

## **Greater than Angels**

IN THIS EPISTLE of "deep things," (1 Corinthians 2:10) God is speaking through the apostle to those who have become his people. Herein he gives insight into the hidden things, the plans and purposes which he talks over with those who love to dwell in his presence. This is some of the 'latter rain,' or 'table talks' of him who comes to "sup" with those who, in the Laodicean stage of the church, have heard his "knock" and opened the door. (Revelation 3:20) How gracious and loving is our Creator to have had the Tabernacle and other types enacted so long ago, and then have raised up the Apostle Paul and given him visions and revelations by which he could write the epistle, to enable his people in the latter days to understand what the LORD has been doing, and how, and why!

This is the epistle of 'better things.' Paul writes of a "better" spokesman "than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4); also of "better things" (Hebrews 6:9; 11:40; 12:24); "better promises" (8:6); a "better hope" (7:19); a "better testament" (7:22) or "covenant" (8:6); a better "mediator" (9:12-15); and a better "priesthood" (7:23,24). Upon the altar (13:10), and in the tabernacle (9:11) are offered "better sacrifices" (9:23). It is a better "ministry" (8:6), leading to a "better country" (11:16), even as the fulfillment, the complete work, is better than the blueprints.

### **CHAPTER ONE**

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

Thus did the LORD speak to the fathers through the prophets. More literally, the thought is that the Divine revelations of the past were given in many ways, and by fragments, or morsels -- "Here a little, and there a little." (Isaiah 28:10) These were scattered bits or pieces given in visions, types, prophecies, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob -- the progenitors of the Jewish people; and also to Moses, Samuel, David, and all the prophets.

In Hosea 12:10 we read, "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes [types], by the ministry of the prophets." And again, in Amos 3:7 we read, "Surely the LORD God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

**HEBREWS 1:2** "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed ['tithemi', placed, put, set] heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Here the 'last days' are the closing days of the Jewish Age, and the opening days of the Gospel Age, but also included are the last days of the Gospel Age. The old methods which God had employed in dealing with his people in the past were no longer to be used. His people were now to be a "New Creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*), and for these all the messages and partial statements of the past were gathered into a complete whole and revealed through Christ.

Paul says that through Christ God has spoken unto "us." (Hebrews 1:2) Here the emphasis is that God was speaking to the same Jewish people as in the past. If an angel had come to them with a message, they would have listened. One greater than angels came with the Gospel message, and the vast majority of Israel received him not. The LORD then turned to the Gentiles, giving them the opportunity to become a part of the 'us' class. Now the oracles of God belong to all believers. -- Romans 2:6-10; 3:2; 9:4,5

God now speaks through his Son! What loving condescension is here shown. All God's works speak volumes about him, but in his Son we have the most complete revelation. In him is a revelation of the brightness of God's glory -- literally an 'off-flash,' as if in a burst of brilliance he had brought the *Logos* into being. Every glorious beauty of the Creator's character shines forth through his Son -- his humility, meekness, loving-kindness, patience, endurance, self-denial -- all those endearing qualities which draw us to him and delight our hearts; also the four cardinal attributes of his character -- his wisdom, justice, love and power.

Paul writes concerning Jesus that "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." (2 Corinthians 1:20) In him and through him will be the completion and fulfillment of all the Father's gracious promises and purposes. This wonderful Son was trained in the ways of his Father throughout all the eons since the time of his creation. He was brought up under the Father's care and instruction. (Proverbs 8:30) He was there when all the angels were created, including Lucifer, for he did the work of Creation. -- John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2

'Made the worlds' can have the meaning "on account of whom the Father created the worlds," or arranged the various ages in his great Divine plan, those ages in and through which he will accomplish all his good purposes.

**HEBREWS 1:3** "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Here the Greek word for 'express image' is *charakter*, meaning 'the impression as of a stamp or die, or seal.' This refers to Jesus' condition since his resurrection, when he was raised up to the Divine nature. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness

dwell." (Colossians 1:19) He is, therefore, "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." (vs. 15) He is before all things, being the firstborn from the dead (at his resurrection), that in all things he might have the preeminence. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Deity bodily." (Colossians 2:9, *WED*) What strong expressions are these! and how complete! By these we know that the Father has placed all things in the hands of his Son, that all the Son's acts, words, thoughts, are just like those of the Father. As Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Only in the throne will I be greater than thou." -- Genesis 41:40

How could two such beings exist separately and yet be one in thought, plan and will? We remember that all through the ages of the past our Lord Jesus, as the agent of the Father, had watched him, studied him, and found supreme delight in the Father's ways of wisdom and beauty. As stated in Proverbs 8:30, which applies to the *Logos*, he was as one brought up by Jehovah, trained and educated in his presence. When Lucifer endeavored to carry out his selfish ambition, Jesus was there and saw the rebellion. He also witnessed the disobedience and fall of man. When the angels fell and sinned, Jesus was there, and noted that abiding close to the Father, obeying him and practicing his ways, brought happiness and security and long life. Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity and disobedience.

'Upholding all things by the word of his power,' means sustaining (from *phero*" -- 'to bear or carry'), as the provider of food and energy and life, distributing to each and all as needed. (Psalm 104:10-24) What a deep assurance that this great Provider will supply all our needs! 'All things' here refers to the whole universe, and to all the creatures in it. The 'word of his power' is a reference to the authority of his utterance, the authority given to him by his Father. The expression also includes Jesus' actual power or energy by which he is now able to accomplish the work of Jehovah. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," said Jesus subsequent to his resurrection. -- Matthew 28:18

"When he had by himself purged our sins," or as the *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* translates it, "made a purification for sins." How clearly this shows that it was Jesus who was offered to effect the purification, the beginning of the great work of eradicating sin from the earth. The word 'purification' is from a Greek word meaning 'a washing off, or cleansing, as of filth or dirt,' and such is the character of sin as viewed by God. This is a reference to the typical purification of sins by the offerings and washings of the Law arrangements, as fulfilled antitypically through Christ. The use of the adverb 'when' shows that the purification must first be accomplished before the blessing could come, and that the offering for sin by Jesus must be made before he could be glorified.

"Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Jesus, having placed the merit of his sacrifice in the hands of Justice, 'Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,' enabling him to effect the salvation and deliverance of mankind. This was at the 'right hand of God,' the exalted position promised to him as ruler with his Father -- "Even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Revelation 3:21) Again, "Sit thou at my right hand [the place of supreme favor and authority with the Father], until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1) The expression, 'Majesty on

high,' denotes the height of greatness, and such is the throne of God -- the highest position of honor and trust.

**HEBREWS 1:4** "Being made so much better [Greek, 'more powerful'] than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Lucifer had sought this high position, endeavoring to exalt himself "above the stars of God." (Isaiah 14:13) Jesus gained the position by obedience and self-denial. Through this training, he realized how great are the responsibilities, and how much care, patience, and love must be exercised in carrying out the Heavenly Father's plans. The Son of God, before he came to earth, occupied a very high position in the Divine plan, but after his work of redemption he was still more highly exalted, being now the Head of the 'New Creation,' and above all angels. To prove this the apostle quotes several passages from the Old Testament:

**HEBREWS 1:5** "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?"

This is a sweeping statement, showing that while all the angels are sons of God, none had the honor of being directly created, as had the *Logos*. Paul here quoted scriptures to prove that such statements in Psalm 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14 -- familiar to every Jew -- could have reference to only One, and that was the anointed Son of God. -- Psalm 89:20-27

In the phrase, 'This day have I begotten thee,' 'begotten' is the Hebrew word *yala*, meaning 'born' or 'delivered.' Apparently it does not refer to Jesus' original begetting, or creation, but to his deliverance from death to the Divine nature at his resurrection.

**HEBREWS 1:6** "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott reads: "And when again he shall introduce the Firstborn into the habitable."

This was Paul's crowning proof of Jesus' superiority, particularly that portion of the prophecy which refers to Jesus' Second Advent, when the proclamation is made that all, even the angels, shall worship him. All things are to be "subdued" unto him." (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) It was prophesied in Psalm 97:7, "Worship him, all ye gods [mighty ones, referring to angels]."

**HEBREWS 1:7** "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."

The fact that Jesus was exalted above the angels bespeaks eloquently the height of his glory, for as Paul quotes Psalm 104:4, he shows that they occupied a very high position in God's arrangements. To them has been given the great honor and privilege of being God's special messengers, or agents. Thus did they serve Daniel, Moses, Abraham, and the

prophets; and thus are they commissioned to serve us, who are heirs of "salvation." -- vs. 14

**HEBREWS 1:8** "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

This is a quotation from Psalm 45:6 concerning Jesus. How great was the reward of being the trusted and chosen agent to dispense the favors and blessings of God to his creatures! Ultimately this will earn their undying love, loyalty, and gratitude. None is so fit and suitable and able as Jesus for this exalted position. He earned it fairly by self-abnegation, and by perfect trust in and love for his Heavenly Father. -- Revelation 5:9,12,13

The expression 'for ever and ever,' is, according to *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*, "for the ages." This will begin with the Millennial Age, which will be the best of all ages up to that time. But it will lead to still greater ages to come. In one sense, when all things are subdued under the Son, and he hands the kingdom over to the Father, to whom he himself will be subject, the kingdom will have accomplished its work of restoration and deliverance. That age is called the time of "regeneration" (Matthew 19:28), the "dispensation of the fulness of times." (Ephesians 1:10) But in a larger sense, the kingdom of Christ will never end, because that which he establishes will continue throughout eternity. (Dan. 2:44; 7:18; Isaiah 9:6,7) When the Messianic kingdom work is complete, there will be other works and other ages in which Jesus will share the throne of his Father.

The 'sceptre' is Jesus' authority or right to rule. It is a sceptre of righteousness -- that is, a sceptre granted to Jesus because of his righteousness and because the Heavenly Father knew he would exercise it in harmony with righteousness.

**HEBREWS 1:9** "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

This Hebrews 1:9 is a quotation from Psalm 45:7. Jesus did not merely practice righteousness, he loved the right way. He also hated iniquity (*Greek*, lawlessness). God's ways when followed mean self-restraint, self-control, but the true children of God delight to be governed by his laws. In them they find the fullest and most enjoyable expression of all their faculties and powers.

Where God rules in the mind and heart there is liberty. That is what Jesus meant when he said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) -- free from the twisting, morbid, paralyzing influence of disobedience and selfishness. Such freedom gives opportunity for the glorious expansion of every faculty and power of mind and body. Paul speaks of it as "the glorious liberty of the children of God." -- Romans 8:21

'*Therefore.*' It was because Jesus thus loved the law of God and found delight in its every demand upon his being, that he could be trusted with 'all power' and be given full authority over both men and angels; so he was 'anointed' by God with the 'oil of gladness'

above his 'fellows.' Thus was he set apart and prepared in every particular to do a great work, a work that carries much responsibility.

The 'oil of gladness' -- that is the Holy Spirit -- was pictured by the holy anointing oil of the Tabernacle and the Temple, the oil that was used to anoint the prophets, priests and kings. How wonderfully the effect of his anointing was described by the prophet, when he wrote:

"The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: ... and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."  
-- Isaiah 11:2-4

The apostle associates the thought of 'gladness' with the anointing which Jesus received, and in the Greek the thought is of supreme happiness and rejoicing. Such could not help but be the result of having been so highly honored by Jehovah, the Heavenly Father, not because he was exalted above his 'fellows,' but because he was considered worthy to be exalted to such degree.

As noted, Jesus was exalted above every other being in the uniHebrews 1:except his Father -- hence, above the angels. Jesus was also exalted above the fellow members of his mystical body; for he is the Head over the church in all things. But, up to this point in the epistle, the church has not been introduced into the discussion. The main argument thus far seems to be to prove that Jesus has been highly exalted above all other spirit beings.

**HEBREWS 1:10** "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

Here Jesus is referred to as Lord. 'The beginning' here mentioned seems to be a reference to the beginning of God's dealings with man -- that is, when he was created and given a home "eastward in Eden." (Genesis 2:8) Evidently this passage refers not to the literal heavens and earth, but to the rules and regulations for human society as was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden. This arrangement between man and his Creator was one of perfection and peace, of sweet fellowship in beauty of thought, word, and deed. Through these arrangements, doorways of ever deeper delights could open as Adam continued to heed and obey the instructions given to him.

The foundations of human society were also laid there -- that is, of family and fraternal relationships. They were on the basis of justice and love, foundations upon which the human race could have built a social structure as wholesome and sweet as that of heaven; and the people could have delighted in the unfolding wonders with which their Creator had filled the earth.

But Solomon said, "This only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Selfishness and sin crept in; suggestions from the father of lies, the prince of darkness, twisted and distorted every one of those gracious arrangements which the LORD had instituted, until all that is now left is a pitiful mockery of what might have been.

**HEBREWS 1:11,12** "They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The literal earth "abideth forever." (Ecclesiastes 1:4) God "created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) The symbolic heavens and earth which came into being at the time of man's creation perished in a certain sense at the time of the Flood, and subsequent to the Flood have been controlled largely by Satan, the prince of this "present evil world." -- Galatians 1:4

But with the establishment of the "new heaven and a new earth," (Revelation 21:1, *WED*; 2 Peter 3:7) these present heavens and earth will be completely destroyed. They shall perish because they are unfit for the glorious things of the future; being full of unspeakable iniquity, they have no place in the pure and holy arrangements of the coming kingdom of Christ. Paul describes the corruption of human society -- "the foundation of the earth" -- in Hebrews 1:10. The illustration of a worn garment suggests that originally, when first created, these symbolic heavens and earth were useful, but now are only fit to be discarded and destroyed.

'But thou remainest.' The *Logos* -- now the exalted Son of God -- has been continuously and consistently righteous throughout the ages, so there is no need that he be set aside as Jehovah's honored servant. Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega" (Revelation 1:8, 3:14) the direct creation of God, which indicates he is the first and the last. Regardless of how many other changes may be made in the Divine arrangements, Jesus will ever remain the one closest to his Heavenly Father in trust, in honor, and in authority.

Hebrews 1:10-12 are a quotation of Psalm 102:24-28. This psalm is suggested as being a prayer by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The answer by God to that prayer is recorded in Psalm 102:24 (middle of verse) to 28. Jesus was assured by the Father that the present evil order that was clamoring for his life would perish and be discarded as waste material, but he would receive immortality.

**HEBREWS 1:13,14** "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Here the reference is unmistakably to angelic beings -- those mysterious and powerful beings of a superior order to man, long known to the Hebrews as direct agents of God. To none of these had God ever extended the astounding invitation to sit at his right hand, but it had been addressed prophetically to his Son. (Psalm 110:1) Thus the Son's superiority

to all other servants of God becomes obvious, and the Apostle Paul proves that Jesus indeed is the greatest being of all next to the Father, and was prophesied to be such.

However, the angels have a high and honorable service to perform. They are 'ministering spirits,' rendering special service to the 'heirs of salvation,' "those being about to inherit salvation." (*WED*) Again we see a reference to the 'fellows' of Hebrews 1:9 -- those who are to share the inheritance and exalted office of the Son, and who are so important in the Divine plan that the holy angels are sent forth to serve them.

There will always be ministering angels -- or persons in attendance -- to aid and serve wherever the Almighty directs, but their chief mission now is to help in the present great work of developing the church. Glorious, wonderful, and beautiful spirit beings are these, who during the kingdom will earn the loving attachment, respect, and admiration of the entire race of mankind. Thus all God's created beings will be knit together in mutual love and service.

In this arrangement, Jesus will be the greatest of all!



## The "Great Salvation"

IN THIS CHAPTER the apostle reminds us of how surpassingly great is the offer of salvation which the LORD has made to the church, and of how important it is that we listen very earnestly, and obey every condition attached to this offer; that we should hold fast to these truths, for our very life depends upon thus giving heed. Paul also reveals that the redemption of the fallen race involved the exaltation of God's only begotten Son, and that first he should partake of the human nature, becoming acquainted with the troubles and sickness of fallen man. By his own death he provided the ransom, and in the course of these experiences, was trained for the highest possible position in the universe -- at the right hand of the throne of God. The chapter closes by revealing our Lord's sympathetic understanding of our frailties, which should cause us to lift up our hearts in thanksgiving that we are accounted worthy to be associated with him in his work, both now and in the future.

### CHAPTER 2

**Hebrews 2:1** "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

This refers us to the preceding chapter in which evidence is presented that Christ is now highly exalted above all angels, therefore speaks with the highest authority and from the standpoint of complete experience -- that when he speaks it is not a light matter which we can afford to ignore or forget. We are given a similar thought in Proverbs 4:13, which reads: "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."

Our interest ought to be increased and intensified as we appreciate more fully the dignity and high authority of Christ, the One who has spoken to us in these last days. For the children of God, 'taking heed' should be considered a 'must.'

Time and events are passing. We cannot stand still. If we are to go forward we must give particular attention to the messages of our Lord lest, while our attention is on other things, his life-giving instructions be allowed to 'slip away' from us and we would thus be without their helpful and guiding influence. Despite the pulling of our natural inclinations and of other influences, we must hold our minds with firmness and determination toward the Word of God, the truth.

It is necessary that we continue to read and study the things which we know to be the truth, as well as keep them fresh and straight in our minds, for we are 'leaky vessels.' The whole thought of this verse is that our spiritual life depends upon our heeding the

Master's word, and we cannot afford to treat it lightly or ignore it. Taking heed is vital to our very existence!

**Hebrews 2:2** "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."

These 'angels' seem to be those used by God in connection with the Law Covenant which, Paul explains, was "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." (Galatians 3:19) The Law Covenant was strictly enforced -- the word 'spoken by angels was steadfast,' that is, basic or binding.

The Greek word translated 'transgression' means 'to walk along side of' rather than 'in the path marked out,' thus suggesting a possible show of righteousness while actually overstepping the Law's requirements.

The word 'disobedience' is from the Greek word *parakoe*. It is used three times in the New Testament. It means 'a mishearing.' In *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* the interlinear word-for-word translation renders it as 'imperfect hearing.' Those who disobeyed the Law Covenant received a 'just' punishment -- justice was the basis of this covenant.

**Hebrews 2:3** "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."

This 'great salvation' is the most wonderful offer ever made to any being -- angel or man. How can we 'escape,' that is, how can we keep from suffering loss if we 'neglect' to give heed to the terms and conditions upon which we may hope to attain such a glorious reward? It is a priceless jewel, and how tragic that anyone should let it slip away from him simply through neglect!

Let us endeavor to maintain our love for the truth, the revealed will of God, by going over its various features continuously. To fail in this is to neglect that which the Lord has provided as a means whereby we may attain the great salvation. In this verse it is clearly indicated that "the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), the "heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1), had not previously been offered to God's people. (See: Hebrews 10:19,20; John 3:13,25-31; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Matthew 11:11; Acts 2:29-36; John 14:2) God's dealings with the natural seed of Abraham were designed to prepare them for his special call. But when Jesus came to them ('his own'), very few received him (John 1:11), so the call went to the Gentiles.

This special invitation, or 'High Calling,' was so important that the Heavenly Father selected his beloved Son as the one to introduce it, the one who was to be the 'captain' of those who would strive to attain 'so great salvation.'

First among those to hear the Gospel call were the apostles and disciples of Jesus. These were eyewitnesses of his miracles, and heard personally his gracious words of instruction pertaining to the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 13:11) John writes of

this, saying: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, ... declare we unto you." (1 John 1:1-3) The Apostle Peter confirms this, saying: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, ... but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." -- 2 Peter 1:16

**Hebrews 2:4** "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will."

In support of the human mouthpieces who, in the beginning of the age, bore witness of Jesus, and of the 'great salvation' which began to be spoken by him, was God himself, the Heavenly Father. His testimony was given by the display of his power as manifested in the many miracles performed by Jesus, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit which came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost. As one miracle followed another, it became a progressive assembly of evidence increasing in weight and importance. What a wonderful introduction this was to our High Calling! What a vast assembly of Divine agencies was used to bring this glorious opportunity to our attention!

**Hebrews 2:5** "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."

This text has been used as an indirect proof that the world before the Flood was under the administration of angels. That world was indeed governed by angels, as other scriptures show. (Genesis 6:4; 1 Peter 3:19,20; 2 Peter 2:4,5; Jude 6) However, the apostle's use of the word 'for' suggests that he is referring back to verse 2, where the administration of the Law Covenant is mentioned, in which the angels had an important part.

Whether we think of the attempt of the angels to govern the antediluvian world, or of their service in connection with the administration of the Law Covenant, the lesson the apostle is emphasizing here is equally apparent; for there was a failure in both cases. Now we are assured that no such failure will occur in connection with the governmental arrangements of the world to come. Christ will then be the King, and associated with him will be those who, as his joint-heirs, have attained the 'great salvation' so that they "live" and "reign" with him. -- 2 Timothy 2:11,12

**Hebrews 2:6** "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?"

David is the 'one' who testified, and the 'certain place' is Psalm 8:3-8. This question is the inevitable result of meditation upon the immensity of creation in comparison to the puny efforts and the nothingness of man. The vast forces and distances of the universe should humble us. The Creator, who made this vast system of worlds, has provided a balance of forces that enables man to live and be happy, providing him with abundance. Surely our gratitude should lead us to exercise supreme confidence and trust in such a Creator, and to consider it a great privilege to be deemed worthy to serve him.

The Greek word translated 'visitest' in this text means 'to inspect and select;' and, by extension, 'to go to see in order to relieve.' Paul's use of the text in this connection would indicate that the chief 'visit' referred to prophetically by the psalmist is the coming of God's beloved Son to the earth -- first, to redeem the fallen race -- and then, to restore those who accept this provision of Divine grace. Thus God visits the human race representatively in the person of his Son.

Many are remembered and visited by God in other ways also, such as in the sunshine and rain; and by means of all the bountiful blessings which are daily showered upon us. (Psalm 116:12) We might think of God's visits as being like those of a physician visiting the sick, and the purpose of this is that many may ultimately be cured of all ills and afflictions. It is this that will be accomplished by Jesus.

**Hebrews 2:7** "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands."

The thought here is, a little 'less' than the angels, not 'a little while inferior,' as some have suggested in their effort to prove that God's design for man is that he shall ultimately be exalted to the spirit nature. If we are to understand God's plan it is essential to keep this distinction of natures in mind. Man is a human being, an earthly creature, created by God to inhabit the earth. Angels are on a higher plane of life, and were created so. It is not God's plan for men to become angels.

The glory refers to Adam, the progenitor of the human race as originally created by God. His glory was that of perfect manhood, in the image of God. The Apostle Paul refers to it as a 'terrestrial' glory. (1 Corinthians 15:40) Man was also created to be a king -- the king of earth. He was given dominion over the lower animals. Thus he was given honor as well as glory. This was the "first dominion" referred to in Micah 4:8, and "the kingdom prepared ... from the foundation of the world," mentioned by Jesus. -- Matthew 25:34

**Hebrews 2:8** "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

Alas, man lost his dominion, glory and honor. Now we behold him in misery and distress as a result of his own willfulness and disobedience. Despite man's pride and boastfulness, he is not able to deliver himself from the result of his sin; and now the human race is threatened with complete destruction.

**Hebrews 2:9** "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Here the apostle clearly indicates the Divine purpose to restore man's original dominion of earth. We do not see this accomplished, but we see the outworking of this Divine purpose in the coming of Jesus to redeem the fallen race -- 'we see Jesus.' We see that

Jesus was made the exact counterpart of father Adam, that he, like Adam, was made 'a little lower than the angels,' and that this was in order that he might suffer death, thus providing a corresponding price by laying down his perfect human life for the perfect man Adam, who forfeited his life. It was for this purpose that Jesus poured out his soul unto death. -- Isaiah 53:6,12

**Hebrews 2:10** "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

It '*became him*'; that is, it was what we should expect of an all-wise Creator, that in his plan to exalt 'many sons' -- that is, the entire church -- to glory, that he should make the Captain, their Leader, the first one to attain this high position, 'perfect through sufferings.' Suffering and death is the path to glory for all these sons, and Jesus was no exception.

This does not imply that Jesus was imperfect by nature before he suffered and died. Rather, he was developed, trained, and perfected as our Captain by means of suffering. A young man, for example, may be a noble person, yet he could not be a physician until he was trained for that purpose. So Jesus was trained by suffering, and thus was perfected for the high offices he now occupies in the Divine arrangements. One of these is in being the Captain of our salvation.

In a very similar way all Jesus' body members, his followers, those whom he leads to glory by inviting them to walk in his footsteps, are perfected for their position of glory with him by means of suffering and trials -- trials which are seasoned with joy so that their experiences as a whole teach them to trust and love their Heavenly Father. How blessed to share these experiences with Jesus, of whom it was prophetically written, "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" -- Psalm 56:8

**HEBREWS 2:11-13** "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."

These are the proof texts which the apostle quotes to establish the great truth of the oneness of the Christ company. Jesus' disciples are his 'brethren,' and so stated in David's prophetic reference (Psalm 22:22) to this congregation of the sanctified, that is, those who are set apart in the Divine plan as partakers of the heavenly calling.

