

Let's Revel in Hebrews

John G. Mitchell, D.D.

GLORY PRESS
West Linn, Oregon

Transcribed by Mrs. Dorothy Ritzmann, M.D.
Edited by Prof. Dick Bohrer
© 2007 by Glory Press, P. O. Box 624
West Linn, Oregon U.S.A.

Dedication

Dr. Willard M. Aldrich, Th.D.

Like sons of thunder,
Dr. Willard and Dr. John
taught,
prayed,
and served
beside one another as
associates,
brothers,
companions,
defenders,
enthusiasts,
friends

for more than 50 years.

With Dr. John taking the more public ministry
and Dr. Willard, as long-time president
of the Multnomah School of the Bible,
the more private,
the two served their Savior
with unrivaled devotion.

The one could not have served so well
without the other.

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Foreword..... | i |
| Author's Preface..... | ii |
| Introduction..... | iii |
| Chapter One..... | 1 |
| Chapter Two..... | 24 |
| Chapter Three..... | 56 |
| Chapter Four..... | 78 |
| Chapter Five..... | 101 |
| Chapter Six..... | 117 |
| Chapter Seven..... | 144 |
| Chapter Eight..... | 168 |
| Chapter Nine..... | 189 |
| Chapter Ten..... | 220 |
| Chapter Eleven..... | 267 |
| Chapter Twelve..... | 311 |
| Chapter Thirteen..... | 357 |

Foreword

My life has been greatly intertwined with Jack Mitchell's because of what his ministry meant to me personally as a teenager and then on through college years and seminary. Under his ministry I became grounded in the Word of God; and, apart from that, I do not see how it would have been possible for the Lord to use me in the various ways that I have had the privilege of being used.

Kenneth Taylor

Paraphrast of *The Living Bible*

Author's Preface

May I say, my Christian friend, to you personally, that if you neglect the Word of God, if you do not take heed to the things you have heard concerning the person and work of our Savior, then you will drift and there's no telling where you'll drift to. We must stay in the Word of God. I can't over emphasize this. I'm dealing with a basic thing. You cannot live for God. You cannot grow spiritually. You cannot live a real Christian life unless you stay in God's Word.

This is what God has given to us. "Thy Word," said the Psalmist, "is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). How can I live in this world with its sin and corruption and lawlessness and indifference and atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, the philosophies of men, the materialistic philosophies, humanistic philosophies—how can I live in such an age without a guide? The Word of God is a guide. But if people neglect the guide, my friend, then they will make for the rocks and the shoals and the quicksands. They're moving on to shipwreck.

I plead with you, Christians, to stay in the Word of God. Don't miss what you have in Christ as did those early Jewish Christians whom the writer of Hebrews addresses.

But you say, "Mr. Mitchell, I don't understand it."

I'm not asking you to understand it. If you live a hundred years, you won't be able to plumb the depths of the Word of God. All I'm asking you to do, whether you're strong or whether you're weak, whether you're old or whether you're young, whether you're wise or ignorant, is to let the Word of God reach you right where you live, right what you are.

This is the amazing thing about the Word of God. It reaches the wise; it reaches the ignorant, the rich or the poor, the bond or the free. Irrespective of your condition or your circumstances, the Word of God can reach you right where you are.

I wish in some way I could put into words the way I feel about this, and I'm sure I have the mind of the Spirit of God, for the Word of God is quick and it is powerful. You're cleansed through the Word. You're kept free from sin through the Word. Again the Psalmist says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). Jesus said in John 15:3, "Ye are clean through the word." So, take heed to the Word which you have, otherwise you just drift, drift. Any old dead fish can drift. God keep us from drifting. May God grant to you and to me that we hold steady and fast and firm.

John G. Mitchell, D.D.

Let's Revel in Hebrews:

Introduction

Iwould like first of all to whet your appetite for this wonderful book of Hebrews. Our Lord, you know, is Prophet, Priest and King. Many of us know about the work of our Saviour at the cross. We know something about His return. But when it comes down to the present day, many of God's people know very little about what He is doing now on the throne.

This is a marvelous book. It deals with the person and work of our Saviour. In Romans you've got the work of Christ. In Ephesians you have the person of Christ as the Head of the Church. But in Hebrews you have both the person and the work of Christ.

Now this book was written to Jews who had become Christians. But they needed maturity. They suffered from cold indifference. They weren't meeting with each other for fellowship. When you come to the 13th chapter, they were wandering. They were following other teachers and getting away from the person of Christ. They needed to come into a more wonderful knowledge of the Saviour—to be conversant with His Word and to walk with Him. The reason for the writing of the book is because the believers of that day were cold, spiritually cold.

And what a need there is today for a revelation of the person of our Saviour and His work for us. "When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that someone teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God," he wrote.

The first five chapters of this book are full of the person of Christ. Now let's look at these first few verses:

1:1. God who at sundry times and in divers manners (in many ways) spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets

1:2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son.

This is cardinal. In past days God spoke unto the prophets. He spoke to the fathers. He spoke through creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto

day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1-3).

God revealed Himself. As Romans chapter one, verse 20 says, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

He spoke unto the fathers. Noah was a righteous man in his generation. He preached for 120 years and had no converts. I’m quoting from the sixth chapter of Genesis by the way. It is an astounding thing. For 120 years he was God’s spokesman. When the judgment of God fell upon the world, only he and his family were saved. Then God spoke through the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were representatives of the living God.

But then Moses came along, and for 40 years he led the people of Israel into the revelation of God—and they spurned Him.

Then He sent His Son, the final revelation. God has spoken through His Son. There will be no further revelation.

What is God like? Just like the Lord Jesus.

Do I want to know God, His character, His heart, His mercy, His tenderness, His compassion? I look at the Lord Jesus. No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath shown him forth.

People today say, “If only God would speak.”

My friends, God has spoken. Do you have ears to hear?

He spoke through creation. He sent prophets, patriarchs, testimonies. At last, He sent His Son. God is speaking to us in His Son. This is final. Are you going to hear what the Son has to say? May we listen with an open heart from day to day as we work our way verse by verse through this wonderful book of Hebrews.

Let us pray:

Our Father, spiritual maturity is to be occupied with the Person as well as with the work of our precious Savior. As we

study this book from day to day, may we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our precious Lord Jesus Christ.

As I said earlier, read the book of Hebrews. The more you read it, the more you revel in it, the more you will get out of this study.

I trust you will do that.

And the Lord bless you for His name's sake.

Chapter One

The book of Hebrews was written, of course, to Jews who had become Christians; but they needed maturity. They needed to come into a more wonderful knowledge of the Saviour—to be conversant with His Word and to walk with Him. And that’s the purpose of the book—to get to us a more mature knowledge of the Person and work of our Saviour.

Hebrews was written while the temple was still standing in Jerusalem. It is one of the early books, and it’s an epistle of doctrine. Allow me to take a few moments to speak to you by way of further introduction to possibly whet your appetites and your desire to read the book of Hebrews. It has only 13 chapters. It is not very long.

Now just as the books of Romans and Galatians deal with the work of Christ and the books of Ephesians and Colossians deal with the person of Christ, in Hebrews we have both the person and the work of Christ revealed to us. The book of Hebrews deals with the glories of our Savior.

Now, the writer is not mentioned in this book of Hebrews. Personally, I’m of the persuasion it was the Apostle Paul; but possibly it was written by Luke. There are certain details in the epistle which from my viewpoint seem to point to the fact that Paul was the writer. The argument in Hebrews is very much like the argument of Paul. For example, you take this word from Habakkuk 2:4—“The just shall live by faith.” It is mentioned in Romans. It is mentioned in Galatians. And it is mentioned also in Hebrews. At the very entrance to the book, you will notice, the writer brings you immediately face to face with the Son of God. No other man comes into the picture. Christ in all His glory is set before us. This is Pauline!

You say, “Well, why didn’t Paul say that he wrote the book?”

No, the Jews were very prejudiced against Paul. And I can understand this. Many thought the gospel was for Jews only and resented his taking Christ to the nations.

Now, when Paul wrote his epistles to the Gentile churches, he used to always start out with, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” or “Paul, an apostle” or “Paul, a bond-slave” and so on. But not in Hebrews. He starts immediately with the person of our Savior. The book was written especially with Christian Jews in mind—Jews who had come to the saving knowledge of Christ. If you move to chapter 13, I think you will see that very, very clearly. And all through the epistle you will find that the book of Hebrews is a very, very personal note from the writer. He knew their needs, and he was not timid about calling into question their motives and their actions. For example, in chapter 5:12, he said—“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”

He is saying you’ve been Christians for long enough. You should be teachers of the Word. Instead of that, someone’s got to teach you the very simple milk of the Word of God.

This is true today. Is it true of you? The great majority of Christians have never grown in their Christian faith. They’ve never grown in their knowledge of Christ—just like these Hebrews. And Paul writes because he knew their need of getting down into basic things, especially concerning the person and work of Christ. Also, the ones to whom he wrote were very conversant with temple worship, and they recognized something of the obligation of the Law.

It looks very much, as you read the epistle through, that some had not come into the fullness of the gospel message. Have you? That’s why you have certain exhortations through the epistle implying that fact. And as you know, the book was written between 63 and 66 A.D. Looking at chapters 8, 9, 10 and 13, it’s very obvious that he wrote this before the temple was destroyed.

The writer of Hebrews wrote because they were spiritually dull. You have that in chapter 5. They were spiritually cold. Does this describe you, my friend? They were neglecting the assembling of themselves together. In other words, they were not attending the assemblies where God’s people met. And then you have spiritual wanderings or jumping from one doctrine to another. They were carried

away with strange doctrines; they were not solidified in the basic truths of Christianity. You remember in chapter 6:1, he said—Leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on to full growth. Let us go on to maturity. Let us go on to the place where God finishes the job He wants done.

Now, there are some key words in this epistle. For example, the word “perfection” is used 11 times. It does not deal with sinlessness. It’s dealing with the completion of a task or the completion of a purpose. For example, in chapter 6, we are to go on to perfection, that is, to go on to full glory, to the completion of God’s purpose in our lives where we shall be just like Christ. Is this the desire of your heart, my friend?

