to do? Don't be guilty of reading them, and forgetting them. Confirm your own faith by doing what every true child of God needs to do every day. And pray that you may not only get over the hurdles of life each day, but that your life may be used of the Lord to help others get over the same hurdles, too. Untold blessing will result for the church if we are not satisfied just to hear God's Word, but are faithful in doing His will in obedience to His Word.

THE TWO MOUNTAINS
or
WHERE HAVE WE COME?
Hebrews 12:18-24

Intro: It probably will take a little explanation for most of us to see the connection between our text for today and the verses we have been considering. One writer (Marcus Dods, Expos. Gk. Test., IV, p. 371) calls this passage "the climax of the Epistle." And he said this because he felt that the doctrines and the exhortations of the Epistle culminate here. That is, they reach their highest point here.

Perhaps it would not be out of place to say that it is here that we reach the mountain peak of the epistle. Perhaps you noticed from the reading of the epistle that two mountains are referred to in these verses. One is in verse 18; the other is in verse 22. And the Apostle said that we have not come to the first one, the one mentioned in verse 18, but we have come to the second one, the one mentioned in verse 22. This contrast summarizes the message of the whole epistle.

But let me back up a little, at least into the earlier part of chapter 12.

We have seen that the Apostle Paul has been speaking of our lives as Christians as a race. We do not all run the same course, nor are we racing against each other. This is a race in which we all can win, and we need to run so as to win. In running we are to keep our eyes on the Lord (who is called "Jesus" in this chapter--see verse 2). Each one of us has many hurdles to get over in this race, and the same was true of the Hebrew Christians to whom the Apostle wrote this epistle. They were experiencing a great deal of affliction, but Paul sought to comfort them by making them realize that their experiences were a part of what the Lord was using to make them more holy. However, there was the danger that they could get weary and faint. See verse 3.

To keep themselves strong the Apostle recommended that they be faithful in engaging in spiritual exercises which he described in verses 11 through 13. And then he gave some basic, practical exhortations for them to follow in verses 14 through 17. We can see from those exhortations that they were to think of helping their fellow-believers in their running as well as remaining strong themselves.

And this brings us to our text for today.

The big question at this point was this: How can such a race

be run when it is as long as it is, and when we are faced with so many difficulties? Verses 18 through 24 give us the main part of our answer; verse 25 through the end of the chapter give us the appropriate exhortations which follow from what we are going to learn today. The Lord willing, we will take up verses 25 through 29 next Sunday.

Now let me give you an overview of our text.

Verses 18 through 24 are divided into two parts:

- 1) The first part is verses 18 through 21.
- 2) The second part is verses 22 through 24.

They both begin in similar way, about coming to a mountain, but the first tells us about a mountain which they had not come to. The second tells us about a mount that they actually have come to. Identically the same verb is used in verses 18 and 22, the perfect tense of the Greek verb, to come to, which means to have access to.

Now let us examine both sections of our text to learn what we can about the resources we have for the successful running of the race of our Christian lives.

Let me give verses 18 through 22 the title,

I. WHERE WE HAVE NOT COME (Heb. 12:18-22).

Let me read these verses over again for you, and you decide as I read what mountain the Apostle had in mind. Don't speak out, but see if you can come up with the right answer.

(Read verses 18-22.)

We know that it had to do with Moses. We know that it was such a frightening experience that the people did not want to continue to hear the sounds that they heard. Not only were the people prohibited from coming up to the mountain, but if even an animal touched the mountain, it was to be killed immediately. Even Moses said (and his words are only recorded here), "I exceedingly fear and quake." Moses was terrified. It had a violent effect upon him physically. It was the most dreadful experience of his life. And we should not wonder at his fear when we are about the fire, the blackness, the darkness, the tempest (which various writers have described as a whirlwind, a hurricane, a cyclone). All of this was accompanied by the sound of a very loud trumpet, and then a dreadful voice.

This is described in the OT in Exodus 20:18, 19, where we read,

And all the people saw the thunderings,
and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet,
and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it,
they removed [trembled], and stood afar off.
And they said to Moses,
Speak thou with us, and we will hear:
but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

What was happening?

God was giving the people the Law, the Ten Commandments.
There was such a display of the majesty and glory of God that the people knew that they were not prepared to stand in His presence even before they knew what the commandments were. We see even in that initial display of God's presence that the people knew that they were not prepared to stand in His presence. They were like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned: They wanted to hide themselves from the Lord.

The mountain that the Apostle Paul was speaking about in these verses in Hebrews was Mount Sinai. And the message he was speaking about was the Law, represented mainly by the Ten Commandments. It did not make access to God possible; it showed Moses and all of the Israelites that they were sinners who were not fit to stand in the presence of God. And they were to learn later that they did not possess the ability to make themselves acceptable to God by keeping the Law because they could not do what it said! The Law made sinners appear to be exceedingly sinful. Paul told the church at Rome that "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20b).

So the point that Paul was making in our text, and, in fact, through all of the book of Hebrews, was that the Law will not save us, nor will the Law sanctify us. Therefore, if we want help in your race, don't expect to get it from the Ten Commandments. Don't go to Mount Sinai for help. That is not where we have come!

Where, then, can we find help? This brings me to my second and last point:

II. WHERE WE HAVE COME (Heb. 12:22-24).

Please notice that the Apostle did not say that we need to go to this Mountain, but he said that we are already there! If you are saved, you are there. However, being there, and getting the help from there that we need, are two different things!

The Apostle was led by the Holy Spirit in these verses to

tell us where we have come, and what we find there. Let me point them out for you.

Where have we come? "Unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." All of that goes together. So this must mean that we have come to heaven.

What do we find there?

In verse 22:

1) "To an innumerable company of angels."

In verse 23:

2) "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven."

3) "To God the Judge of all."

4) "To the spirits of just men made perfect."

In verse 24:

5) "To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

6) "To the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

The Apostle was obviously speaking of heaven, and what we have there. Our hope is not on the earth, nor is it found in the things of the earth. It is not to be found in the Law which was given from Mount Sinai. If the book of Hebrews has been telling us anything, it has been telling us that the ceremonies and regulations of the Mosaic Law have been satisfied, and that the Jews are no longer under the Law. Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of the Law for all who ever have trusted Him, or who ever will trust in Him. Therefore, as we have been learning in this epistle, our hope is to be found in "Jesus," the One Who is now seated at the right hand of God in heaven!

Obviously you and I are not in heaven yet. However, spiritually that is where we live. Let me remind you of what Paul told the church at Ephesus. After describing in Eph. 2:1-3 what they formerly were before they were saved, then he told them about how things had changed. Here are his words in Eph. 2:4-6:

But God, who is rich in mercy,
for his great love wherewith he loved us,
Even when we were dead in sins,
hath quickened us together with Christ,
(by grace ye are saved;)
**And hath raised us up together,
and made us sit together in heavenly places
in Christ Jesus.**

That is our position in Christ at this very moment. Only a child of God is capable of understanding what that means.

Now listen to what Paul told the Colossian church along the

same line. You will find these words in Col. 3:1-4:

If ye then be risen with Christ,
seek those things which are above,
where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
Set your affection on things above,
not on things on the earth.
For ye are dead,
and your life is hid with Christ in God.
When Christ, who is our life, shall appear,
then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Our help doesn't come from men, nor from the wisdom of men, nor from any earthly source. Our help comes from the Lord Jesus Christ, and spiritually that is our position right now. Some day our spirits and our bodies will be there, but right now that is our position in Christ.

What do we have there?

A. "An innumerable company of angels" (v. 22b).

We learned in Heb. 1:14 that angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." I don't know all that means, but I do know that such a statement means that you and I have a lot of help given to us by angels in our earthly race.

B. "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (v. 23a).

The idea in the Greek expression which is translated, "general assembly," is that of a festive group which has gathered for the purpose of rejoicing. They are the members of the Church, the body of Christ, who are already in heaven, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Their race is run, and they are safely at home with the Lord. Even thinking of them ought to be a tremendous encouragement to those of us who are still running our race.

C. "To God the Judge of all" (v. 23m).

But there is no fleeing from His presence. Those who are there are fully accepted by Him in Christ. How different it was at Mount Sinai. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21. How wonderful it is to know that "the Judge" is our heavenly Father!

D. "The spirits of just men made perfect" (v. 23b).

As the church of the firstborn we see the saints as a body. Here we see them as individual saints. They do not have their resurrection bodies, but they are there as "just men

made perfect." "Perfect" and "perfection" are key words in Hebrews, aren't they? This is the goal toward which we are running. And they have made it! You know some people who are already there, don't you? And more are arriving all of the time. We are the Lord's people as "just" now as we ever will be, but our perfection awaits the time of our arrival in heaven.