'And again,' writes Paul. He then proceeds to quote another proof text, as though conscious of the scriptural rule that important matters should be established by the mouth of more than one witness. His second quotation is from Isaiah 8:18, and refers to the 'children' whom the Heavenly Father gave to be the associates of Jesus; thus they were his brethren. Possibly Jesus had this text in mind when, in his prayer, he said: "Thine they

were, and thou gavest them me." (John 17:6) What a loving exchange between the Father and the Son -- a reward and rejoicing for both.

**Hebrews 2:14** "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil."

These 'children,' those whom Jesus was not ashamed to call his 'brethren,' were all originally Adam's children, therefore by nature 'flesh and blood.' In order for them to be partakers of the 'great salvation' as the brethren of the glorified Jesus, it was necessary that they be redeemed from death.

Therefore, Paul here explains the philosophy of the ransom, which involved the necessity for Jesus becoming a man, and as such, dying the "just for the unjust." (1 Peter 3:18) Involved, also, in this is Jesus' authority ultimately to destroy the Devil.

How does Satan have the 'power of death'? The Greek word here rendered 'power' has the thought of the authority of office, and is often translated 'dominion' or 'authority.' The dominion which Satan has seized and misused has become one of death -- the reign of sin and death. Paul describes him as the "god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4) Satan has his dominion taken away, and he himself is bound at the beginning of the millennium; and at its close he is destroyed. -- Revelation 20:1-3,10

**Hebrews 2:15** "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The whole human race are subject to the bondage of death, but not all are held in bondage by the 'fear' of death. Who, then, are these who are so afraid of death that they are held in bondage because of it? This seemingly refers to a class of consecrated ones who fear the suffering and sacrifice involved in their consecration and who, because of this fear, are held back from their privileges and opportunities of suffering with Christ so that they fail to qualify as members of the 'little flock' who partake of the 'great salvation.' Later, these are delivered and their robes made white in the blood of the Lamb. They are described by the Revelator as a "great multitude," which comes up through great tribulation. They will not reign with Christ, but will be servants in the antitypical, spiritual temple. -- Revelation 7:9,13-16

**Hebrews 2:16** "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

The Greek word here rendered 'verily' is used only this once in the New Testament. It is the equivalent of saying, "As we all know." *James Moffatt's Bible Translation* says: "of course." It was so well known in the Early Church that Jesus, in becoming the seed of Abraham, had to first partake of flesh and blood, and not the nature of angels, that John made this a test of whether or not one's faith was of God: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." -- 1 John 4:3

**Hebrews 2:17** "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

What depth of wisdom is in God's plan, that Jesus should share the woes and difficulties which beset men so that he might be a merciful High Priest! He is merciful because he realizes the difficulties, the weaknesses which beset his followers, and humanity in general. He was made like unto his brethren 'in all things.' This does not mean that Jesus was imperfect, or that sin was ingrained in his nature. His 'brethren' are 'New Creatures,' and Jesus was tempted in all points as these are tempted.

As a result of observation and association, however, Jesus became familiar with the trials which beset the human race in general, and particularly those who become New Creatures, yet still have to battle against the motions of sin in their flesh. This adds to his sympathy for us, gives him mercy and understanding in dealing with us as our Advocate at the throne of grace. By the same token, as the Head of the priestly class which will deal with the world of mankind during the millennium, he will also be sympathetic, and will be glad to do everything possible to help the repentant ones of the human race back to perfection and to full at-one-ment with the Heavenly Father, the Creator.

**Hebrews 2:18** "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Jesus suffered much agony of mind and body rather than yield to evil. Thus he was 'tempted' or tried, so knows how to bring to our aid the things which helped him in his times of need. These things are suggested to us through the Word, and therein we are instructed in the proper use of all the means of Divine grace made available through our merciful and loving High Priest. When we go to the Father in prayer we can be assured that the merit of his sacrifice has been applied on our behalf and we are also assured that our puny and imperfect efforts are acceptable. He is able to render aid by the power of sympathy, knowledge, and experience. For this he was fully trained.

# The Heavenly Calling

## CHAPTER 3

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

In the preceding chapter Paul emphasizes that the true disciples of Jesus are also his "brethren" (Hebrews 2:11,12), and that the Master is not ashamed to consider them such. In this chapter he reveals that these brethren are 'holy' in the LORD's sight, and that they are partakers of 'the heavenly calling.' (vs. 1) There is a wonderful depth of Christian love and understanding manifested in this statement. These Hebrew Christians were far from being in a spiritually-healthy condition, as we shall see later in the 5th chapter; but, nevertheless, Paul still looked upon them as being 'holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.'

The reference to Jesus as the 'Apostle' reminds us that he was the One whom the Heavenly Father sent into the world to be the Redeemer and Savior; the word means 'one who is sent.' Jesus chose twelve apostles -- Paul later taking the place of Judas -- and these were the ones whom he specially sent to be his inspired representatives -- "the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Others are referred to in the New Testament as 'apostles' because they were sent to preach the Gospel, but these should not be confused with the inspired Twelve, the ones who are symbolically referred to in Revelation as the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. -- Revelation 21:14

We are to 'consider' Jesus, that is, to ponder over his glorious qualities, for he was the One specially set apart and 'sent' by Jehovah to be the "messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1), the One who was to reveal the love and saving power of God both to the church and to the world. To the Hebrew brethren, and to the whole church, he is the High Priest of our profession. This is an important thought to keep in mind in order properly to understand the Book of Hebrews; the church, the 'brethren' of Christ, are members of a priestly order, not merely those who receive blessings through a priesthood.

The word 'profession' in this text is from a Greek word meaning 'common speech,' or profession. As underpriests, the consecrated followers of Christ during the present Gospel Age have a common share with Jesus in the work of the priesthood, being ministers "of reconciliation" with him, through the use of the "word of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) As his ambassadors, these Christians speak only the things which he gives them to say.



**Hebrews 3:2** "Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house."

Faithfulness is one of the very important qualifications of a messenger, or representative, for otherwise he could not be trusted. The Heavenly Father could rely upon Jesus to be faithful to the trust committed to him. The expression 'appointed him,' should read, "made him." This could refer to his being made the High Priest, or possibly it refers to his original creation. In either case, Jehovah knew that he could trust his beloved Son.

Moses was a type of Christ, and Moses was faithful over his house. In telling us of Moses' faithfulness, Paul quotes from Numbers 12:7, where the LORD said of his ancient servant, "Who is faithful in all mine house." This was high commendation. There could be no higher.

**Hebrews 3:3,4** "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God."

"Of whom [God] are all things, ... and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things," writes the apostle. (1 Corinthians 8:6) This principle has operated ever since the *Logos* was created. Thus, while Jehovah spoke of the house over which Moses was the chief servant as 'mine' (Hebrews 3:4,5), we may reasonably conclude that the *Logos* had much to do in organizing the natural descendants of Abraham into that house of servants.

The same is true of the house of sons which has been 'made' during the Gospel Age. Jesus is the Head over this house, but he is more than that; for, under the direction of his Heavenly Father, he has been supervising its building. Thus it is very true that Jesus has been more highly honored in the Divine plan than Moses. The 'glory' associated with Moses' ministry was reflected in his countenance when he came down from Sinai bearing the Ten Commandments. This was typical of the still greater glory of the antitypical Moses when, as a result of the inauguration of the New Covenant, the glory of God will be caused to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea.

**Hebrews 3:5** "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after."

The Greek word here translated 'servant' does not denote a slave, but merely one who is subservient to another in the sense of having a lower office. Moses was a highly honored servant, and was faithful in all his house 'for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.' The thought clearly is that the house of servants under Moses, and all which pertained to it, was designed by God to be a testimony, or a setting forth by types, of things which would take place later on a higher and grander scale -- "a shadow of good things to come." (Hebrews 10:1) This includes the Tabernacle and its services, which the apostle explains later in the Book of Hebrews, and accounts for the exactness with which Moses was required to carry out the details of construction given to him: "See, saith he,

that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." -- Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5

**Hebrews 3:6** "But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Here the more honored position of Jesus as Head over the house of sons is again alluded to, in that the house is said also to belong to him -- he is more than its Head -- and we are his brethren in this house, or family. True, we are servants, but we serve as sons, and as sons many of the secrets of the Divine plan are revealed. See John 15:15

'Whose house are we.' Paul and his Hebrew readers, and eventually the whole church, are included in the pronoun 'we.' But we can be a part of the house of sons only on condition that we 'hold fast' our 'confidence' 'firm unto the end.' Evidently the Hebrew brethren, to whom this epistle was written, were having difficulties along this line, for the admonition to steadfastness and to holding fast recurs time and again. Letting these things slip through lack of confidence and rejoicing might well be the besetting sin mentioned later in Chapter 12, verse 1. This is a sin which easily besets all of the LORD's people. We can well take to heart the warning that only if we actually 'hold fast' can we hope to continue as members of the house of sons.

By including the 'we' class in the house of sons, the apostle brings in the great mystery that the church shares with Jesus in the anointing and in the service assigned to this 'house.' What an inestimable privilege! It is a fellowship of service, life, and training. Through this fellowship there comes into the heart of each member of the church a deep peace and joy which the world is utterly unable to understand. Satan tries to make us loosen our grip on these things, going about as a "roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8), endeavoring to terrorize the 'brethren' who are partakers of the 'heavenly calling.' But we are not ignorant of his devices, and are confident that he will not be able to pluck us out of our Heavenly Father's care. -- John 10:29

In the Greek text, the thought is that we exult in our hope; we rejoice in our hope; that is, we anticipate its realization with pleasure. Let us not permit this hope to become dim by giving too much attention to the world, or to anything which will alienate our affections from the LORD and from his service. There can be no halfheartedness on the part of those who hope to make their calling and election sure to a place in the glorified house of sons.

**Hebrews 3:7-9** "Wherefore (as the Holy [Spirit] saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

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

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

'Wherefore' -- the opportunity of attaining so high an honor and the danger of losing it, emphasizes the importance of holding fast our exultant confidence and hope. How shall

we hold fast? By not permitting our minds to question the goodness and faithfulness of our Heavenly Father, and by keeping close to him in prayer and through the study of his Word. If we allow ourselves to be influenced by the enticements of the world, there will develop a dullness of our spiritual minds with a consequent lack of faith, leading finally to unbelief -- an unbelief which will fail to consider properly all the bountiful proofs of God's faithfulness and love.

It is in Psalm 95:7-11 that the Holy Spirit, through David, testifies concerning the importance of not hardening our hearts as did the Israelites in the wilderness. Thus does our loving Heavenly Father help us to keep our feet in the right path. The expression, 'today,' is prophetic of the present Gospel Age, when the privileges of the heavenly calling are open. It is not the only day of salvation, being properly called "a day" of salvation in Isaiah 49:8. For each individual there is only a short time during the present life span in which to prove faithful, but this is sufficient if we "give diligence" to make our "calling and election sure." -- 2 Peter 1:10

Sometime 'today' will come to a close and many will say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jeremiah 8:20) The *American Revised Version* reads, "O, that ye might this day hearken to his voice." God does not coerce any of us, but do we appreciate the heavenly calling enough to hearken to and obey his voice? If we keep our exultant confidence and hope 'firm unto the end' we will delight to walk faithfully in the LORD's way even though now it is the way of sacrifice and death.

How do we 'harden' our hearts? By failure to appreciate God's goodness as manifested in his providential leading and care, and by resisting his will as revealed to us through his Word. Every making of an excuse for our lack of obedience renders our spiritual perception more dull, and we become correspondingly less responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the Jews, because of their continued hardness of heart, no matter how many times the LORD reproved them, or how richly he blessed them, by their continued waywardness and disobedience they provoked the LORD; so their wilderness experience was to him a day of "provocation." -- Hebrews 3:8

For the Israelites it was a "day of temptation." (Psalm 95:8) There were ten special trials which the LORD permitted to come upon them. These are referred to in Exodus 5:21; 14:11; 15:24; 16:2; 17:2,3; 32:1; Numbers 11:1,4 (twice); 12:1; and 14:2. Each of these circumstances constituted a test of faith for the Israelites -- tests in which they failed. But as the LORD, on each occasion, delivered them from the situation which caused them to complain, they should have learned to put their trust more fully in him, but they did not.

**Hebrews 3:10,11** "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

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

The disobedience of the Israelites in the wilderness was of the heart. They could have been excused at first because of their lack of faith, but as time after time the LORD demonstrated his love for them and his power to deliver them, they should have learned to put their trust in him. But they did not, for the reason that they did not want to. They had a disposition of rebellion against their God. 'They do always err in their heart.'

Because of this, and not because of inherited weakness, the LORD was 'grieved,' and in his 'wrath' he 'swore,' or definitely determined that all the males of the nation who were numbered and were of responsible age would not be permitted to enter into the Promised Land, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua. Nor could they enter into God's rest to enjoy peace of mind and soul, based on full confidence in Jehovah's care for them.

**Hebrews 3:12** "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

We should examine our own hearts carefully; but it is often difficult to see our own defects, so we need Divine help in scrutinizing ourselves. How appropriate is the prayer of the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." -- Psalm 139:23,24

Those who have unbelieving hearts not only rob themselves of the peace and joy they might otherwise have, but they send out an evil, hurtful influence to those around them. How important that we take heed to our hearts. To do this we will need to give close attention to the instructions of the LORD, and not permit ourselves to be subject to outside influences, nor listen to other voices than that of the LORD.

**Hebrews 3:13** "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

The Greek word here translated 'exhort' is similar to the one which is translated 'Comforter' when this name is given to the Holy Spirit. It means to strengthen together, and thus to comfort one another. This is one of the blessed privileges of each member of the New Creation. May we all be faithful in our endeavors to strengthen and encourage our brethren.

We are to continue exhorting the brethren to faithfulness while it is called 'today'; that is, throughout the Gospel Age, the period in the Divine plan when the 'heavenly calling' is operative. It is especially urgent that we continue faithfully to exhort one another, for soon the door to the heavenly calling will be closed, and the Gospel Age ended.

There is always a danger that our hearts become hardened by 'the deceitfulness of sin.' The ways of error and sin are almost always made to appear very bright and worthwhile. Satan, therefore, will deceive and delude, as many as are not taking heed. Everything which is out of harmony with God and with righteousness is a delusion. If we permit our

hearts to be drawn away by such influences, and hardened toward the LORD and toward his people, we will ultimately experience the loss of everything, including life itself.

**Hebrews 3:14** "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

This text clearly disproves the theory of "Once in grace, always in grace." It states definitely that the only ones who actually partake of Christ are those who hold the beginning of their confidence "firm unto the end." (Hebrews 3:6) Jesus said, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13) In Revelation 2:10 we read, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The 'beginning' of our confidence is a reference to that fresh vitality, the eager interest, and that all-absorbing determination which was ours when we were first convinced of the truth of the Gospel and of the heavenly calling, and decided that we would give our all to the LORD in full consecration to do his will.

Paul seemed apprehensive lest the Hebrew brethren might already have lost a measure of their first-love zeal and confidence. Later in Chapter 10 he writes to them saying, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." (Hebrews 10:32) In Chapter 6:11, complimenting them on their love and zeal, he added, "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."

**Hebrews 3:15-19** "While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

"For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

"But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

"And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

"So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

In these verses the apostle seems to be emphasizing the vital importance of the admonition he has already given not to permit our hearts to become hardened by unbelief, and through unbelief, to cast away our confidence. He stresses this point by reminding us that this was the unhappy lot of all who came out of Egypt with Moses.

Verse 16 is treated by most modern scholars as being in question form like verses 17 and 18. (*See Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott.*) As a question, the text could read, "Who, when they had heard, provoked? Was it not all who came out of Egypt by Moses?" Caleb and Joshua were the only exceptions among those of responsible age who were numbered at

the time of the Exodus, and these two in six hundred thousand are ignored in this exhortation to watchfulness and faithfulness.

Unbelief is a serious thing in the sight of God, for it places a barrier between him and those upon whom he would graciously bestow his blessings. Abraham became the friend of God upon the basis of his faith, or belief. This thought of friendship in relation to faith helps us to appreciate more fully just why faith is so important to God. Even in our relationships with one another there could be no friendship except upon the basis of faith, or confidence. There can be no friendship among nations except as they have faith or confidence in one another. So it is in our relationship to God. If we wish to enjoy the blessings which he is so willing to bestow abundantly upon his friends, we must have confidence in him.

The unbelief of the Israelites was their great sin in the 'day of provocation.' In that day when they provoked the LORD they did not have confidence in him, and because of their unbelief, rebelled against his providence. Their sin was the greater because it continued after they had been given many demonstrations of God's good will toward them, and of his ability to care for them, for then it became willful. They hardened their hearts, with the result that they lost everything so far as God's blessings at that time were concerned. The 'rest of faith,' which God had provided was lost. They did not enter the Promised Land. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

# Entering into Rest

## CHAPTER 4

**Hebrews 4:1** "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

The closing verses of Chapter 3 present the example of Israel's failure to enter into the rest which could have been enjoyed at that time, and reminds us that the failure to do so was due to unbelief. It is this example that the apostle builds on when he writes, 'Let us therefore fear.' The fear referred to is not that of terror, or dread. The apostle writes that God has not given us the spirit of fear. -- 2 Timothy 1:7

The 'fear' we should have, lest we come short of any promise which the LORD has given to us of entering into his rest, is that of watchfulness, or alertness, to make sure that in no way we are unfaithful to the LORD's requirements. When the apostle speaks of coming short of 'a promise,' the thought is, failure to meet its conditions, for all his promises to those who are partakers of the heavenly calling are conditional upon faithfulness in doing God's will.

Lack of faith, or unbelief, is one of the greatest contributing factors of failure. As Christians, we should be alert to avoid this pitfall. Likewise, failure to be watchful results in the weakening of faith. The blinding, paralyzing influence of unbelief caused the Israelites to fail. Noting this, we should endeavor to maintain a lively appreciation of the dangers involved in our own case, the danger of becoming overcharged with the cares of this life, or of permitting some earthborn cloud to dim our spiritual vision so that we fail to 'enter in.'

The promise of a heavenly inheritance is so precious that nothing should prevent us from attaining it! We should prepare for it by feeding on the heavenly manna provided by the LORD, and by drinking an abundance of the water of truth from the 'smitten rock,' Christ Jesus. This promise is for all the consecrated. However, only those will attain who are strong in faith, like Caleb and Joshua, and who preserve their confidence through fellowship and prayer.

**Hebrews 4:2** "For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

The word Gospel means 'good news.' We are accustomed to thinking of it as applying primarily to the "Gospel of Christ: ... the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16) Paul tells us that "God ... preached before the Gospel unto Abraham." (Galatians 3:8) In

this case it was the good news that through the patriarch's seed all the families of the earth would be blessed.

In this second verse of the chapter, Paul uses the word 'Gospel' to describe the good news that the Israelites would enter into their inheritance in the Promised Land. To them this meant rest from the hardships of the wilderness -- the desert heat, living in tents, and other difficulties. Instead they entered into a land of beautiful hills and valleys, where there were abundant springs of living water, cool and refreshing, and an ample amount of food. This was the highest rest the Israelites, with their natural minds, could imagine. See Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 11:10-12.

This good news to Israel was, as the apostle indicates, a type of the Gospel which has been preached to us -- spiritual Israel. Our ultimate rest will be enjoyed in a heavenly Canaan. The typical Israelites were not profited by the message preached to them, but this should not be so with us. We should be doers of the Word as well as hearers.

**Hebrews 4:3,4** "For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."

There is a rest which the people of God who are strong in faith may enjoy even before they enter into the rest 'that remaineth.' In this case the rest is in proportion to our measure of faith.

What is this rest? The apostle explains that it is like the rest which God entered into when the original work of Creation was finished. We are not to suppose that God was then physically tired and that he ceased all activity until he became rested. On this point the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" -- Isaiah 40:28

God pronounced his creative work 'very good,' but he knew that man had to be tested, and that in this test he would fail and come under the sentence of death. God permitted this in order that the human race might experience evil and learn the terrible results of disobedience to his laws. The benefit of this experience, however, could only be gained by restoring man to life, and this could not be done unless a Redeemer was provided to give his life in place of the forfeited life of Adam. This entire work of dealing with and blessing the fallen race through redemption and restoration was placed in the hands of the Logos, who became Christ.

**Hebrews 4:5-8** "And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if



Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day."

In these verses it is clearly shown that in the Divine plan a fixed number had been determined who would prove their fidelity to God by their complete faith and confidence in him -- a faith so strong that they would be able to devote their all to him and rest completely in the belief that he would cause all things to work together for their good.

The Israelites who came out of Egypt failed in this test. David refers to this in Psalm 95:7,8. Paul quotes this scripture and indicates that when the psalmist used the expression 'To day' he was speaking prophetically of the present Gospel Age. But now our faith is being tested, and it behooves us to be on the alert, to 'fear' lest our hearts become hardened, and the opportunity of the heavenly calling be taken from us and given to others. The opportunities of this present Gospel Age are limited, says the apostle. We know that it will soon be over, so let us be diligent, for the "time is short." -- 1 Corinthians 7:29

Speaking from the standpoint of the typical Sabbath, and prophetically of the 'rest of faith' enjoyed by spiritual Israel, the Prophet Isaiah writes of how we may delight ourselves in the LORD, and that he will feed us "with the heritage of Jacob." (Isaiah 58:13,14) Jacob gave up all his earthly possessions, but gained instead sweet communion with the LORD, and a reaffirmation of the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac.

During the present Gospel Age we experience a foretaste of the rest that 'remaineth,' that perfect rest beyond the veil. We should learn to cast all our care upon the LORD, knowing that he doeth all things well. (1 Peter 5:7) Thus the burden is lifted from our own hearts and we are free to think and to enjoy sweet fellowship with our Heavenly Father and with our Lord Jesus -- by faith to eat of the luscious 'fruit' of the 'land of promise,' and to drink the new wine of the kingdom. What a wonderful peace and rest results from such a full confidence in, and fellowship with, the LORD.

**Hebrews 4:9-11** "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

'There remaineth ... a rest' (verse 9) and 'let us labour ... to enter into that rest' (verse 11) - - these two statements obviously refer to our heavenly rest, beyond the veil. And in the tenth verse, somewhat as a parenthesis, Paul speaks of our present rest of faith which, having entered, we have even now ceased from our own works as God did from his. Entering into the rest that 'remaineth' is dependent upon our having entered into the present rest of faith.

**Hebrews 4:12** "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

God spoke to typical Israel through Moses, Joshua, and others. Their faith was tested by the measure of their obedience to the Word of the LORD imparted to them. He speaks to us through his entire Word, and our faith is likewise tested upon the basis of our zeal in doing these things.

The Word of God is a most penetrating searchlight, as it were. It searches out even the motives behind our thoughts, as illustrated by the dividing asunder of 'soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.' Nothing can be hidden from such a searching influence. Let us endeavor to keep our hearts pure, that thus our spiritual vision may be clear and our faith strong.

**Hebrews 4:13** "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

God's Word penetrates our innermost consciences and reveals what we are to ourselves, enabling us to compare it with what we should be. Meanwhile the LORD is also looking into our hearts and appraising the progress we are making in bringing our every thought into captivity to his will.

**Hebrews 4:14,15** "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

When we realize that the thoughts and intents of our hearts are not right before God, we can be assured that a loving provision has been made to extend mercy to us through our great High Priest. Because we do have such a High Priest, one who is able, because of his own experiences, to deal with us sympathetically, we can with confidence, continue to 'hold fast our profession.' We have professed to accept Christ as our Redeemer and Savior, and to have covenanted to walk in his steps of self-sacrifice. We have professed to believe the promises of God relating to the 'heavenly calling.' We have undertaken to conform ourselves to all the conditions attached to those promises. But when we think of self with all its weaknesses we would lose courage and begin to 'let these things slip,' were it not for the knowledge that we have a sympathetic High Priest who understands when we fail. Because of this, we can with confidence 'hold fast our profession' in the firm belief that we will ultimately attain our goal which is Christ.

Our High Priest was tempted in all points like as we are, says the apostle; that is, he was tempted as a New Creature in the way we as New Creatures are tempted. He is our great burden bearer. He understands how great are our struggles, and what an effort it is to keep God's will continually uppermost in our hearts and minds. He understands why we fail so often, and lack so much in those qualities of righteousness with which the LORD is pleased to see us adorned. His merit is ready for our asking, and it makes up for our defects as long as the intentions of our hearts are right.

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

God wants us to enter into his presence with confidence, not timidly as though we were fearful he would not recognize the merit of our High Priest, in whose name we approach the throne of grace. Our present rest of faith depends upon our exercising full confidence in this loving provision, and God wants us to enjoy full rest, peace, and joy.