As 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 18 says—“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

In other words, the more we contemplate the person of Christ, the more we become just like Him; and the less we look at Christ, the less we are like Him. You see, I’m dealing with basic things. So this word “perfection” is used 11 times meaning the completion of a purpose or of a task—not sinlessness, not sinless perfection, but the completion of a task.

Now, the second key word would be “heaven” or “heavenly.” The writer is making contrasts between Judaism and Christianity or, if you please, between the Law and Grace, between the work of the tabernacle with its sacrifices and priesthood and the work of Christ and His sacrifice. In the writer’s contrasts between earthly and heavenly, “heaven” and “heavenly” are used quite a bit in the epistle. He wants to draw our attention to things heavenly.

And then, the third one used is “better than.” For example, Christ is better than angels. He is better than Moses. He’s better than Aaron. In other words, He’s better than anybody else.

The whole epistle deals with the Lord Jesus Christ, His person and His work. Let me take two little statements that give us the key: “Thou art my son” (Hebrews 1:5). That’s His person. “Thou art a priest forever” (Hebrews 5:6). That’s His work.

And you'll notice that there is a great deal of the Old Testament used in this epistle. Whoever wrote it certainly knew his Old Testament. I wish we had had the time to spend a few months in the Old Testament, especially in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, taking up the contrast between the priesthood of the Old Testament and Christ's priesthood, the work of the priests in the Old Testament and the work of Christ for us today. This would be a fruitful study for those of you who love to dig deep into the scriptures.

Now, there are two other little statements I want to give you: "Within the veil" (this is in chapter 10) and "outside the camp." This is the language of Leviticus and the sanctuary. We are within the veil Godward. We are outside the camp manward. May I repeat that? In chapter 10, through the work of Christ, we are right within the very presence of God. We are within the veil, Godward. And then we're told to go outside the camp bearing His reproach. We're outside the camp, manward. That means separation from the world and worldliness. It means belonging only to God on the throne and having access to God, a holy God, a sovereign God.

I've got to be careful how I walk down here among men. Remember the world is not redeemed. The average person today in the world doesn't know Christ. And you and I are heavenly men and heavenly women on earth in the midst of a world that has no place for Him. So we go outside the camp.

Is that where you are walking today, my friend? Do you have a life "inside the veil" in private communion with God and personal enjoyment of all that speaks of Christ? Are you living "outside the camp," willing to suffer reproach as you testify of Christ, conscious that you are separated from the world?

Now, there are those who say it means going outside the camp of Judaism. And some have even gone so far as to say it means that we should go outside the camp of those in Christianity. In fact, there's a movement today among young people to go outside the established church. But there is no ground for it; for, when you get right down to business, God moves through His people who are gathered together for

study, for worship, for praise and thanksgiving and who then go out as a testimony.

So we are within the veil Godward, and outside the camp, manward. And may I say, Christ is the all-absorbing theme of the book. Christ is ever the center of attraction.

You remember in Matthew chapter 3, when our Lord was baptized by John in the river Jordan, the heaven was opened. What for? To see God's man on earth. Did you ever stop to think of it? All of heaven gazed upon Jesus as He was baptized by John in Jordan. And there came a voice from the glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

In the book of Hebrews, it is just the opposite. In the book of Hebrews, heaven is opened for you and me to look into and there we see the same Man, Christ Jesus, on the throne of the majesty on high in the heavens. Let me mention it once more. Four times in the book, in chapters 1:3, 8:1, 10:12 and 12:2, I read "He sat down at the right hand of God". So, this is a wonderful thing. This book is worthy of all our study and our Savior is worthy of all our attention.

My, you know, we've got a lot of interest in heaven. Do you know why? Jesus is there. God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. Now, you and I are on earth. We've become joined to the Savior. We've been born from above, as John 3 declares, but we're still on earth. What for? To testify to the world of God's heavenly man, Christ Jesus.

Now I trust you'll read that first chapter through and especially these first few verses. It would be wonderful if you could memorize them and quote them throughout the day concerning the person of God's Son, the heavenly Man, who came to the earth and is now back in heaven.

Then, as much as you are able, will you read the whole book of Hebrews? It may be you could have it as a family devotion. Just read a few verses each day. Or sit down and take a Bible in your lap and read it all through. It has only thirteen chapters. Read it through. Read all of it. Don't stop and try to examine it. Don't stop and worry about some statements in there whether you're saved or whether you're lost, as in

chapter 6 or chapter 10. Read it through. Read it through. And the more you read it, the more you'll get out of it.

So that, as we come into the book, it will be flooding our hearts and the Spirit of God will be able to reveal to us some of the treasures of the person of our Savior and the work He is doing now. And may it warm and bless your heart each day.

Let me get down now a little further by way of introduction to this book of Hebrews. You see, what I'm doing is just whetting your appetites to read the book. Now don't you turn away because I am telling you things you already know. I want to saturate your mind with the glories of who Christ is as well as the what and why of His redemptive work.

The writer knew Jewish people who had come to know the Savior but were not clear as to the completion of the gospel for them, and so he writes to give to them and to us the superiority of the person of Christ and the superiority of the priesthood and the work of Christ. The book is full of warnings. There are five distinct warnings that we shall mention afterwards. And then the book ends in chapters 11, 12, and 13 on the three great words—chapter 11 on faith, 12 on hope, and 13 on love.

But the first few verses of the first chapter of Hebrews give to us the theme of the epistle.

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

1:2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds:

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;

1:4. being made so much better than the angels.

God's complete and final revelation is given to us in His Son Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished, and there is no further need of revelation. Or should I put it the other way, there is no need for any further revelation. God in past days has spoken to us through prophets,

through the sages of old, through creation; but He's now speaking to us in His Son.

There never has been a time in the history of men that God has been without a witness. Even today, we find people saying, "Oh, if God would only speak. If God would only speak." My friend, He has. God has spoken; and He speaks through Jesus Christ His Son.

You see, man didn't discover God. This idea that man discovered God is not true. The fact is that God has revealed Himself to man. And if God had not given any revelation of Himself to man, man would not have any revelation of God. Now, notice these first few verses—

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

1:2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

May I suggest that God was made known to man first of all by His creative act. People talk about the argument of design, asking "Is there really a God?"

There are those who don't believe the Bible to be the Word of God who ask, "Can you give any grounds to believe there is a God if you don't use the Bible?"

Yes, yes. Look around you. Look all around you.

But the Bible says it well—"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). There is no place on earth or in heaven where the voice of creation is not heard.

You know, I've had men say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I don't believe in your Christ. But I'm not a pagan. I'm an agnostic, an atheist. I don't believe there's a God. Pooh!" I witnessed to a young fellow who was a fisherman who said words like this to me.

And I said to him, "I suppose you have the tide table for this year in your fishing box, don't you?"

"Sure I have. You've got to have a tide table."

"Well, that's an amazing thing," I said. "A year from now you can tell me when it is going to be high tide at Cannon Beach and how many

feet it's going to be. You know what time it's going to be low tide a year from now. How many feet and how many inches it is."

"Oh," he said, "it's just a question of law. It goes by laws."

And I said, "How did the laws come into being? You can't have a law without a personality, without Someone who puts that law in motion."

You see—God—has spoken to people. Wherever you find people in the earth, they are responsible to worship their Creator. God has spoken.

Before we go on, let us pray:

Our Father, as we bow before You, we are humbled that You have chosen to speak to us and that You have spoken to us through Your Son. We feel so inadequate to present such marvelous truths to hearts and lives. We would ask of You today that our study of this Book might be a time of dedication to You. Whatever the past may have been, may we today as a people, as individuals, dedicate ourselves to You and to the glorification of our wonderful Saviour. Oh, Father, bless us as we read and study these verses. Bless us as we remember the terrible cost—that Christ died that we might live. He bore our sins that we might go free. He died that we might have life eternal.

So bless each one as we wait before You.

In the precious, precious name of our Lord Jesus, we pray.

Amen.

God has spoken. He has made Himself known through His creative acts. Here in our generation through our knowledge of technology in the field of nuclear energy, we have made instruments, and we've thrown men to the moon on the split second.

Did you ever stop to think that when they went to the moon, they had to go by God's time-clock? Everything was set by scientists in the fields of electronics and nuclear energy and mechanical and scientific knowledge, but they still had to go by God's time-clock—by the very second. And if you were listening on the television when they were

going around the moon, you would remember they said in a certain number of seconds we would hear from them again.

If man can do that, what in the world can God do? You can take the microscope and examine things of the tiniest detail or you can take a telescope and you can search the heavens. And what do you see? Perfect order. Everything running in its orbit on time. You see perfection in the smallest things of creation—a snowflake, a rain drop, whatever it may be—perfection.

Did this just happen? No, my friend. “The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

I remember some years ago, with two of our men I went down to Shiloh Basin and Beaver Homes and Downey, three little places out near Astoria. We had a wonderful movement of the Spirit of God. I used to go down on Wednesday nights and teach these young believers the foundational truths of the Word of God.

One night after the meeting down there (I had taken two young fellows with me to give their testimony), a dear farmer said to me, “Mr. Mitchell, would you like to come up to our house and have a cup of coffee before you go home?”

You know, when a Scandinavian asks you to come and have coffee, you know you are going to get more than coffee.

And I said, “No, it’s getting late and these boys have to go to work in the morning. If we go up to your place and have coffee and visit around for a while, it’ll be midnight before we get back to Portland.” It was 60 miles away.

“Well,” he said, “the boys are coming.”

What could I say? So we went.

When we got to his farm, it was on a hill right over the Columbia River and you could see Longview in the distance.

The farmer said to me, “Mr. Mitchell, would you mind talking to my neighbor? He’s out at the barn.”

I said, “Has he been to the meetings?”

“Yes, he’s been to some of the meetings, but he wants to talk to you. Would you please do that?”