One of the things that we learned about the Law in this epistle to the Hebrews is stated in Heb. 7:19:

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

E. "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (v. 24a).

This is the best of all, isn't it? "Jesus" is there! He is our Great High Priest. What Moses and the priests under the Law could not do for us, our Lord has done. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Our Lord has made peace for us with God. By His death He successfully intervened on our behalf. We are not under the old covenant, but under the new which our Lord established by the shedding of his blood.

Cf. Heb. 7:21-28.

Nine times in Hebrews our Lord is called "Jesus" (3:2; 4:14; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2, 24; 13:12, 20). Each time it focuses attention on His humanity, "and in each case it furnishes the key to the argument of the passage where it is found" (Westcott, p. 33).

"The new covenant" is not the old covenant revised, but an entirely new covenant, one which does not say, "This do, and thou shalt live," but it says, 'Tis done, the great transactions done; I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

F. "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (v. 24b).

The sacrifice of Abel was an OT picture of the sacrifice of Christ. Referring to it as "the blood of sprinkling" does not mean that the blood of Christ is in heaven, but it does mean that the merit of that blood, the effect of our Lord's death, is forever recorded in heaven guaranteeing that all for whom His blood was shed will eventually be in heaven.

Concl: Is it any wonder that the Apostle began this chapter by telling us that we need to be "looking unto Jesus." It is nice to know about the angels, and about the

church, and about "the just men made perfect," but none of that would have been possible if it had not been for our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the One Who has taken away from us the fear of standing in God, our Judge. And He did it by His death.

This part of chapter 12 does not give us anything to do. It simply tells us what we need to know and believe. We will see the doing part next week. But let us make sure that we understand that our salvation is not by the Law. We are not under the Law. Jesus Christ satisfied the Law's demands, and by the grace of God our help comes from Him now, and our hope will some day become a reality when we join the saints in the presence of the Lord.

Our race is here on earth, but our eyes need to be turned continually to heaven, and to our Lord. It is from Him that we receive the strength to run and to win. Without Him we will faint and fall out of the race. Therefore, do not look to Mount Sinai and the Law which was given there to Moses, but look to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. It is to that mountain we have come, and it is there where even now we are seated in Christ at the right hand of the Father. The Law tells us what we need to do for ourselves, a hopeless task. The grace of God tells us of what Christ has done for us, and nothing more is required. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

FILLING THE GAP
BETWEEN POSSESSION AND PERFORMANCE
Hebrews 12:25-29

Intro: The book of Hebrews us a book which tells us repeatedly that God is a God of revelation. That is, God is a God Who speaks. He has been pleased to make known truth which otherwise would have been withheld forever from man. In the opening verses of this epistle we are told that God in times past has spoken at various times and in various ways. We have that revelation in the Old Testament. We are also told in those opening verses that in these last days God has spoken to us in His Son. The message which He has given to us in His Son is God's final message. With the writing of the books of the New Testament God's message to man has been completed. Since the days of the apostles there has been no new revelation from God. There have been many who have claimed to receive messages from God which even supersede the Old and New Testaments, but those who make such claims are false teachers. We must be careful to abide by the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

However, having said that, I must also say that in the Word of God we have two major messages: one given through Moses; the other through Jesus Christ. The one is the first covenant, or the old covenant; the second is the new covenant. The Apostle Paul has been explaining throughout the book of Hebrews that we are not under the first covenant, but we are under the new covenant. God has given both covenants, but the first was preparatory and temporary, and was given only to Israel. The second is final and permanent. It was given through Jesus Christ, and all who believe in Him are under the secure provision of the new covenant. With the establishing of the new covenant, it was no longer necessary for the sacrifices and ceremonies under the first covenant to be observed. They were types which were fulfilled by the work of Christ on the Cross. There was a priesthood of the family of Aaron in Old Testament times. Jesus Christ is a greater High Priest, after the order of Melchisedek. By His work all believers are made priests and have access into the very presence of God by the new and living way in Christ.

Therefore, we are not to be concerned with Moses and the Law, but with CHRIST! The Law was not given as a way of salvation. The Law was given to Israel to show them their need of salvation, and to restrain and direct them in their lives until Christ came.

This is the message of the book of Hebrews. Jesus Christ has been shown to be greater than angels, greater Moses, greater than Joshua, greater than Aaron, and greater than Abraham,

just as the new covenant is greater than the first, or old, covenant.

It was God Who gave the Law through angels to Moses. It was God also Who has spoken to us in the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ. The first message was delivered from Mount Sinai; the second, from heaven.

In verses 18 through 24 of Hebrews 12, which we considered last Sunday, we had this contrast drawn out very specifically for us. Verses 18 through 21 tell us that we have not come to Mount Sinai on earth where the Law was given with such an alarming display of the majesty of God. But, according to verses 22 through 24, we have come to Mount Sion, or Zion, in heaven. Our Lord came from heaven, and He returned to heaven. And He is there today seated at the Father's right hand as evidence of His finished work in salvation, and of God's complete satisfaction with the death of His Son.

I hope you remember what we saw in those important verses. If you are not quite clear on them, read them over again as soon as you can.

This brings me to our text for today: verses 25 through 29. The first three verses of this passage give us:

I. A WARNING (Heb. 12:25-27).

The greatest mistake that people can make today, or in any day, is the failure to believe that the Bible is the Word of God! If people knew in their hearts that this Book is His Book, you wouldn't have to argue with them about the existence of God, nor about sin in its many forms--about abortion, about homosexuality, or adultery, or the roles of men and women, or a host of other things that the Bible addresses. More than that, there would be no argument about whether or not there is a heaven to seek and a hell to avoid. But people are so blinded by their sin that they refuse to believe that it is the Word of God.

However, let me tell you this: Man's rejection of the Bible does not change for one moment, or in one detail, the fact that it is the Word of God. It is God's Word whether we believe it or not. Therefore, the warning is this:

"SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT HIM THAT SPEAKETH."

This is a warning which applies to every person on the face of earth, in every nation, and in every generation until the end of time: "SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT HIM THAT SPEAKETH." We might translated the word "See" as BEWARE! To refuse it is

to reject it. And even if we are ignoring it, we are rejecting it—at least for the moment.

Let me remind you that even this warning is the Word of God. God has given us His Word, and then He has told us that the worst thing that we can ever do is to "refuse" it, to reject it.

Let me ask you: Are you making this mistake, any of you? Are you listening to the Word of God? Are you listening to what it has to say about Jesus Christ? Do you know why it was that He died? Do you think that God sent His Son into the world to die for sinners just to have you say, or think, "Oh, that isn't important? How could something that happened 2,000 years ago have any meaning for me today?"

I plead with you today: Listen to the Word of God! Don't refuse it. Don't reject it. Listen to it. Believe it, and obey it. You are the loser if you close your ears and your heart to the Word of God. And your loss will be forever!

Notice how the Apostle went on to illustrate his warning, and to emphasize it. (Read vv. 25b-27.)

When God spoke from Mount Sinai, it was so terrible that the people of Israel thought that they were going to die! That was nothing compared with what God is going to do, and He issued a warning about it in the OT book of Haggai, chapter 2, verse 6. (Read v. 26.)

The Apostle said that God promised to do this, and we know that God always keeps His promises.

This is what the Apostle Peter was speaking about in the third chapter of his second letter. (Read 2 Pet. 3:7-13.)

Are you ready for that shaking, which the Apostle explained as meaning a removal? It is coming, be sure of that? And when it does, people will realize how absolutely foolish they have been not to listen to the Word of God so that they could have gotten ready for eternity in heaven. Instead, they will spend eternity in hell. God has said so!

How good of God to speak! He didn't have to, you know. He could have proceeded with His plan without telling anybody about it. But He has told us, and He has told us how to prepare for it.

Illus: After the most recent earthquake in southern California, we called our son, Dwight, as I am sure many of you called your family members or friends who live

down there. Perhaps they told you what Dwight told us. He said that it was the most frightening experience of his life—and he has lived down there for 24 years! Do you know how long it lasted? Forty-five seconds! What do you think will be the feeling of people around the earth when the Lord shakes not only the earth but the heavens into nothing with a fervent heat?

Let me say it again: "SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT HIM THAT SPEAKETH." Many people today are all involved, day and night, with our environment. But how many of them are refusing to listen to God about something that is infinitely more important? That is the salvation of their souls.