'The throne of grace' -- what a beautiful and meaningful description of the Divine provision of mercy for those members of the sinful and dying race whom he has taken into his family as sons! It is illustrated by the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy of the typical Tabernacle, on which the blood of the Atonement Day sacrifices was sprinkled. The Mercy Seat represents Divine justice, while the two cherubim arising out of it and looking down upon it with outstretched wings, illustrate Divine love and power ready to bear the message of justice satisfied to the world. -- 1 Kings 8:7

It is the merit of Christ that satisfies justice and provides the antitypical Mercy Seat -- the throne of grace -- for all those whom Jesus is not ashamed to call his brethren. (Hebrews 2:11) Through the Word, Divine love and power have brought the assurance of mercy into our hearts, so we can come boldly into the presence of God, and feel at home as we stand before his throne of grace. Surely this should cause us to exult with joy and gladness as thus we realize the heights and depths of our Father's love. We will gain strength to hold fast.' The LORD will lovingly hold our hand as he leads us in the way of righteousness.

## **The Called of God**

### **CHAPTER 5**

**Hebrews 5:1** "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin."

Obedience, Divine appointment of those who serve God, and a studious application to the study and practice of the truths of the Divine plan are among the important lessons emphasized in this chapter. The high priests mentioned in this first verse are those of the Aaronic order. They were taken from among men in a very complete sense. The tribe of Levi, from which the priestly family, beginning with Aaron, was chosen, was one of the tribes of Israel. They were human beings in every particular, but they were chosen by the LORD and ordained by him to serve the nation in all matters pertaining to their relationship with God.

These priests, the apostle tells us, offered 'both gifts and sacrifices.' The gifts were the various thank offerings and peace offerings brought to the priests by the people, while the sacrifices for sin were more particularly the typical sacrifices which were offered on Israel's Atonement Day. It was by virtue of these that the nation maintained its standing before God from year to year -- at least in a typical sense.

**Hebrews 5:2** "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity."

The high priests of Israel, taken from among the people, were men of like passions -- that is, weak and imperfect. They were thus in a position to understand, sympathetically, the problems and failings of the people whom they served, and could, if they would, extend a measure of patient forbearance, particularly where sincere efforts were made to progress in righteousness. God exercised similar forbearance toward the whole nation in the wilderness, although finally provoked to anger against them.

**Hebrews 5:3** "By reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins."

Since the typical priests of Israel were themselves imperfect, they needed atonement for their sins as much as those to whom they ministered. On account of this, provision was made whereby they could offer sacrifices for themselves. An account of this is recorded in Leviticus 4:3-12

**Hebrews 5:4,5** "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee."

The elect character of both the typical and antitypical priesthood is made very definite in the Bible. No one can serve God acceptably unless called, or invited, by him. The matter of who will occupy a given place in the Divine arrangement is not left for human wisdom to decide. Aaron was God's choice to be Israel's first High Priest. Whether or not there were others who could have served just as well was not a matter for Israel, or anyone in Israel, to decide.

Korah, his sons and others, challenged the appointment of Aaron, and the LORD arranged a demonstration in order that his choice might be clearly and definitely established. The account of this is recorded in Numbers, chapters 16 and 17. A representative of each of the twelve tribes was instructed to bring a rod to Moses. He placed these rods in the Tabernacle overnight. The understanding was that the owner of the rod which miraculously budded and brought forth almonds during the night would be the LORD's choice. It was Aaron's rod that budded. This clearly indicated that Aaron was indeed 'called of God.'

Even Jesus 'glorified' or 'honored' not himself to become a High Priest. Before he was 'made flesh' Jesus occupied the highest position in the universe next to his Father; but unlike Lucifer, who aspired to be as the Most High, the Logos humbled himself, taking on the form of a human servant. Although he had come to earth to be the world's great High Priest, he did not assume this position. Not until at Jordan, when he heard the Father's voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," did Jesus undertake his priestly work. (Matthew 3:17) While he was the "Only Begotten of the Father" in his original creation, the begetting referred to in this verse seems to refer to the beginning of his life as a New Creature at Jordan. -- John 1:14

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

Having established the fact of Jesus' Divine appointment as the High Priest prefigured by Aaron, in this verse Paul verifies Christ's appointment, or calling, to another order of priesthood, one which applies particularly to the work of the kingdom age. The apostle does this by quoting Psalm 110:4 -- a prophecy in which Jehovah declares his intention that his Son should serve in this high and honored capacity. So again, it is clear that Jesus did not take this honor unto himself. Melchisedec was king of Salem in addition to being a priest of the Most High God, and his twofold office serves well to illustrate Christ's work during the millennium.

**Hebrews 5:7,8** "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

There had never been any question about Jesus' Divine appointment to the priesthood, yet it was essential that his worthiness for this high office be proved, and one of the methods chosen by the Heavenly Father to accomplish this was 'by the things which he suffered.'

The prayers, supplications, and agony here referred to took place in Gethsemane. Jesus made no noisy outcry, else the disciples not far away would have been awakened. He bore this intense suffering alone, so far as human help was concerned. Not until he was 'heard in that he feared' did he receive strength which enabled him to endure calmly the physical suffering in his trial and crucifixion.

The Greek word translated feared in the above quoted passage means primarily 'to be cautious,' rather than to 'dread,' as the word fear suggests. Jesus had reached a very critical point in his earthly life and ministry, and was making sure that no missteps should be taken. Much the same thought is contained in Paul's admonition to us: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." -- Hebrews 4:1

Paul says that Jesus was heard in that which he 'feared,' or in that about which he was being so 'cautious,' or 'careful.' The text also states that he was heard by One who was able to 'save' or deliver him from death. It would seem that the Master was concerned over the matter of his eternal existence. He knew that he was to die as man's Redeemer, but his concern was whether he had been fully faithful, so that he could confidently expect to be raised from death.

Jesus understood the lessons taught by the typical Tabernacle, and the services the priests rendered therein. When the high priest was offering sacrifices for sin, the blood of which was carried into the Most Holy and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, if he had not fully and correctly carried out every detail of that service as instructed by the Lord, he would die as he passed under the second veil. (Leviticus 16:2,3) This would picture the Second Death. His rising alive beyond the veil pictured a resurrection from death.

So Jesus, the antitypical priest, offering himself in sacrifice instead of an animal, realized that if he had not carried out every detail of the Divine will, he would, in passing under the veil of death, fail to rise on the other side. No wonder he was concerned; and what a comfort it must have been when he was 'heard' and given complete assurance that his sacrifice was acceptable.

What did Jesus have in mind when he prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"? (Matthew 26:39) 'This cup' represented the intense mental and physical suffering which he now realized would be involved in connection with the consummation of his sacrifice. For him to suffer as a blasphemer of the God whom he loved with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, was a terrible ordeal.

The manner of death -- the horror of crucifixion with all of its long, drawn-out torture of thirst, of unbearable suffering and agony, and of fever -- all of which frequently lasted for

several days -- would be very painful to his flesh. Could he endure this and yet remain perfectly obedient? With these thoughts flooding his mind, it is no wonder that he agonized with "strong crying and tears." -- Hebrews 5:7

But there was no question in Jesus' mind of wanting to avoid anything which was his Father's will. If the Father's will would allow for a less trying experience he would be glad, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," was the Master's sincere and wholehearted desire. (Matthew 26:39) He was willing to endure, but he sorely needed some assurance that he was acceptable to his Father before entering the black darkness of death; and he needed strength to bear this awful experience.

But why did the Father withhold this assurance until Jesus had prayed in agony three times? Why was the assurance not given at once? As Jesus must pay it all, he must be tested to the utmost. Would he give up because the answer was delayed? Would he believe that his Father had forsaken him? What suffering the Father's heart must have endured, thus to permit his beloved Son to suffer until after his third pleading, by withholding the answer which would comfort him! Does it not shame us, who complain if our burdens seem heavy, or faint if the help is long delayed!

When the testing had accomplished the intended purpose of proving the Master's obedience, the Father sent him the assurance which he sought, and he was comforted. Then, with supreme confidence, he met all his persecutors triumphantly. Now he could not be turned aside from his course of faithfulness, although he knew what the consequences would be. As the first and only begotten Son of God, he had always been obedient, and had constantly been his Father's delight. But now, in Gethsemane, before his accusers, and on the cross, he learned to be obedient through suffering. Truly we can have confidence in such a High Priest!

**Hebrews 5:9** "Being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

The word 'perfect' used here is a translation of a Greek word meaning 'complete.' Its use does not imply that Jesus was ever imperfect, in the sense of being a sinner. Rather, the thought is, that his training for the priesthood had been completed, the final lesson being the excruciating suffering through which he passed.

Because he was obedient, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. Obedience is a basic requirement in all who will have eternal life on any plane. The whole world of mankind lost life through the disobedience of our first parents. How logical that the One who redeemed Adam and his race from death should prove his worthiness by obedience, and how appropriate that all who reap the benefit of his ransom sacrifice should do so only upon the basis of their obedience! This lesson of obedience must be learned by all Jesus' followers, although not necessarily through such severe tests as came upon the Master.

**Hebrews 5:10,11** "Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing."

The Jews, on the whole, seem almost completely to have overlooked, or to have forgotten, the special order of priesthood of which Melchisedec was a type, although they must have known about him, and that Abraham paid tithes to him. Jehovah foretold that the Messiah would be the antitype of Melchisedec, so it was only because the Jewish Christians to whom Paul wrote were 'dull of hearing' that they did not know about it. -- Psalm 110:4

Later in his epistle Paul reveals further lessons based on the Melchisedec type, but nothing that seems especially difficult to understand. He was both a king and a priest, representing the double role of the Messiah during the millennium, and this is a beautifully simple truth to grasp. Apparently, then, their dullness of hearing was not a lack of intelligence, but simply a disinterested attitude. This lack of studious interest probably caused them to overlook what the LORD had said about Melchisedec, so anything that Paul might write to them about this type would seem strange.

What about ourselves? Are we giving the Master our undivided attention, listening with all our mind and heart? In Isaiah 50:4, *Leeser's Translation*, the prophet, personifying Jesus, says of his Father: "He wakeneth me morning by morning, he wakeneth my ear to listen like those who are well taught." Is God blessing us in this manner, or are we hindering our own growth in grace and knowledge by our hardness of heart and dullness of hearing? It has been given to us to know the mysteries of heaven, and Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." (Matthew 13:16) Do we properly appreciate this great honor, and are we keeping alert to learn and to apply all the lessons which the LORD is so graciously supplying for us?

**Hebrews 5:12,13** "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."

'For the time ye ought to be teachers' -- this indicates that God's purpose in calling us into the Truth is in order that we may become teachers of the Word -- his ambassadors and the "ambassadors for Christ." -- 2 Corinthians 5:20

The Hebrew brethren to whom Paul wrote had been in the Truth long enough to be skilled in the use of the Word, able to explain, not merely the simple facts concerning sin, the need of a Redeemer, and the hope of life through Christ for both the church and the world, but also to be able to give a reason for this hope, from the promises of God and from the many illustrations he has provided to help us appreciate more fully what the Truth should mean to us.

Paul does not in any sense minimize the importance of the 'milk' of the Word. Indeed, he tells the Hebrew brethren that they needed to have the 'first principles' taught to them



again. Because of neglected privileges, neglected opportunities for study and prayer and fellowship, they had not grown in the knowledge of the LORD and of his Truth, and had even lost some of the clear vision of the Truth which, for a while, they had enjoyed. Real growth in knowledge is possible only when the basic principles of the Truth are kept in mind and used as a foundation upon which to build.

The 'first principles' of the Truth referred to by Paul are not necessarily the simple truths of the Divine plan. They are 'first' because they are basic, or fundamental, to an understanding of all truth. The Greek word here translated principles conveys the thought of an orderly arrangement, and such are the basic doctrines of the Divine plan when seen in the light of the rightly divided Word of truth. -- 2 Timothy 2:15

The Hebrew brethren had lost their clear vision of the Divine plan, and in order again to become skillful in the use of the Word they needed to begin their studies all over anew. Not only did they need to be taught again concerning the first principles, but it had become necessary that these basic truths be outlined to them in the simplest way possible -- as illustrated by feeding a child with milk. Thus they could properly understand and assimilate the Truth.

**Hebrews 5:14** "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The difference between babes in Christ and mature Christians is that the latter have made proper use of the Truth, and have thus grown strong in the LORD. They have been diligent both in their study of the Truth and in their application of its principles in their daily lives. *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* renders this passage, "possessing faculties habitually exercised," that is, not allowed to grow dormant from neglect.

## Going on to Perfection

### CHAPTER 6

**Hebrews 6:1,2** "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

These opening verses of Chapter Six are in reality a continuation of the lesson presented in the closing verses of Chapter Five. It is a lesson designed to encourage the LORD's consecrated people, by study of the Word and the heart application of its principles, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*'Leaving the principles.'* -- This expression must be taken in connection with the explanation, 'not laying again the foundation.' Putting the two together the thought of 'leaving' the principles is simply that of building up from the foundation, not leaving them in the sense of deserting them, and never again thinking or talking about them. The illustration is clearly that of constructing a building. A building is not complete, or 'perfect,' while only the foundation is laid; neither would it be perfect if the superstructure were built elsewhere than on the foundation.

The word principles in this verse is the translation of a Greek word meaning 'beginning, or chief.' It is the Greek word *arche*, which is essentially the same as the first part of the word archangel, meaning 'chief angel.' It is not the same word which is used in the preceding chapter, in the expression 'first principles.' There, as we learned, the Greek word used signifies orderly arrangement, the thought being the orderly arrangement of the doctrines of the Bible to form the Divine plan of the ages.

The principles of the doctrine of Christ are not, therefore, the unimportant teachings of the Bible, but instead, the great foundation truths upon which all Christian belief and work must be built. How important it is, then, that we keep in constant and vital touch with these foundation principles. It would not be necessary to build the foundation repeatedly, but since the Hebrew brethren had let these things "slip" they needed to be taught over again, in order that they might, in renewing their devotion, have a foundation upon which to build. -- Hebrews 2:1

*'Repentance from dead works.'* -- Because Paul was addressing Hebrew Christians, the dead works here mentioned could be particularly their efforts to gain life by keeping the Law. These were dead works not only because they did not thereby gain life, but also because by them they were brought under the additional condemnation of the Law. But

repentance is the principal thought in connection with this doctrine, and repentance is essential to receiving God's blessings regardless of one's former position in life.

Repentance is a definite step in the life of all who become Christians. It is not something with which we are concerned but momentarily when first drawn to the LORD. As Christians we are daily transgressing against God, and daily we need to be in a repentant attitude which seeks Divine forgiveness through the merit of the shed blood. This fundamental doctrine in the plan of salvation should serve continually to keep us humble before the LORD and in constant recognition of our need of Divine grace and mercy through Christ.

*'Faith toward God.'* -- The relationship of faith to our standing before God is a vital fundamental of the Divine plan. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," the Scriptures declare. (Hebrews 11:6) We see the importance of this doctrine by noting the manner in which Paul couples it with 'repentance from dead works.' No one can be justified by the works of the Law, but we can be justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1) How important it is to keep this fundamental truth clearly in mind and order our lives in keeping therewith!

The *'doctrine of baptisms.'* -- Because all those of the Jewish nation had been "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," it was at first necessary for Jewish converts in the Early Church to be baptized with John's baptism unto the remission of sins, and thus to be reinstated in their standing with God under the Law Covenant, in order to be transferred into Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:2) But even in the case of these, the real doctrine of baptism called for their burial into Christ, their covenant to be dead with him. Gentile converts had to symbolize this baptism in death by immersion in water. Thus 'baptisms,' in the plural, are involved in this basic teaching of the Truth, and all are important foundation truths upon which to build.

The *'laying on of hands.'* -- This practice was familiar to the Jews under the Law Covenant. In Jesus' day there were occasions when the sick were healed by the laying on of hands. The servants of the Early Church were elected by the laying on of hands, or, more literally, stretching forth the hand. Timothy was cautioned by Paul not to lay hands on anyone suddenly -- without due consideration. (1 Timothy 5:22) As a Christian doctrine, the laying on of hands seems to indicate clearly the giving of recognition and authority.

The literal act of laying on of hands ceased with the death of the apostles, but its symbolic significance has continued with the church throughout the age, and is a vital factor in the Christian life today. Those upon whom the apostles laid their hands received the Holy Spirit. This outward sign of approval was of great value in the Early Church; but the LORD's people still need that which the laying on of hands represented; namely, the approval and acceptance of God, which is manifested by the "witness" of the Spirit. (Romans 8:16) The doctrine, or teaching, which has to do with our being anointed by the Holy Spirit and being thereby recognized by the LORD as members of the body of Christ

and authorized to be his ambassadors, is therefore fundamentally important. Surely we do not want to lose sight of this glorious significance of the Truth!

The *'resurrection of the dead.'* -- "If in this life only we have hope in Christ," writes Paul, "we are of all men most miserable." (1 Corinthians 15:19) Surely the doctrine of the resurrection is a very vital one. This is true whether we think of it as pertaining to the "first resurrection" in which we hope to share; the "better resurrection" of the Ancient Worthies, or the general resurrection of the world. (Revelation 20:6; Hebrews 11:35; Acts 17:31) It is the very foundation of our hope. It requires keen spiritual vision, which can be enjoyed only by "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised" to plumb the real depth of this glorious doctrine of the Truth. (Hebrews 5:14) In the first chapter of Ephesians Paul says that he prayed for the opening of the eyes of understanding of "the saints which are at Ephesus," that they might realize the mighty power being exercised on their behalf, explaining that it is the power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead and highly exalted him "far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." -- Ephesians 1:18-21

*'Eternal judgment.'* -- The reference here seems to be to the final judgment, or determination as to the individual's worthiness or unworthiness of everlasting life. The church is on trial now, and in the case of each probationary member the time will come when the decision must be made. Let us strive earnestly that we may be found among those who will hear those welcome words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21) It is certainly important that we keep constantly before us the fact that our lives are an open book before God, and that while he is merciful and just, our trial will end favorably only if we keep our hearts pure and render unto him the very best that we are able.

**Hebrews 6:3** "This we will do, if God permit." -- In two ways Paul reveals his humility by this statement. He had criticized the Hebrew brethren for their lack of zeal, and had pointed out to them their great need to make better progress in the Christian way, yet he puts himself on a level with them and says this will 'we' do, if God permits.

He realized that every blessing enjoyed by the Christian is a manifestation of Divine grace. We could not have come into this blessed relationship at all except the Heavenly Father had drawn us. (John 6:44) We could not know the Truth unless he had given us 'ears to hear.' (Matthew 13:16) We cannot make progress in the Truth unless the LORD permits, for we are able to work out our salvation only because he is working in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." -- Philippians 2:12,13

**Hebrews 6:4-6** "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world [Greek, age] to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

The Greek word here rendered 'once' denotes more than the single fact that at one time we were enlightened. It is a word which means finality. Provision was made to rescue the fallen race from the result of Adam's sin, but if we have been truly enlightened concerning this, have accepted the provision of Divine grace and have entered into covenant relationship with the LORD, and then fail, no further provision is made for us. We receive our enlightenment from the Word of truth. This is always the first step in approaching God. We may "feel after him," but to find him we must be enlightened to know where he is and how to approach him. -- Acts 17:27

The *heavenly gift.*' -- This heavenly gift is something which can be 'tasted.' What is it? It is Jesus, our Redeemer. The fact that we have tasted him implies that we have more than merely heard about him and believe that he is the Savior of the world. Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53) This denotes a close fellowship with the Master, based upon a full consecration to follow in his footsteps. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." -- Song of Solomon 2:3

*'Partakers of the Holy Spirit.'* -- Those who have tasted of the heavenly gift as a result of making a full consecration to the LORD receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit. They are partakers of the Holy Spirit, suggesting a partnership in the sharing of its blessings.

*'The powers of the world to come.'* -- These are the powers of regeneration. In no other way will the power of God in the world, or age, to come be so wonderfully demonstrated as by the resurrection of the dead. Those who are partakers of the Holy Spirit now have by faith tasted of the power of the resurrection. They are, even now, in their hearts and minds, "risen with Christ," and seated with him "in heavenly places." -- Colossians 2:12;3:1-3;Ephesians 2:6

If, after learning the 'principles' and experiencing the Christian blessings of this age, one then falls away, it would be impossible, says Paul, to renew him again to repentance. Evidently the Hebrew brethren had not progressed far enough to be exposed to this danger, although there is a warning here that they could not expect to be laying the foundation of repentance continually. To presume upon Divine grace after coming to a full knowledge of the Truth, and upon the basis of full consecration, experiencing its power in our lives would be like crucifying the Son of God afresh, and there is no provision for this in the Divine plan. "Christ dieth no more." -- Romans 6:9

**Hebrews 6:7,8** "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh unto cursing: whose end is to be burned."

The apostle is using an illustration to help us grasp more clearly what he means by 'going on to perfection.' God's purpose in watering the earth, and the purpose of those who till the ground, is that it might 'bring forth herbs'; that is, that there might be a fruitage, or harvest. In this illustration the earth pictures those to whom are given the water of Truth,

while the tillers of the soil might be those who are used by the LORD to assist the brethren in connection with their understanding of the Truth. This cooperative arrangement is intended to bring forth fruit, but if nothing but thorns and briars appear, the effort is wasted. So, the object in our receiving the Truth is not merely that we may enjoy it, but that it produce a fruitage in our lives, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." - Hebrews 12:11

**Hebrews 6:9,10** "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Although these Hebrew Christians had not been making use of their opportunities as they should, Paul was pleased to call them 'beloved.' This is the spirit of Divine love, the love that will not let go its hold on an individual while there is any evidence at all that reformation is possible. The expression, 'better things' is in contrast with the possibility just mentioned of falling away after being fully enlightened, and thereby crucifying the Son of God afresh. Here the apostle was encouraging them to take a firmer hold upon the Truth, and to follow that course of zeal and devotion which would result in their salvation -- that "great salvation" which began to be spoken by our Lord. -- Hebrews 2:3

These Hebrew brethren evidently 'ran well' for a time, for the apostle speaks of their 'work and labour of love.' Later, in Chapter Ten, verses 32-34, he asks them to call to remembrance these "former days" when they were first illuminated, when they "took joyfully" the spoiling of their goods, etc. He wanted them to renew their original zeal and love.

What could have been more encouraging to those who, perchance, had become weary in well doing than to assure them that the Heavenly Father had not forgotten their past faithfulness! While Paul does not say so, one of the evidences that God had not forgotten them was the fact that he stirred up the apostle's mind to write this epistle as a means of helping them to take a more positive stand for the Truth and for righteousness.

God's justice not only reproveth and punishes where necessary, but treasures up every good deed and rewards it. Even the giving of a cup of cold water to one of his little ones will not go unrewarded. God also encourages every good trait that it might grow stronger and become more dominant in one's life. He takes delight in every evidence of progress in the path of righteousness.

**Hebrews 6:11,12** "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."

*'The same diligence.'* -- In the beginning, their work and labor of love was very manifest. God's interest is in all his people -- 'every one of you' -- he does not want one to fail. But victory is dependent upon 'full assurance of hope,' not for a little while, merely, but until

we have been faithful even unto death. Note the connection here with his former admonitions and warning with respect to failure to enter into rest because of unbelief. -- Hebrews 2:3;4:1-11

Every truly faithful and zealous disciple of Christ is an encouraging example to his brethren. Those who inherit the promises do so because of their implicit faith and patient endurance -- even unto death. If we follow the example of these we will not be slothful, but diligent. God's promises pertaining to the 'great salvation' are not unconditional. Those who actually inherit them must fulfill the conditions.

**Hebrews 6:13-15** "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

The apostle here does not quote the entire oathbound covenant with Abraham, for he is not discussing the covenant, but is merely citing the illustration of Abraham's faith in God's promises or patiently waiting for their fulfillment as being essential to actually having them become a personal possession. God made a 'promise' to Abraham. Here the Greek word translated promise means simply an announcement. But the promise which Abraham obtained after he endured is from a Greek word meaning more than an announcement -- it is, according to "*Strong's Bible Concordance*" also a 'pledge,' or an 'assurance.' God gave Abraham this pledge, this assurance, when he ratified the original promise by his oath.

**Hebrews 6:16-18** "Men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

God's willingness to give his people a more abundant assurance of his loving purpose toward them is fully in keeping with his grace and mercy. He did not need to confirm the covenant with his oath, for no one would ever have reason to doubt his word. Later, one of the requirements of the Law was that important matters should be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses, and God was willing to conform to this principle. His word was immutable and his oath was immutable, so by these two immutable things, he has given us strong consolation who have laid hold of the hope set before us in the covenant with Abraham.

**Hebrews 6:19-20** "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

Our anchor is fastened 'within the veil.' Here the apostle puts the Christian in the position of the typical high priest who alone had the privilege of entering into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. We can hope to enter into the antitypical Most Holy, even heaven,

because Jesus, our Forerunner has, first of all, entered for us to prepare the way. What a glorious hope!



## "After the Order of Melchisedec"

### CHAPTER 7

**Hebrews 7:1,2** "This Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace."

It is in chapter 5, verses 6, 10 and 11, that Paul first mentions Melchisedec as a type of Christ, and there he wrote that he had "many things" to say about him, things which to the Hebrews would seem "hard to be uttered" because, as the apostle explains, they were "dull of hearing." Again, in the last verse of chapter 6, Jesus is referred to as "an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." In the seventh chapter, Paul itemizes the 'many things' about Melchisedec which prove him to be a type of Christ, the reigning priest of the Millennial Age. This entire chapter is devoted to showing how much greater in every way, typical and antitypical, was the Melchisedec priesthood than the Aaronic order.