So I went out to the barn and found this fellow and shook hands with him. And I said, “My, it’s a beautiful night, isn’t it?” It was one of those nights when the moon was shining and the stars were out. It was a beautiful night.

To my amazement, he said, “I suppose you think I’m a pagan, don’t you?”

I said, “Well, I don’t know a thing about you. Are you a pagan?”

He said, “No sir, I believe there’s a living God. But I don’t believe in your Jesus.”

What would you have said?

“Well,” I said, “Listen, fellow, do you really believe there’s a God?”

“Of course I do. I can’t see all this handiwork in the heavens, all this terrific creation that has been made and not believe there is a God.”

“Do you worship Him?”

He looked at me blankly.

I said, “Sir, if you believe there is a living God, you ought to worship Him. Do you worship Him?”

He blurted out, “I don’t know how.”

“Well,” I said, “you give me a few minutes and I’ll tell you how.” You see, he was the wrong boy to make that statement, I’ll tell you.

He told me again very frankly that he didn’t believe the Bible. He didn’t believe in Christ.

Now I said, “How are you going to know God? You see His power. You see His Godhead in creation. But what is He like? Does He have any interest in men and women in their frailty? Does this God who made the heavens and the earth have any interest in you or in me?”

And I gave him the gospel that no man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, that’s Jesus Christ, He hath declared Him. And if I come to Him who has made the provision for me to come into the presence of God and accept Him as my own personal Savior, then I’m free to come and know God, to

experience His love, to experience His grace, to experience His joy and His peace.

He needed John 3:16-17, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

“Friend, God is speaking through His Son. This is the final revelation to man. And when men spurn the revelation of God through Christ, there’s nothing left but judgment.

“I’ve got to be realistic with you on this. How can we know God apart from Christ because Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh?

“And if you spurn the Savior and spurn the scriptures which speak of the Savior, then my friend, I’ll say very bluntly, that you have no revelation of God.

“God today is speaking to you through His Son.

“But, my friend,” I told him, “you’ve got to come to God through the One whom He ordained. You have no excuse for rejecting Him.”

Now, in verses 2 and 3 and the beginning of verse 4, we have seven of the wonderful glories of Christ. Here you have the superiority of the Son of God over the prophets and the fathers of old. He is the central theme of the epistle.

1:2. God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

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;

1:4. Being made so much better than the angels.

Do you notice the first thing? He’s been appointed heir of all things. Do you know that the risen Lord Jesus Christ owns everything? And this will be manifested when He comes. In the second Psalm, the Father says, “I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (verse 8). He’s the heir of

the universe. And no wonder! He created all things—which leads us to the next thing.

“By whom also he made the worlds” or as the Revised Version says, “By whom also he framed the ages.” You take John’s gospel, chapter 1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

You have the same thing in Colossians 1:16. He’s the one who created all things. In Hebrews chapter 11:3 we read, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” You see, we are just living in a little period called “time.” But our God framed the ages, right from the beginning to the end. From the earth of the past to the new heavens and to the new earth of the future, our Lord is Lord over all. Did you ever think of it? He’s not only the heir of all things, He’s the Creator of all things. And God is speaking to us through this Son whom He has appointed heir of all things. Don’t you think it would be a wise thing to hear what the Son has to say?

And the second thing in this second verse is the fact that He is the Creator. He made the worlds. He’s not only the one who owns everything, but He’s the one who made everything. He’s the one who framed the ages. And I’m not going to take time again on this except to point out that in John chapter one and Colossians chapter one, Proverbs 8 and so on, we have where the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. There was nothing made that was made, but He is the One who made it.

And now, the third one. In verse 3: “Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.” As someone has said, “He is the steel engraving of the Father.” He is the revealer of God. Here you see the essential deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

You remember in John 1:18, we read, “No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” May I suggest that all through your Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, anyone who ever saw God, saw none other than Jesus Christ His Son for He is the forth-shining of His substance.

I find it all, my friend, expressed in Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. This is why He came. He's the express or exact image of God's person. As Colossians 1:15 says, "He is the image of the invisible God." "In him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily" And as the first two verses in John chapter one say, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the same was in the beginning with God." He's the eternal Son of God.

And God is speaking to you and to me, now, through and in His Son. Take time for His book. Take time today. Don't use these studies as a substitute for getting into the Word of God yourself. May they simply whet your appetite for the deep things of God. Why don't you spend some time worshiping and praising and magnifying Him today in your life, in your words, and in your actions?

And then the fourth thing. He's the sustainer, in verse 3:

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.

As Colossians 1:17 says, "By Him all things consist (are held together)." He's the sustainer. He is not only the Creator of all things, but He holds everything together.

You know, I have here in front of me a clock. You have your watch there. If I were to ask you what is the time, you'd tell me the time. Where did you get the right time? How do you know your watch is right?

"Well," you say, "I set it according to Western Union."

Well, where does Western Union get it?

"Well, Western Union gets it from those men who study the stars."

My friend, your little old watch on your wrist keeps time according to God's time clock. Our Savior upholds all things by the word of His power. And if I might give a little illustration of this—forgive me if I have told you this before.

Some years ago, a friend of mine, Robert Millard, now with the Lord, was an astronomer who had a 4 ½ -5 inch telescope on Council Crest up on a hill near here. And one night about, oh, about midnight, I was just getting ready for bed when the phone rang. And my friend

called me up and said, “Jack, you come on up here, and I want you to see the heavens.”

I said, “Listen, Bob, I’m just getting ready for bed.”

He said, “Call Mary to the phone.”

I said, “OK. We’ll be up.”

So, Mrs. Mitchell and I drove up to his home, and he had some friends there—some mutual friends—and we went into his observatory and we began looking at the various stars. It was a beautiful night.

And he talked to me about the various things in the moon, and with different magnifying glasses we could see certain things on the moon, the craters and the mountains and so on.

And then, I said this to him—it was about 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning by this time—and I said, “Bob, what time is it?”

And he pulled out a big watch.

I said, “I don’t care about your watch. When Western Union calls you each morning and says, ‘What is the time?’ you tell the time from your big grandfather clock which you keep in time with the stars. Is that right?”

He said, “Yes.”

I said, “Now, is my watch right according to the stars?”

And he pulled a book out and he said, “Now, about this time a certain star should be in a certain place in the universe.” And he turned around his telescope and found his star, looked at the gradations on his telescope and he told me within the very second what the time was.

“Do you mean to tell me that that star which is going through the heavens at millions of miles an hour is always in a split second in a certain place?”

He said, “Yes. In fact, I can tell you a hundred years, two hundred years from now, it will be in the same position at the same time.”

Here, we have worlds in space going along at unbelievable speed and yet always on the exact second. My friend, we ought to just fall down and worship God. That’s what I said to Bob. I said, “Bob, it’s just about time that we got down and worshiped Him.”

This One, who upholds all things by the Word of His power, is our Savior and Lord. My friend, did you ever stop to think of it, that the

Lord Jesus holds the whole world in His hands? He holds the stars in His hands. He is the One who is absolute in authority over the whole wide universe. Even this old earth with all its sin and shame is under His hands. Even when they abused and scourged and crucified Jesus Christ—did you ever stop to realize—He was the One who had authority?

My friend, He's not only the revealer of God, but He's the One who upholds all things by the word of His power. And when Jesus said at the resurrection in Matthew 28, "All authority is mine in heaven and in earth," my friend, He was declaring Himself as sovereign God, having authority in heaven with its myriads of galaxies, with its innumerable, innumerable stars and planets and constellations, all running on their orbits on the split second. And my Savior, your Savior is the One who upholds all things. If it were not for Him, you'd have chaos.

Why is God longsuffering? Because He wants men and women to come to Him and accept His divine provision for their eternal salvation. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Thank Him today for his longsuffering and patience with you, my friend.

And thank Him for his love.

Now, we come to the fifth, the fifth glory of Jesus Christ. I read here, "when he had by himself purged our sins." He is not only the revealer of God, but He is the redeemer of man. He is the only revealer of God, and He's the only redeemer of man. There's none just like Him.

1:3b. When he had by himself purged our sins (or made purification for our sins), he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Did you ever stop to think of this?

Cleansing from sin is made a great deal of in this epistle. And we have that aspect of redemption at the very entrance to the book.

You take, for example, in Hebrews 9:12, He entered once into the holy place with His own blood and there obtained for us an eternal redemption. In Hebrews 9:26, "He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." In chapter 10, verses 10 and

12 and 14, especially verse 12, we read, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” I say redemption or cleansing from sin is made a great deal of in the book of Hebrews.

And, of course, one would expect that when you remember that the whole Old Testament with its tabernacle and sacrifices had to do a great deal with sin. God has made the provision whereby men can be purged, cleansed, purified from sin.

To create, to sustain He just speaks. But my friend, to redeem you and me from sin, He didn't speak. God Himself came in the person of His Son, His only begotten Son to be a propitiation for your sin and mine. As we have it over in 1 John 4:10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation (the redeemer, the One who will cleanse us) for our sins.” He is the One who will satisfy God.

The very next statement in the passage in verse 3 says that, when He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high in the heavens.

This is the sixth thing we find in these first few verses. In other words, the resurrection and the exaltation and the crowning of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God are a guarantee that He has perfectly satisfied God in His character, in His justice, in His righteousness. It is a guarantee that He has already put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It's the guarantee that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

And four times in this book of Hebrews, I read this fact that He sat down at the right hand of God, at the right hand of the Majesty on high in the heavens. You have it in chapter 1, verse 3, in chapter 8:1, in 10:12; in 12:2 where it reads, “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.” That is, He has been given all authority in heaven and in earth.

And remember one of the last words of our Savior, if I may quote from Matthew 28:18, Jesus said before He went back to heaven, “All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” In the book

of Ephesians in chapter 1:21, He was exalted above all principalities and powers. He is on the throne of God. He has all authority.

Does He have all authority in your life, my friend?

Will He have all authority in your life today?

May it—really—be so.

There is one more thing that the writer says here about our Savior in His exaltation in verses 3 and 4. “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels.”