Don't ignore the warning! If you do, you are the loser.

But let me go on to verses 28 and 29. Here we have:

II. AN EXHORTATION (Heb. 12:28, 29).

I believe that the Apostle was speaking here to those who were trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Look at verse 28.

The first part speaks of that which has happened to us, and which we profit from increasingly. And so he said it using the present tense: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." This is our POSSESSION.

The last part of the verse speaks of what we need to be doing: "Whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." This must be our PERFORMANCE.

That which joins together our POSSESSION with our PERFORMANCE is in the middle of our verse: "Let us have grace."

This is why I have given my message the title, FILLING THE GAP BETWEEN POSSESSION AND PERFORMANCE. The gap is filled, the two are brought together, by the grace of God.

It has often been said, and all of us should know, that doctrine produces deeds. What we believe effects our behavior. Our creed is to affect our conduct. Precept is always accompanied by practice. If we are not behaving as the children of God, there is something wrong with our believing.

Let me show you what I believe the Apostle meant in giving us this verse. But remember that it is not just his word; he was writing what the Lord told him to write. So it is the

Word of God.

What does it mean that we have received, or are receiving, "a kingdom which cannot be moved," or removed?

He was talking about our salvation. The Lord told Nicodemus in John 3 that being born again meant entering into the kingdom of God. We have been brought by salvation into the kingdom of God. We are "receiving" it, as the Apostle said, because we are growing in our understanding of what that means. We are learning more and more about this new life, about our heavenly citizenship, about submission to the sovereign authority of our great God. We have it now, but it means more to us the longer we have the kingdom of God. It is not an earthly kingdom which can be seen, but it is a heavenly kingdom which nevertheless is real, eternally real!

What are we to do now in this kingdom which we are a part of?

The last part of the verse says that we are to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Isn't it amazing to think that it is possible for us to "serve God"? We who are really unworthy to speak His Name have become His subjects in His kingdom, and have the unspeakable privilege of serving God.

Paul referred to this earlier in this epistle to the Hebrews when in Heb. 9:14 he wrote this:

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 he used the same verb for "serve" in that verse that he did in Heb. 12:28. It is a word which combines the ideas of priestly service and worship.

See Heb. 10:19-22 and 4:14-16.

We serve our God as priests, and our service is to be characterized by worship.

But how, according to the latter part of this verse, as we to serve our God?

Paul says that there are three requirements:

- 1) It must be "acceptable" to God.
- 2) It must be "with reverence."
- 3) It must be "with godly fear."

We have evidence in the OT that there were times when the priests served the Lord unacceptably. Consequently, the Lord not only did not receive their service, but He often judged them for their sin. If our service is to be "acceptable," it must be pleasing to God; it must be in full accord with His will. We need to think about this as we come to the Lord's Table this morning. We are not to serve the Lord any way that we want to. We are not to serve the Lord thinking more about whether or not people will like what we are doing than we are about whether or not it is pleasing to the Lord. And if it is to be pleasing to the Lord, it must be in agreement with the Word of God.

What is "reverence"—the second requirement?

Spurgeon said that this means, "a holy shamefacedness" (Vol. 28, p. 32). And this is the way the word is actually translated in 1 Tim. 2:9 where Paul told Timothy that women should "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety..." "Shamefacedness"—what does it mean?

It describes one who is timid, even bashful, with a feeling of unworthiness, when coming into the presence of a superior. Wuest says in his commentary on 1 Timothy (p. 48) that "the word is a blend of modesty and humility."

David was showing "reverence" for the Lord when, after the Lord had promised to build him a house, he said,
Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house,
that thou hast brought me hitherto? (2 Sam. 7:18).
He showed both embarrassment and humility that God would deal with him in such a gracious way.

What about the third expression—"godly fear"?

This word in the Greek does not mean that we stand in dread of the Lord, but it does mean that we approach Him carefully, and that we do so out of great devotion toward Him. Spurgeon referred to it as "holy carefulness," and even "in the spirit of holy cheerfulness." We are no longer afraid of God, in that sense, but neither do we want to offend Him or do anything that would displease Him.

How can we do this? How can we fill in the gap between what we have and what we need to do?

This brings us to the Apostle's words, "Let us have grace."

Godly expositors seem to agree that there are two ideas in this expression:

- 1) That Paul was talking about enabling grace.
- 2) That he was also speaking of a feeling of gratitude.

The Lord is the only One Who can give us the grace we need to do what we need to do. He does this in answer to prayer, according to Heb. 4:16. He does this in response to our faith. God's grace enables us to serve the Lord as we should, measuring up to the way we should serve and worship such a great and holy God.

We will serve Him with a attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving if we remember that all we have, we have received from Him. We have received from Him a kingdom which we will never lose, a kingdom which we do not deserve, and for which we have shown ourselves to be unworthy many, many times.

Therefore, while I say, "SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT HIM THAT SPEAKETH," I also say, "LET US HAVE GRACE." And the reason we need to be obedient to both of these expressions is because "our God is a consuming fire."

Verse 29 is a quotation from Deut. 4:24. Among other things this means that the God of the OT and the God of the NT are exactly the same. God is holy. God is righteous. God cannot look upon sin. We can only approach Him covered with His own righteousness through Christ. He is a God of love, but He is also holy, a God Who hates sin and Who judges sin.

Concl: Remember that there is no possibility that you will be accepted by God, or that you can serve God, if you have not come to receive His kingdom through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's holiness excludes you and me, but in Christ we can have full and eternal acceptance. Then we need to receive grace every day that we may serve God and worship God and love God as we should.

May He enable us to hear what He has to say, and to do what He wants us to do.

SERVING GOD ACCEPTABLY
Hebrews 13:1-6

Intro: In the book of Hebrews there are three words that are brought together. They are the words faith, hope, and love. We see this, e.g., in Heb. 6:10-12. (Read.)

We see it again in Heb. 10:22-25. (Read from verse 19, noting that the preferred reading of verse 23 is "the profession of our hope.")

Many who have studied the book of Hebrews feel that this threefold emphasis is made in the last three chapters of the epistle--and they would divide it this way:

- 1) In chapter 11 the emphasis is upon faith. There seems to be no question about this.
- 2) In chapter 12 the emphasis is upon hope. Actually the word "hope" is not used in this chapter, but it seems that the emphasis is there. The first two verses deal with "faith," but from that point on the Apostle seemed to be concerned about encouraging those suffering Hebrew believers with their "hope" in God and in Christ. That is especially the case from verse 22 to the end, and most of all in verses 26-29.
- 3) And it seems equally clear that the emphasis in chapter 13 is upon love. In this chapter the word "love" occurs only once, and it is a part of the Greek word for "brotherly love." However, there is an obvious emphasis upon love throughout the chapter:
 - a) Our love for the Lord's people (vv. 1-3).
 - b) Love in marriage (v. 4).
 - c) Love for the Lord (vv. 5, 6, 8).
 - d) The Lord's love for us (vv. 5, 6).
 - e) Love for the Lord's servants (vv. 7, 17).
 - f) Love for the Word (vv. 7, 9).
 - g) Love for spiritual sacrifices (vv. 15, 16).

It is because of this emphasis upon love in the thirteenth chapter of this epistle that it is called the love chapter of Hebrews.

But let me point out another thing about this chapter.

We learned at the end of chapter 12 that we are to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." We are to live for Him, to worship Him, to serve Him "acceptably."

Now if we are to serve Him acceptably, we must do that which is pleasing to Him, and do it in a way that is pleasing to Him. It is not for us to decide what pleases the Lord and what displeases Him. We learn what pleases Him from His

Word. Therefore, it would be expected that in the context of that exhortation to "have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably," the Apostle would tell us what we need to do if we are live lives that are pleasing to the Lord. And that is exactly what he has done. The chapter division may make it a little harder for us to see this, but if we read from chapter 12 into chapter 13, ignoring that chapter heading, you will see that what I am saying is true.

Therefore, the Apostle's first point is my first point. If we are to live and work so as to please God, if we are to serve Him acceptably, we must:

I. LOVE ONE ANOTHER (Heb. 13:1-3).

Probably one thing that disturbs you parents more than anything else about your children is for them not to get along with each other. Or, if we have a child who has broken away from the family, that is a great grief to us as parents. The Lord has made us feel that way because that is the way He feels about us when we in His family fail to love each other.

And so we have first,

A. The exhortation (Heb. 13:1).

It can be said to the credit of these Hebrew Christians that they did love each other. You could tell that they loved each other if you were with them. Do you remember what Paul wrote to them in Heb. 6:10? "For God is not unrighteous to forget..."