Melchisedec was both a king and a priest, and from God's standpoint a very highly honored priest. Abraham, a friend of God upon the basis of his faith, was highly honored by Jehovah, but Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec -- giving to him a tenth of all the spoils of battle on the occasion when he slaughtered the kings who had taken Lot, his nephew, into captivity. -- Genesis 14:18-20

The title Melchisedec is a very significant one, being made up of *melek*, meaning 'king,' and *tsedeq*, meaning 'righteousness.' He actually was King of Salem. Salem means 'peace,' so Melchisedec was 'King of peace.' What a clearly defined type Melchisedec was, therefore, of the one concerning whom the Prophet Isaiah wrote that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." -- Isaiah 9:7

**Hebrews 7:3** "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

The evident thought of this text is that Melchisedec was without father or mother in the priesthood -- he did not inherit the office from his parents. It was given to him directly by God. Paul emphasizes this point in order to offset the doubts some might have concerning Jesus, that not being of the Levitical tribe he could not therefore be a priest. In the Jewish Age arrangement, it was God who constituted the Levitical tribe the one from which priests were to be taken; so God had the authority and power to exalt others to the

priesthood. This he did in the case of Melchisedec, and also Christ, the antitypical Melchisedec.

In the Aaronic order of priesthood there was an arrangement of succession, but not so in the higher, or Melchisedec order. Melchisedec had neither predecessor nor successor in the priesthood. In this respect he was like 'the Son of God,' who similarly is the only one in this highest of all priestly orders. Paul explains that the typical significance of this is that Christ 'abideth a priest continually.'

**Hebrews 7:4-10** "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the Law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."

Paul's reasoning in these verses is irrefutable. Abraham is counted one of the greatest, if not the greatest, hero of faith mentioned in the Bible. In Romans 4:13, he is designated the "heir of the world." Yet he paid tithes to Melchisedec, and, as Paul states, 'The less is blessed of the better.' (vs. 7) The head of Israel's priestly tribe, that is, Levi, himself paid tithes to Melchisedec while still in the loins of Abraham. None of the Levitical tribe, not even the priests could, therefore, be as great as Melchisedec.

'Of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.' There is no record of the birth or death of Melchisedec. All we know is that he lived. This makes him a fitting type of the perpetual priestly office of Christ, of whom it is prophetically stated, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6) In this statement Paul may also have been alluding to the testimony of the "two men" at the tomb of the antitypical Melchisedec, when they asked the women who were looking for Jesus' body, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" or, as the marginal translation states, why seek "him that liveth." -- Luke 24:4,5

**Hebrews 7:11** "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the Law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"

In this verse Paul presents still another argument as to why believers should expect that the Aaronic priesthood would be succeeded by another and higher priestly order. It was the fact that the Levitical, or Aaronic, priesthood did not bring perfection to those who were served by it. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1) had spoken to the Jewish fathers by the prophets had foretold that there would be another priesthood established, one after the order of Melchisedec, and now the inspired Paul is pointing out another reason why this was necessary.

**Hebrews 7:12-17** "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Hebrews who had accepted Christ would not find it easy to understand why changes needed to be made in the Law in order for Jesus to serve as a priest, so in these verses Paul's reasoning is to show why this change was the logical thing to expect, and quite in harmony with God's arrangement. Priests of the Levitical order served by hereditary rights. One could not begin service until he was thirty years of age.

Jesus, however, was not of the tribe of Levi, so according to this hereditary arrangement of the Law, he could never be eligible for the priesthood. In the Divine plan a higher priestly order was designed for him. By the hereditary arrangement one could become a priest regardless of whether or not he was worthy of the office, but under the Melchisedec order this could not be. So far as his priestly service was concerned, Melchisedec was 'without beginning of days, nor end of life.' His genealogy is not recorded. None of his qualifications for the priesthood are recorded. His was simply a case of being chosen by God. It is this great fact that stands out in the case of Jesus, the antitype of Melchisedec.

The fact that priests of the Aaronic order inherited their positions was an evidence of the temporary nature of their service. But with the Melchisedec order the reverse is true. No time element entered into this arrangement. Thus Melchisedec is a suitable type of the endless life and continuing priesthood of Jesus. As Paul presents it, the 'power' or authority for Christ's appointment as a priest was that of 'an endless life,' this being in harmony with the prophecy which foretold his appointment.

**Hebrews 7:18,19** "There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

The "Law ... was weak through the flesh," Paul wrote. (Romans 8:3) The reason the Law failed was not because there was something wrong with it, but because of the imperfections of those who attempted to obtain life under its provisions. Since the Israelites proved by their own failure under the Law that its arrangements were not adequate to bring perfection and life to fallen human beings, it was automatically disannulled and the way opened for a new arrangement.

Since the Law made nothing perfect, this was additional reason for the appointment of another priesthood, and it is in connection with this that we have been given a 'better hope,' a hope which, when it matures, will result in perfection. It is a hope which includes the prospect of serving and reigning with Christ in the future work of blessing the

obedient of mankind with 'restitution' to perfection. Christ is not now a reigning priest, but we have the assurance that he "ever liveth to make intercession" for us, and that through the merit of his shed blood we are 'reckoned' perfect by God. (Hebrews 7:25) Thus, being "justified by faith, we have peace with God," and can "draw nigh" unto him, going "boldly unto the throne of grace." -- Romans 5:1; James 4:8; Hebrews 4:16

**Hebrews 7:20,21** "Inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.)"

Jesus was not only appointed by God to be a priest, but his appointment was confirmed by a Divine oath. Surely, then there should be no question in anyone's mind concerning his right to be a priest, a greater right than those who became priests merely by heredity.

**Hebrews 7:22** "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."

'By so much' -- this refers to the great authority of Jesus' appointment to the priesthood as indicated by the fact that it was confirmed by God's oath. God's original covenant of blessing, which embraces the hope of both the church and the world, was confirmed by Divine oath. This was the covenant made to Abraham. This is probably why Paul associates the 'better covenant' with the assurance of the Divine oath.

The expression 'better covenant,' is in contrast with the Law Covenant. The covenant principally referred to is doubtless the promised "new covenant." (Jeremiah 31:31) By his death and resurrection Jesus became the 'surety' for this covenant. By the same token he also made sure of our acceptance under the terms of the Sarah feature of the original Abrahamic Covenant -- that part of the covenant which calls for the development of the "seed" which is to bless all the families of the earth. See Galatians 3:27-29; 4:19-31.

**Hebrews 7:23-25** "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Who could fail to see this advantage of the Melchisedec order of priesthood? Christ 'ever liveth to make intercession' -- a priest 'for ever.' We can well imagine the case of an earnest Israelite under the Law Covenant seeking to live close to God, and leaning heavily upon a certain high priest for counsel and encouragement. He would become acquainted with the priest, and the priest would get to understand him and be able thus to better serve him. But suddenly this high priest dies. What a tragedy this would be for the one who depended so largely upon him.

This is not true of our High Priest, Jesus, for he 'ever liveth,' and is ready at all times to make intercession for us. He understands us, too -- knows our every weakness, yet loves us with an everlasting love. No wonder he is able to save 'to the uttermost' those who

'come unto God by him.' Those who desire to return to God and to his fellowship and blessing are helped and shown the way. Christ's merit is imputed to them to cover their defects; and his intercession is able to make their earnest efforts successful. What a Savior! What a Priest!

**Hebrews 7:26-28** "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the Law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated [margin, 'perfected'] for evermore."

'For such an High Priest became us' or ours. He was 'holy' -- entirely devoted to his Heavenly Father, with a devotion prompted by love and based upon knowledge. He was 'harmless' -- his every influence was beneficial. He was 'undefiled' -- not only from the standpoint of the Law, but morally pure as well. He was 'separate from sinners' -- he did not derive his life from Adam, but merely his physical makeup, nor was he in any way tainted with human imperfections, as typified by the Levitical priesthood being separated from every contact with the dead or with impurity. He is now 'higher than the heavens' -- a reference to Jesus' high exaltation when he was raised from the dead, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." (Ephesians 1:20,21) It was because Jesus was thus exalted that he is now able to appear in the presence of God for us.

The contrast between the sacrificial work of the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifice of Jesus is in the fact that they needed to keep repeating their work, but Jesus offered himself only once. The typical priests offered sacrifice, first for their own sins, and 'then for the people's,' Paul states. Then he explains concerning Jesus that 'this he did' when he offered up himself; that is, he offered sacrifice for the sins of his body members, the church, and also for the people's sins. Paul has just explained that Jesus, personally, was holy, and separate from sinners. He had heard Jesus inquire, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4) Jesus thus acknowledged his footstep followers as a part of himself, and it was for these that he offered himself in sacrifice, and also for the people of the whole world. The Apostle John says of Jesus that he became the "propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." -- 1 John 2:2

Jesus was perfect as a man, and the experiences through which he passed while offering himself in sacrifice perfected him as a New Creature; in the sense, that is, of being developed, or made complete. Thus he became fully qualified to serve as our High Priest now, and for the world in the age to come. In that future work his church will serve with him.

## **The Mediator of a Better Covenant**

### **CHAPTER 8**

**Hebrews 8:1,2** "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

'We have such an high priest.' Throughout the seventh chapter Paul tells about this wonderful High Priest, that had been appointed by God, and that was the antitype of Melchisedec, who had no predecessors or successors in the priesthood, and who was a king as well as a priest -- a royal priest. The fact that Jesus is a royal priest is further established by the explanation that he is now 'set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.'

Despite his exaltation Jesus is still a 'minister,' a servant, of the sanctuary. But now there is a different sanctuary, the true tabernacle -- the antitype of the Tabernacle constructed by man in the wilderness of Sinai. This true tabernacle is 'pitched' by God. In reality it is a condition, not a place. The first 'holy,' is the Spirit-begotten condition of New Creatures, while the 'holiest of all' is heaven itself, where Jesus appeared in the presence of God for us.

**Hebrews 8:3,4** "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law."

The principal work of the typical priests was to 'offer gifts and sacrifices.' All of these were typical and pointed forward to the sacrificial work of Christ. In the type, there were the Atonement Day sacrifices as well as those subsequent to the Day of Atonement. Those offered on the Day of Atonement typified the sacrifices offered by the antitypical priesthood for the sins of both the church and the world, while those subsequent thereto pointed forward to the fact that the people in presenting themselves to the Lord during the millennium would do so in recognition of the sacrifice which had been previously offered for them by the antitypical High Priest.

To fulfill these types, it was necessary, Paul declares, that Jesus 'have somewhat also to offer.' It was for this reason, other scriptures reveal, that he was "made flesh." (John 1:14) It was his own flesh -- not that of bulls and goats -- that Jesus laid down in death, and it is on the basis of the merit of this sacrifice that he now has appeared in the presence of God for the church, and will later appear for the entire world of mankind.

The sacrificial work in the type, particularly that of the Day of Atonement, was concealed from the view of the camp of Israel. In the antitype, while Jesus actually died in view of the people, they did not realize the significance of his death, for the meaning was concealed from them.

In the type, after the slaying of the animals, the priest took the blood into the Most Holy and there sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat. Antotypically, this was accomplished by Jesus when, after his resurrection, he entered into the presence of God for us; for it was then that he had somewhat also to offer -- sufficient, indeed, to effect the reconciliation of both the church and the world. Thus, as Paul shows, the priestly office of this age and of the next age, is on a much higher plane, a spiritual plane. He agrees that if Jesus were on earth, as a man, he would not be eligible to serve as a priest; but this is not important, for the purpose of that typical priesthood had been served.

**Hebrews 8:5,6** "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

The Tabernacle and its services were intended by the Lord to be illustrations of better -- 'heavenly' -- things to come and for that reason he gave Moses such specific instruction to have everything according to the pattern which had been shown to him. It was probably difficult for Jewish converts who had been accustomed to the typical arrangements, which had been in force during the Jewish Age, to realize that they were merely illustrative of the spiritual things of this age.

Every feature of God's dealings with Israel foreshadowed better things to come (Hebrews 10:1), including the covenant into which they entered with the LORD at Sinai. Paul reminds the Hebrews that God had promised a 'better covenant,' and that Jesus was its Mediator. He explains that this better covenant is established upon better promises. God promised the Israelites that if they could keep the Law Covenant they would live. But they were unable to live up to its perfect requirements, and the sacrifices of bulls and goats which were made each year on their behalf failed to take away their sins; so they remained under condemnation to death. The promises of life under the New Covenant are 'better' because an adequate provision has been made to take away the people's sin -- the provision of the blood of Christ.

**Hebrews 8:7,8** "If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

The first covenant was not 'faultless' because of the sinful condition of those with whom it was made, and because the sacrifices which accompanied it had no power to remove

their sin. Paul reasons that God's promise of a New Covenant was tantamount to 'finding fault' with the old. The thought is not that of scolding, but as the words literally state, a fault had been found in the old covenant. God knew from the beginning that this fault existed. It was not a fault in his part of the covenant, but in theirs; for they were unable to keep their part of it.

Not understanding the plan of God, many have supposed that Paul, in his reference to God's promise of the New Covenant, is implying that this promised covenant had already been inaugurated, and that the Hebrew's relationship to God was through this new arrangement. A careful study reveals, however, that this is not the case.

Throughout the epistle the followers of the Master, his 'brethren,' are depicted not as those in the camp of Israel being blessed, but as a part of the antitypical priesthood. In the type on the Day of Atonement only the high priest could enter into the Most Holy, and in the antitype Paul encourages us to follow Christ, our 'Forerunner,' into the antitypical holiest of all. In that typical arrangement there were priests, sacrifices, a tabernacle, and a covenant. In the antitype, we have all these, and the church is associated with Jesus in the priesthood, the sacrifices, the heavenly tabernacle, and with him will, during the thousand years of the kingdom, administer the laws of the New Covenant.

The making of the typical Law Covenant began when first the LORD "took them by the hand" out of Egypt, and then took Moses up into the mount and gave him the Law. (Jeremiah 31:32) Following, there was the sacrifice of animals and the providing of blood by which the people and the book of the Law were sprinkled. That which took a matter of days in type requires the entire Gospel Age in the antitype. With the sacrificial work -- the 'better sacrifices' -- of the age complete, then will come the inauguration of the covenant, first with 'the house of Israel and the house of Judah,' and ultimately with all mankind.

**Hebrews 8:9,10** "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

'Not according.' The Law of the old covenant was written on stone (the Ten Commandments) and the various ordinances were recorded either on clay tablets or parchment. But the writing of the laws of the New Covenant will not be according to this manner, for the promise is that it shall be written in the hearts of the people, implying their restoration to the original image of God in which Adam was created. Adam was in a covenant relationship with the LORD before he fell. -- Hosea 6:7 (*Marginal Translation*)

In 2 Corinthians 3:3 Paul speaks of the "epistle of Christ," not engraven on stone, but "in fleshy tables of the heart." Then he explains that we are made "able ministers of the new testament," or New Covenant. (vs. 6) Some have mistaken this as proof that the promises



of the New Covenant are now being fulfilled in the experiences of true Christians. But in this lesson Paul is not referring particularly to the promise of Jeremiah 31:31-34, which he quotes in Hebrews, but is taking a lesson from the writing of the Law on the tables of stone. Antotypically, it is this work which is now being done: and just as the typical tables of stone were prepared prior to the inauguration of the old covenant, so Paul is describing a work which is now going on prior to the inauguration of the New Covenant; namely, the preparation of the church to be the 'able ministers' of that covenant when it is put into operation for the blessing of the people.

**Hebrews 8:11** "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

This promise will become literally true when the ministers of the New Covenant have made their "calling and election sure" and it is finally made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (2 Peter 1:10) Of that time, it is promised that the knowledge of the LORD shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14) Herein is a very obvious proof that this covenant has not as yet been put into operation. If it had begun to function at the First Advent as an agency of reconciliation between God and men, as some claim, how utterly it has failed to accomplish the purpose God designed for it, as outlined in this verse! But there can be no failure in the plans and purposes of God, and when this covenant is inaugurated the whole world will indeed learn to know him and be reconciled to him; those who willfully resist Divine grace being destroyed from among the people. -- Acts 3:23

**Hebrews 8:12** "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

"This is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins," writes Paul in Romans 11:27. In this eleventh chapter, he explains that the blindness, iniquity, and ungodliness of Israel, or Jacob, shall be turned away by the "Deliverer" that is to come "out of Sion," which, as he explains, is to occur following the time when the "fulness of the Gentiles" has come in. (Romans 11:25-28) Thus does Paul locate the time for the fulfillment of God's promise of the New Covenant and its sin-cleansing powers as following the work of the present Gospel Age, the work of calling out from the world the Zion class, the 'little flock,' which is to live and reign with Christ, and with him, as the great 'Deliverer' and 'Mediator,' ministers of the New Covenant.

**Hebrews 8:13** "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

How keen is Paul's reasoning, that the Law Covenant was made 'old' simply by God's promise of a new one. When God declares a fact it is established. From God's standpoint, it had served its purpose. Israel had been cast off; and when the time should come for him to again deal with this people whom he still loved for the "fathers' sakes," it would be under the arrangements of the New Covenant. (Romans 11:28) Then their sins, which

caused them to be rejected, will be taken away and they shall once more be his people,  
and he shall be their God. -- Jeremiah 31:33,34

## **Patterns of Heavenly Things**

IN THIS CHAPTER Paul outlines in detail some of the important features of God's typical dealings with Israel in connection with the Law Covenant, as well as the Tabernacle and its services. All Israel was blessed under that typical arrangement, but the priests were the ministers of the people, and only the high priest entered into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement. In considering the antitype, it is essential to keep in mind that throughout the epistle Paul identifies the church of this age as the antitypical priesthood, not the antitypical camp of Israel; and in this chapter (as also in Hebrews 6:19,20) he reveals that the joint-heirship of the church with Jesus means that she enters into the antitypical Most Holy with him, and shares his work as the world's great High Priest. If we keep this antitypical position of the church in mind, we will have no difficulty in understanding properly any part of the Book of Hebrews pertaining to the covenants and the sin offering.

### **CHAPTER 9**

**Hebrews 9:1-5** "Verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly."

'Of which we cannot now speak particularly' -- Paul did not write this epistle for the purpose of explaining the typical significance of all the details of the Tabernacle and its services, but refers to these and other types of the Old Testament in his effort to revive the faith and zeal of the Hebrew brethren by emphasizing that in Christ, and in their association with Christ, they could realize the fulfillment, the substance, of all that God had promised through their prophets, and had illustrated by the Tabernacle and its services. It is true, nevertheless, that his incidental references to the types throws much light upon their true meaning, which otherwise we would not be able to understand.

The point Paul is stressing in this reference to the typical Tabernacle and its services is the fact that it was related to the first, or Law Covenant. It was part of the mediatorial arrangements of that covenant. Bringing that lesson forward to the present age, it means that now there is also a tabernacle, and sacrifices, and that the church as the 'brethren' of Christ, participate with him in all these, even to entering into the antitypical 'Holiest of all.'

In Paul's itemizing of the various articles contained in the typical Tabernacle, the *King James Version* places the golden altar of incense in the Most Holy. The *Vatican Manuscript*, however, places it correctly in the first Holy, as is so clearly shown in the Old Testament. This is obviously correct, for the 'Holiest of all' represents heaven itself, the presence of God, and there is no sacrificial work carried on in heaven, as would be suggested by the presence of an altar in the Most Holy.

Each of the three articles of furniture in the Holy of the Tabernacle represents the spirit-begotten church. The table of shewbread pictures the church holding forth the Word of life; the candlestick shows the church in the role of light-bearer, while the golden altar is typical of a sacrificing church. It is the smoke of the burning incense sacrificed on the altar and penetrating into the Most Holy that prepares the way for an acceptable entrance into glory, the hoped-for abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Ark of the Covenant represents the church, Head and body in glory. In the ark was the golden bowl of manna, representing the immortality of the Christ; Aaron's rod that budded showing the elect quality of those who are to bless the world; and the tables of the Law, suggesting not only that the Christ has fulfilled the righteousness of the Law, but will serve in the great work of writing God's law in the hearts of the people during the Mediatorial Age, the thousand years of the kingdom.

In the Ark of the Covenant we have foreshadowed the four great attributes of Jehovah. The mercy seat proper -- the slab of gold which covered the Ark of the Covenant and on which the blood of atonement was sprinkled -- represents Jehovah's justice, the two cherubim foreshadow his love and power, while the ark itself (the golden chest) represents his wisdom.

**Hebrews 9:6-10** "When these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation."

The services rendered by the priests in the first Holy (vs. 6) were the morning and evening care of the lamps, the morning and evening offering of incense, and the weekly care of the shewbread. This was done by the priests, and the church is a part of the antitypical priesthood.

Only the high priest went into the Most Holy, and then only once each year, which was on the typical Day of Atonement -- an exception being when the Tabernacle was to be

moved: then it was the high priest's duty to go into the Most Holy and cover the ark and mercy seat in preparation for moving. The yearly visit of the high priest in the Most Holy was to sprinkle the blood of atonement on the mercy seat 'for himself, and for the errors of the people.'

Jesus is the one in the antitype who 'sprinkles' the blood -- his own blood -- on the heavenly mercy seat, the 'throne of grace.' It was not necessary that he do this for himself individually, but in the antitype the church is the body of the great High Priest; so it was essential that he 'appear in the presence of God for us.' As in the type the high priest also sprinkled the mercy seat with blood on behalf of 'the people,' so it will also be in the antitype.

The statement 'once' each year cannot be taken too literally. The thought is that in one service each year the high priest frequented the Most Holy. In this one service, however, he actually went into the Most Holy twice, and twice sprinkled blood on the mercy seat -- first, the blood of a bullock, and on his second entry, the blood of the Lord's goat. More about this as Paul unfolds the lesson.

The blood was sprinkled, the apostle says, for the 'errors' of the people. The Greek word here used has as its root meaning the thought of ignorance, of not knowing, which strongly suggests the idea of shortcomings, or sins which are not willful, those which are due to inherited weaknesses. In other words, Adamic sin.

Paul explains that the restriction which limited the high priest to entering into the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement signified that the way into the antitypical 'Holiest of all was not yet made manifest.' In chapter six Jesus is referred to as the 'Forerunner' in entering into the antitypical Most Holy, hence the first. It was Jesus who opened the way to this heavenly reward, doing so when he appeared "in the presence of God for us." (vs. 24) None could be a partaker of the heavenly calling until Jesus came. He "brought life and immortality to light." (2 Timothy 1:10) We again emphasize that this heavenly calling, partaking with Jesus in the priestly work, is for the church alone, whereas the world will be blessed with earthly life through this spiritual priesthood.

It is not difficult for those of us who were never under the Law Covenant arrangement to realize that those typical sacrifices and ordinances could not take away sin, hence could not give one the sense of a guiltless conscience before God. The situation with Hebrew Christians in the Early Church was probably quite different. To them, those visible things perhaps had a great degree of reality, especially if their faith could not easily grasp the invisible, spiritual arrangements of the antitypical priesthood. Paul therefore more than once in the epistle emphasizes that the old arrangements were never intended to be anything more than 'figures' of the 'better things' to come, and encouraged the Hebrews to take a firmer hold of these better things.

The ultimate to which the typical sacrifices and other services under the old Law Covenant pointed forward was what Paul speaks of in verse ten as 'the time of reformation.' This is what Peter describes as the "times of restitution." (Acts 3:21) While

in the antitype the priesthood of the Gospel Age benefits from the sacrifice of Christ, even as did the priesthood in the type, the priestly service was then performed on behalf of all Israel. In the antitype, the blessing of Israel and the world is the final objective of the work of the present age, the antitypical Day of Atonement. That blessing will be the reformation and restoration "spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began."

**Hebrews 9:11-14** "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The typical sacrifices could not purge the conscience, but the blood of Christ can. This is the substance of Paul's argument in these verses. He speaks of the blood of Christ as being the antitype of the blood of both the bulls and goats offered by Israel's priests. In the Divine arrangement for sin atonement, there is no other blood antitypically than the blood of Christ. The church shares in the sin offering work, as foreshadowed by the sacrifice of the Lord's goat on the typical Day of Atonement, but this is possible only because of the blood of Christ. Blood symbolizes life, and the life which we sacrifice is the life we receive by faith from him. We have no life of our own, being condemned to death because of sin.

**Hebrews 9:15** "For this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament [covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

'For this cause.' For what cause? The cause of sanctifying, purifying and the purging of conscience. The blood of Christ accomplishes this necessary cleansing from sin for his body members, the church, but the cleansing work of Christ's blood does not stop with the church; for, as Paul explains in this text, it is for this purpose also that he is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

These verses in Hebrews can be understood properly only in the light of God's plans to bestow blessings upon Israel and all nations during the age to come. There is the erroneous view that the New Covenant is now functioning, that at Jesus' death it immediately took the place of the Law Covenant, and that now all believers are being blessed under it.