So I would say as the seventh thing in these three verses, Christ is supreme. He's not only better than man—not only over all men having all authority—He's much better than the holy angels of God. He is God, having the nature of God and angels are all subject to Him. And this is what we find from verse 4 down through verse 14 (which we'll take up in a few moments). But the work of Christ having been accepted now, our Lord exalted, He is much better than the angels.

You know, the Jews have a great respect for angelic beings. You cannot read your Old Testament without realizing that. But did you ever stop to think that man is preferred in heaven before angels, before angels who have never sinned? You know man was made for the earth. But here is a Man on the throne of God and the 24th Psalm says, as if all the heavenly hosts were saying, “Open up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

And the question is raised, “Who is this King of glory?”

And the answer comes ringing, “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.” Open up and let Him in! Who is this King of glory? The Lord, He is the King of glory.

Did you ever stop to think that the most marvelous thing in all God's universe today is that there is a Man in heaven who has all authority in heaven and in earth? Do you realize that our Savior has all authority? That He's a real Man who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, knowing exactly what we go through? He's praying for us, according to the will of God. My, what a wonderful thing to think about!

Christian friends, realize that you've got a Savior who understands all about you. He's representing you, and He's praying for

you. He's pleading your cause, and He's able to succor you. Will you think about that today?

I would to God, and I say this reverently, I would that God's people—those who really love the Savior—I wish they would know more of the sufficiency of Christ for their every need. How many deny the complete sufficiency of Christ! We trust the flesh, we trust movements, we trust feelings, we trust experience, we trust ordinances, anything but the person of Christ.

My friend, He is all sufficient, glorious in His person and marvelous and complete in His work. This is what you have in the first three verses. He's the heir of all things, He's the Creator of all things, He's the revealer of God, He's the Redeemer of man, He's the Upholder of all things, and He's exalted to the throne of God. And I find at the beginning of verse 4, He's supreme over angelic beings.

Now, in these verses we also see the deity of Christ. We see His incarnation. We see His atonement. We see His ascension. We see His exaltation. And all we need, all you and I need for a deeper spiritual life is occupation with the matchless, wonderful Son of God.

You know, I think about this quite often. I wonder why it is that we Christians allow so many transient, materialistic little wee things to come into our life and rob us of a fellowship, of an intimacy with the Lord of glory.

I would indeed that our eyes might be opened to see Him as we study this book, see Him in all His glory, all His beauty, as well as His saving grace. I want you to fall in love with Him. And our love for Him will be evidenced by our obedience to His Word, by our submission to His will.

Now, may I repeat it. All we need for a deeper spiritual life is occupation with the matchless Son of God.

May that be true of each of us today.

Now, starting in at verse 4 and running right down to chapter 4, verse 13, we have the first section we're taking up, having to do with the superiority of the person of Jesus Christ.

Who is this Jesus at the right hand of God?

First of all, He is superior to angelic beings. Now, you find this from verse 4 of chapter 1, right down to the end of chapter 2.

He's superior to the angels, first of all, as the Son of God. You find this in the rest of chapter one. He is better, much better than the angels. And you'll notice from verse 4 to verse 14, the writer uses scripture. Almost all of these quotations are from the Psalms. One is from II Samuel, chapter 7.

But now, the question is why should the writer of Hebrews prove the superiority of Jesus Christ to the angels?

Remember, he has Jews in mind, Jews who venerated their angels. And very simply, all he does is just use the scriptures. In Acts chapter 7, verse 53, and in Galatians chapter 3, verse 19, we find that the law of Moses was given through the mediation of angels. Angels had a tremendous place in the thinking of Jews for centuries. So the very first thing in the book of Hebrews is to prove the superiority of the Son of God over angels. God is speaking to us in His Son, and this Son is superior to angelic beings.

I want to give you five facts in this chapter where Jesus Christ proves His superiority over angelic beings.

The first fact is that He's got a name.

1:4. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

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 speaks of sonship. You have this, of course, in the second Psalm where you have the nations speaking. If I could break it down, the nations speak, the Father speaks, the Son speaks and then the Spirit of God speaks—three verses to each one, 12 verses in the Psalm. And you remember what the word of the Father to the Son is, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” To the Son He says, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” And again, “I will be to him a Father, he

shall be to me a Son.” Here is a much greater name, a more excellent name, than angelic beings have.

And the second fact is in verse 6. Not only does He have a better name, but He has a much greater position. And here He receives worship. And I read the verse,

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.

Now will you think about these first two things? How that the Son of God is better in name than angels. He has a much greater position. He is the object of worship. Remember this. In fact, when our Lord returns to the earth, He's going to be the object of angelic worship.

Is He the object of your worship today?

I'm persuaded in my own mind that most of us, and I speak of myself, even after years of Bible study, I feel that we have never yet begun to touch the hem of His garment. We haven't yet begun to see the glories and the majesty as well as the love and the grace of our God. And the reason for this is, I think, we fail to see the righteous character of God. And the more we see the righteous, holy character of God, the more we appreciate His love and His grace.

And this is Jesus Christ as a Man, the exalted Man at God's right hand. “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” They worshiped Him back in eternity as God the Son. But now, God the Son has become a Man and has taken His place in the human family as the Son of God. And now, they worship Him.

The third fact is in verses 7-9. He is greater in position in rulership and in heirship. He is the exalted one, as you also find in the 45th Psalm and in the 104th Psalm.

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

1:8. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.

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.

Did you ever think of it? Angels as the servants of God worship the Son of God, the exalted One; and notice that the Father acknowledges the deity of His Son: “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

Who says this? May I quote to you from Philippians 2 where we read that “God also hath highly exalted him” (verse 9). Who? The One who died, the One who was buried, the One who was raised again and went back to heaven. God has “highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2:9-11).

The next verses speak of the fact, in verses 10 and 12, that Christ is not only greater in rulership, but He’s also greater in person. He’s the eternal one.

Notice it, please. He’s quoting from the 102nd Psalm.

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

1:11. They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

1:12. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

He is the eternal one.

My friend, let’s face up to it. The writer of Hebrews by the Spirit of God is telling us that this Son of God is not only the Creator but He is more eternal than the heavens and the earth. He laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of His hands. They are perishing things, but He remains.

Did you ever stop to think that man can, in the field of astronomy, look back thousands of years and can look forward thousands of years to where the very constellations will be in the heavens? Oh, the detail of it, the wonder of it all. He sustains everything, and He’s greater in person.

No angel framed the ages.

No angel made the world.

No angel holds them in their place.

No angel can declare that He is eternal, the same yesterday, today and forever, as verse 12 says,

1:12. But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

My friend, we're talking about the eternal Son of God in His superiority over angelic beings. May I give you one more in verses 13-14, He is greater in authority. And here you have the divine sovereignty of the Son. Now look, angels were never given this place. Angels are servants.

1:13. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

1:14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Now this is the first time in the book that you come to the word "salvation." And salvation in Hebrews has to do with His people. The writer is not talking about the unsaved. He's talking about Christ's present ministry for His people while we walk in this world and about the angels that have been sent forth to minister unto us. Angels are looked upon as being inferior not only to the Son of God, but also to the people of God. Let me, for example, suggest a verse or two from 1 Corinthians chapter 6. You remember that Paul is advising the Christians in Corinth who are going to law with each other. He says, "Don't you know that we shall judge the world? Don't you know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)

To which of the angels did he say to take the place of authority over the universe? Authority over heaven, authority over earth? Never to angels. But to the Son he could say, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."

And maybe I ought to say a word here in verse 13. When God said to the Son,

1:13. Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

This is used again in chapter 8:1 and again in 10:12. My friend, the time is coming when every enemy of God, every enemy of Jesus Christ is going to be put under His feet.

I tremble when I think what's in store for those who have repudiated the Son of God, for those who have despised His grace, for those who have taken the Word of God and torn it to pieces and thrown it out as untenable. I tremble for these men who openly, blatantly deny Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Son of God.

My friend, Jesus Christ has been exalted to the throne of God and holy angels are under His authority. And the time is going to come when He is going to reveal that authority, and the powers of hell are going to be shaken and Satan will be bound. And the Christ-rejecter, the one who has spurned the Savior, is going to taste His judgment, His righteous judgment.

My friend, be sure you belong to Christ.

And the reason why He's not manifesting His authority is because He wants to take you and me as sinners and transform us into the children of God. He's waiting to save any and all who will come unto Him.

If you're not saved, if you're not a child of God, I plead with you my friend to accept Jesus Christ, God's Son, as the One who died for you and rose again that you might have life and have it abundantly.

And, Christian, worship and magnify Him today—He is worthy of all our exaltation—for His name's sake.

Chapter Two

Now, before we take up chapter 2, let me mention again that there are five warnings in the book of Hebrews. And you will notice, as I mention them, how one leads to the next.

In chapter 2, we're asked not to neglect so great salvation.

In chapters 3 and 4, we are warned against the awfulness of unbelief.

In chapter 6, we have the question of degeneration or, as someone has said, apostasy.

Then in chapter 10, we have the willful sin which is despising the authority of the Person of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the work of Christ.

And in chapter 12, we have the terrible sin of indifference, where Esau is given to us as an illustration of a heart that has become indifferent to God.

And you know the human mind follows this trend. We go from neglect to unbelief to apostasy to willful sin to indifference. And might I say, sadly, it seems as if we have come to this last stage in the church's history. There are those who claim that we are living in a post-Christian era, that Christianity has had its day and is through. My friend, what has happened is this: We have come to a place of absolute indifference to the things of God. I speak now, in a general way.

You know it is terrible to be indifferent to the things of God and to the person of his Son Jesus Christ. But there is something worse than being indifferent and that is to be satisfied in your indifference. And I'm afraid so many people today are absolutely satisfied to be indifferent to the person of Christ and to the work of Christ, indifferent to the claims of God, indifferent to the fact that they must stand in the presence of God, indifferent as to how much sin they perform or act or do, indifferent to the consequences, indifferent to anything—total indifference.