And so he wrote here at the beginning of chapter 13, "Let brotherly love continue." "Brotherly love" is love for the other members of the family of God. It is a love which makes us concerned for each other. It is a love which causes us to pray for each other. It is a love which makes us want to help each other. It is a love which causes us to live as we should so that we can be examples of godliness to each other instead of stumblingblocks. It is a love which makes us want to be with the people of God. We enjoy their fellowship.

This is not a carnal, sensual, fleshly love. This is the manifestation of the love of God which has been poured out upon us by the Holy Spirit, according to Rom. 5:5.

Illus: This past week I had a call from a man I did not know who asked me why God didn't save him when he wanted to be saved. After questioning him briefly, I asked him how he expected to know that he was saved. He never did give me an answer, but I got the impression that he would looking for

some sensational feeling. And so I said to him, "Do you know what the evidences of salvation are?" He didn't. And so I told him some of the things that the Apostle John wrote in his first epistle which helped us to know when we are saved. I quoted to him, among other verses, 1 John 3:14:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

One of the first evidences we experience that we have really been saved is that we love the people of God. We would rather be with them than with anybody else. In fact, when we are saved, we cease to enjoy the things that we used to enjoy when we were with people who do not know the Lord. I invited this man to come to church, but I don't see any stranger here this morning. I assume that my comment did not strike a responsive chord in his heart.

How it must grieve the Lord when we, His children, fail to love each other! We need to keep in mind what our Lord told His disciples when He was with them in the Upper Room. Cf. John 13:34, 35.

The exhortation here in the book of Hebrews to believers who did love each other is proof that we need to encourage one another along this line. Be careful when you begin to feel better than your fellow-believers. Be careful when you can no longer learn from others who are in Christ. Let us aim at love, not hate or resentment or envy or retaliation or alienation. "Let brotherly love continue." And the exhortation would point to a fervent love.

But let us go on to verse 2. Here we have:

B. An exhortation to love strangers (Heb. 13:2).

Paul was talking here about believers who are strangers.

This is a good word for any local group of believers. We look forward to being together, but sometimes our fellowship gets so close that it is hard for others to get in. Or, we may be so sure of ourselves, that we have little patience with others who do not dot their i's and cross their t's like we do. Or we just may not like to meet other people.

The word "entertain" means to show hospitality. We can do this by inviting others to dinner, or by providing housing for other Christians who are on the road. It can mean inviting some servant of the Lord into your home. Some of the best times we have had in our home, even when our children were with us, were those times when we had some new acquaintance with us in our home. It was good for us; it was

good for our children.

Paul said that you may be in store for a special blessing. Abraham and Sarah entertained the Lord and two angels who came to them, but they thought they were just three men. The Lord often sends people our way so that we can be a blessing to them, or they can be a blessing to us--or both! Show love for all of the Lord's people, those you know, and those you don't know.

But there is a third verse here dealing with the love that we have for each other.

C. Love for those in prison (Heb. 13:3).

We do not suffer today like those early Christians suffered. They lived with the ever-present possibility of arrest because of their faith. They might be free on day, and in prison the next. That is what Paul said in this verse. And how well he knew that possibility.

When Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy he had this to say about a man by the name of Onesiphorus,

The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus;
for he oft refreshed me,
and was not ashamed of my chain:
But, when he was in Rome,
he sought me out very diligently, and found me.
The Lord grant unto him
that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day:
and in how many things he ministered unto me
at Ephesus, thou knowest very well (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

This is what Paul was talking about. Although Christians don't usually go to jail in America for their faith, it is not uncommon for believers to be ostracized, or persecuted in some way by family and friends, for their faith in Christ. When that happens, go to them, be with them, encourage them. And if the time should come when we face arrest for our faith in Christ, let us remember this exhortation.

I think that it is very, very interesting that, when the Apostle spoke about how we are to serve the Lord acceptably, he began by speaking of the love that we need to show for each other.

Now let us go on to the fourth verse where we read about:

II. LOVE IN MARRIAGE (Heb. 13:4).

This is another kind of love. This is the first love that

was experienced by the first human beings who lived on this earth. It is a God-given love, and it is to be limited for every man to just one woman. God made us male and female, and He was the One Who performed the first marriage. It is a sacred relationship, and must never be violated or broken.

When Paul said that "marriage is honourable in all," he said that it is considered priceless, precious, among all people. It is only a degenerate society that ignores marriage, or tries to satisfy sexual desires outside of marriage. One of the first evidences of a decaying society is the breakdown of the marriage relationship.

It would be impossible for anyone to say how many people in America and throughout the world engage in sexual activity without being married, or how many who are married are unfaithful to their husband or wife. Such things are flaunted by those who do it. No society, including our own, will survive which continues to violate what is pleasing to God regarding marriage. And the last part of this fourth verse tells us so: "But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." And do not doubt that for a moment. "Whoremongers" are fornicators, and fornicators are unmarried people who do what only married people should do. "Adulterers" are those who engage in sinful behavior where one or both are married to someone else.

What did Paul say about them? "GOD WILL JUDGE"! What does the last verse of chapter 12 say? "FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE." And if this is true about sin between men and women, how much more will sin between men with men, and women with women fall also under the fiery judgment of God.

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Ephesian church in Eph. 5:1-12. (Read.)

I trust that no one listening to my voice will ever believe the trash that is being spread abroad today that it doesn't make any difference how you live. The Lord in His mercy may let us get away with it for a time, but a day of judgment is coming. And it may not be very far away. Our troubles are increasing daily in this country, and no political party is going to bring us out as long as we are defying the will of Almighty God.

Cf. Prov. 7:21-27; 9:13-18.

We Americans may take great pride in being able to do what they want to do, but there is an awful price to be paid when we violate the will of God. Why are we as Christians against fornication and adultery and homosexuality? Because God is

against it, and we fear God! There is only trouble ahead for the person who ignores God and His Word.

While I hope you won't forget verse 4, let me go on to something more pleasant in verse 5 and 6.

III. CONTENTMENT (Heb. 13:5, 6).

Twice in this chapter Paul spoke about money: once here, about what we want; secondly, in verse 16 about what we give.

The word "conversation" is an Old English expression which includes two things:

- 1) Your character.
- 2) Your way of life.

And Paul says concerning our "conversation" that it is to be "without covetousness." And "covetousness" here means greedy for money.

We might not think that this is a very important exhortation until we read that Paul told Timothy that "the love of money is the root of all evil," all kinds of evil. See 1 Tim. 6:10. He was saying that in one way or another money has something to do with every sin. We want money so we can do what we want to do and so we can have what we want to have. The love of money has made drug agents out of top government leaders. The love of money has sent bankers to jail. The love of money has caused girls to go into prostitution. The love of money has caused elected officials to disgrace themselves. The love of money has brought many a preacher down in shame. You can illustrate this as well as I can.

Our Lord said that we cannot serve God and mammon. Cf. Luke 16:13. "Mammon" is the translation of an Aramaic expression for wealth. So if you and I are going to "serve God acceptably," we cannot be lovers of money. We work for what we need, and we can thank God for His faithful provision for us, but when making money becomes the main thing in our lives, it is no longer possible for us to please God.

More than that, it means that we are not satisfied with God and what He has provided for us. That is what it means to be content; it means being satisfied.

The latter part of verse 5 is a quotation from Joshua 1:5, the Lord's words to Joshua when he became the leader of Israel. And its use here means that God's promise to Joshua is a promise to every child of God. We are reminded in Prov. 23:5 that riches can take wings like an eagle and fly away. But the Lord's promise to us is that He will never leave us nor forsake us. And so this gives us the confidence, the

right, the authority to say,
The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?

To be discontented means that we are not satisfied with the Lord, nor are we satisfied with His promises. Speaking as a Christian, it means that we want the Lord's blessing, but we are not really interested in the Lord Himself. It is probably true that we have all sinned on this point, but let us make sure that by the grace of God we are not going to tolerate covetousness in our hearts, nor in our lives.

Concl: We are going to learn more in the rest of this chapter about what it means to serve God acceptably, but we have seen enough this morning, I think, for all of us to work on in the days ahead.

Let us take stock on our lives to determine just how much we love the people of God. How much do you love the Lord's people? Can you have just as good a time, or perhaps even better, with people who do not know the Lord? If you claim to love the Lord's people, are you carefully making sure that your life is a help to them, and not a stumblingblock?