But how much more meaningful the passage is when we recognize the distinction between the 'servants' and those whom the Lord is preparing to serve when the servant class has been completed. It is the same difference which should be discerned between those who are now being prepared to be the future kings of earth as joint rulers with

Jesus, and the subjects over whom they will rule. It is the same difference we should recognize between those being prepared to judge the world, and the people of the world who, in the future judgment day, are to be judged by them.

**Hebrews 9:16,17** "Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

The 'testator' of the New Covenant is primarily Christ. Certainly there could be no move toward the making of this covenant until Christ died. As outlined in the Scriptures, there were to be called from the people those who would participate with Christ in the administration of its laws. Not even the selection and preparation of these could begin until the death of the Testator, although the fact that they are being selected does not imply the functioning of the covenant itself. Indeed, the covenant cannot function until all its servants have been selected, prepared, and qualified to serve.

**Hebrews 9:18-20** "Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."

As Paul here explains, it was after Moses had spoken every precept of the Law to 'all the people' that the typical covenant was dedicated with blood. No one will argue that the pure Gospel has not yet been explained to all the people. But when the New Covenant actually goes into full operation this will be the case for then none will need to say to his neighbor, "Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." -- Jeremiah 31:34

**Hebrews 9:21,22** "Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

Exodus 24:6-8 makes it clear that the sprinkling of the 'book and all the people' followed the sprinkling of the "altar," or, as Paul details it, 'the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.' Paul evidently made no attempt to give these two uses of the blood their proper sequential order. The sequence set forth in the Exodus account, however, is in keeping with the antitype; for, as we have seen, the blood of Christ is first used to sanctify the servant class -- those who will serve the New Covenant as the heavenly, or spiritual sanctuary.

The Exodus account explains that Moses used half the blood for the 'altar,' and with the other half he sprinkled the book and the people. This, harmonizes with the two sprinklings of the blood on the mercy seat on Israel's annual Day of Atonement -- first the blood of the bullock, and then the blood of the goat. In both instances the blood points forward to the merit of Christ's sacrifice, and both types teach that there were to be two

applications of the antitypical blood, first for the church, and then for the world. There is no remission of sin for either class aside from the shed blood of Christ.

**Hebrews 9:23-26** "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The apostles knew that some time was to elapse before their Lord would return. They all expected to die and be resurrected when that great event occurred. Nevertheless, they believed that Jesus' First Advent marked what Paul here describes as the 'end of the world.' To them the "night" was "far spent," and the day was "at hand." -- Romans 13:12

With this thought in mind, it was not difficult for Paul to see the significance of the two sprinklings on Israel's typical Day of Atonement as that which in antitype occurred 'once.' It was, indeed, but one ceremony in the type, its many occurrences being the year-by-year repetition. In the antitype, in the 'end of the world [age],' there is but one ceremony in which Christ puts away sin. But in this one service there is, as shown in the type, the two sprinklings, and the two appearances -- the first is for 'us,' the church of Christ, and the second will be for all the people.

**Hebrews 9:27,28** "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Verse twenty-seven is frequently misused to prove the erroneous theory that there is no probation after death, that the destiny of each individual is unalterably fixed the moment he dies. The text has no direct reference to the death of humanity in general; but even if it did, the language proves that judgment is not rendered at the time of death but 'after' death, and the Scriptures generally bear this out. After humanity goes into the Adamic death, they will be raised from death and given another, an individual, judgment or trial for life.

The text, however, is really continuing the discussion of sacrificial death. The 'men' referred to seem clearly to be Israel's high priests, and this is borne out by the Greek definite article, "the." (See "*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*") They died sacrificially as represented in the animals they offered. If they did not carry out every detail of the service according to the LORD's instructions, they would be judged unworthy to enter into the Most Holy with the blood, and would die as they passed under the second veil.

So Christ was once offered, Paul continues. He did not offer a bullock as did the high priest in the type, but offered himself. Had he been unfaithful in this offering he would



have died the 'second death,' and would not have been raised from the dead, therefore could not have appeared in the presence of God for us. But he was faithful, and assurance has been given all men of this, said Paul on Mars' Hill, "in that he [God] hath raised him from the dead." -- Acts 17:31

He appeared for the church at the beginning of the age. The evidence of this was the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But he is to 'appear' again, not in sacrificial robes, but in glory, and the evidence will be the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. This will be on behalf of 'them' that look for him. Note again the distinction between 'them' and 'us,' as in verses twenty-four and twenty-eight. Those who 'look for him' will doubtless embrace practically all mankind as they become acquainted with the love of God and with the wonderful provision he has made through Christ for their salvation -- their restoration to human perfection and everlasting life. -- Isaiah 25:9

## "A New and Living Way"

THIS CHAPTER CONTINUES the discussion of chapter 9, carrying the thought forward to show still more completely how the voluntary offering of Jesus' human life was a complete sacrifice, which not only atones for sin, but by so doing prepares the way for the sinner to be fully reconciled to God.

### CHAPTER 10

**Hebrews 10:1** "The Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."

Here, as in chapter 8:5, is brought out the thought of a shadow cast by a substance. Typical Israel could not discern the significance of these shadows. Indeed, they did not recognize them as such, but considered them to be the reality. Nor would it be possible for us to see them as shadows but for the fact that the sunlight of the Gospel reveals them as such. Standing in the light of the Gospel, we see in the shadow of those typical ceremonies the images of the realities which we, as spiritual Israelites, are now privileged to enjoy.

**Hebrews 10:2-4** "Then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Paul's argument is simple, yet conclusive: had those typical sacrifices been effective in taking away sin, there would have been no more remembrance of sin on the part of the sinner -- he would have enjoyed genuine and lasting peace. But this was not the case, hence the necessity of repeating the sacrifices 'year by year continually,' and even this failed to 'make the comers thereunto perfect.'

The conclusion is, not that the typical priests failed to offer those sacrifices in the proper manner, or that those seeking atonement were not sincere, but rather that under no circumstances could the blood of bulls and goats take away sins. God did not intend that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Those sacrifices were merely shadows, to be looked back upon from this age, patterns pointing forward to the blood of Christ, the real medium of atonement.

**Hebrews 10:5** "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me."

The Apostle Paul in this verse, speaking of Jesus, quotes the *Septuagint Version* of Psalm 40:6 in the Old Testament. The Logos, in all the glory he had with the Father in his prehuman existence, could not have offered a sacrifice which would have been efficacious to take away human sin. A corresponding price was necessary, so it was necessary that the Logos be "made flesh," (John 1:14) that a human body be especially 'prepared,' and it was his flesh that he gave for the life of the world. The Heavenly Father prepared this body by choosing a mother that was pure of heart and full of faith, and transferring a vigorous, perfect spark of life from the spiritual realm to her womb, that it might be "found in fashion as a man." -- Philippians 2:8

**Hebrews 10:6** "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure."

This does not mean that God was not pleased with the efforts of his typical people who in sincerity brought their animal sacrifices to him in keeping with the prescribed arrangements of the Law. True, there was often a lack of genuine sincerity in their offerings, and ultimately those typical ceremonies deteriorated into mere formalism, and oftentimes hypocritical formalism. With this Jehovah was greatly displeased. But even at the best, he received 'no pleasure' in the sense that he realized, even though the people did not, that those animal sacrifices could not take away sins, hence could not open the way for members of the sin-cursed and dying race to return to him and enjoy his fellowship and blessing. In contrast to this we think of the prophet's statement concerning Jesus that "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." -- Isaiah 53:11

**Hebrews 10:7** "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

Again Paul quotes from Psalm 40:7,8, and applies the prophecy to Jesus. It expresses the sentiments of Jesus' heart as he presented himself in full consecration to do his Father's will. None of the Gospel writers indicate that Jesus ever quoted this prophecy, but it surely must have been in his mind when he presented himself to God at the time of his baptism. Luke 3:21 records that Jesus did offer prayer at the time of his baptism; and it is reasonable to conclude that it was here that he made the words of the prophecy his own, saying to his Father, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

The will of the Heavenly Father for Jesus was not an indefinite matter, for it all had been minutely recorded in the 'volume of the book,' that is, in the Old Testament Scriptures, and Jesus agreed to be guided by its every detail. Paul's reference to these terms of the Master's consecration, associating them with the Tabernacle types, suggests that in addition to the written words of instruction, the types and shadows of the Tabernacle and its services were intended also to be an expression of the Father's will for his beloved Son, to guide him in his course of sacrifice as he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

**Hebrews 10:8,9** "Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

In these verses Paul expounds somewhat the meaning of the prophecy concerning Jesus which he had quoted 'above,' repeating a part of the prophecy for emphasis. In the type, there was a dedication of the Tabernacle and of the priesthood which were to serve under the terms of the Law Covenant. That was the 'first' arrangement by which the sins of the people were expiated, and sinners reconciled to God. But it was merely a typical arrangement. It did not actually take away sin. It merely called attention to the need for sin atonement and pointed forward to the real sacrifice which would make this possible, and to a New Covenant under which sinners redeemed by the blood of Christ would be restored to at-one-ment with God.

Jesus' consecration, as foretold in the prophecy, was the beginning of the establishment of the 'second.' In order to have this whole picture clearly in mind, however, it is essential to see that the consecration of the typical priesthood, and the dedication of the Tabernacle did not constitute the complete making of that old Law Covenant. These ceremonies were merely a means to an end, and the end was the reconciliation of the nation to God under the terms of the Law Covenant.

So far as God was concerned, that typical covenant, and all the sacrifices associated with it, came to an end when Jesus began his ministry, for there the New Covenant arrangements began to be set up. First, as the Head of the great antitypical priesthood, Jesus consecrated himself to God and to his service, and this work of consecrating the priesthood has continued throughout the entire age, and is still going on. This is not the work of the New Covenant, but the preparation for it.

The establishment of the second, or New Covenant, is in two phases, even as was that of the typical covenant. First there is the consecration of the priesthood and the provision of the blood. This is the work of the Gospel Age. Then there is the reconciliation of the people made possible by the blood and through the services of the priesthood. This will be the work of the Millennial Age. Not until the close of the millennium will the work of the New Covenant be fully completed. Its establishment began with the consecration of Jesus, who dedicated himself at Jordan to be the Head of the great antitypical priesthood.

**Hebrews 10:10** "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

'By the which will.' -- This is the same 'will' of God mentioned in the prophecy, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." In this will of God for Jesus there was a provision for him to have a church, who would be at one with him, sanctified by the Spirit of the Truth, even as he was sanctified by his obedience to the word of Truth. But our full sanctification would not be possible apart from the merit of his blood, provided through the sacrifice of the perfect human body provided for him.

But again let us emphasize that this sanctification of Christ's body members is but a preparatory step in the establishment of the New Covenant -- that covenant under the terms of which the world will have an opportunity to believe and be reconciled to God. On behalf of his body members Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," and then added, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Again, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." -- John 17:17,19,22-23

Note the great objective of the sanctification of Christ and his church -- 'that the world may know' that God sent Christ to be the Redeemer and Savior. The purpose of this is that the world may have an opportunity to believe, for "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14) It will be under the terms of the New Covenant, during the millennium, that the world will be given this opportunity for belief and reconciliation. Then Christ and his church will be reigning as "kings and priests," (Revelation 5:10) the members of the church having been made acceptable through the blood of Christ, shed once for all. It is the blood of the New Covenant because it is the blood which makes possible the sanctification of the priesthood of that covenant, and through the service of that priesthood the same blood will be the basis for the reconciliation to God of all who accept the invitation, "Come. ... take the water of life freely." -- Revelation 22:17

**Hebrews 10:11-14** "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

There is a seeming contrast in these verses between the typical high priest's standing to offer sacrifice and the antitypical high priest, Jesus, being seated at the right hand of God after he had offered his perfect sacrifice once for all. In the type, the priest was obliged to continue 'day by day' offering sacrifices, and even then no genuine cleansing from sin was accomplished. But in the antitype, following the 'once for all' sacrifice, results were expected, and Jesus, exalted at the right hand of God, waits for those results. -- vs. 10

The fact that the church participates with Jesus in the sacrificial work of the Gospel Age does not mean that his shed blood was not efficacious to expiate the sins of both the church and the world. The once for all feature of the atoning work refers only to the provision of the ransom. The church's share in the work of reconciliation has to do merely with the manner in which the merit of the ransom is made available for the reconciliation of the world. A part of that arrangement is that the blood first of all forms a basis for the sanctification of the church that she might share with Jesus in the mediatorial work of the next age as "ministers of a new covenant." -- 2 Corinthians 3:6, *New International Version*

**Hebrews 10:15-18** "The Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

This is a wonderful use of a proof text! Paul had just said that the sacrifice of Jesus had 'perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' To prove that this could be possible, he cites the promise of the New Covenant, the promise in which the Lord declares concerning those reconciled to him during the age to come, that 'their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.' In the case of the ineffectual typical sacrifice, which could not make the comers thereto perfect, there was a 'remembrance' of sins, and new sacrifices had to be made. But this is not the case with the sacrifice of Jesus. The very fact that God had promised, on behalf of the restored world, that he would remember their sins no more, is proof that the sacrifice which made possible their reconciliation was fully and forever efficacious. Since it is so on behalf of those who will be restored to actual perfection in the next age, it is also true on behalf of those who, upon the basis of the same sacrifice, are now justified by faith and thus reckoned perfect in the sight of God.

**Hebrews 10:19-22** "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

As is so often the case, we find that here again, beginning with verse 16, Paul sets forth the hope of both the church and the world. The hope of the world is that of being reconciled to God under the terms of the New Covenant. This is restitution hope, made sure by the blood of Christ. It is cited by the apostle to prove that the merit of the blood guarantees absolute perfection to those who later will accept it under the terms of the New Covenant.

But now, having assured us that the blood does provide the possibility of human perfection, he tells us that upon the basis of sacrifice made acceptable by the blood -- as acceptable as though we were perfect human beings like Jesus -- we have 'boldness to enter into the holiest,' the antitypical holiest, that is, even heaven itself. No Israelite in the camp of Israel was ever offered the opportunity of entering into the typical Most Holy. Only the high priest had that privilege, and he had it only because he carried with him the blood, first of the bullock, and then of the goat, offered on the Day of Atonement.

It would be boldness akin to presumption for us to attempt to enter into the antitypical Most Holy were it not that the Scriptures make it so abundantly plain that we are invited to this High Calling. Paul's argument literally places the consecrated followers of the Master in the position, antitypically, as foreshadowed by the typical high priest. But he tells us that we have a right to aspire to this high position because the blood of Christ

gives us a reckoned standing of perfection before the Lord. Our hearts, he says, are 'sprinkled from an evil conscience,' and 'our bodies washed with pure water' -- the water of the Word.

## **Holding Fast to the Faith**

ROUGHLY SPEAKING, the book of Hebrews is divided into three sections. The first six chapters are largely in the nature of exhortation, although they lay the groundwork for the doctrinal discussion (the second section) which begins with chapter seven. This doctrinal discussion, with occasional exhortations interspersed, continues until verse 22 of this tenth chapter. The third section begins here, and while still building upon the doctrinal foundation, the apostle exhorts the brethren to renew their faith and zeal lest they let these things "slip." -- Hebrews 2:1

**Hebrews 10:23** "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

After the Apostle Paul has explained how Jesus opened a new and living way for those who would follow in his steps, he exhorts them to hold fast the profession of their faith as they walk in this new way. In the Greek text the word 'hope' is indicated, rather than 'faith.' The exhortation is, therefore, to hold fast the profession of our hope. It is this hope which is as an anchor to our souls, as it enters into and lays hold upon that which is within the veil. Thus if we are to have "boldness" to enter into the holiest of all, we must hold fast to our anchor of hope, the anchor which should be firmly fixed within the "veil."  
-- Hebrews 10:19,20

Paul has already explained that the 'veil' represents Jesus' flesh -- his sacrificed flesh, of course. And if we are to enter into that which is beyond the veil, it means also the sacrifice of our flesh -- being planted together in the likeness of his death. We are not sufficient for this of ourselves. It is only as we are "sprinkled" and "washed" that God will consider us worthy. (Hebrews 10:22) These thoughts were illustrated by the sprinkling of the typical priests with blood, and by their washing at the laver in the court.

We are to hold fast 'without wavering.' The Hebrews were showing a tendency to waver, and the great effort of the apostle throughout his letter is to strengthen their determination to "go on unto perfection," not to draw back. (Hebrews 6:1) They apparently had endured considerable suffering on account of their faith in Christ, and possibly their wavering was due in part to their lack of understanding of the Christian's share in the better sacrifices of the Gospel Age, hence Paul's effort to show them that they were priests and, as such, must expect to offer sacrifice, not of animals, but themselves. In keeping with this Divine plan, God was faithful. If they expected him to deliver them from all trial, then it would appear that he was unfaithful, but with the proper vision of their place in the plan of God, they should be able to 'hold fast' and with 'boldness' seek to enter into the 'holiest.'



**Hebrews 10:24,25** "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Paul wrote to the Philippian brethren, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Philippians 2:4) This is what it means to 'consider one another.' We are to give consideration to their needs, particularly along spiritual lines, and noting them, do all we can to help, to encourage, to 'provoke' particularly unto 'love and to good works.' Perhaps the most frequently recurring need of all Christians is thus to be provoked. The flesh shrinks from sacrifice, and it is so easy to become "weary in well doing" that we need the exhortation to faithfulness which we receive from one another. -- Galatians 6:9

It is difficult to exhort those with whom we are not associated, so logically the apostle reminds us of the importance of meeting together for mutual encouragement, 'and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.' This epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the time of trouble which brought the Jewish Age to its final end. That trouble was in a measure typical of that which is upon the world today, which now betokens the near approach of the new day of kingdom blessings.

Possibly the conditions leading up to that trouble at the end of the Jewish Age were looked upon as signs that the kingdom was even then near. In any case, the Early Church did not expect that nearly twenty centuries would elapse before the kingdom would be established. Paul wrote that the night was far spent, and that the day was at hand. (Romans 13:12) To the Early Church the time was short, and this was given as one reason they should assemble so much the more. With what great force this exhortation applies to the LORD's people now, when the 'day' is not only approaching, but about ready to manifest itself in the blessing of the sin-cursed and dying world. Never before was it more important for the LORD's people to meet together for mutual encouragement.

**Hebrews 10:26,27** "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

It is the willful sin of Adam, primarily, that is expiated by the blood of Christ. It is because there is 'no more sacrifice for sins' that those who now, after having come to a knowledge of the Truth, become willful sinners and, continuing their willfulness, will die the "second death." (Revelation 21:8) Carelessness is not in itself necessarily willful sin although it can easily lead to a willful neglect of the grace of God. Perhaps this is why the apostle mentions the point of willfulness and its consequences directly after his admonition not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Certainly a failure to meet with the LORD's people might be a first step toward losing all interest in the Truth and in the LORD.

**Hebrews 10:28,29** "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who

hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

Some Christians might interpret the 'sorer punishment' here mentioned as being eternal torture. But this is not the thought. The wages of sin is death. Those who sinned willfully against Moses' Law died, but their death is not eternal. That was the typical age, and the death penalty then inflicted was merely illustrative of the 'second death,' a death from which the Scriptures promise no resurrection. This latter punishment is therefore 'sorer' because it will last forever.

Paul suggests that the sin which ultimately results in the second death is treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. But notice the expression -- 'wherewith he was sanctified.' This indicates that only those who have accepted the blood, and have been sanctified by it, can do 'despite unto the Spirit of grace,' and receive the punishment of the second death.

**Hebrews 10:30,31** "We know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The statement by the LORD, 'Vengeance is mine, I will recompense,' is frequently quoted in exhortations to brethren not to judge one another, but to leave all judgment with the LORD. But here the apostle is using it to emphasize that the LORD will, indeed, punish the willful sinner -- 'I will recompense.' So serious is this for those who reject the provisions of the blood of Christ after having been 'sprinkled' and sanctified by that blood, that he adds, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

For such as do despite to the grace of God through Christ, it is indeed a fearful thing. To them nothing remains but a 'fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,' of which they are a part. Falling into the hands of God as here indicated means to be dealt with according to the terms of his strict justice, and without benefit of the atoning merit of the blood of Christ.

**Hebrews 10:32-34** "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

In these verses again is revealed the practical purpose of the epistle; namely, to reestablish the faith and zeal of the Hebrew brethren. The 'former days' were ones of zeal and self-sacrifice, days in which they took 'joyfully the spoiling of your goods.' But evidently there had been a change. Their "first love" had somewhat cooled. (Revelation

2:4) Paul's evident object in asking them to recall those former days was in order that they might endeavor to recapture their spirit of love and joy and self-sacrifice.

In this admonition there are revealed two ways in which we may suffer with Christ. The first is that of being at the front of the battle, and thus of coming in actual contact with the trials and persecutions which result from such active participation in the work of the Gospel. The other is in being the 'companions' of those who are 'so used.' Paul suffered much under the first category, but many in the Early Church, including the Hebrews, suffered with him by letting it be known that they were his friends and supporters. In one, or both, of these ways it is still the privilege of the brethren to suffer for righteousness' sake and, by faithfulness, prove worthy of joint-heirship with Christ in the kingdom.

**Hebrews 10:35,36** "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

Again is indicated the evident tendency of the Hebrews to let go their hold on 'these things.' Sometimes the sheer weight of trials tends temporarily to discourage. This is understandable but Paul was warning against casting away, or throwing away, their confidence. This might be very close to a willful sin.

'Ye have need of patience,' Paul wrote. The Hebrews ran well for a time, but they needed patience in order to continue. They had done the 'will of God' in presenting themselves in consecration, but this was not enough, for that alone would not result in their receiving what the LORD had promised. Only those "that shall endure unto the end" receive the "crown of life." -- Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:10

**Hebrews 10:37** "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

The time element in the plan of God has always been a test of faith to his people. The apostle here alludes to the prophecy of Habakkuk 2:2,3, where the LORD gives us the assurance that the great vision of his plan will not tarry. Paul thus applies this prophecy to the end of the age and to the return and presence of Christ. This great event in the plan of God was the inspiration of the Early Church. Paul's reference to it here emphasizes that all he had said concerning the hope of both the church and the world must await fulfillment until 'he that shall come will come.' And now that he is here, how faithful we should be! How we should hold fast without wavering!

**Hebrews 10:38,39** "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

The apostle again quotes from the prophecy of Habakkuk (chapter 2, vs. 4) -- "The just shall live by his faith." But the loss of faith means a drawing back. How firmly, yet lovingly, the apostle endeavored to take hold of these Hebrews and lift them up to more solid ground. 'We are not of them who draw back unto perdition.' Evidently they had let

these things slip to some extent, but they had not yet sinned willfully. They needed to be taught again the "first principles of the oracles of God," (Hebrews 5:12) but Paul believed this possible, and that they were 'not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.' Doubtless Paul was right.

## **Heroes of Faith**

THE HEBREW BRETHREN to whom this epistle was originally written were, seemingly, inclined to be somewhat unstable in their faith and zeal. One of the practical purposes of the epistle was to stimulate them to give "more earnest heed" to the things which they had heard, lest at any time they should let them slip. (Hebrews 2:1) They had apparently been zealous for a time, but had become lax, so that now they needed to be taught again the first principles of the Truth. (Hebrews 5:12) It is in keeping with his effort to revive their faith and zeal that in the tenth chapter Paul asks these brethren to recall the "former days," and reminds them of their willingness at that time to suffer for the cause of Christ, adding that then they endured "joyfully" the spoiling of their goods. - Hebrews 10:32,34

Maintaining this objective of the epistle, Paul presents the wonderful lesson of faith, which we find in the eleventh chapter. Beginning with verse 32 of chapter 10, the apostle builds up to, and introduces, his discussion of faith, showing the Hebrew brethren how essential faith was to them, lest they should "draw back unto perdition." (Hebrews 10:39) In order to establish the fact that genuine faith in God and in his promises is a mighty keeping power in the lives of those who serve God, Paul cites, in this eleventh chapter, many examples of the past, beginning with Abel, and notes how faith gave them strength to accomplish and endure.

A study of the chapter gives one a deeper appreciation of the power of faith in the life of a devoted servant of God, showing how it enabled him to endure, fortified him to resist discouragement, and to continue in a way of life in which it is known that danger and hardship would almost constantly be encountered. Truly, the Ancient Worthies present a glittering testimony of their faithfulness in enduring inhuman persecution. What a powerful incentive to greater faithfulness this testimony must have been to the Hebrew brethren when it was so eloquently presented to them by Paul!

### **CHAPTER 11**

**Hebrews 11:1** "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

The Greek word here translated 'substance' could be more properly rendered 'foundation,' or 'basis.' Faith, therefore, is the basis for our hope, and the evidence (Greek, 'proof,' or 'conviction') that it will find fruition in the glorious realities of the things promised. The 'things hoped for' and the 'things not seen' are the same. In Romans 8:24,25 Paul writes, "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

We could have no hope apart from faith. The other essential element of hope is desire. It would be improper to say that we hoped for something which we did not desire. Nor could we say that we hope for some desirable thing if we had no assurance of ever receiving it. The natural eye has not seen the glorious spiritual inheritance which God has promised to the church, but, as Paul explains, they have been revealed to us by the Spirit, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." -- 1 Corinthians 2:10

This does not mean that we can actually understand what a Divine being is really like; but the Spirit of God, through the Word, has revealed sufficiently to create within us a desire for heavenly things, and the assurance is given us by the promises that we will be able to attain such a reward. It is our faith which grasps these promises and thus gives us a reason for hoping for the things which we have been led to desire.