One of the greatest dangers in the Christian life is to lose interest in that which is familiar. This was the trouble with Israel. In Hebrews chapter 8, verse 9, the writer speaks of this. Our Lord speaks of it in Matthew 22 where they were indifferent and where they neglected the great things of God. It's the great danger for us.

Here, for example, is a man who says, "Oh, I heard that all my life. I don't want to hear it again." What has he become? He has become indifferent, neglecting the wonderful truths of God.

Listen to me, friend. I pray God we Christians may never come to the place where the work of Christ and the person of Christ don't stir our hearts, where spiritual truths become so common to us that they have no more effect upon our hearts and upon our lives. May the Lord deliver us from it. This is one of the reasons for the writing of the book of Hebrews because at the very beginning it occupies us with Christ, when He's the center of our affections. This is the place where we ought to be where the Word of God and the person of Christ are at the center of our lives. Otherwise, we enter into a field of declension, of spiritual deadness.

And may I remind you that three of the reasons for the writing of this book of Hebrews are, they were neglecting the assembling of themselves together. They were following strange doctrines. And, as chapter five says, "When for the time they should have been teachers of the Word of God, they had to be taught again." They were dull of hearing.

I pray God you and I will not become dull of hearing the Word of God. No matter how often we hear this same truth, may we never get too much of it. The more you know the truth of God, the more you live with God, the more you can impart to somebody else.

I'm afraid, as someone has well said, "Too many Christians are trafficking in unknown truth." They take the truth of God, but they never experience it. They don't live in it. Resolve to live in it today, friend. The more you keep in the Word of God, the more heresy-proof you will be.

I want to say these few things as I begin to open up the whole book of Hebrews before you. Let me read the first verses of chapter 2.

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 (drift).

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

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;

2:4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?

Mark the warning regarding steadfastness which is essential for growth. We are to take heed to what the Son has to say. God is speaking to us in His Son. And, brother, we better listen to what Christ has to say to us. We have the urgency of the appeal. We must give heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should drift.

My Christian friend, if I'm talking to you, there's no excuse for drifting. And there are so many drifting with the tide, drifting with the religious worldly tide instead of going on with God. Are you drifting today? There is only one thing that will keep you from drifting and that is to take heed to the Word of God that He has given to you.

This gives us the first warning in this book. Now, let me repeat that he's writing to Hebrew Christians, that is, Jews who have accepted the Savior. And he has some problems with them because all their background and all their culture is wrapped around the Law of Moses, and so it would be very easy for them to slip back into the legality of the Law and miss what they have in Christ.

2:1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things of God or to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (drift).

2:2. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward: (and those who broke that word came under sure judgment) what shall we do?

2:3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; (which Christ has brought to us).

Now, allow me to change and give you material that will help you confront those to whom you might talk who are not Christians. For I read here in verse 3, “How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation.” Now, this has been dealing with the urgency of the appeal. Everyone must give heed to the Word of God. The solemnity of the appeal is “lest we drift.” Now, the reason for the appeal is in verses 2 and 3.

“If the word spoken by angels was steadfast” . . . the word of angels, by the way, is the Law.

Now, here we have the reason for the appeal. The word of angels was steadfast. For those of you who want to follow it through, in Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19 or Deuteronomy 33:2, the Law of God was given to Moses through the mediation of angels (called “saints” in Deuteronomy). And if that Law brought sure judgment, my friend, how shall people escape if they neglect the salvation declared by His Son? If the word of the angels is sure, what about the Word of God? Escape is impossible!

That’s why in John 3:36, I read, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

I know salvation is by grace through faith. I know that God has completed a tremendous work in His Son and through His Son. And if the word spoken by angels, holy angels, was real and steadfast and produced judgment, what do you think is going to happen to the man or the woman who will just neglect the salvation that God has offered in His Son? I repeat it, escape from judgment is impossible. Did you ever think about it?

May I again quote John 3, verse 18. What does it say? “He that believeth is not judged; he that believeth not (just ignores, just neglects) in the name of the only begotten Son of God is judged already.”

Why?

“Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” And this is the judgment that “men loved darkness rather than light.” They neglected God’s provision for their eternal welfare.

Escape is impossible for those who deny and neglect and refuse Jesus Christ as Savior.

May you carry this Gospel in your heart as you speak to lost men and women today for His name's sake.

And the second warning is the question of unbelief.

And then the third warning is declension.

The fourth warning is the willful sin, in chapter 10.

And then we have the last one in chapter 12, indifference.

Now, starting in at verse 5 and running through to the end of the chapter in verse 18, there is given to us the superiority of Jesus, the Man, over angels.

Let me repeat that in the first chapter from verse 4 to the end of the chapter we had the superiority of the Son of God over angelic beings. In chapter two from verse 5 to 18, we have the superiority of the Son of man. There's no question who He is because the writer points out in verse 9 that "we see Jesus." Here we have the humanity and the humiliation of the Son of God in His death, and yet as a Man He is superior to angels.

Now, let me break the passage up for you so you understand a little bit about it. But to me this is an amazing passage. Here is given to us the great purpose of God for the earth. In verses 5-8 we find what God's purpose is.

And what is God's purpose? That man shall have dominion over the works of His hands. He has put the world in subjection to man, not to angels. In other words, the divine purpose is that man should rule the world, not angels. And this scripture supports this. Let's read it.

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

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?

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:

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.

2:9. But we see Jesus.

Now, again, the divine purpose of God for the world is that man shall rule the world, not angels. And the scriptures support this, I repeat. In fact, he quotes here from the 8th Psalm. It gives to us amazing things. Listen to him.

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas” (Psalm 8:3-8).

But you say, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, sir. This is not true. I’m living on the earth and I do not see man having that place of authority. I do not see, for example, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea in subjection to man.”

That’s true. But this is what Hebrews chapter 2:8 says, “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet” and God has left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, the representative Man, crowned.

What is God’s purpose for the earth? That man shall have dominion over the works of His hands. Did you ever stop to realize that man, since sin came into the human race, is no longer the authority? Oh, we see a little bit of it. For example, a man can take the four-footed creatures—sheep and oxen and horses and so on—and put them under his authority.

But what about the fowl of the air? What about the wild beasts of the field? What about the fish of the sea? Man doesn’t have all authority. But this was God’s original purpose for the earth.

When God made man, He made him the crowning part of His creation. He made man to have authority over the works of His hands. And this is yet to be fulfilled. Don’t for one moment think that the purpose of God is going to be thwarted.

My friend, the time is going to come when man will again have authority over the works of God's hands. Did you ever stop to think of what's in store for God's people in the future? Do you realize, my friend, that just as sure as Jesus Christ died and rose again and was exalted to God's right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, having all authority in heaven, all authority in earth, that He's the guarantee that His people will again have that authority?

Sin ruined the authority of man. Before sin came into the human race, Adam had authority. Adam called the animal creation and gave them names. He had authority over the fowl of the air. He had authority over the fish of the sea. But then he rebelled against God, and God couldn't trust him with that authority. God can't trust man today with that authority.

You say, "Well, man has become a tremendous being."

It's true. He's worked up many inventions, amazingly unbelievable inventions. He's peered right into the very heart of creation. He has split the atom and released atomic energy. In the field of nuclear physics, it is hard to see where man is going. The future seems unlimited.

But, my friend, alongside of that has come destruction. The very things that we invent are being used for the destruction of the human race, the destruction of life. God can't trust man with authority. Man has got to be changed before God will allow him to again have that authority. But the purpose of God is still going to be accomplished, and man is yet going to have dominion over the works of God's hands. He is going to change man in and through Jesus Christ. And those who are in Christ Jesus are going to be transformed by the power of the Spirit of God. They are going to have authority over the works of His hands.

You know, I'm amazed continually at the grace of God and at the patience of God with the human race. You go out some night and look at the stars and see God's constellations and the galaxies of stars—innumerable kinds of stars in the heavens. The earth is a wee little speck in God's universe. And each man is only one of billions on the earth. You are just one. And then to see the audacity, the indifference, the corruption of the human heart, that man would defy the living God—it's beyond all comprehension.

“What is man?” Why should God look upon man, man in his sin, man in his corruption, man in his rebellion? Why should God be mindful of man, when He made man, when He made this creature on the face of the earth? He’s a speck in God’s universe.

God gave man to have dominion over the works of His hands. Man was the crowning thing in God’s creation. He made man in His own image, in His own likeness. He gave him a will. He gave him emotions. He gave him a mind, different from anything else. Man is so different. In fact, man has been trying to make himself come up from the creature to the godhead. But he can’t make it. There are too many gaps in between there, brother.

Man was given the capacity to think, the capacity to will, and the capacity to worship. He denied the living God who made him. He rebelled against Him. And God took from man that dominion which he had over the works of His hands. As the writer says, “We do not yet see all things put under man, but we see Jesus.”

He is our representative Man crowned with glory and honor who guarantees that in the future, man will yet again have this dominion over the works of God’s hands.

Let me just stop here for a moment.

“Do you mean to tell me, sir, that man is going to have dominion over the works of His hands?” someone asks.

Yes, yes. You remember the gospel of Luke presents Jesus as a Man, God’s Man, the sinless Man, the perfect Man, the only One of whom God said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.”

Did you ever realize that our Savior was the One whom God could trust with His power, with His authority? Jesus could say to the winds and to the waves, “Be still” (Mark 4:39). He could raise the dead. He could rebuke Satan. He could heal the sick and cleanse the lepers as a Man. God could trust Him with authority. God can’t trust you and me with that authority. I know some people who claim to have some power and some authority. But they are the center of attraction, not the Son of God. They aren’t attracting people to the Savior. God can’t trust you and me with such power.

Did you hear what I said? God cannot trust us with His power. Didn't Jesus one day speak of this to His disciples? When the disciples asked, "Why could not we cast the demons out?" He said, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and it shall obey you" (Matthew 17:19-20). This was the mount of Transfiguration.

Don't say, "Well, that's the mountain of doubt."

No, He's talking about the physical mountain. You read your gospels.

But the time is coming when God is going to transform His people. And His people are going to be the ones who shall have dominion over the works of His hands. It's beyond comprehension, is it not?