I would hope that we all not only agree with what the Bible says about marriage, but that we are carefully observing the will of God in our relationships with the opposite sex. Don't be deceived because some people seem to get away with a sinful life. No one is going to get away with it. You can be sure of that.

Finally, let us recognize that contentment is a rare characteristic even among the Lord's people, but let us make sure that, by the grace of God, we are going to live to show that we are satisfied with the Lord, and satisfied that His promises give us the right to say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Let us pray for each other that day by day we may "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

FOLLOWERS OF THE TRUTH
Hebrews 13:7-14

Intro: The last two verses of chapter 12 give us the key to understanding chapter 13. (Read Heb. 12:28, 29.)

This means that in chapter 13 the Apostle Paul was explaining a little about how we are to "serve God acceptably," or in a manner that is pleasing to Him. He did not write everything that he could have written. We have the other epistles of the NT to give us further guidance. However, he did give enough to get us started in the right direction, even though there are things in chapter which had special emphasis to their position as Hebrew Christians.

We saw last week that there is a special emphasis in this chapter on love. In the first three verses of chapter 13 the emphasis was upon their love for each other as the children of God. In verse 4 he spoke of love in marriage, and also of ways in which the Biblical doctrine of marriage was being perverted. Then, in verses 5, 6 we see that they were warned against having a love for money. Instead, they were to be contented, and to remember that it was the Lord Who gave them their security, not money!

Today we come to verse 7.

From verse 7 down through verse 14 it seems to me that there is an emphasis upon continuing to abide by the Word of God. He had quoted from the book of Joshua, chapter 1, verse 5, in the fifth verse of this chapter, and that may have been what prompted him to go on speaking about the Word. It ought to be very clear to all of us that we cannot "serve God acceptably," we cannot live to please God, unless we are acting in obedience to the Word of God. And so we see that in verses 7 and 8 he was speaking of:

I. TEACHERS WE ARE TO FOLLOW (Heb. 13:7, 8).

He was speaking of their church leaders, their elders, men who had "spoken unto" them "the word of God." They were men who had been placed in authority over the Jerusalem church, men who themselves were under divine authority to teach and preach the Word of God. The fact that the people in the Jerusalem church were to "remember them" may be an indication that the teachers to whom he was referring were no longer with them.

To "remember" them means, as the verse goes on to show, that they were to remember what they taught, as well as how they lived! They were teachers who had limited themselves to the

Word of God. They had faithfully taught what God had revealed in His Word. In their case, it would apply to what had been written as well as to what had been passed down to the early Christians from the teaching of the apostles. They evidently had taught the Word thoroughly, and had taught only the Word of God. How wonderful it is to be raised under the guidance of faithful teachers of the Word! And we should never forget them.

There have been many men who have been a great help to me in my own understanding of the Word of God. Some are in heaven; others are still living. I have on the wall of my study a picture of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer who taught theology to me and to hundreds of other men who sat under his ministry at Dallas Seminary. I often look at his picture and think of those wonderful days at Dallas when my mind and heart were being filled with truths of Scripture which I had never understood before. And I will say this about Dr. Chafer: It was not a disappointment to get acquainted with him personally. He lived what he taught. His love for the Lord and for the Word of God were built into his soul. I could really have this seventh verse of Hebrews 13 put on a little plaque and attached to his picture.

Notice the exhortation that the Apostle gave here regarding the teachers those Hebrew Christians had. He said, "Whose faith follow." This meant that they could be thankful that they had teachers who not only taught the truth, but that they also lived the truth." We need both of these characteristics, not just one or the other. The teaching of God's Word becomes a powerful force in the transformation of lives when it is faithfully taught by men of God who know that they need to live it as well as to teach it.

Let me say to those of us who are elders and deacons, this is a special message for us, too. This is not something that was needed then, but not now. It is needed today just as much as it was then. We ought to be praying every day that the Lord will keep us faithful in our teaching, and just as faithful in living by the Word of God.

And when we remember those who have taught us, those who have helped us to understand the truth and to walk in the truth, let us remember them with thanksgiving to God. Be thankful for them whether they are in heaven, or still serving the Lord here on earth.

But now look with me at verse 8. This is probably one verse in the book of Hebrews which most Christians know: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." As far as we know, this epistle to the Hebrews was written a little

past the middle of the first century. That means this epistle is about nineteen and a half centuries old--almost two thousand years. And yet this statement about our Lord is just as true today as it was then. Our Lord is still the same. And as far as our yesterdays, our todays, and our forever, He is still the same. His power has not changed. His love is still the same. His wisdom is the same. He is still at the right hand of the Father, and yet He continues to be with us. What Paul and the other apostles taught about Christ, they could still teach in exactly the same way if they were with us today. The needs of people have not changed. The Gospel has not changed. Salvation has not changed. The promises of God have not changed. God's plans have not changed. And yet why would the Apostle insert this statement into the book of Hebrews at this point?

I think I know why.

The Apostle began this epistle by telling us that God has spoken to us "in His Son." Here in chapter 13 the Apostle had been encouraging the Hebrews believers to remember their teachers, what they had taught, and how they had lived. What had they taught? The heart of their teaching was Jesus Christ. Christ is the theme of Scripture. If you and I are to preach the Word, we must preach Christ. And since He is the same, if there is no change in Him nor in anything that the Word of God tells us about Him, then we must never what we have been taught about Him. What we need to just to learn more!

Some people would ridicule what we do here at Trinity Bible Church, teaching the Word of God. Have you ever heard anyone say something like this? "Of what importance for us today is a book that is 2,000 years old?" They feel that we know so much more now than people did then, that it is regressing to take seriously such an old book as the Bible.

This is why we teach it: Because its message never changes. It is a message of an unchanging Christ. God is the same. If God were to reveal Himself all over again, He would send Christ again and He would cause another Bible to be written just like the one we have.

So I say especially to you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, don't ever be ashamed of your Bible, nor of your Lord. Your Bible contains unchanging truth about an unchanging God Who has spoken to us through His unchanging Son. Therefore, you can do no better than to follow the faith of those who have taught you the Word of God.

But now let us look at the next three verses. Here we have:

II. TEACHERS WE ARE NOT TO FOLLOW (Heb. 13:9-11).

One thing that has interested me for many years has been to see in Scripture how quickly people turned away from the truth of the Word of God. You see that false teaching was a major problem in the New Testament Church before the Scriptures were completed. And the most dangerous of false teaching was that where the Scriptures were used, but changed in some way.

What was the problem here?

Jewish believers in the first century had a hard time letting go of the Mosaic Law. It was difficult for them to turn away from the sacrifices and ceremonies that the children of Israel had been observing for more than fifteen centuries before Christ came. They were inclined to believe that the Gospel was a combination of law and grace, not just grace. The Apostle told them here in these verses that their hearts needed to be established in the grace of God. We are saying the same thing when we say that people need to be established in the doctrines of grace!

There perhaps was a desire and an attempt on their part to make the Gospel more acceptable to their fellow Jews—and more respectable. And so they sought to hang on to some parts of the Mosaic Law, particularly the sin offering. And so they were inclined to be occupied with "meats," or sacrifices, rather than with Christ. And they wanted to bring all of this into the temple so that they would not be looked down upon, and the Gospel would find greater acceptance.

However, in listening to this teaching, which Paul called "divers and strange," they had forgotten one significant thing about the sin offering. It was not to be eaten. It was taken outside of the camp, AND BURNED! And even the priests in the OT could not eat the sin offering.

The sin offering of the Law was a type of Christ. The type spoke of the reproach that sin brings upon the sinner, and in the death of Christ we see the reproach and shame which He experienced. However, the sin offering did not profit those who offered it. The sin offerings which we sacrificed under the Law could never take away sins. The Apostle made that very clear earlier in this epistle. The Law showed that what sinful man needed was not some work to do, but a divine provision through the grace of God. The sin offering of the OT did not make sinners right with God; it was a type which pointed ahead to Christ. Only Christ by His death on the Cross can save either Jews or Gentiles from their sins. And so, the people of Israel, as well as Gentiles, need Christ.

This brings me to my last point.

We have seen the kind of teachers that we need to follow-- those who teach and live the pure Word of God. We have also seen the kind of teachers that we must not follow--those who corrupt the Word of God, even though the truth is mixed in. If we know the Word, then we will be able to detect that which is different and "strange." This section is concluded by the Apostle's emphasis upon:

III. THE ONE WE MUST FOLLOW (Heb. 13:12-14).

His name is "Jesus."