**Hebrews 11:2** "By it the elders obtained a good report."

The 'elders' referred to here are undoubtedly the Ancient Worthies, the 'fathers' of Israel, for it is these whom the apostle discusses throughout the chapter. The expression, 'obtained a good report,' seems to indicate that these faithful ones of the past received from the LORD some assurance that they were pleasing to him -- something, probably, akin to what is described in Christian experience as the witness of "the Spirit." (Romans 8:16) It is also true, of course, that this 'report' has reached us, bringing the individual faithfulness of each of the elders in a wonderful panorama of inspiration (or as Paul puts it, "a cloud of witnesses") for our encouragement. -- Hebrews 12:1

**Hebrews 11:3** "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

True faith is not blind, for it enables one to see, to 'understand,' as Paul states it in this text. As we view nature today we discern that everything which develops, or grows, starts with something which is largely visible -- a seed becomes a plant, a grub becomes a moth. Reason tells us that this could not have been true in the original Creation. Faith builds upon our reasoning, and comes to the understanding that through the mighty power of God, the visible things of creation were 'framed,' not from things which appear, but from invisible elements beyond our powers to comprehend. In Romans 1:20 the apostle writes, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen [by the eye of faith], being understood by the things that are made."

We understand by faith, Paul states, that the worlds were framed by the 'word' of God. The Greek word here used is not *logos*, but one which means a command, or directive. Paul's reasoning here is evidently based upon his knowledge of the Genesis account of Creation, where such expressions are found as "Let there be light"; "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters"; "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together." Thus did the Creator command, and the worlds were framed. -- Genesis 1:3,6,9

The Greek word translated 'worlds' in this text is *aion*, meaning 'age,' or in the plural, ages. Paul's reference, therefore, may be understood to include God's Divine plan of the ages pertaining to man's place in his great creative scheme. The language of the texts seems to preclude the possibility of limiting the reference merely to the ages in the Divine plan, but these might well be included since they have to do with man's eternal existence, as the crowning feature of God's earthly creation.

**Hebrews 11:4** "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Paul tells us. (Romans 10:17) This would indicate that Abel received information from God concerning the kind of sacrifice he should offer. If it had simply been a case of each of the brothers offering to the LORD what they had on hand to give, Abel's faith would not have entered into the offering any more than Cain's. Seldom does the Bible give all the details of any occurrence and, although no mention is made of it, we think it is quite possible that Abel was informed by the LORD that he wished a flesh and blood offering. His obedience demonstrated his faith, proving that he was righteous.

The text says that Abel was 'righteous.' The same Greek word is used here as when Paul wrote, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10) In this latter statement, however, absolute righteousness, or perfection, is referred to, whereas the righteousness of Abel was merely his heart condition which was demonstrated by his faith and obedience. It is essentially the same thought as that contained in the reference to Abraham's justification by faith.

A close analysis reveals the great importance God attaches to faith in him and in his arrangements and promises. Had Adam possessed true faith and confidence in God he would not have transgressed his law. While Adam's descendants have lost perfection and life because of his sin, those such as Abel, Abraham, and others who, despite their imperfections, did believe God, proved their worthiness of his favor and friendship. Such faith-righteousness is properly and scripturally described as justification.

During the Gospel Age those who possess such a faith, and demonstrate it by full consecration to the LORD, are justified to life through the merit of the shed blood of Christ. This is in order that they might present their bodies living and acceptable sacrifices to God and thus share in the sacrificial work of this age. However, during the preceding ages there was no opportunity to share in the "better sacrifices." (Hebrews 9:23) The imputation of the blood of Christ was not needed to give a standing of life to God's servants; but their faith was no less vital because of this, nor were they less pleasing to God. It is simply that he dealt with them differently than he does with those in this age who possess a justifying faith.

While it is true that God's testimony concerning Abel's righteousness has come down through the ages to us, the text also indicates that Abel himself was encouraged by this

'witness.' His life of faithfulness was brief, and probably he received little in the way of reward except this assurance of the Creator's favor and love. We doubt if any greater blessing could be experienced by anyone than to know that he is a friend of God. It is even a blessing to us now to know that by faith Abel proved worthy of this high honor, for his example stimulates us to be faithful. In the margin, the expression, 'yet speaketh,' is translated, 'is yet spoken of.' Not many of all the millions who have died throughout the ages have been remembered long by their own generation, but these heroes of faith of the Old Testament are still spoken of, and their lives cited as examples, thousands of years after they died.

In passing, it is well to give thought as to why God was pleased with the flesh and blood sacrifice offered by Abel. It was evidently because it pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) When condemning our first parents to death, God made the statement that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. (Genesis 3:15) This was a veiled promise of future deliverance from the result of original sin. But for this to be possible there would need to be remission of sin, so God began to illustrate that this was to be accomplished by the shedding of blood. As his plan of redemption unfolds, it comes to light that it was to be through the shed blood of his own beloved Son.

**Hebrews 11:5** "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

In Genesis 5:24 we are informed that Enoch "walked with God." This was a walk of faith. Not much is said in the Scriptures about Enoch, but Jude informs us that he prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord with myriads of his saints to execute judgment. (Jude 14) This would indicate that in his walk with God, Enoch had been informed concerning at least some of the Divine plan, and that he believed what the LORD told him and acted upon it. So in this again is shown God's pleasure with those who believe his promises. Even in the human sphere of association it would be impossible to enjoy friendly relationships with those who did not believe what we said. How much truer this is in our relationship to God!

Enoch was 'translated,' Paul tells us, 'that he should not see death.' This is one of the texts in the Bible which is used by many of our Christian friends to prove that the righteous do not sleep in death, but are taken immediately to heaven. But does the Greek word here rendered 'translated,' necessarily imply this? Two other examples of the Biblical use of this word may help us to reach a conclusion. One is found in Jude 4, in which the word 'turning' is a translation of the same Greek word, and the text reads, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." The other example is in Galatians 1:6, in which the word 'removed' is a translation of the Greek word Paul used in Hebrews 11:5 to describe what happened to Enoch. This text reads, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel." Obviously the word translated, with the meaning ordinarily attached to it, would be quite



out of place in both of these texts; for in both instances the writers are simply describing a changed position, or attitude, of certain believers. They had allowed themselves to be removed, or turned, from one position to another. "*Strong's Concordance*" gives the literal meaning of the word as 'transfer.'

The question remaining, then, is in what sense was Enoch removed, or transferred -- from what, to what? The Scriptures divide the dead and dying world of mankind into two general groups, the "quick," and the "dead." (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1) The 'quick' are evidently those who, while under condemnation to death, are still alive, not having fallen asleep in death; while the 'dead' are those who have actually gone down into the tomb. To be transferred from one of these classes into the other could well be what Paul tells us God did for Enoch in order that he 'should not see death' -- that is, should not experience the painful process of dying, or what is sometimes referred to as 'death agonies.' Most people, in thinking of the time they will die, express the wish that they might go suddenly, in their sleep, if possible; and for Enoch to be taken in this way, without his being conscious of what was occurring, could well be construed as a great favor from the LORD.

The Old Testament record seems to bear out this conclusion. It does not use the word 'translated,' as the seemingly faulty translation of the Greek in Hebrews 11:5 suggests, but simply states that "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24) The expression "were not," is used in Jeremiah 31:15 to describe the death condition of Rahel's children. And the Scriptures tell us concerning certain wicked cities of Abraham's day that God "took" them away as he saw good. (Ezek. 16:50) So, the fact that Enoch 'was not,' and that God 'took' him, does not imply that he has remained alive somewhere, but rather the opposite.

In any event, we know that Enoch was not taken to heaven, for Jesus declared definitely in his day that no man had ascended to heaven. (John 3:13) To us the weight of testimony seems to be to the effect that in Enoch's case God intervened to end his life without the necessity of suffering the horrors of dying, while with others of his faithful servants he did not -- with the possible exception of Moses, although Moses at least knew that he was about to die. Finally, in Paul's summation of the lives of the first mentioned of these Ancient Worthies, he says, "These all died in faith." -- vs. 13

**Hebrews 11:6** "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

The faith referred to is that which begins with one's original confidence of God's existence, and that the Creator is a just and loving God, one who rewards those who diligently seek him. It is faith that causes one to "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him," as the apostle declares. (Acts 17:27) But "all men have not faith," Paul explains. (2 Thessalonians 3:2) Those who do not have faith do not enjoy God's favor at the present time, for nothing inspires them to search after him. How thankful we can be, however, to realize that in the next age, the glory of God will be demonstrated to the faithless ones, giving them an opportunity to approach him upon the

basis of 'sight.' When, in this way, they learn to know God, they too will have faith in him; and, if they demonstrate their faith by their obedience to the laws of the new kingdom then operative throughout the earth, they will be rewarded with life everlasting on the earth. That will be the day of their 'visitation.'

In the present age the Lord is dealing with, and blessing, only those who have faith strong enough to be convinced that he is able and willing to fulfill all his gracious promises. And faith should grow stronger as we become better acquainted with the LORD, and experience the manifold blessings which he continually showers upon those who 'diligently seek him.' The evidence of a growing faith will be found in the increasing zeal in seeking to know and do the Heavenly Father's will.

Every follower of the Master needs a strong faith in order to meet the various tests which Divine wisdom permits to come upon him. But faith gives the victory now, even as it did for those heroes of faith throughout Old Testament times. Just as faith enabled them to suffer and to die in their loyalty to God, and in their obedience to his cause which he had entrusted to them, so it will be with us. It is only through the exercise of such an increasing faith that we can hope to have the witness of his favor, and be assured of receiving the reward which he has so many times promised.

The quality of the faith described by Paul is also worthy of note. It is a belief, not only in the existence of God, but has in it a measure of comprehension of his wonderful character -- that he is 'a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Millions have had a negative sort of faith that there is a God, but it has not been the kind of faith described by Paul. It has been more akin to fear. They have been afraid that a demonlike god existed, and that he was ready to plunge them into an abyss of torture if they failed to please him. For this reason they have tried, in some measure, to please him, but their efforts have not been based upon a true faith.

**Hebrews 11:7** "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

In this text we are again reminded that faith is the evidence of things unseen, for Noah believed what God told him concerning the coming flood before there was any visible evidence of rain. And this was a greater test of faith than it might seem to us now, since those of the antediluvian world had never seen rain at all, for the record is that a mist went up from the earth to water it. -- Genesis 2:6

In so many cases the translators of our common version Bible take occasion to introduce the idea of 'fear' into the text, evidently because of the gross misapprehension they had of the character of God. Here we have another example of this. They have used the word 'warned,' when the Greek expression which they translate simply means 'to utter an oracle.' And the word fear, in the expression that Noah was 'moved with fear,' simply means to be circumspect, or having due reverence for God and the desire to conduct

himself in keeping with the information which he had received from him concerning the coming Deluge and the need they would have for an ark.

It was Noah's faith that led to this attitude, and acting in harmony therewith he built the ark -- another demonstration of the fact that only through works of obedience is faith manifested. And Noah actually did demonstrate his faith and thereby 'condemned the world' -- that is, "the world that then was." (2 Peter 3:6) The record is that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, although none of his sermons is recorded in the Bible. On the principle that actions speak louder than words, may it not be that part of his 'preaching' was done by the fact that, exercising faith in what God told him concerning the coming Flood, he proceeded to build the ark?

The world did not believe this testimony nor any other which Noah might have given to them, so they were brought under condemnation and perished in the Flood. It was his faith in God and in the information God had given to him, leading to obedience in building the ark, which highlighted the faithlessness of the world at that time; for, through him, and as a result of his faith, the people had an opportunity to believe, but failed to accept it. Thus they were condemned.

At the same time, Noah's obedience resulted in his becoming an heir to the righteousness which is by faith. In other words, he was brought into the same friendly relationship with God as were the other heroes of faith of that ancient time. And what a favored position that was for all of them!

## **The Father of the Faithful**

THE FAITH LIFE OF ABRAHAM stands out very prominently in the Scriptures, and the more so when we realize that in the city of Ur where he was living when God called him, he was one of a very few -- perhaps almost the only one -- who had faith in and worshiped Jehovah, the Creator and only true God. Findings of archeologists reveal that the citizens of Ur as a whole were worshipers of the moon god, but despite his heathen surroundings, Abraham maintained his belief. Even his father seemingly did not share his faith, although the Scriptures indicate that Sarah, his wife, did; and to some extent this was probably true of his nephew Lot.

**Hebrews 11:8** "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

Abraham maintained his belief in the true God despite his surroundings. Now his faith was put to a further test, for the God whom he worshiped spoke to him and invited his cooperation in a Divine plan for the blessing of all the families of the earth. (Genesis 12:1-3) In God's call to Abraham we see exemplified the manner in which he deals with practically all his faithful servants; that is, he told him something about his plan, and then invited Abraham to participate in it. If he has given us an understanding of his Word and plan, we should construe it to be his call to become "workers together with him." -- 2 Corinthians 6:1

Abraham was called to go to a place which he 'should after receive.' In the Hebrew text the thought here is that Abraham believed he was about to receive the land; and, of course, there is nothing of record in what God said to him which would indicate that he would not possess the land as soon as he complied with the conditions and entered into it. But in this also his faith was severely tested, for actually he never did become the owner of the promised land. See Acts 7:4,5.

Abraham demonstrated his faith by the fact that he 'obeyed.' James stated the thought differently, saying, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." (James 2:18) Regardless of how much faith we may claim to have, or believe in our own hearts that we possess, if it fails to pass this simple, though exacting test of obedience, we are deceiving ourselves.

Abraham obeyed, 'not knowing whither he went.' His lack of knowledge concerning the outcome of his obedience made the test more severe and caused his faith to stand out more resplendently by contrast with the unbelief of many with whom he was associated in Ur. Sometimes the expression 'blind obedience' is used, and this was essentially the

sort of obedience by which Abraham demonstrated his faith by leaving Ur and starting for the land of Canaan.

**Hebrews 11:9** "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."

If Abraham believed that he would possess the land of Canaan soon after he reached it, his faith in God's promises was again tested, for he was only a sojourner in the land, living there 'as in a strange country.' He lived in 'tabernacles,' or, as the Hebrew text indicates, tents, or cloth huts.

**Hebrews 11:10** "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Abraham gladly lived in tents throughout the remainder of his life after leaving Ur, for he 'looked for a city.' So far as the Old Testament record is concerned, the only promises God made to Abraham were those pertaining to the land, and that in his "seed" all the families of the earth should be blessed. (Genesis 22:18) Apparently it was from the promises relative to the 'seed,' and the blessing to reach the people through this seed, that he was encouraged to look for a 'city.'

In Galatians 3:8 Paul mentions the promise made to Abraham, and uses the word "nations," instead of 'families,' in his reference to the blessings which are to reach the people through the seed. When we take into consideration what constituted nations in Abraham's day, there is really no difference in the meaning of these two words, for nations then were merely family arrangements, or tribes, and usually the leading member of the family was ruler of the tribe.

In comparison with nations of today these tribal arrangements were small, usually with only one main aggregation of people in a central city which frequently was walled for protection, and looked to by the surrounding tribesmen as their center of government. A city then, to Abraham, contained the thought of rulership, or a governing center.

Abraham probably was a respected citizen in Ur, but there is nothing to indicate that he was in any way associated with the rulership of that people. So, when God spoke to him and promised a seed through which all the families, or nations, of the earth would be blessed, he probably visualized himself as becoming the head of a new governing family which, under Divine blessing, would become so large and so powerful that it would extend its beneficent influence over all the other nations. Jesus said that Abraham "rejoiced" to see his day -- that is, he believed that all mankind would be blessed. -- John 8:56

God's people know that the city of which Abraham will actually become a part is the glorious kingdom of the Lord; but it is doubtful if he visualized it as clearly in his day as we do now. Since he had no spiritual insight into the plan of God, his concept of the Divine promise would of necessity be limited to the knowledge which was based upon

his own experiences and observations. His faith, that God was indeed the builder and maker of the city for which he looked, was strengthened from time to time by the marvelous manner in which the LORD dealt with him, particularly in the birth of Isaac. In this there could be no doubt that the LORD was building the promised city, for otherwise Isaac could not have been born.

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

From this text we learn that Sarah shared the faith of her husband. She also believed that God would fulfill his promises. The fact that Paul emphasizes the power of Sarah's faith, which resulted in a miracle conception, ties in with his reference in the previous verse to Abraham's belief that God was the builder and maker of the city for which he was looking. Sarah was barren even in her youth, and now she was old, yet God gave her strength to conceive and to bear Isaac. What better proof could they both have that God was working to fulfill his promises?

**Hebrews 11:12** "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

As the great plan of God unfolds throughout the Scriptures, we learn that the promised seed will be of two parts, the heavenly and the earthly. This seems to be suggested by the double comparison; that is, to the 'stars of the sky,' and the 'sand which is by the sea shore.' True, in this text, the special emphasis of the illustrations seems to be that of the great numbers involved, but this will be true of both the heavenly and the earthly seeds.

The heavenly seed of Abraham will first of all be Christ and his church, the "little flock" to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give "the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) But included with the heavenly seed will also be "a great multitude, which no man could number." (Revelation 7:9) These will serve God in his spiritual temple. (Revelation 7:15) They will be the "companions" of the bride class, who will "follow her" and be with her. -  
- Psalm 45:14

The earthly seed, as represented by the sand, will, to begin with, be the resurrected Ancient Worthies, who, receiving a "better resurrection," will be made "princes in all the earth." (Hebrews 11:35,39; Psalm 45:16) Then will follow, and be included in the earthly seed, the entire resurrected human race; that is, all who, when given a full opportunity, prove themselves worthy of everlasting life. Thus seen, it will be true of both the earthly and the heavenly seed that their number will be great.

**Hebrews 11:13** "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

The 'all' here referred to as having died in faith, are particularly Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob; although the same statement is true of the entire Ancient Worthy class. They received not the promise -- that is, the actual fulfillment of the promise. In Hebrews 6:13 Paul tells us that the promise had been made to Abraham, and then in verse 15 he says that after Abraham endured, "he obtained the promise."

The 'promise,' which Abraham obtained after he patiently endured, was something more than he originally received when God promised him the seed and the land -- it was an assurance, the guarantee of God's oath. This is indicated in the Greek text by the use of a stronger word, a word which means more than the mere making of a statement. It is this stronger word which Paul uses again when he says that 'these all died in faith, not having received the promises.'

There is no contradiction in these two statements, for Paul is using the Greek word *epaggelia* in the first instance to describe 'a Divine assurance of good' -- as *Strong's Concordance* defines it -- and in the latter case to denote the actual realization of the good which had been assured. The fact that Paul uses the word in this sense indicates that it embraces this stronger meaning. The inspired use of a word can always be relied upon as a correct interpretation of its meaning.

Paul says that the patriarchs saw the fulfillment of the promises 'afar off.' As we have seen, when Abraham first left Ur to go to the promised land, he believed he was about to realize the fulfillment of the LORD's promises. But the circumstances of the ensuing years gave him, as well as Isaac and Jacob, a different viewpoint. As they went through year after year of their long lives without the city for which they were looking coming into actual view, their faith extended their vision farther into the future. They continued to look for the city, however, even though it was afar off, even in a resurrected life beyond the grave. By their steadfast adherence to God's promises, they 'confessed,' the apostle says, that they were 'pilgrims and strangers on the earth.' Some might try to read into this statement that the patriarchs entertained a heavenly hope, but this is not the correct thought.

The Greek word here used by Paul, and translated 'earth,' is *ge*. Its basic meaning is 'soil;' by extension, it can be used to describe a region, and it sometimes denotes the solid part of the entire globe. Paul uses it in this text, however, to describe the land in which, as stated in verse nine, Abraham 'sojourned ... as in a strange country.' Here, the word land is a translation of the same Greek word *ge*. In Acts 7:3 this word is used twice. It is a quotation of God's command to Abraham, and reads, "Get thee out of thy country [Greek, *ge*], and from thy kindred, and come into the land [*ge*] which I shall shew thee." It was in this land that the patriarchs continued to be pilgrims and strangers until they died.

**Hebrews 11:14-16** "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

'They that say such things': The patriarchs testified their faith in God's promise concerning the land and the seed by their steadfastness in remaining in the land even though it had to be as nonowners, or strangers. Paul suggests that they had opportunity to return to the land of their fathers, where they would be at home and among their own people. But they did not do this, which demonstrated that they had their hearts set on a better inheritance, even on that which the God of heaven had promised to them.

The contrast in these verses is not between the earth and heaven, but between the former home of the patriarchs and the one which the LORD had promised and in which they continued to be strangers. Paul's lesson is on the faith of the patriarchs; their faith, that is, in the promises of God; and God had not promised them a heavenly home, but a home in Canaan; and they died in faith, not having actually received this home.

God was greatly pleased with their faith, so much so that he was not ashamed of them. They became his friends because of their faith. And while they did not grasp the fullness of their part in the Divine plan, God actually 'prepared,' or promised, for them a 'city,' or kingdom, for they will be among the 'princes' in the Messianic kingdom.

Paul's assertion that they desired a 'better country, that is, an heavenly,' must be construed to mean that which the God of heaven had promised, for they were given no basis to desire anything except earthly blessings. Jesus understood this, and told the Jews of his day that they would "see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" in the kingdom of God, and he shows clearly that it will be right here on the earth, not in heaven. -- Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28

**Hebrews 11:17-19** "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

God's request that Abraham offer up Isaac as a sacrifice was doubtless the severest test that had been placed upon the faith of this 'father of the faithful.' One reason for the request was that Abraham's faith might be further tested. Another was that God was making a picture, or illustration, of what he would later do, that he would offer up his own Son in sacrifice for the sins of the world.

There is a veiled reminder of this in the expression, 'only begotten.' Later, as we know, this term appears in the Bible and is applied to God's own Son. Abraham fathered Ishmael, and by his wife, Keturah, he had many children. But, as the record states, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," (Genesis 21:12) and because Isaac was the promised seed, he was also, in the Divine plan, Abraham's 'only begotten son.'

Abraham's faith did not waver when it was confronted with this test, for as Paul explains, he believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead; and he did thus receive him back, 'in a figure.' This completed the illustration of the sacrifice of the antitypical Isaac,



and of his actual resurrection from death. What a wonderful privilege Abraham and Isaac thus had in the outworking of the Divine plan!

**Hebrews 11:20** "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

That Isaac did not entertain a heavenly hope, either for himself or for his children, is evidenced by the blessings which he pronounced upon Jacob and Esau shortly before he died. (Genesis 27:28,29,39,40) Isaac received the birthright blessing, which included future rulership. We have already noted how Abraham would construe God's promise concerning the seed to mean that his descendants would become rulers; and this comes more clearly to light in Isaac's blessing upon Jacob.

The remainder of the blessing upon Jacob was "the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." Esau also received this part of the blessing, but in selling his birthright he forfeited the right to become a part of the ruling seed of Abraham. This right continued with the descendants of Jacob until the first advent of Christ, when, because of their rejection of him as their Messiah, their house was left unto them "desolate." -- Matthew 23:38

Isaac's blessing upon Jacob and Esau is one of the clear evidences that the patriarchs were beginning to perceive that the promises of God were not to be fulfilled in their day. Nevertheless, this did not weaken their faith. They continued to believe that God would keep his covenant, so they died in faith, not having received the fulfillment of the promises.

**Hebrews 11:21** "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

Jacob actually blessed all twelve of his sons, but in keeping with the theme which Paul follows in tracing the faith life of the patriarchs, he specially mentions Jacob's blessing upon the two sons of Joseph. Genesis 48:4 records a part of this blessing, and in this text the land is again especially emphasized. Jacob was then in Egypt, but he still had confidence that God would fulfill his promise concerning the land of Canaan, this better country, in which, together with his father and grandfather, he had lived as a stranger. So in this again is emphasized that the patriarchs' hopes were earthly, not heavenly, and those earthly hopes will yet be realized.