And yet, when I remember, for example, 1 Corinthians 6, "Don't you know," says Paul, "that we Christians are going to judge the world? Don't you know that we are going to judge angels?" In the first chapter of Hebrews, the last verse, don't you know that the angels are your servants?

My friend, our minds can't begin to comprehend what's in store for God's people. God has a purpose for the earth, and He has not changed that purpose. He is redeeming His people, taking out a people for His name; and they are going to have dominion over the works of His hands. Now, you think on that for a moment.

The guarantee that that purpose will be accomplished is found in verse 9. Now, the end of verse 8 says, "We see not yet all things put under him." That's true, but ...

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

In other words, Jesus is the guarantee. Now, the first chapter and the second verse says that God is speaking to us through His Son. But no name is mentioned except that He's the Son of God. But when you come to chapter 2, verse 9, the writer comes right out and mentions who the Son is. "But we see Jesus."

And again, may I say that the apostolic writers of the New Testament are very explicit on the question of the title of the Son of God—Jesus, the One who was born in Bethlehem of Judea; Jesus, the One who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil; Jesus, the One who was nailed to the cross, was buried, and was raised again from the dead; Jesus, who was exalted to be a Prince and a Savior at the right hand of God.

As Philippians 2 says, “God hath given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow” in heaven and in earth and in hell (verses 9-10). And every created intelligence in the universe is going to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father.

And here at the very beginning of Hebrews, we find an amazing thing. A man called Jesus is exalted to the throne of God, having all authority. He is the pledge and the assurance of this glorious future that God has in store for the earth. “We see Jesus.” This is His humanity, the Man. Why was He made a Man? For the suffering of death, for the question of redemption.

And you’ll notice in the passage that He should taste death for everyone, not just an elected few. Our Lord went right down into the bowels of death for you and for me. You see, the main death is not the death of the body. But Jesus poured out His soul unto death.

Did you ever think of it? Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane could say, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death” (Mark 14:34).

Christian friend, do you know that you don’t do that? The moment you leave this scene you go right into the presence of God. The unsaved man goes down into Hades, waiting judgment. The believer in Christ goes right into the very presence of God. As Paul could say, “I’m in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). Absent from the body is present with the Lord.

But Jesus, when He died, He went right down to the bowels of death. He poured out His soul unto death. Why? Because He loves you and He loves me. He tasted death, that you and I might go free.

And the writer gives the guarantee to us here in verse 9 that the purpose of God for man is going to be completed. God has not changed His purpose.

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

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 suffering.

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

We're dealing especially with the guarantee of the purpose of God with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the pledge and assurance of this glorious future. Now, he talks about Jesus, the Man. He's speaking of His humanity, that our Lord was made a little lower than the angels. That is, He took His place in the human family for a purpose, and that was to accomplish redemption. We read in this 9th verse "that he by the grace of God should taste death for everyone."

Now, in verse 10, let's continue. His provision and work for us runs from verse 10 down to verse 19.

It says here that God is going to bring many sons into glory:

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.

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

Listen in verses 10 through 18, He gives us the provision to fulfill that purpose. What's He going to do? "He's going to bring many sons unto glory." And to make this thing possible, I read, "To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

You see, man's promised supremacy could only be gained through suffering. Where sin carried the first man Adam and his race

into death, the second man Christ Jesus went Himself by the grace of God; and now God has highly exalted Him.

Let me not forget to say to you that wherever sin is, God's righteous judgment demands suffering. Christ must go through the path of suffering. What for? To bring many sons into glory.

When we come to chapter 5 and take up the qualification of a priest, we're going to find out there that our Lord, 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, was heard in that he feared" (verse 7). "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (5:8-9).

Now, it might be well for me to suggest this. It talks here in verse 10 about "making the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." It does not say to make anyone sinless. This word "perfect," by the way, is used quite often through the book of Hebrews. It doesn't mean sinlessness. It doesn't mean sanctification. It means a completion of a purpose. The purpose of God is that He is going to have a people to whom he can trust His power and authority to govern His creation. And suffering must come into the picture because of the righteous character of God.

Sin has come into the picture. How is sin going to be put away? All through your Bible, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. There must be suffering. You can't get away from this, my friend. And to make our Savior the captain of our salvation, to perfect or to complete the job He came to do, He must do it through suffering. And this our Savior did. He accepted all the conditions. And to bring many sons into glory, He suffered and He died and He completed the job.

That's why He could say in John 17:4, "Father, I have finished the work You have given me to do." Or in John chapter 19 verse 13, "It is finished: and he bowed his head" (and his head didn't drop; he bowed his head in simple resignation to the will of His Father, and yielded up the spirit). He died for you and for me.

There was a certain sense in which they killed Him and yet, He could say, “No man taketh my life from me; I have power to lay it down” (John 10:17-18). That’s what you can’t do. He bowed His head in submission and yielded up the Spirit. He went through suffering. He went through death. For what purpose? For the perfecting of God’s purpose in the people who would be fitted to reign and to have dominion over the works of His hands.

And not only so, but He goes on to the next verse. It’s an amazing thing.

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

Now, here we have a new relationship. A new relationship was established. This is something new. “That He might bring many sons into glory.” These are those who are going to be just like Himself. He would bring many sons into glory; and to accomplish this, He must suffer. But by thus doing, He brought a new relationship into being. He accomplished something that was never done before.

Friend, may I say to you very frankly, when we talk about salvation, being born again into the family of God, do you know what it means? It means that God is bringing into being a new race of people to whom He can grant His power and authority over creation. He’s going to be able to trust them with His power. So, the purpose of God for the earth will be accomplished. He puts away their sin by the sacrifice of Himself and brings into being a new relationship, a new family, a new race of people.

So from verse 10 down through verse 13, we have this question of a new relationship that God is bringing into being.

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.

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

2:12. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst

of the church will I sing praise unto thee,

2:13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

Now, here I say it is the Son of God speaking and He's talking about the work that He has and will accomplish and about those who will accept Him and be brought into relationship as the children of God.

As I said a moment ago, He's bringing into being a new race of people. The human race betrayed Him; the human race failed Him; and sin and death and corruption are reigning everywhere. But God is going to complete His purpose through man. So I find that our Savior came as a man into the human race for the purpose of making it possible for God to bring into being a race that's freed from sin, a race to whom He can give this authority over the works of His hands.

Now, let's go down to verses 10 and 11, especially the end of verse 10.

2:10b. To make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.

And again may I talk about this word "perfect." Our Lord always was perfect in the sense that He was always righteous. He was always sinless. He was always perfect in the sense that He stood before God in all the perfection of God's Man. We're talking here about the completion of a purpose. It's what we have in the book of Hebrews. For example, in chapter 6, the writer says, "Let us go on unto perfection" and it means there going on unto full growth, unto the completion of the task which God has for us on earth, in and through us, working in us His own good plan and purpose.

And then he goes on in verse 11 where he says,

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

Now, this relationship and association between Christ and His people is based upon His death and is displayed in His resurrection. He was not united to this new group of people in incarnation. He was

incarnate in order to suffer for the purpose of bringing in a new race. And it is in this risen, glorified Christ that we are joined in this heavenly fellowship. In other words, Christ effectually separates us unto God. And, by the way, this is sanctification.

You remember in John chapter 20—oh, I'll go a little farther back. In John chapter 17, verses 18 and 19, He said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Our Lord set Himself apart.

This word "sanctification" in the book of Hebrews is never by the Spirit. It's always on the ground of the work of Christ. The word "sanctification" means to set apart. People talk about sanctification as having the roots of sin taken out. Well, I question whether that is in the scriptures. Sanctification is being effectually set apart for God.

There is both daily sanctification where we are experiencing separation from that which is evil and that which is sinful, from that which does not glorify God, that which dishonors God. It's a certain measure of daily sanctification. And then there's a positional sanctification where everyone who accepts the Savior is set apart for God. And that's what we have here. "For he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Of one what? Of one relationship, one life, one purpose.

Possibly this might be in the mind of John the Apostle in 1 John 1:3 when he says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." And this word "fellowship," can I change the word, our "partnership," is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. As you have in 2 Corinthians 5:16 and 17 when he says, We know "no man after the flesh," not even Christ after the flesh, though we have known Christ after the flesh, from now on know we Him no more. Therefore, therefore, if any man be in Christ, in this risen, glorified Christ, he is a new creature: old things (not patched up things, not made over things) "are passed away; behold all things are become new."

We belong to a new family, a new family! And the only way to get into that family, the only way we can experience this relationship is

by the new birth, by receiving Jesus Christ as our own Savior. He has made this possible through suffering and death and resurrection. I want to make this very, very clear. Every member of this family, of this new race, is eternal and stands before God righteous, having been cleansed by the blood of Christ and been eternally united to Jesus, the Son of God.

That's why He could say in John chapter 14:20—do you remember that amazing verse?—when He said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

In fact, take that upper room discourse of our Savior, in John's gospel, chapters 14 and 17, and read of this wonderful union. The delight of our Lord's heart was that, having perfected His Father's will and purpose in coming to the earth, He had taken His place in the human family, being made sin for us, removing the barrier, making it possible for the righteous God to pick up sinners like you and me, cleanse us, give us life eternal, make us His children, make us members of a new family, and set us apart with His Son for God Himself. This is what you have here. “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” One in life, one in purpose, for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

Now, it doesn't say that we are not ashamed to call Him “Lord.” It doesn't say that, though it should be true. But He is not ashamed to call you and me His brethren. Of course not. He certainly is not ashamed at the work He has done for us. He is not ashamed of the work He is doing in us. He is not ashamed of the work He is yet to do when He transforms us to make us like Himself.

One could go into Scripture concerning this amazing thing that you and I stand before God in all the merit and all the beauty and all the righteousness of Christ. And He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

By the way, are you ashamed to call Him “Lord” here on earth? Are you ashamed to declare that He is your Savior? He's not ashamed to call you brethren.