Three weeks ago in speaking about Heb. 12:24 I told you that our Lord is called simply "Jesus" nine times in the book of Hebrews. Here in Heb. 13:12 we have #8. (The last is in verse 20.)

"Jesus" is the Name of the Son of God made flesh. He was called "Jesus" because He came to "save his people from their sins." To do this He became our sin offering. He did not die in the Temple, nor even in the city of Jerusalem. He was taken outside of the city walls, and there crucified on Calvary. He died a shameful death. Those who trust in His death for their salvation are no longer accepted by the world. People do not like to be told that they are sinners. And if they admit that they are sinners, they do not believe that it took the death of Christ to save them. The natural heart of man will not let him believe that there is not some contribution that he can make for his salvation. So there are many things about the simple Gospel message which are unacceptable to the world.

But we are not talking about what is acceptable to the world. We are talking about serving the Lord "acceptably." And if we are to serve Him "acceptably," we must share in the reproach of Christ! We are not out to change the world. We are to bear witness to sinful men of a crucified Savior Who is the only Savior who can cleanse the sinner's heart, and make him acceptable to a holy God.

Therefore, let us not waste our time trying to make the Gospel acceptable to the people of the world. Let us bear His reproach. We are not trying to clean up this world. We are seeking citizens for the heavenly Jerusalem, those who by the grace of God will admit their sin, and believe that nothing by the death of the Son of God could possibly prepare us for heaven.

Concl: We have "divers and strange doctrines" in our world

today. "Divers" means different. They all differ from the true Gospel, and they are often different from each other. "Strange" means novel, or foreign. You won't find them in the Word, although such teachers may use part of the Word. They are new to the Word of God, not the old Gospel of the grace of God. We have many well-meaning leaders who are trying to make the Gospel more acceptable to the world. Paul told the Corinthian church that "the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18a). The only way that you and I can make it otherwise is by changing it. Nowhere in the Bible do we learn that we create a worldly atmosphere for the preaching of the Gospel so that people will be receptive to the Gospel. The Gospel condemns man. The Gospel shows man his sin, his helplessness, and his hopelessness. Only by the grace of God does the Gospel become music in the sinner's ear.

If we are going to "serve God acceptably," we must preach the Gospel as it is to men as they are! If we do otherwise, we are guilty of false teaching. God will see to it that His Word will not come back to Him empty, but it will accomplish what He intends for it to accomplish, and it will prosper in doing the very thing that He intends for it to do. Let us do what He has told us to do, preaching the Word; and let us trust Him to see His mighty Word to bring sinners to Himself.

Paul never sought to avoid trouble by preaching a different or strange Gospel. We can tell that we are preaching what he preached if we are getting the response that he got. Some believed; many did not believe. Among those who did not believe there were many who would have gladly killed him--and apparently they finally succeeded.

May the Lord give us grace and boldness to be faithful in proclaiming the Word, trusting the Lord to give us fruit that will remain for His glory.

SACRIFICES THAT PLEASE GOD
Hebrews 13:15-19

Intro: Vacation plans -- Lucille and I will be away three Sundays, starting next Sunday. We expect to be in and out of town, making three short trips, since there will be two showers during this time which Lucille does not want to miss. Gary will be speaking the next two Sunday mornings, and Dr. John will have the third Sunday morning. Tom Matthews, Thomas Goble, and Dr. Uchiyama will have the evening services in that order. Pray for these men as they minister, asking the Lord's blessing upon them.

You have probably noticed from the Tableau that I am not finishing Hebrews this morning. Verses 20 and 21 are too important to include with the text that I have today, and so, although there will be a few weeks before my last message, I am going to wait until we get back to finish the book.

Today I want to take up verses 15 through 19 of chapter 13. (Read.)

In the verses immediately preceding my text for today, those of you will remember that the Apostle was speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Sin Offering. It was included in a warning that the Law has no part in our salvation, but that we are saved by the grace of God.

We have seen in this epistle that our Lord is not only our High Priest, but He is also our Sacrifice. He did not come before God with the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood. We learned that in Heb. 9:12. The book of Hebrews is a letter dealing with the priestly ministry of our Lord.

However, we have seen also in this epistle that by our Lord's death the old Levitical priesthood came to an end because all believers have become priests. It makes not difference whether we are man or woman, adult, young person, or child, regardless of the color of our skin or the language we speak, everyone who is trusting in Christ for salvation is a priest. In Heb. 10:19 we read that we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." And I hope all of you remember that wonderful sixteenth verse of Hebrews 4,

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

We could not do this if we were not priests.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Pet. 2:19 that we are "a royal priesthood."

The Apostle John said in his introduction to the book of the Revelation that God has "made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," or, as it can be translated, we are a kingdom of priests unto God.

As I have told you on other occasion, a priest ministers to God! And he does this primarily by offering sacrifices. Therefore, it is important for us to know what are the sacrifices which we are to bring to God.

Those of you who were here two weeks ago will remember that my text was Rom. 12:1, 2. The second verse exhorts us to "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice unto God..." That is a priestly ministry.

As we come to verse 15 in Hebrews 13, we can see that the Apostle was speaking of three sacrifices: one in verse 15; two more in verse 16. And then he added at the end of verse 16, "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." Therefore, if we want to minister to the Lord to please Him (and no other motive could possibly right), then we must make sure that these are offerings that we are bring to the Lord, not just once in a while, but "continually," as the Apostle said in verse 15.

Then in verse 17 Paul gave some instructions regarding the response of the people to their God-given leadership. Evidently he looked upon this as a means God would use to safeguard their priestly ministry.

And then this section which I have chosen as my text concludes with a prayer request in verses 18 and 19. Responding to that request would also be a priestly work.

So we are dealing with priestly work this morning, and, as Paul indicated in verse 28 of chapter 12, repeating it at the end of Heb. 13:16, we must be concerned most of all with pleasing God, to be well pleasing to God. To do this, our hearts need to be right, we need to offer the right sacrifices, and we need to do it in the right way and with the right motive.

Now let us look at:

I. THREE SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES (Heb. 13:15, 16).

Please note that the sacrifice mentioned in verse 15 has to do with God alone. The sacrifices in verse 16, while offered to God, are for the benefit of man, and we would think that Paul was thinking primarily of believers.

First, then, in verse 15 we have:

A. The sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15).

This is not new to the NT. This was a sacrifice enjoined upon the people of God many places in the OT. Sometimes in the OT an animal sacrifice accompanied their thanksgiving to the Lord, but not always.

David said in Psa. 27:6,

And now shall mine head be lifted up
above mine enemies round about me:
therefore will I offer in his tabernacle
sacrifices of joy; I will sing,
yea, I will sing praises to the Lord.

In Psalm 50, verse 14, we read,

Offer unto God thanksgiving;
and pay thy vows unto the most High.

And then in verse 23 he concluded the Psalm with these words:

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:
and to him that ordereth his conversation aright
will I shew the salvation of God.

In Psalm 69:30-32 we find these words:

I will praise the name of God with a song,
and will magnify him with thanksgiving.
This shall please the Lord better than an ox
or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
The humble shall see this, and be glad:
and your heart shall live that seek God.

The Psalmist wrote in Psa. 107:22,

And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of
thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Listen to Psa. 116:17,

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and will call upon the name of the Lord.

Psalm 119:108 says it this way:

Accept, I beseech thee,
the freewill offerings of my mouth,
O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.

Hosea exhorted the people like this in Hosea 14:2:

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord:
say to him, Take away all iniquity,
and receive us graciously:
so will we render to thee the calves of our lips.

Jonah said in his prayer in Jonah 2:9,
But I will sacrifice unto thee
with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay that that I have vowed.
Salvation is of the Lord.

There are many verses which have to do with thanksgiving in both the OT and the NT although they may not speak of it as a sacrifice. Paul told the Thessalonian church,
In every thing give thanks:
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (1 Thess. 5:18).

What does our text say? (Read Heb. 13:15.)

What are we to do? We are to "offer the sacrifice of praise." To whom is it to be offered? "To God." Blessings may come to us through people, but they always have God as their point of origin. How often are we to praise God? In our morning devotional time? Yes, but more than that. When we sit down to eat our food? Yes, but more than that. When we go to bed at night? Yes, but still more than that. We are to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God CONTINUALLY!" Through whom do we praise the Lord? Our praise is only acceptable when we come "by him," i.e., by Christ. Throughout the day and into the night, during all of our waking hours, we are to be praising the Lord for His many, many, many blessings upon us.