## **The Works of Faith**

THERE IS A tendency on the part of some to insist that faith is of greater importance in the Christian life, than works, while others overemphasize the value of works. Either viewpoint is wrong, for when these two essential elements of Christian character are seen in their true light, it becomes apparent that a comparison cannot be made between their relative importance, for neither one can properly exist without the other. No one can possess true Christian faith without manifesting it by his works, for James declares that "faith without works is dead." (James 2:17,20) Nor can a Christian perform works acceptable to God other than those which manifest his faith. This is the thought Paul gives us when, commending the Thessalonian brethren, he speaks of their "work of faith" and their "labour of love." (1 Thessalonians 1:3) Nowhere in the Bible is this proper relationship of faith and works more clearly set forth than in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

**Hebrews 11:22** "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Joseph had been richly blessed by God while in Egypt, and highly honored by Pharaoh, but he knew that Egypt was not his home, nor the home of his people. He believed that in God's due time the Hebrew children would be taken into the land of promise. He mentioned this, and gave instructions that when it occurred, his bones should be taken to Canaan. This was expressive, perhaps, of his faith in the resurrection. Not understanding the resurrection hope as clearly as it was later set forth in the New Testament, he may have supposed that the actual bones which he possessed when he died would be restored. But Paul explained, "Thou sowest not that body that shall be." -- 1 Corinthians 15:37

**Hebrews 11:23** "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

The word translated 'proper' in this verse is translated "fair" in Acts 7:20, where Stephen also applies it to Moses, saying that when he was born he was seen to be "exceeding fair." The *Marginal Translation* renders this, 'fair to God.' The Greek text justifies this translation. In Exodus 2:2, where we are first told about the birth of Moses, he is referred to as a "goodly child." Apparently Stephen understood that Moses' parents saw in this child one whom the LORD desired to use in a special way. This would explain why their faith in God was especially demonstrated by their risking the wrath of Pharaoh in not obeying his edict concerning the destruction of all male Hebrew babies, and hid him for three months. -- Exodus 2:2

**Hebrews 11:24-26** "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

It will be remembered that by Divine overruling Moses' own mother enjoyed the privilege of caring for him during his childhood years, and it is apparent from Paul's comment concerning his faith that the mother must have taught him thoroughly concerning the promises made to Abraham, and the hope of the Hebrew children in the coming of that "seed" which was to bless all the families of the earth. (Genesis 22:18) Whether or not at that early date the descendants of Abraham had learned to speak of the 'seed' of promise as the Messiah, is not revealed in the Scriptures. However, Paul so understood the promises, and he knew that Moses' decision to be loyal to the promises and to the God of his fathers was equivalent to taking a stand for the Messianic cause.

From this standpoint, all the suffering of the Ancient Worthies resulting from their loyalty to God and to his promises could properly be referred to as the 'reproach[es] of Christ,' for all those promises were related to their hope of the coming Messiah. They suffered because of their faith in the Messianic cause. This is quite different from the privilege the church of the Gospel Age has had of suffering "with" Christ, of being "planted together" in the likeness of his sacrificial death. -- Romans 8:17; 6:5

Moses must have been greatly inspired by the promises of God which his mother related to him as a child. The fact that he knew about the God of Abraham, and about the promises he had made, clearly indicates that his mother had these things in mind from the time of his birth, and that it was her faith in the promises that led her to hide this 'exceeding fair' child, and thus to save his life. It is doubtful if she was still living when Moses led the nation out of Egypt, but how she will rejoice when, in the resurrection, she learns of the wonderful manner in which the LORD rewarded her faith!

**Hebrews 11:27** "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

The reference in this verse to forsaking Egypt evidently applies to the Exodus, when Moses led the whole nation out of bondage; for, when he left Egypt at the age of forty and fled into the land of Midian, it was largely because of his fear that Pharaoh would have him killed as punishment for slaying an Egyptian. This is further borne out in Exodus 4:19 where the LORD, in giving Moses courage to return to Egypt, assured him that those who formerly sought his life were now all dead.

Later, however, when Pharaoh let the Israelites leave the country, he said, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." (Exodus 10:28,29) There is no evidence here of fear. Moses was ready to forsake Egypt, and to take the Israelites with him, trusting in Him who was invisible to care for them as they journeyed toward the promised land.

**Hebrews 11:28** "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them."

Moses received specific instructions concerning the sprinkling of the blood and keeping the Passover feast. Not to have obeyed these instructions would have represented a serious lack of faith in the Word of God. His faith was rewarded in the passing over of Israel's firstborn.

**Hebrews 11:29** "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."

It required great confidence in God and in the assurance of his protection, for Moses and the Israelites to pass through the Red Sea as they did. This was truly a work of faith. While it may be possible to explain this miracle, it is not necessary to do so in order for us today, who have faith in God's promises and power, to believe the Biblical record of what occurred. Christian faith would be lacking its most essential element if it did not believe that God is able and willing to do things for his people that they are unable to do for themselves.

**Hebrews 11:30** "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Here the faith of Joshua, the successor to Moses, comes prominently to the fore. When he received instructions from the LORD concerning the strategy to be used in capturing Jericho, he did not question the wisdom of the plan, though from the human standpoint it would not seem to be a procedure which would result in victory. But he believed God. The Israelites followed his leadership, and their faith was crowned with victory. Many have also endeavored to explain this miracle, but we should exercise the same faith as did Joshua, and believe that God gave them the victory. Faith that does not go beyond human ability to understand is not genuine faith at all.

**Hebrews 11:31** "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

James tells us that Rahab's faith resulted in her justification (James 2:25) -- not a justification to life, but to a position of friendship with the LORD, a friendship based upon her confidence in his promises. It is a mistake to suppose that the term justification is used in the Bible only to describe the life standing of those on behalf of whom the merit of Christ has been applied. The subject of justification takes on a new luster, and becomes simple and understandable, when we recognize the wider use the Bible makes of the term.

Rahab's initial work by which she demonstrated her justifying faith, was her concealing of the spies. She hid them on the roof of her home, concealing their presence by covering them with flax; and then, when she was asked where they were, she further concealed

them with her tongue. In expressing her willingness to do this, she explained to the spies that the people of the city had heard of Israel's victories over their enemies, and had become very fearful, and for herself she had concluded that if Israel's God was as great and powerful as the reports indicated, the thing to do was to yield oneself to him and become his servant. This was apparently the beginning of her change of heart and conduct. See Joshua 2:8-13.

Rahab is called Rachab in Matthew 1:5, where we find her in the same honorable position as Ruth in the lineage of Jesus. After the fall of Jericho, she evidently accepted the faith of the Israelites and became one with them, marrying Salmon. Thus her faith and courage in protecting the spies were rightly rewarded by God at that time. Paul indicates, she demonstrated her worthiness of a position with the Ancient Worthies in their "better resurrection." -- vs. 35

**Hebrews 11:32-34** "What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Here Paul ceases to give detailed examples of individual faith, realizing that his letter would become altogether too lengthy. He begins to generalize, mentioning a few more names and incidents as a group, finally omitting even names, including all the remainder in the expression, 'and of the prophets.' The subduing of kingdoms is evidently a reference to Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judges 7); Barak's over the Canaanites (Judges 4); Samson's over the Philistines (Judges 14); Jephthah's over the Ammonites (Judges 11); David's over the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites, and the Ammonites. -- 2 Samuel 5:17-25; 8:1; 8:2,10-12

These 'wrought righteousness,' that is, they stood for a righteous cause, and their faithfulness was accounted unto them for righteousness. They 'obtained promises.' Here the Greek word rendered promises is the same as used by Paul when he tells us that after Abraham endured he "obtained the promise." (Hebrews 6:15) It is a word which is slightly stronger in meaning than the one used in the statement that "God made promise to Abraham." (vs.13) Paul uses it to convey the additional thought of assurance.

'Stopped the mouths of lions,' is a likely reference to Daniel's experience in the lions' den.

'Quenched the violence of fire.' This seems to be alluding to the experience of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.

They 'escaped the edge of the sword.' When Israel was faithful to the LORD, the nation was protected from their enemies, and in their weakness, the faithful were made strong. They were given strength also to put to flight the 'armies of the aliens' who entered their land for purposes of conquest.

**Hebrews 11:35** "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

While there were two occasions when children were awakened from the sleep of death (1 Kings 17:17-23; 2 Kings 4:18-37), the reference here seems to be more particularly to the hope of a future resurrection for their loved ones which was engendered in the hearts and minds of all the women in Israel by the promises of God. See Jeremiah 31:15-17.

Others were 'tortured' says Paul, 'not accepting deliverance.' The Greek word here rendered tortured is a very strong one, meaning to be stretched out on a rack and tormented. The Scriptures do not record any incidents of literal torture in this fashion. Paul may have used the word as symbolic of the severe trials of various kinds to which the faithful of Israel were subjected. The three Hebrews, for example, were offered deliverance from the fiery furnace if they would worship the image which had been set up.

Such devotion to principle, Paul explains, was inspired by faith in a 'better resurrection.' The Prophet David explains that those who were "fathers" in Israel, are to be made "princes in all the earth." (Psalm 45:16) Jesus explained that in the kingdom they will be recognized by the people of the whole earth -- from east, west, north, and south -- as the Lord's representatives. To occupy this position as the human representatives of the kingdom, they will need a measure of perfection from the start, and this seems to be what is implied by the expression, 'better resurrection.' The world in general will reach perfection by a gradual process, but the Ancient Worthies, having proved their faithfulness under trial, will be thus rewarded when first awakened from the sleep of death.

**Hebrews 11:36-38** "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

If all the detailed experiences of the Ancient Worthies were known it would doubtless be found that Paul is here alluding to trials which literally came to one or more of them. Hanani was imprisoned for his faithfulness. (II Chron. 16:10) Micaiah was also put in prison. (1 Kings 22:26,27) Jeremiah also thus suffered. (Jeremiah 32:2,3) Zechariah was stoned. (II Chron. 24:20,21) Traditional writings say that Isaiah was sawed in two by Manasseh, the evil king who succeeded Hezekiah to the throne of Judah.

The Holy Land was especially suited by its geologic formation and its wilderness aspects to afford shelter to persecuted persons. So it did to one hundred of the LORD's prophets whom Obadiah hid in a cave (1 Kings 18:4,13); and also to Elijah. (1 Kings 19:9,13) All remember the story of how David hid in a cave when Saul was persecuting him.

The world (*kosmos*) of the prophets' day was not worthy of those faithful representatives of God. Nor did the people of the world then know that those whom they persecuted were proving themselves worthy, by their faithfulness, of a high position of honor in God's new world, as the human representatives of the Divine Christ.

**Hebrews 11:39** "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."

They had the assurance that their unwavering fidelity to truth and righteousness was pleasing to God, but they did not receive the fulfillment of the promises God made to them. That must wait until they are raised from the dead.

**Hebrews 11:40** "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Here is a clear statement of one of the important truths of the Bible, one which reveals that, in the plan of God, all do not receive the same reward. 'Some better thing' is provided for the church of this Gospel Age than that which will be received by the Ancient Worthies. John the Baptist was the last of the Ancient Worthy class, and of him Jesus said that while none greater had ever been born of women, yet the least in the "kingdom of heaven" would be greater than he. (Matthew 11:11) The 'kingdom of heaven' here mentioned by Jesus is the spiritual phase of that kingdom. Jesus will be the chief one therein, and the church, exalted to the Divine nature, will reign with him. But John the Baptist as one of the Ancient Worthies, will be in the human or earthly phase of the kingdom.

In chapter nine, verse thirteen, Paul speaks of the blood of bulls and of goats, and also the "ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean." "*Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices*" points out that the bullock sacrificed on Israel's Day of Atonement typified Christ, while the sacrifice of the goat pointed forward to the church's share in the "better sacrifices" of the Gospel Age. (Hebrews 9:23) It is also suggested that the ashes of the heifer mentioned in this verse typified the sacrifices of the Ancient Worthies.

We believe that this is the right viewpoint, and it seems not unreasonable to us that Paul had this in mind when writing the eleventh chapter of this wonderful epistle. Having referred to that in the type which represents the sacrifices and sufferings of God's people in two ages, he then shows how realistically it has worked out, and continues to be true in the actual experiences of those who are loyal to the Messianic cause.

## Looking unto Jesus

IN THE PREVIOUS chapters of this epistle Paul has opened our understanding to many of the types and shadows contained in the Tabernacle and its services. By contrast, he has shown the grandeur and majesty of the antitypes -- the "substance" (Hebrews 11:1) -- as they are centered in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are reminded of our "heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1) to joint-heirship with Christ, based upon our willingness to share in his suffering, and counseled to be watchful and full of faith lest we be caught in some of the pitfalls which Satan has set for us along the narrow way. In chapter eleven he has encouraged us to steadfastness by presenting that grand array of faith heroes who through the power of faith endured suffering faithfully unto death in order that they might obtain "a better resurrection." (Hebrews 11:35) Now he comes to the grand climax of it all, pointing us to Jesus, the supreme example of faithfulness, bidding us to "consider him" and follow him in order that we might obtain a "kingdom which cannot be moved." -- Hebrews 12:3,28

### CHAPTER 12

**Hebrews 12:1** "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

'Wherefore' -- that is, having noted these noble examples of faith, these can serve as a 'great cloud of witnesses' to us. The thought in the word witnesses is not that the Ancient Worthies are now in heaven looking down upon us, but rather that their lives of faithfulness serve as a witness, or testimony, of God's integrity and of his ability to uphold those who believe his promises, and who endeavor to demonstrate their faith by their works, and are as onlookers in an arena.

'Let us lay aside every weight' -- This is a reference to the practice of runners to strip themselves of every unnecessary weight of clothing and other hindrances which might tend to retard their speed on the racetrack. The experiences of a runner are illustrative in some respects of the Christian life. We are running for "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 3:14) and in order to be victorious we also must lay aside all hindrances of whatever nature they might be, such as "the cares of this world," the "deceitfulness of riches," the "lust of the flesh," and the "pride of life." -- Mark 4:19; 1 John 2:16

'And the sin which doth so easily beset us' -- It has been suggested that each runner in the heavenly racecourse has some particular sin which, more than any other, tends to impede his progress. This doubtless is true, but Paul seemingly is referring to a close-girding sin



which is common to all the Lord's people. Judging from his many references to it, and his admonitions to overcome it, it is the sin of unbelief. Lack of genuine, working faith in the promises of God lies at the root of most of our shortcomings. It was the sin which led to Israel's downfall. If we are overcomers, it will be through faith that we gain the victory.

'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us' -- To win the Christian race it is necessary not only to run with "all diligence," but also with patience, that is, with cheerful endurance, not grumblingly, nor in the spirit of wishing we were doing something else. -- 2 Peter 1:5,10

**Hebrews 12:2** "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

'Looking unto Jesus' -- In the Greek text the thought is 'to consider attentively.' Paul, through his eloquence displayed in chapter 11, has caused us to give careful consideration to the manner in which faith wrought victory in the lives of the Ancient Worthies, and now he reminds us of the crowning example of faithfulness, even 'Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.'

Jehovah, our Heavenly Father, is the author of the plan of salvation. The Greek word translated author in this instance is one which means 'chief leader.' It is translated "captain" in Hebrews 2:10. We can, and should, follow the examples of faithfulness we see in the Ancient Worthies. Paul wrote that we should follow him as he followed Christ, but we should ever keep in mind that Jesus is our 'chief leader,' for it is in his footsteps that we are to walk. He is the finisher, or 'perfecter,' of our faith. The faith life of others tends to strengthen our faith, and Jesus' faithfulness does this for us. If we look to him attentively, despite our imperfections, we can finish our course victoriously and win a crown of life.

'For the joy that was set before him' -- The Heavenly Father gave Jesus an incentive to faithfulness. The Apostle Peter informs us that the prophets testified not only concerning the sufferings of Christ but also of "the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:11) It was these promises of the glory which would follow his suffering that assisted Jesus to endure the cross and despise the shame. This was not a selfish joy, for although he would delight in the prospect of again being personally present with his Father, he knew also that this position of glory would enable him, during the thousand years of his kingdom, to bestow blessings of life upon all the families of the earth.

As Paul declares, because Jesus faithfully endured he is now at the right hand of the throne of God. This is in fulfillment of the Father's promise, "I [will] divide him a portion with the great." (Isaiah 53:12) God always fulfils his promises to those who are faithful to him. -- Psalm 16:11

**Hebrews 12:3** "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

The Greek word in this text translated 'consider' means 'to estimate.' It is taken from a root word meaning 'analogous.' In other words, we are to consider him in the sense of making a comparison between what he suffered and the much less trying experiences through which we are passing. The 'contradiction of sinners' led Jesus to his death. He was the Son of God, but his enemies contradicted this, charging him with blasphemy. He was a king, but this was also contradicted, so he was charged with treason, and crucified.

When we compare his sufferings with our own we will discover that there is no occasion for our becoming 'wearyed and faint,' that is, becoming "weary in well doing." (Galatians 6:9) In the Greek text, the word translated wearyed is the same as that used by James when he wrote, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick," or wearyed. (James 5:15) This is more than a temporary discouragement. The word seems to be descriptive of a condition of mind in which one is about ready to give up the good fight of faith entirely. But if we compare our lot with the sufferings of Jesus, we will realize that there is no occasion for an attitude of this kind.

The Greek word used by Paul and translated faint is one which means 'to relax.' One does not need deliberately to step out of the Christian racecourse in order to lose the prize. It is merely necessary to relax, to be a little less zealous and energetic. As a rule, to relax results in fewer trials. In other ways also it is appealing to the flesh, but it could easily lead to what Paul describes as being a "castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27) The opposite attitude is described by the poetic lines, "Awake my soul, stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on."

**Hebrews 12:4** "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

This text can be understood properly only in the light of the Divine plan, particularly as it relates to the church's share in the "better sacrifices" of the Gospel Age. (Hebrews 9:23) Paul is not here especially emphasizing a Christian's warfare against his own personal sins, although such a warfare is most essential. However, such does not lead to death -- 'unto blood.' To the extent that one is able to overcome sinful tendencies in his own body there generally results an improvement of physical health.

The word 'against' is from a Greek preposition which in some instances in the New Testament is used to denote the thought 'because of,' and is so translated. Jesus did not die as a result of striving against sin in his own body, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Hebrews 7:26) It was sin that caused his death, however; that is, the sin of others -- the sin of the whole world. His striving against sin was in the fact that he laid down his life as a sin offering.

It is this that is brought to our attention by the Apostle Paul in Romans 6:10,11. In this passage he explains that Jesus died "unto" sin, and then says that "likewise" we should reckon ourselves to be dead "unto" sin. The only sense in which Jesus died 'unto,' or because of sin, was as an offering for sin, and by Paul's authority we can reckon

ourselves to be dying in the same way. Thus we are said to be "planted together in the likeness of his death" -- Romans 6:5

The "body of sin" (Romans 6:6) that is destroyed as a result of Jesus' crucifixion, and our crucifixion with him, is the whole cancerous growth of sin which has fastened itself upon the entire race, and which must be removed ere the people can have life. *Strong's Concordance*, in a broad definition of the Greek word, *soma*, in this text which is translated 'body,' says that it means the 'sound whole body' to be used in a broad application, literally or figuratively.

That the reference is not to our own individual bodies is proven by the fact that Jesus' crucifixion is included. Besides, the text declares that "he that is dead" is justified. (Romans 6:7) Our bodies, although sinful by nature, are justified by the blood of Christ and thus made acceptable as a sacrifice, so Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) Accepting this invitation to sacrifice, we are "crucified" with Christ. -- Galatians 2:20

The purpose of this in the plan of God is that the body -- not bodies in the plural -- of sin might be destroyed. Thus the joint work of Christ and his church is likened to a great struggle against the enemy 'sin,' and it is to this that Paul refers when he writes, 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' This great battle against sin is a fierce one, and while the forces of righteousness will ultimately triumph, during this Gospel Age all who participate in the struggle lose their lives as human beings. But they have the Master's promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." -- Revelation 2:10

It is this faithfulness unto death that Paul describes by the expression, 'unto blood.' 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood,' he told the Hebrew brethren. This observation by Paul is linked to his admonition to 'consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.' As we have seen, the word consider in the Greek text has the thought of 'making a comparison.' When the Hebrew brethren did this, they would realize that although they may have suffered a great deal, they had not yet been fully planted together in the likeness of Jesus' death.

The Hebrew brethren indeed had suffered! They had endured a great "fight of afflictions," and had taken "joyfully the spoiling" of their goods. (Hebrews 10:32-34) Throughout the epistle Paul endeavors to explain why these, and all true followers of the Master, should expect to suffer. The "captain of their salvation" was perfected for his position in glory by suffering, so the "many sons" who attain to glory with him must also expect to suffer. -- Hebrews 2:10

Now Paul presents another viewpoint of Christian suffering, another reason we "suffer with him." (Romans 8:17) It is because, together with Jesus, we participate in the great battle against sin. He reminded the Hebrew brethren -- and us -- that having entered this

struggle we should not consider relaxing in the fight, that we should follow the example of Jesus, who, in his striving against sin, did so 'unto blood,' that is, unto death.

**Hebrews 12:5,6** "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

The word 'chastening' as used in this text does not necessarily imply punishment. *Strong's Concordance* defines the Greek word *paideia* from which it is translated as meaning 'tutorage,' or by implication, disciplinary correction. It is translated 'nurture' in Paul's admonition to fathers to bring up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) The same word is translated 'instruction' in the text which informs us that the inspired Word of God is profitable for "instruction in righteousness." -- 2 Timothy 3:16

**Hebrews 12:7,8** "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

'If ye endure' -- It was this that Paul, throughout the entire epistle, was encouraging the Hebrew brethren to do. They had endured faithfully for a time, but he admonished them to endure unto the end. While the chastenings of the LORD are not manifestations of his anger, but corrective in nature, they do, nevertheless, usually involve more or less of suffering. Paul was strengthening the Hebrews to endure this also. While closely related to our suffering with Christ as a result of our being planted together in the likeness of his death, corrective discipline is not the same. However, it calls for endurance if we are to reap the benefit therefrom.

**Hebrews 12:9,10** "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

The lesson here is obvious! If we consider that the corrective measures taken by our earthly parents served a good purpose in our lives, we must conclude that the chastenings administered by our Heavenly Father are of much more value, for they have to do with our eternal destiny. The text states that our earthly parents chastened us for 'their own pleasure.' The marginal translation gives a more correct thought. It reads, "As seemed good to them," that is, they used the best judgment they could. When our Heavenly Father chastens us, it can always result to our profit. In his wisdom he knows exactly the sort of experiences that are best for us in order that we might be 'partakers of his holiness' -- that is, fully set apart to the doing of his will.

**Hebrews 12:11** "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

No amount of philosophy can convert pain into joy. However, no matter how trying our experiences may be, if we allow them to exercise us in the proper way, the after result will be good -- 'the peaceable fruit of righteousness.' To be 'exercised' is to be trained. The thought in the Greek text is akin to our English word 'gymnastics.' The Lord permits various experiences to come into our lives in order that we might be properly trained for the high position in the kingdom to which he has called us.

**Hebrews 12:12,13** "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Paul here quotes from Job 4:3,4, the words of Eliphaz to Job. Eliphaz, one of Job's 'comforters,' states that in the past Job had been able by his words of encouragement to lift up the hands of others which hung down, and to strengthen feeble knees. But now Job was in this very position himself, and needed help. So there were some among the Hebrew brethren who likewise needed encouragement, for they were showing signs of becoming 'weary in well doing.' All who are running for the prize of the High Calling have the blessed privilege of assisting others in the same racecourse. It is not a competitive race in the sense that we are running against our brethren, but a cooperative one.

We are 'to make straight paths for our feet, lest,' as Paul explains, 'that which is lame be turned out of the way.' There are probably always some in the racecourse who are less vigorous than the others -- lame ones. If the strong runners swerve from side to side in an uncertain manner, the way is made the more difficult for the lame; for in addition to their halting progress, they become confused. This is simply an admonition to set a good example for our brethren.

**Hebrews 12:14** "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

We can have peaceful intentions in our dealings with 'all men,' but it might not always be possible to attain peace. Elsewhere Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18) James wrote that "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." (James 3:17) The LORD does not want us to compromise principle in order to have peace, either in our association with the brethren, or with the outside world. 'Holiness,' that is purity of character based upon principles of righteousness, is essential to our winning the prize and being with our Lord in glory.

**Hebrews 12:15** "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

The thought here is to beware, and diligently so, lest we fail of the grace of God. The admonition is much the same as in chapter 4, verse 1. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." There is nothing which can so quickly cause us to 'come short' as permitting bitterness to develop in our hearts, either against one or more of our brethren, or against our own experiences in the racecourse.

We sometimes hear the expression, 'soured on life.' If we do not maintain the proper viewpoint and the right attitude of heart, we could easily become embittered by our trials -- not directly against the LORD, perhaps, although it could lead to that. In such an attitude of heart one becomes a grumbler, a complainer, causing dissatisfaction to spread, with the possibility that 'many' will be 'defiled.'

**Hebrews 12:16,17** "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Esau stands out in the Scriptures as one who hastily decided to sell his inheritance in the Abrahamic promise for a mess of "pottage," (Genesis 25:30) that is, temporary material gain. Unlike the Ancient Worthies, he did not have sufficient faith to endure hardships. Such hardships were necessary to really inherit the promised blessings.

However, when Esau discovered that Jacob had taken necessary steps to make sure that he received that which he had purchased, he was greatly perturbed. He inquired diligently of his father if something could not be done about it. Paul says that Esau 'found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Figuratively, the word place in the Greek text, denotes 'opportunity' or 'condition.'