By the way, and allow me to do this, will you. I hope you will understand me when I say that I have met Christians who talk about “Brother Jesus.” Please don't do that. Please don't do that. Don't you

call Him Brother. You call Him Lord. You call Him Savior. But don't call Him Brother. It's true, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. And it's true, after the resurrection in John 20, He said, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God" (verse 17). He could say, "And these are my brethren." But you never read of anyone calling Him Brother in the Scriptures. And please don't come to that place of calling Him "Brother Jesus." He's your Lord.

Do you mind my telling you this? He's your Lord, never forget that. He's your Lord. He's your Master as well as your Savior. And don't think that it's an indication that you are full of devotion to Christ by calling Him "Brother Jesus." For some reason or other this just doesn't sit right with me. And I'm sure it doesn't sit well in the Scriptures. He is the "Lord Jesus."

But the amazing grace of it all, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Why? Because we've been made one with Him, because we're joined to Him. And He is the first born among many brethren. That's Romans 8:29.

Now, why don't you enjoy Him today? Enjoy this union with the Savior. Enjoy your relationship with Him.

Can I talk to you a minute out of my own heart? It's a wonderful thing to have a Savior who has made such—such provision.

You know I've been studying the Word of God for a number of years, but I never get over the marvelous thing that Jesus did when He died for you and me. Too many Christians have gotten over being saved. Listen, friend, the more we get into it, the more we meditate upon our wonderful Savior, the more marvelous our salvation is. Christ has suffered, died, and been raised again, having put away sin, having made provision for the transformation of men and women from death to life, from sin to righteousness, from wrath to God.

Think of it, that you and I can share in this wonderful purpose of God. And no wonder He says, "I am not ashamed to call them brethren." Not ashamed of the work? Of course not! Is He ashamed of our company? No, no. The Lord is not ashamed of the ones He has redeemed. The question is, are we ashamed? You know, I think of that verse in 1 John 2:28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when

he shall appear, we may have confidence (boldness), and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”

He's not ashamed to call us brethren.

Oh, my Christian friend, today, child of God, member of the body of Christ, joined to the Savior, never be ashamed that you belong to Jesus Christ. Never be ashamed that He's your Lord. Please have that reverence and that worship and that devotion to the Savior where He will always be your Lord and your Master. And then to think that He's not ashamed of our company. Listen to the next two verses.

2:12. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church (the assembly) will I sing praise unto thee.

2:13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

He comes into the midst of the church. What for? To loosen our praise. “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee,” as if the Lord was leading the Hallelujah Chorus in magnifying His Father. You and I will be singing in that crowd, magnifying the One who made provision for man to be redeemed through the Son. We are the Father's gift to the Son. But there's one thing in the way, in verses 14 and 15. The children must be delivered from Satan and from death. So in verses 14 and 15, we not only have the provision and work for us to fulfill God's purpose, but we have a new deliverance. Our Lord became a Man for a purpose, that He might meet Satan and defeat Him. Listen to this.

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, (or He might annul the power of him so that Satan might be shorn of his authority over death), that is, the devil:

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

He not only came to put away sin. He not only came to vindicate the righteousness of God or to bring in a new family. But, my friends, He came that He might deliver you and me from the power of the fear of

death and from the power of the devil. Here we have one of the purposes of the incarnation. He became a Man, took His place in the human family, not only to die to put away our sins, but to redeem His children from the power of death and from the authority of hell.

Did you ever stop to think, my Christian friend, that, when you and I accepted the Savior, one of the great purposes of our Lord's coming was to deliver men and women, not only from sin, but from death which reigned and from the power of the devil, the arch enemy of our souls?

You know sometimes when you think of salvation, you think of being forgiven of our sins and we're going to heaven. But we haven't even scratched the surface yet. You see, the human race has been under this two-fold authority. Death has reigned over the human race.

When sin came into the human race, death reigned. You remember that. A baby born into the world never sins, but it dies. The moment it takes its place in the human family, it's under the sentence of death. Death reigns. You can argue yourself black and blue, but you can't alter the fact that death reigns, plays no favorites, rich or poor, bond or free, wise or ignorant, old or young. Death plays no favorites.

So, to deliver His family from the fear and bondage of death, our Savior went into death and came forth victorious over death so that you and I might be delivered from death. That is why John 5:24 says, "We are passed from death unto life." As I said a while ago, the moment a Christian leaves this scene he goes right into the very presence of God. He has already been delivered from the fear and the bondage and power of death.

And not only so, but when our Lord died, He also defeated Satan and robbed him of his authority and power over God's people. Remember that Satan is the god of this world, religiously. He's the prince of this world, governmentally. And the vast number of people out of Christ are under the authority of the power of darkness. They may not believe it. They may not understand it. They may not feel it. But the fact is, Satan is the prince of this world. As Ephesians 2:2-3 says, He's the one who energizes the children of disobedience. He's the god of this world. He's the prince of this world.

And when you and I come as sinners and we see Jesus Christ as Savior, He not only puts away our sins, but He immediately delivers us from death's authority. In other words, death cannot touch the Christian until the Lord permits it. I mean just that, my friends. Death cannot touch the believer in Christ until God permits it. It's been shorn of its authority.

A Christian who is walking in the will of God is immortal until his work is done. Death cannot touch him. The powers of hell have been defeated by Jesus Christ at the cross and in resurrection. As Colossians 2:15 says, He carries those powers on His chariot wheels. He has led them captive, defeated them, and shorn Satan of his power. Satan wasn't destroyed. That word "destroyed" here in verse 14 means to annul. That is, He annulled the power of Satan. The devil has no more authority over any one of God's children—not only the strong ones but the weak ones, not only the mature Christians but the babes in Christ.

My friend, lay hold of this. You belong to Christ. Neither death nor Satan has any more authority over you. And when Christ died on the cross, He not only put away your sins and made it possible for God to bring in a new race, but He delivered that new race, not only from sins, but from the power of death and the power of darkness.

What a Savior we have!

Deliverance from the fear of death and the bondage of death and the powers of hell can only be found one place—in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We see Jesus crowned, having tasted death for us. He was crowned with glory and honor. And my friend, He's the victorious One.

May I plead with you, Christians, to live today in the fellowship of the Son of God?

And now, we come to the second thing we were discussing, not only the provision of a new race of people to accomplish His purpose, but in verse 14 our Lord did two things on the cross. He not only put away the sin that you have in verses 9 and 10, but He destroyed the power of Satan. And He delivered us from the fear of death.

So you have these two things that the Lord Jesus did in verses 14 and 15. In incarnation and death He completed a two-fold objective. He

overcame the prince of death, that is, the devil. And He liberated His people from the bondage and fear of death. This is an amazing thing, isn't it?

Now, I have been a pastor for a great many years, and I'll say very frankly that there's a tremendous difference when death enters a home, enters a family. And if the family loves the Savior, you have a certain attitude, a certain peace, a certain comfort, a hope.

You come to an unsaved family when death comes and there's no hope. You see, when our Lord came, He came not only to put away sin. But He came to deliver us from the fear of death and in His resurrection He destroyed the authority over death, over His people.

Allow me to quote from Revelation 1:18, speaking of our Lord who was the first and the last, who was dead and is alive again forever more and He goes on to say, "And I hold on my girdle the keys of death and of hell." That is, "I carry the authority of death and of hell."

In His death, He delivered us from sin. In His death, He destroyed the power of Him that had the power of death, and in His death He delivered us, who through the fear of death, were all our lifetime subject to it.

Now the chapter is not through yet. The rest of the chapter takes up another very important thing. The children are still on earth in weakness. Although we have been delivered from sin's guilt and power, though we have been delivered from the devil and his authority, though we have been delivered from the fear and bondage of death, we are still down here on earth in frailty. And this gives to us, shall I say, one of the keys to the whole rest of the book of Hebrews. What is our Lord doing for us?

So allow me to read from verse 16 to verse 18, from 16 to the end of the chapter.

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

2:17. Wherefore in all things it behooved him (it was fitting for 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.

2:18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able

to succour them that are tempted (or tested).

Allow me to give the argument again. God's purpose for the earth is man shall have dominion. Man ruined that by sin. Our Lord came in due time for the purpose of delivering man from the bondage and penalty of sin. And through His death, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Through that same death, He destroyed the authority, the power of Satan over His people. Through that same death and resurrection, He annulled the power of death. We have been delivered from death's authority and power; and God is bringing into being a new race of people, a new family, as He could say, "I and the children which God hath given me" (v. 13).

But I'm still on earth. Now, these are wonderful things, but I'm still on earth. I'm still in frailty. I still fail God. Don't you? Don't you? Does God leave us? Does God save us and give us salvation, make us His child, and then let us go our own way? No, He's made provision for you and me in our frailty. So here we come to the key—one of the key truths, shall I say—of the book of Hebrews. May I read verse 16 and make it a little different, “

2:16. For verily he did not undertake the cause of angels, but he undertook the cause of the seed of Abraham.

2:17. Wherefore in all things it behooved him (it was fitting for 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.

Now notice He did not undertake the cause of angels. And I'm glad for that. I'm not an angel. And by the way, neither are you. Angels are created holy beings, and they always do God's bidding. And when our Lord died, He didn't die for angels. He didn't die for demons, and He didn't die for the devil. He died for you and for me. And He did not undertake the cause of angels. He took His place in the human family and took upon Him the seed of Abraham.

As verse 17 says, "He was made just like His brethren." He took His place in the human family and was tested in all parts like you and

me, yet without sin. What for? “That He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God” and that He might “make reconciliation,” more closely “propitiation” for the sins of the people. He’s made provision for His people.

And He’s talking about His people, those who trust Him. He has made provision to put away their sins and to satisfy the character of God. “For that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Now, I said a moment ago, that we’ve come to a very, very important statement. The whole of Hebrews right down through chapter 10 is dealing with the question can this Jesus of Nazareth, can this One who took His place in the human family, really undertake my cause while I’m on the earth in frailty?

Now, I want to know that. I’m a man in the midst of men. I’m surrounded by sin and corruption and by lawlessness, by worldliness, by carnality and surrounded by things that would detract me and detract you from the things of God.