Praise Him for His care of you through the night hours. Praise Him for health and strength. Praise Him for your family, your home, your job, your food, and all of the conveniences you enjoy every day. But praise Him most for His love, His faithfulness, His grace, His power. Praise Him for His Word. Praise Him for His Son. Praise Him for salvation and for all of the blessings you have because you are saved: the forgiveness of your sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, our sonship, our hope, and on and on. Praise Him for answered prayer. Praise Him for letting us live in this country. Praise Him for the opportunity we have to serve Him.

The list is endless, isn't it? David recognized how impossible it is for us to keep current in our praise when he wrote in Psa. 40:5,

Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works
which thou has done,
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.

Our lives should be one long doxology.

However, it is one thing to know that we should praise the Lord; it is another thing to do it. Right now why don't you purpose in your heart that, by the grace of God, you are going to be more faithful in offering the sacrifice of praise to God. And I will do the same.

But there are other sacrifices that we need to offer. Those he mentioned here in verse 16 are:

B. Sacrifices of good works, and giving (Heb. 13:16).

I mentioned earlier that the sacrifice of verse 15 has to do with God alone. The sacrifices of verse 16 have to do with people, and especially the people of God.

And when Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he said this:

As we have therefore opportunity,
let us do good unto all men,
especially unto them who are of the household of faith
(Gal. 6:10).

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he had this to say to them,

I can do all things through Christ
which strengtheneth me.
Notwithstanding ye have well done,
that ye **communicated** with my affliction.
Now ye Philippians know also,
that in the beginning of the gospel,
when I departed from Macedonia,
no church **communicated** with me
as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.
For even in Thessalonica ye sent once
and again unto my necessity.
Not because I desire a gift:
but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.
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** (Phil. 4:13-18).

Good works and giving are sacrifices we are to be offering to the Lord. Communicating is giving you money. And they are equally important with offering our praise to God. God gives to us, and we give Him our praise. Then, because of the abilities and possessions He has given us, we are able to serve and worship Him by being of service to others.

A Christian who is selfish with his time and selfish with his money is not what the Lord wants him to be. Has someone else been helped and enriched spiritually, and perhaps even financially, because of what you have done for them this week. Remember: When we do things for others because we love the Lord, even in our own families, the Lord takes it as a sacrificial offering of love toward Himself. Paul said that we should not forget to do these things. The Lord will lead you as to when and where and how, but you and I need to know that these are ways that we have of pleasing the Lord.

You and I have to apply these verses to our own hearts. If we are failing to do what we should, let us ask God for grace to be obedient to His will.

However, the Lord has made a special provision for His people. He mentioned the spiritual leaders of the church in Jerusalem back in verse 7. Now he turns to them again, and speaks about them as:

II. GUARDIANS OF THEIR SOULS (Heb. 13:17).

In the context it would seem that Paul was saying that the elders, those who had the rule over them, were by their teaching, and by their help, to keep them reminded of what they needed to do if they were going to be faithful priests in offering sacrifices to the Lord.

How do we know what pleases the Lord, and what displeases Him? It is all here in the Word. So, as long as your elders teach you the Word of God, be obedient. Submit yourself to the teaching we give you, not because we say it, but because it is the Word of God. Some day we are going to be held accountable. Let it be for us a joyful time, not a grievous time, because, if it is joyful, that will mean greater rewards and blessings for you in the life to come.

And may those of us who are elders be careful that our teaching is exactly in accord with the Word, and that we are doing what we want our people to do. Elders teach by example before they teach by word of mouth. That is true of all of us.

The last thing that I want to mention today is:

III. PAUL'S REQUEST FOR PRAYER (Heb. 13:18, 19).

What Paul wrote in verse 17 must have been partially responsible for his request in these two verses. He was overwhelmed with the responsibility that was his, and so should every leader in the Lord's work. We are no different

by nature from the people we serve. We need the Lord's help just as much as anyone else does. And so we are foolish if we do not seek the prayer support of all of the people of God who will pray for us.

Remember what Paul had written to them at the end of chapter 5, and through chapter 6, when you read this request. Many of them were spiritually immature, but Paul wanted their prayers, nevertheless. He wanted their prayers for his own life (v. 18), and he wanted their prayers for the Lord's guidance in his ministry, making it possible for him to be with them again, if such a thing would be pleasing to the Lord.

This might be another epistle that we should list with Paul's prison epistles. His reference to Italy in verse 24 would suggest that possibility. If it were his first imprisonment, the prayers of these Hebrew Christians were answered in a positive way. Paul did get back to Jerusalem. But we need to remember that his purpose in wanting to be with them was that he might help them spiritually. Thus, his prayer request was for his own life, and then for his ministry.

I would like to make that request of you for myself. Pray for me that my life will be pleasing to the Lord, and that the Lord will make me a spiritual blessing to you. Pray this for all of our elders and deacons. There is not a one of us who feels really qualified for the responsibilities that we have. That is the reason we need your prayers.

Concl: Let me close by saying what the Lord said to His disciples after He had washed their feet: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). But let me say for all of us that just knowing about our sacrifices, but not offering them to the Lord, will not make us happy. Happiness is reserved for those who not only know the will of God, but who do it!

And so, in the words of Heb. 12:28, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

THE GOD OF PEACE
Hebrews 13:20-25

Intro: Today I am completing our present series on the book of Hebrews. We have spent sixty-four Sundays considering the great truths of this epistle. I never feel that I have done justice to any book that I teach, but I can say that I have been richly blessed each week in preparing my messages. I hope, too, that you have been blessed. How wonderful it has been to me to see again, and I trust, in a deeper way, the great truths involved in the high priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we think of Who our Lord is, what He did for us at Calvary, and what He continues to do for us at the right hand of the Father, all of us should respond daily to the exhortation Paul gave to us in verse 15 of this chapter. Whatever else we thank God for, we always can be thankful for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before turning the major amount of our time this morning to verses 20 and 21, let me speak for a few minutes about verses 22 through 25. In these verses we see again the tenderness in the heart of the Apostle.

Paul was always very positive and very clear in his teaching, but always very gracious in what he had to say. And we see this in verse 22.

He was pleading with them to be receptive to the message of this book. His title for the book of Hebrews is given here. It is "the word of exhortation." It is a book full of instruction, full of encouragement, and carrying with it in all of its teachings some very important practical teaching. He wanted them not only to know the truth that he had written, but he wanted them to live in the light of these great truths.

We might wonder at his statement here in verse 22 that his letter was with "few words." It is longer than any letter I have ever written, and probably you would say the same. What did he mean by saying that it was "written...in few words"?

Well, I can say for sure, but what I think that he meant was that, in writing about such a subject, he could have written much more. But he had condensed it as much as he could without leaving anything out that was important for them to know. He wanted to write enough so that they would understand the present ministry of Christ in heaven without being wordy. I think we would all agree that he did just that! He could have written much more, but he did not try to do that. What he has written, none of us will ever be able to understand or explain fully. But let us keep working at it,

praying for greater and greater light on the past work of our Lord on earth, and his present ministry in heaven. Nothing could be more profitable for our souls.

The book of Hebrews should greatly strengthen our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It should give us much assurance of our salvation. It should have a profound change upon the way that we live. So, by the grace of God, let us make sure that it is a "word of exhortation" to us.

In verse 23 Paul gave them a good report concerning Timothy. We do not have any information about Timothy's circumstances than we do here. He must have been in prison because of his ministry, but now he was free. And Paul hoped that the two of them would be able to visit the people to whom this letter was first addressed--probably the church in Jerusalem.

In verse 24 we see Paul's greeting to the church: first to the leaders, and then to the people. And he sent greetings to them from the believers in Italy, which is probably an indication as to where the Apostle was when he wrote Hebrews.

The Bible certainly teaches us that it is not an idle thing to send greetings to one another. It means that we are thinking of them, and many times it means that we are praying for the people we greet. Such a habit of greeting one another can be a great encouragement to all of us.

Finally, in verse 25 we have Paul's concluding prayer. Charles Simeon once said, "In reading the epistles of Paul, we cannot but observe how continually he begins and ends them with prayer" (Vol. 19, p. 549). And his prayers often have to do with the grace of God. He knew that the Lord's people need grace every day, and he was one who believed in praying grace into their souls.

He concluded this verse, and his epistle, with, "Amen." John Owen said this word means, "So it is, so let it be, so it ought to be, it is true, it is right and meet that it should be so" (VII, 480). What a fitting conclusion this is, not only to his prayer, but to the epistle. "So it is." "So let it be." "So it ought to be." "It is true, not only that I pray for you, but what I have written is true." And "it is right and meet that it should be so."