*Strong's Concordance* in defining the Greek word *metanoia* in this text, translated 'repentance,' says that by implication it denotes 'reversal of [another's] decision.' This is revealing, for it suggests the probability that the repentance which Esau so diligently sought was not a reformation of his own heart, but a reversal of Isaac's decision whereby he bestowed the much desired blessing upon Jacob.

The account in Genesis 27:30-34 bears this out. When Isaac discovered that he had pronounced his chief blessing upon Jacob, he said, "Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed." 'He shall be blessed.' This was Isaac's decision, but Esau was not satisfied with it.

The next verse (34) records, even as Paul tells us, that Esau "cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father." But,

just as the LORD, when telling us of his determination to plague death and to destroy *sheol*, the grave, said, "Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes," (Hosea 13:14) so Isaac refused to repent, or to reverse his decision. His blessing had gone to Jacob, and no condition could be found which would justify making a change. Actually, Paul does not say that Esau sought repentance in his own heart. He says that this profane person sought a 'place' or condition of repentance, and the original record shows that it was his father's repentance Esau was seeking.

## **Approaching Mount Sion**

THROUGHOUT THIS EPISTLE Paul has presented various incentives to faithfulness, and assures the Hebrew brethren that despite the difficulties of the narrow way of sacrifice the LORD's grace will be sufficient for their every time of need. In the second and third verses of this chapter he mentions the "joy" that was set before Jesus which enabled him to endure "the cross" and despise "the shame" which was heaped upon him by the "contradiction of sinners." Beginning with verse 18, the apostle, in a most eloquent manner, sets a wonderful joy before the Hebrews and before us, the joy of participation in the Messianic kingdom with all the called and faithful ones whom the LORD will similarly honor and bless.

**Hebrews 12:18,19** "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more."

This is a reference to the experiences of Moses and the Israelites in connection with the inauguration of the typical Law Covenant. Similar language to this is used in Joel 2:1,2, which is a prophecy of the "day of the LORD," that period in the Divine plan when the long-promised kingdom of Christ is about to be established in power and great glory in the earth. 'Fire,' 'darkness,' 'tempest,' and 'thick darkness' are all used symbolically in various prophecies to describe the great Time of Trouble which immediately precedes the full manifestation of kingdom glory to the world and the inauguration of the New Covenant.

**Hebrews 12:20,21** "(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.)"

'They could not endure that which was commanded.' Exodus 20:18,19 refers to this and verse 19 reads, "They said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." In Deuteronomy 18:15-18 Moses refers to this request of the people that God speak no more to them lest they die, and promises that the LORD will raise up another "Prophet" to them, "from among their brethren," one who would be able to give them that which they desired at Horeb, which was life. It is this promise that Peter quotes in Acts 3:22, indicating that it will be fulfilled during the "times of restitution of all things" following the Second Coming of Christ. Thus again do the Scriptures confirm the fact that the inauguration of the Law Covenant is typical of what occurs following the return of Christ to establish his kingdom and to inaugurate the New Covenant.



**Hebrews 12:22** "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

In the Greek text, the word which is here translated 'come unto' is one which means 'approached to.' (*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) The antitypical mount Sion is the Lord's kingdom. That kingdom was not established at the time Paul wrote this epistle, so it could not be true that the Hebrews had come unto it in the sense of being in the kingdom and reigning with Christ. But they were approaching unto that kingdom. The hope of the kingdom was their inspiration, and the goal for which they were striving was joint-heirship with Jesus in that kingdom. Revelation 14:1 pictures the entire "little flock" (Luke 12:32) class, together with Jesus, the "Lamb," on mount Sion. In a prophecy concerning Jesus as king supreme in the kingdom, the Heavenly Father said, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." -- Psalm 2:6

The church throughout the entire age has also been approaching unto 'the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.' This is the city for which Abraham looked, "whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10) It is shown in Revelation 21:2 as "coming down from God out of heaven." It is another symbol of Christ's kingdom. It will not be a humanly constituted government, for its authority and power come from God 'out of heaven.' The hope of reigning with Christ in this 'city' has been one of the inspirational joys of the entire church.

In this city, God, the fountain of life, will exhibit to mankind the principles of righteousness contained in his eternal laws, and show the people how to apply them in their daily affairs of life. The foundations of that "new Jerusalem" will not be a great army or navy, but the Divine principles of righteousness and truth.

The church has also been approaching 'an innumerable company of angels.' This is clearly a reference to those angels which the LORD has made as "a flame of fire," and who have been sent forth "to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Hebrews 1:7,14) These holy and invisible messengers of God have had a very prominent part in the development of the church. We do not know how many of these unseen servants of God there are, but among them there are some assigned especially to the LORD's people. All along the way, and in every changing experience of life, our guardian angels have been present to guide us in the paths of righteousness, and to protect us from harm. What a joy it will be to meet and fellowship with them!

**Hebrews 12:23** "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

Jesus said, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20) And we are approaching unto, and will ultimately meet with, all whose names have been thus enrolled. The 'church of the firstborn' is a more comprehensive expression than the "church of Christ." The use of the word firstborn takes our minds back to the type, and to

the fact that it was the firstborn of Israel who were saved from death by the blood of the Passover Lamb.

After the nation left Egypt, the tribe of Levi was substituted for the firstborn, and set aside to be the religious servants of the people. From the Levites the priests of Israel were chosen, the high priest being typical of Christ, and the under-priests representing the church of Christ. (Hebrews 3:1; 1 Peter 2:5,9) The Levites in general were the servants of the priests, and represent those pictured in Revelation 7:9-17 as a "great multitude" who serve God day and night in his temple. Paul includes these in the 'general assembly,' by describing it as the church of the firstborn.

What an inspiration it is to know that we are approaching unto such a wonderful company of God's people! There will be Paul and Peter and John, and all the apostles and other faithful ones of the Early Church, besides those dear ones whom we have personally known and loved. It is a joy even now, at meetings and conventions, to fellowship with those of like precious faith. How much greater will be our joy when, having reached the end of the way of sacrifice, we join this general assembly, not temporarily, but to be with them forever! Who could faint, or grow weary, when such a glorious prospect is held up before us?

We will meet our loving Heavenly Father, 'the Judge of all.' Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) Fortunately, the only ones who ever will see him face to face will be the pure in heart, and being thus pure, they will delight to be in the presence of him who is Judge of all, for they will have nothing to fear. "In thy presence is fulness of joy;" wrote David, "at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." -- Psalm 16:11

The 'spirits of just men made perfect' to whom we are approaching are evidently the Ancient Worthies. They will, of course, be in the human, or earthly, phase of the kingdom. Nevertheless, the church will be in communication with them. All the Ancient Worthies were 'just men,' being justified by their faith. "They without us," however, as Paul states, could "not be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:40) With the church complete and beyond the veil, the 'making perfect' of the Ancient Worthies will quickly follow. Thus as we look forward to the glorious consummation of our hopes, we visualize, with the other rewards to which we are approaching, the great joy of meeting and working with the Ancient Worthies.

**Hebrews 12:24** "To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

When we get the proper setting of this passage, and realize that the Mediator of the New Covenant is but one among many things to which we are approaching, it is clearly apparent that Paul is not telling us that the New Covenant is now functioning and that the Church is under it with Jesus as the Mediator. This is no more true than that the kingdom was established at Pentecost, or that the Ancient Worthies were resurrected at the beginning of the age; or that the church throughout the age has had the privilege of

fellowshipping with the angels face to face; or have had the blessed privilege of meeting God the Judge of all, and enjoying the pleasures of his presence. In fact, just as all these joys are still future, and we are merely approaching unto them, so is the New Covenant. The text is a conclusive proof of this important truth.

We are also approaching unto the 'blood of sprinkling,' which speaks better things 'than that of Abel.' Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, but the blood of Christ will speak of justice being satisfied, and that God's love and power are ready to assist the dying world back to life and to fellowship with the Creator.

The thought of 'sprinkling' takes us back to the type, when "the book, and all the people" (Hebrews 9:19) were sprinkled with the blood of the typical Law Covenant. The church "drink[s]" Jesus' blood, and is cleansed by it. (John 6:53) We are also represented as using the blood as a covering or "robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:10) The symbolism of sprinkling seems to have been used particularly to describe the sealing of the New Covenant. 1 Peter 1:2 is interesting in this connection, for in this text the apostle tells us that our sanctification, or setting apart to God's service by the Holy Spirit, is "unto" the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," not by that sprinkling. In other words, the purpose of our sanctification is, among other things, that we might participate with Jesus as ministers of reconciliation, or comediators of the New Covenant. The blood will be Christ's, but if faithful, we will have a share in the work of sprinkling.

**Hebrews 12:25** "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

In this verse Paul reverts to the opening theme of the epistle, that "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." And the reason these things we have heard are so important is that they represent the voice of God which has reached us through his beloved Son, for in these "last days" God has spoken to us by his Son. -- Hebrews 2:1; 1:1,2

**Hebrews 12:26** "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."

The literal earth -- that is mount Sinai -- shook at the voice of the LORD when Moses mediated the Law Covenant. But Paul, quoting from Haggai 2:6,7 informs us that the heavens also are to be shaken in connection with the setting up of Christ's kingdom. Through Haggai, the LORD said, "Yet once [more], it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."

The shaking of the literal earth in the type foreshadowed the shaking of the symbolic heavens and earth in the antitype. Peter explains that this shaking will be so severe that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10) In

reply to questions asked by the disciples concerning signs of the Master's Presence, he replied that the "powers of the heavens" would be "shaken." -- Luke 21:25,26 (WED)

The reference in all these prophecies is to the present 'heavens' and 'earth', the spiritual and material phases of "this present evil world." (Galatians 1:4) The spiritual or religious elements of our present social order are already terribly shaken, and they are fast losing their power over the people. This bears convincing testimony of the fact that we are at the very end of the age; that the kingdom to which the whole church has been approaching is now very near; and in the realization of this every Christian should truly rejoice.

**Hebrews 12:27** "This word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken [marginal translation, "may be shaken"], as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

'Yet once more,' this is to be the final shaking, and it is brought about by "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," but Jesus adds, "no, nor ever shall be." (Dan. 12:1; Matthew 24:21,22) The things which will be shaken, or removed, during this trouble will be the ones 'that are made,' that is, the man-made governments, institutions, societies, customs, and standards. These, for the most part being built upon the foundation of selfishness, will not stand up under the shaking and the "fire" of God's "jealousy" by which the whole symbolic earth, is to be "devoured." -- Zeph. 3:8

But there will be some things which cannot be shaken. These will be the things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ. In Psalm 46 we are told that we should not fear though the "earth be removed," and the "mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (vs. 2) But we are also given the assurance that "she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." (vs. 5) The preparation of the kingdom began at Pentecost, and throughout the age those associated with **it** have been approaching its completion, when it will rule the nations with power and in great glory. Hence it will never cease to exist, so is represented by Paul as remaining.

**Hebrews 12:28** "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

We are 'receiving' -- Greek, 'associated with' -- a kingdom which cannot be moved. Concerning it Daniel said, "It shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2:44) This being true, 'let us have grace' or, as the thought here seems to be, gratitude. Our gratitude to God for his favor in extending to us the privilege of being associated with such a glorious kingdom, should move us to give all, even life itself, in his service, and to do so with reverence and godly fear -- "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." -- Hebrews 4:1

**Hebrews 12:29** "For our God is a consuming fire."

This does not mean that God is a torment Deity. It is simply an affirmation of the fact that God is opposed to all sin and unrighteousness, and ultimately will destroy everything that

is out of harmony with his holy will. He has made a wonderful provision of grace through Christ which makes acceptable the service of those whose hearts are perfect toward him, but his law still stands that "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) This 'present evil world' is now being 'devoured' by the 'fire' of God's 'jealousy,' but if we keep our hearts pure, and serve him acceptably through Christ, we will have an abundant entrance into the new kingdom, even the kingdom of Christ.

## "Let Brotherly Love Continue"

A CASUAL READING of this final chapter of the Book of Hebrews might give one the impression that its subject matter is made up of various unrelated admonitions and warnings, with some doctrinal truths interspersed. However, the first sixteen verses are closely related in thought, presenting the manner in which one of the typical services of the Tabernacle represents practical Christian living -- how we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and our reasonable service. -- Romans 12:1

### CHAPTER 13

**Hebrews 13:1** "Let brotherly love continue."

The Apostle Paul's masterful treatise on Christian love contained in 1 Corinthians 13 shows that without love all Christian endeavor would be in vain. In view of the subject matter presented in the next fifteen verses, we might properly consider this opening verse as Paul's 'text' for the chapter.

**Hebrews 13:2** "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Hospitality is one of the evidences of brotherly love. Those who are in a position to share their homes and food with others when an opportunity and need arises, but do not do so, would manifest a lack of this particular grace of love. Abraham is the one referred to as having entertained 'angels unawares.' This was the occasion when three angels, appearing as men, called on Abraham and made the final announcement that his wife Sarah was to bear a son. It was on this occasion also that Abraham was informed concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. -- Genesis 18

**Hebrews 13:3** "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

In this verse Paul reminds us how love is manifested by our interest in those who are 'in bonds' and those who 'suffer adversity.' In the days of the Early Church it was not an uncommon thing for the brethren to be imprisoned, to be in bonds. Paul is urging a close attachment to these. Remember them, he says, with the same degree of concern as though you too were bound.

We are also to remember those in 'adversity.' We are all members of one 'body,' the 'body of Christ.' In a physical body, when one part suffers they all suffer, and so it should be in the body of Christ. So it always is when 'brotherly love' continues.

**Hebrews 13:4** "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

At first glance this verse may seem out of place in the subject matter being presented. However, due to the prevailing conditions of his day, it might well be a reminder by Paul that the love which he was discussing was not the sort that finds expression in sensuality.

**Hebrews 13:5** "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

When brotherly love fills the heart there is no room for covetousness. In the Greek text the word translated 'conversation' includes one's whole manner of life, not merely his words. If we are 'content with such things' as we have, our manner of life will not be motivated by selfish desires to acquire that which may belong to another. Christians are the 'richest' of any people in the world, for regardless of how much or how little of this world's goods we may possess, we have God's promise, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' With God as our caretaker, what more do we need?

**Hebrews 13:6** "That we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Fear is one of the contributing causes of covetousness -- fear lest we may not have resources to meet needs which may arise, and fear that we may not be properly prepared to meet the competition of life. Love casts out fear, and besides, since the Lord is our helper, and has promised never to leave nor forsake us, we will not need to fear. Our enemies may be permitted by God to injure us temporarily, but he is able to overrule all such experiences for our eternal good, and to his glory.

**Hebrews 13:7,8** "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

1 Timothy 5:17 states, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." The Greek word translated 'rule' in this letter to Timothy means to 'stand before,' that is, to take the lead, through teaching and example. The Greek word for rule in the text in Hebrews seems somewhat stronger. The marginal translation uses the word "guides." The Lord has appointed the members in the body of Christ as it pleaseth him, and brotherly love will manifest itself by a humble recognition of the Lord's arrangements, and a desire to cooperate therewith.

There must be an evidence of the Lord's choice in those whom we thus 'remember.' They must speak the 'word of God,' and not their own theories. Their faith in what they teach must be demonstrated. The end for which they live and strive must ever be 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.' True followers of Christ, qualified to be our guides, will be like him in all ways, including his unchangeableness. True Christian

guides will not vacillate -- they will not be influenced by any and every flight of fancy of the imagination of fallen men.

**Hebrews 13:9** "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

The trend in Christian churches is away from being 'established.' One of the contributing reasons for this is probably a recognition on the part of leaders in all denominations that their creeds cannot be proved by the Bible anyway, so why be bigots by attempting to support them? The opposite swing of the pendulum takes them to the position that it makes little difference what one believes.

Those who have forsaken the creeds and returned to the pure Truth of the Bible rejoice to stand fast in the faith. They will not permit themselves to be carried about by 'divers and strange doctrines.' Their hearts have been established by 'grace,' that is, by the favor of God in opening the eyes of their understanding to see the mysteries of the kingdom Gospel.

'Not with meats.' The question of 'meats' and 'drinks' as ordinances of the old Law Covenant was a controversial one in the Early Church. Writing to the Galatian brethren regarding the same general controversy, Paul said, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." (Galatians 1:6) In those early days of the church, the expression 'grace' was often used in contrast to the supposed necessity of observing some or all of the ordinances of the Law in order to obtain salvation through Christ; and as Paul explained, it was 'a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats.'

**Hebrews 13:10** "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."

An altar was always intended for sacrifice, not as a table from which to eat. The priests were permitted to eat, and were supposed to eat, certain portions of some of the sacrifices they offered, but apparently they did not eat from the altar in the sense of using it as a feasting board, or table. There are other pictures in the Bible which suggest that we feed upon Jesus -- 'eat his flesh' and 'drink his blood.' (John 6:53,54) This is a beautiful and meaningful illustration, but seemingly Paul does not have this in mind in this reference to the 'altar.' He is not saying that we have the privilege of eating from an altar of which the typical servants of God were not permitted to eat. What he does mean is that it is an altar of sacrifice.

**Hebrews 13:11-13** "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."



It is always important to note the words 'for' and 'therefore' in our study of the Bible. It is especially so in this case. First, Paul identifies the 'altar' and service of the Tabernacle which foreshadowed our privilege of sacrifice, emphasizing that it was the one in which the typical priests were forbidden to eat. For, instead of eating them, as was done in connection with some sacrifices, 'the bodies of those beasts ... are burned without the camp [Leviticus 16:27] ... Let us go ... unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.'

Just as they 'which served the tabernacle' were not permitted to eat the sin-offering animals, so our part in this arrangement is not to receive restitution blessings, but to become cosacrificers with Jesus, sharing with him in the great sin offering feature of the Divine plan. Instead of remaining by the altar to eat, we are to go ... unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach -- that is, to be 'burned' with him.

The typical service to which Paul is referring in this lesson was the one performed annually on Israel's Day of Atonement -- the tenth day of the seventh month. In that service there were two animals sacrificed as sin offerings -- a bullock and a goat. The bullock was first slain. Its fat was burned on the brazen altar in the court of the Tabernacle; its blood was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled on the mercy seat; and its carcass was taken outside the camp and burned. The goat for the sin offering was treated in the same manner.

Since the Apostle Paul clearly shows that we, as followers of Jesus, have the privilege of sharing his reproach, suffering with him 'without the camp,' and since he also explains that the altar on which we offer our sacrifice is typed by the one from which the priests had no right to eat, it seems clear that the two animals used in the typical Day of Atonement service represented the sacrificial work of Christ and the church. The bullock, being sacrificed first, would represent Jesus' perfect sacrifice; while the goat, would represent the church. The fact that both animals were handled in the same manner would illustrate our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." (Romans 6:5) This viewpoint gives vital meaning to Paul's invitation, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) Our 'bodies' would not be acceptable for sacrifice except through the merit of the blood of Christ.

**Hebrews 13:14** "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Again the little word 'for' continues the sequence of thought. If we should accept the benefits of Christ's sacrificial work merely for ourselves, it would mean that ours would be a hope of restoration to life on the earth -- restitution. In that case we would have here on earth a continuing 'city,' or a permanent home. Instead of this we give our bodies to be burned, as Jesus did. This, in addition to symbolizing the reproaches of Christ in which we share, suggests also the giving up of our human life. While we know that going to Jesus 'without the camp' means that the earth cannot be our permanent home, we seek a city to come. Jesus promised to prepare a place where his disciples might be together with him. Thus, 'if we die with him, we shall live with him' -- at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Hebrews 13:15** "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

In the typical Atonement Day service, before the priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the mercy seat, he took a censer full of live coals from the fire which was burning on the brazen altar in the court -- where the fat of both the bullock and the goat was burned. Then, "his hands full of sweet incense beaten small" he went into the first Holy of the Tabernacle, sprinkled the incense upon the coals of fire, thus causing a rich perfume to fill the Tabernacle, penetrating into the Most Holy. The coals of fire were placed on the golden altar, which was in the Holy. -- Leviticus 16:12,13

Since Paul shows so clearly our privilege of participating in the antitypical Atonement Day sacrifices insofar as the burning outside the camp is concerned, it seems reasonable that when he speaks of offering the 'sacrifice of praise,' he is drawing a lesson from this incense feature of the Atonement Day service. This represented God's viewpoint of the sacrifice. It was sweet perfume to him. So in the antitype, while our bodies are being burned without the camp, where by the world we are considered to be the "filth" and "offscouring" of the earth, our hearts are going out to God in praise for all that he has done for us, and for our privilege of being workers together with him. -- 1 Corinthians 4:13

It is more than merely a thankful feeling in our hearts. This sacrifice of praise, Paul says, is 'the fruit of our lips.' Lips are a symbol of speech, or utterance. It is a beautiful way of illustrating our ambassadorship, that we are 'witnesses of Jesus,' the 'light of the world,' commissioned to preach the Gospel to all nations. Peter puts it plainly, saying that we "should show forth the praises" of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9) This is the fruit of our lips, our sacrifice of praise, and we may be sure that it is sweet incense to God.

**Hebrews 13:16** "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

This is a practical summary of the thoughts Paul associates with the admonition in the first verse -- "Let brotherly love continue." This means having a solicitous interest in the 'body' members, going to Jesus without the camp, and offering the sacrifices of praise. Therefore, we should 'do good,' and forget not to 'communicate,' that is, to give -- our time, talent, strength, money, our all -- that others might be blessed. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10) 'With such sacrifices God is well pleased,' says Paul. We may think of animals being burned, or of incense burning on a golden altar, and it is wonderful to understand these symbols and types. Such knowledge alone is valueless unless it is translated into practice by doing good and communicating, through the use of our all in Divine service. This is the exercise of brotherly love. May we all let brotherly love continue!

**Hebrews 13:17** "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

The ones who have the 'rule' over us are the elected elders of the ecclesias. But this rule is not to be in the nature of lording it over God's heritage. The Greek text gives the better thought of their being 'guides,' or 'leaders.' We are to follow the leadership of our elders in so far as they follow Christ. Even the Apostle Paul did not ask more than this.

Spiritual guides, or leaders, are worthy of this position in the church only if they meet the qualifications mentioned in this admonition; that is, if they sincerely 'watch' for the 'souls' of the brethren. A true elder will have the interests of the brethren at heart, and will watch over them to prevent false teachers from preying upon them. He will be humble in his service, and willing to sacrifice his own comforts and conveniences in order that the best interests of his brethren may be served. Should we fail to follow the leadership of such, we would be sure to lose many rich blessings which the Lord has provided for us.

**Hebrews 13:18,19** "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

In Acts 23:1 Paul speaks of having lived in "good conscience." The particular blessing which he sought through the prayers of the brethren was that he might be restored to them. This might indicate that Paul was imprisoned at the time he wrote the epistle.

**Hebrews 13:20,21** "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

What a wonderful benediction with which to close a letter! It would not be possible to commend the Lord's people to a better source of care and blessing than 'the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.' Paul desired that the Lord would make the Hebrew brethren 'perfect in every good work.' The Greek word here translated 'perfect' is defined by "*Strong's Bible Concordance*" as "to complete thoroughly, that is repair (literally or figuratively) or adjust." It is used by Paul in Galatians 6:1, and translated 'restore.' The text reads, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." It is also used in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19 to describe the repairing or 'mending of nets.'

The spiritual lives of the Hebrew brethren needed 'repairing' in order to be complete. They had started out well, but failing to give proper heed to the things they had heard, they had let them slip; so much so that they needed to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. Paul had urged them to call to remembrance the 'former days' when they were first enlightened, and when they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. He reminded them that while they had suffered for the Truth they had not yet 'resisted unto

blood.' Nevertheless, Paul realized that even after he had done his best to revive the faith and zeal of these brethren, his effort would be ineffective unless the Lord blessed it; so this was his wish for them, his benediction, that the Lord would restore them to every good work.

**Hebrews 13:22** "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words."

Much of the information of the Book of Hebrews on Old Testament types, and on the covenants of God, was written as an 'exhortation' in an effort to stimulate greater faithfulness to the Lord and the Truth on the part of the Hebrew brethren. Paul was concerned lest they fail properly to 'suffer the word of exhortation,' that is, that they might not appreciate his motive, hence fail to profit as they should from the things which he had written. He hoped that he had not overdone the matter, and reminds them that after all his letter contained only a 'few words.' Surely there was much more he could have written.

**Hebrews 13:23** "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."

This reference to Timothy, indicating that he was a fellow worker with the writer helps to confirm Paul's authorship of the epistle.

**Hebrews 13:24** "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you."

There was a wonderful bond of Christian fellowship and unity among the brethren in apostolic days. It meant much for the brethren in Judea to receive a message of greeting from those in Europe. This same common interest and love is experienced among the true followers of the Lord even today.

**Hebrews 13:25** "Grace be with you all. Amen."

After all is said and done, if we have the grace, or favor, of the LORD in our lives, nothing else can really matter; for "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) God's grace takes care of every situation; cheers us in every trial, and keeps us humble in every joy. It covers our imperfections, and gives us strength to overcome. And when we reach the end of the way and hear that welcome, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant,' we will know that it was only because God's grace sustained us all the way that we were able to finish our course victoriously, and to the glory of God.