The Apostle Paul was what we would call today "a people person." He loved the Lord's people. He loved to teach them. He loved to pray for them. He loved to be with them. And when he couldn't be with them, he loved to write to them. What a great example he still should be to all of us. There is much that we can learn from verses like the four which we

find at the end of this epistle.

But now let us turn our attention to verses 20 and 21.

This has been called the noblest of Paul's benedictions. John Owen said that "the substance of the whole doctrinal part of the epistle is included in it" (VII, 472). I would have to say the same thing about the practical exhortations of the epistle. He does not go into great detail here, as he has in the epistle, but we see here what Paul was concerned about. He wanted to see God's purposes in salvation fulfilled in the life of each and every believer.

Those of you who were at Mark and Annette Johnson's wedding yesterday will remember that I gave this to them as my prayer, hopefully our prayer, for them. In the words of these two verses you and I are praying for all that any child of God will ever need. (Read.)

Let us examine these two verses as fully as we can in the time that remains.

Notice, first,

I. HOW THE APOSTLE ADDRESSED GOD (Heb. 13:20a).

Paul called Him, "the God of peace."

The NT makes it very clear that our prayers should normally be addressed to God. We pray to God through Christ by the Spirit. That is the normal pattern for prayer. But there are different ways in which we can truly and reverently address God.

I noticed in going through some of the passages in the epistles that Paul called God, "the God of patience and consolation" in Rom. 15:5. In Rom. 15:13 he called God, "the God of hope." In 2 Cor. 1:3 he addressed Him as "the God of all comfort." In 1 Pet. 5:10 He is called "the God of all grace."

However, it seems that there is a stronger emphasis in the NT on the title we have in our text than on any of the others. Listen to these verses.

- 1) Rom. 15:33, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."
- 2) Rom. 16:20, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."
- 3) Phil. 4:9, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of

peace shall be with you."

- 4) 2 Cor. 13:11, "Finally, brethren, farewell, Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."
- 5) 1 Thess. 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And many feel that 2 Thess. 3:16 is also a reference to God. Even if it should refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is worth noting:

- 6) 2 Thess. 3:16, "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all."

So there is no doubt but that this is a prominent title for God in the NT. But what does it mean that He is "the God of peace"?

It means that He is the only source of peace. Our peace comes from Him, or we have no peace. But it also means that He desires our peace.

The word "peace" has actually occurs three times before this in the book of Hebrews. See Heb. 12:14; 11:31; 7:2.

"Peace" is one of the most frequently used words in Scripture. I am sure that you can recall many of them as we think about it today. "Peace" was the greeting with which the Jews would greet each other. But "peace" takes on a new meaning with those who know our Lord Jesus Christ. And we will see more about that as we go on in these two verses today.

Let it be written indelibly upon all of our hearts that our God is "the God of peace." The more we think about this, the more it will mean to us that He is "the God of peace."

But let me go on to my second point:

II. THE PRICE OF OUR PEACE (Heb. 13:20b).

How easy it is for us to repeat a verse like Rom. 5:1 without stopping to think of the terrible price God paid to bring "peace" to our sinful hearts. That verse reads,

Therefore being justified by faith,

we have peace with God through out Lord Jesus Christ.

But the price was enormous. It cost the death of Christ to do away with the enmity and disruption that existed between God and man.

The book of Hebrews has had much to say about the death of

Christ, about the shedding of His blood, but I believe that A. T. Robertson was right when he wrote in his Word Pictures In The New Testament (Vol. V, p. 450) that this is "the only direct mention of the resurrection of Jesus in the Epistle." It is often implied, but here it is clearly stated, and spoken of as the work of God, "the God of peace." Here the resurrection is clearly stated: God "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."

We have the whole book of Hebrews compressed into these few words, simple words, easily understood by those who know the Savior, and yet so profound that you and I will never be able to plumb the depths of their meaning.

Note that the death of Christ is implied here because the Lord Jesus could not have been raised from the dead if He had not died. But He did die. He died a terrible death. He died as a Substitute for all of the redeemed. He died as "the great shepherd of the sheep." Our Lord Himself said about His death in John 10, verse 11,

I am the good shepherd:

the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

This is particular redemption, isn't it? He died not just to provide salvation for anyone who might be inclined to receive it, but He died to guarantee, to do all that was necessary for the salvation of those whom the Father had chosen for salvation.

John Calvin used to like to call the Lord, our Pastor. That is what "shepherd" means. We could translate David's words in Psa. 23:1, "The Lord is my Pastor; I shall not want."

Here we read that the Lord Jesus is "the great shepherd," or the Great Pastor. He is "great" because of Who He is, and because of what He has accomplished. By His death He completely satisfied God concerning the sins of all of the elect. He left nothing undone. He by His death guaranteed that all of the elect would eventually be saved, that their sins would be forgiven and forgotten. An "everlasting covenant" was established not only guaranteeing the salvation of all of the elect, but also guaranteeing that our salvation could never, under any conditions, be revoked. It can never be called back, never rescinded, never cancelled. And, as God's witness to all that He was completely satisfied with the work of His Son, He raised Him from the dead. And, as we have learned more than once in this book of Hebrews, today our Lord is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven where He devotes His time to making intercession for us. As our great Pastor, our Lord has by His death fully atoned for every person who has ever been saved, or who ever will be

saved. This gives us the right to sing that great hymn, "Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

Much, much more could be said about verse 20, but I must move on. But notice before we go on that verse 20 is a majestic statement, not only of Christian doctrine, but of worship. At the same time notice that verse 21 contains a petition, a request, which the Apostle was presenting to the Father. And so let me direct your attention to:

III. THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER (Heb. 13:21a).

Paul was calling upon God to continue His work in the heart and life of all of the believers who first received this epistle. But this is also a prayer which he undoubtedly prayed for all of the believers he knew, whether in person, or by report.

Paul had gone to great lengths to explain to those early Hebrew Christians why they could not be saved by the Law, and also why they could not be sanctified by the Law. The Law had its purpose and its place, but it never saved anybody, and it never made a saint out of any sinner. What the Law could not do, God accomplished through the work of His Son on the Cross and at the right hand of the Father. And this verse would inform us that while it is imperative that we teach, yet teaching, to be everlastingly effective in the lives of the Lord's people, must be followed up with faithful prayer!

When we are saved, the work is not finished. Our Savior is "great" not only because He has removed our sins, but because He is sufficient for every need we have, for every trial we will ever face, for the removal of every obstacle that stands in the way of our becoming what we ultimately we be when we stand before the Lord.

When Paul prayed here that God, "the God of peace," would make them perfect, he was praying that God would set in order everything in their lives, equipping them fully to do His will, to do that which was "wellpleasing in his sight." This is the great objective each one of us should have in all that we do every day. It is the great objective for all that we are to be! The Lord did not set us free from our sins so we could go on sinning. He set us free from our sins so that we could be and do that which would please Him. He saved us to make us holy; He saved us to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

But notice something which is extremely important in this verse which is easy to overlook. God equips us to live holy

lives always and only "through Jesus Christ"! The Law could not save, but Christ can--and He does! The Law could not make us holy, but Christ can--and He will! The only way you and I can be what God wants us to be day by day is by learning of Christ, trusting Christ, looking to Him in every situation to supply all that we need to be the people that He saved us to be.

May we be faithful in praying this very prayer for each other, and for ourselves, knowing that our Lord is praying for us this very way as He sits interceding for us at the right hand of the Father.

One final word:

IV. THE OBJECT OF ALL CHRISTIAN LIVING (Heb. 13:21b).

Listen to these words: "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Was the Apostle speaking here of God, or of Christ?

It actually makes little difference because to glorify One is to glorify the Other. But I believe that Paul was speaking here about glorifying "the God of peace." This was the object our Lord had throughout His life here on earth, and this should be our purpose as well. All must be done ultimately to glorify the great God of our great salvation!

Concl: These two verses contain a message for all of us which we must never get away from. God is the One Who has made possible our salvation through Christ, and He is the One Who through Christ will enable us to glorify Him in all of the circumstances of our lives.

What a God we have, and what a Savior is Christ! Let us worship Them, learn of them, trust them, and seek by the grace of God to live to glorify our God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This same book which tells us that Christ died for His sheep, also authorizes us to preach the Gospel to every human being, with the promise that, if anyone will come to Christ, and trust in Him as having done all that is necessary for our salvation, that one will be saved. If you do not know Him as your Savior, turn to Him and trust in Him today before you leave this place. There is no other Savior but Christ. No one can come to God except through Him.