We’re surrounded by so many things that would seek to thwart the purpose of God in you and me. How in the world can you and I stand? We couldn’t stand for one minute, my friend. Don’t fool yourself. We couldn’t stand before God for one minute if it were not for the present ministry of Christ, One who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows exactly what we are going through. And He’s praying for us now, according to the will of God.

Will you think of that for the rest of this day? Think of it now. The eternal Son of God at the right hand of God knows exactly what you’re going through. He knows your weakness. As the 103rd Psalm said, “He remembers our frame. It is just dust.” That’s because He knows us. And He knows the world in which we live because He’s been here and lived here. He was tested here. He knows exactly what we go through.

And you remember He’s praying for you. He’s undertaking your cause. Will you think of that today? And revel in Him, your Savior, who understands you. If nobody else understands you, my friend, He understands you.

Are you shut in?

Are you weak?

It is the real desire of my own heart that in some way I can present to you something of the heart of the Savior for you individually. You know, sometimes we think of the great movements on the earth. We think of the hundreds of the thousands and the millions who belong to the professing church of Christ. Maybe you belong to a large Christian church or an assembly and you feel, "Well, I'm just one in thousands. I'm just one in hundreds. Who cares about me?"

I want you to understand that you personally, no matter how weak or frail you are, if you love the Savior, if you've trusted Christ as your Savior, you are a special object of the care of God. He thinks more about caring for you and undertaking for you than in running the universe. That's a material thing.

But you, my friend, belong to Him. You've got a tremendous place in the heart of God. God has a tremendous interest in you. And His interest in you is so much that He gave His Son to die for you. God's got too much in you to let it go by. And, if you've really trusted the Savior, you are the object, not only of His affection, His devotion, but you are the object of His power and His continual care.

I want you to know that, as we have studied the book of Hebrews, I have repeated quite a bit; and I intended to do that because I want to get right down into your heart. You may not understand all of it intellectually, but I want you to get it right down in your heart that you are, as an individual, a personal object of His care, of His love, of His devotion. God's going to have a people who are joined to His Son, related to His Son.

As the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 2 and verse 11, "He that sanctifieth (that's the Lord Jesus), and those who are sanctified (those are the ones who have trusted Him) are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." And this sanctification means to be set apart for a purpose.

I recognize that in Corinthians and other books we have practical sanctification for daily living. He's not dealing with that here. The writer is dealing with the question of being set apart for a distinct purpose. And, by the way, in the book of Hebrews, sanctification is always on the

ground of the sacrifice of Christ. Take, for example, Hebrews 10:10, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

I repeat this because some people, when you talk about sanctification, think about a certain doctrine of holiness. He's not dealing with that here. Jesus Christ and all who are in Him have been set apart for a distinct purpose, and part of that purpose is to rule God's creation.

But the children whom He has redeemed are still in frailty. True, they have been delivered from the guilt and penalty of sin. True, they have become the children of God. True, they have eternal life. True, they have been delivered from the authority of hell. True, they have been delivered from the bondage and fear of death, which you have right on down through verse 15.

But now, I'm still in frailty here on earth. So God undertakes for me in my frailty. It's what I want to get to your heart. And I don't mind repeating it. You are the special object of His care.

Now, listen to verse 16. "Jesus did not undertake the cause of angels." He didn't die for angels. He is not doing anything for angels. "He undertook the cause of the seed of Abraham." Why didn't he say the seed of Adam? No. Abraham. The children of Abraham are the children of faith.

Like our Lord could say in Luke 19:9, when He said to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Now, he was Jew, but he became the child of Abraham by faith. And everyone who trusts the Savior will be the child of Abraham in this sense that they've received Him by faith. But they are still on the earth. You are here. I am here. You have your weaknesses and your frailties and so do I. And Jesus Christ today is doing a job, caring for us.

So, in verse 17, I read, "Wherefore it was fitting for Him to be made like unto His brethren." What for? "That He might be a faithful and merciful high priest in things pertaining to God."

Now, let me just stop here for a moment. He's a faithful and merciful high priest. A high priest is one who stands before God to represent his people. If I may make a little contrast here. A prophet is one who represents God to the people. A priest is one who represents the

people to God. And in Hebrews chapter 9:24, I read that He is now appearing “in the presence of God for us.” Jesus Christ, the risen, exalted Son of God, is my, is your, representative before the throne of God. He’s representing us. He’s our high priest. And He’s a faithful high priest. He is faithful to God. He’s a merciful high priest. He’s merciful to us.

You see, He knows all that we go through. It might be well for me to suggest in this connection that the purpose of God, as I said in verses 5-8, is that man shall have dominion over the works of God’s hands. Now, let me go a bit further. God has a purpose for every one of us Christians, we who trust the Savior. And when God gets through with that purpose, when He’s through with that purpose, you and I are going to stand in His presence just like Jesus Christ. Now, this is the purpose of God. It’s what you have in Romans 8:29. God has determined that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son who is the firstborn among many brethren.

You remember in John 20:17, He said to His disciples, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Here is a relationship. Jesus Christ is the righteous, holy, perfect Son of God. And you and I in Him stand before God in that same perfection. But it has not yet been worked out in us.

So it means that, when you and I are here on earth, we go through testings and trials. We go through sorrows. We go through disappointments. Does anybody care for me? Do you ever think about this?

I’ve heard people say, “You know, Mr. Mitchell, nobody understands me. Nobody seems to care for me.”

And I’m sorry to say this, oh, how sorry I am to say that there are Christians today, possibly in your city and in this city wherever you live, who are just dying for someone to understand them—for some other Christian to really understand them in their frailties, in their weakness, in their failures.

Oh, let us not be censorious. Let us come among God’s people with a heart of understanding. You know, to me it’s a wonderful thing. For example, I’m a teacher of the Word of God and Jesus at the right

hand of God, who has all authority, understands exactly what I go through every time I stand up and teach the Word of God.

I don't know what your position in life is. I don't know what your tests are. I don't know what your sorrows or afflictions are. But I know one thing. I have a Savior who perfectly, absolutely understands just what you go through. Not only so, but He's the one who is the God over all circumstances. And He's working out in you and in me His own perfect plan. And He's touched with the feeling of my infirmities.

You know, if I can be a little personal here. When I first started to preach as a young man up on the prairies of Canada, it came to me with great, great, shall I say, quite a jolt about 3 o'clock one morning. I had two or three meetings the next day. I didn't know what in the world I was going to give these people on the Word of God. I had told them everything I knew; and here I was all day Saturday and into the light Sunday morning, still trying to pray and study and write and I couldn't get a thing.

And just as if it came out of the blue, "What are you worried about? Don't you know I was a Preacher, and I'm praying for you?"

I said, "Well, Lord, if that's so, I might as well go to bed."

You know, God doesn't want me to be indifferent or lazy, but I understand He knows exactly what I go through. He knows exactly what you go through.

My friend, my Christian friend, wouldn't it be a good thing if today you just got right down in the presence of God and did some communicating with Him. Tell Him your weaknesses.

You say, "You know, Mr. Mitchell, He knows all about me."

I know He does, but why not tell Him. Doesn't a mother like to have her child come and tell her what's on the child's heart, what's on the child's mind? It may be the mother knows more than the child, but my, the mother loves to have the child come and manifest that confidence in mother in telling her what's in his little heart.

Why don't you and I come into the presence of God more often? Talk to God very frankly, very openly about your tests and your trials. And sometimes, it may be, you are so full of self-sympathy that you miss the glories of Christ. You're so full of self and the misery you're in

or the tests you go through or the circumstance under which you live, that you miss something of the joy and the blessing of the presence of the Savior.

Listen, friend, I don't know who you are, but I do know one thing. The Lord understands you, just you. He knows all about your circumstances. He knows your frailties, He knows your weaknesses. And He's praying for you. He's able to succour. He's able to strengthen. He's able to deliver. He's able to undergird any and everybody who will trust Him.

Now do that today, will you? Sometime today, you get alone with the Lord and do a little communicating with Him. Tell Him all your troubles. Tell Him all your trials. Tell Him all your frailties. I know He knows all about them. But, my friend, this is fellowship. This is communicating with the living God. Maybe this is what He's waiting for you to do, so He can deliver you from some of the things you're in.

Oh, how we've robbed ourselves of joy and peace and blessing and power because we do not spend time in communicating our own hearts with God. He cares for you. He loves you. Christ is your High Priest. He's your faithful High Priest—faithful to God and merciful to you.

Now, let me restate verses 17 and 18 of chapter 2,

2:17. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be (it was fitting that he should be) made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation (propitiation) for the sins of the people.

2:18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tested, he is able to succour them that are tested.

You remember in Romans 8:2-3 it says, "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me (set us) free from the law of sin and death." Now, mark, "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Now, here we have the Savior's coming into the human race for a purpose. The marvelous thing is that when Christ died, He not only died

to put away sin and deliver us from the power of hell and the powers of death, but He is a faithful and merciful high priest.

And the question is going to be raised afterwards in the book, “Can this Jesus of Nazareth qualify to be a real priest, because a priest is one who represents the people to God, just as a prophet represents God to the people.” Now our Savior is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is faithful to God and merciful to us; and because He has made provision for us, having satisfied the character of God through His work on the cross to put away our sins, and because He suffered being tested, He qualifies to be our high priest.

Now, this word “tempt” is “being tested.” Some people wanted Jesus Christ to sin so that He might be better able to help us. One doesn't have to sin in order to help people. One doesn't have to sin to understand the awfulness of tests. In fact, I would make this statement that the more holy one is, the more that person realizes the awfulness of sin—more so than the one who is continually failing. You think about that.

Allow me to quote from Dr. Westcott, the great Greek scholar who wrote these words concerning this matter about our Lord's being tested. As I said a moment ago, “temptation” here means trial. He had sympathy for us. He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was tested in all points. This is the quotation:

“Sympathy with the sinner in his trials does not depend on the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain. Sin indeed dulls sympathy by observing the idea of evil.” End of quotation by Dr. Westcott.

In other words, you and I have never known the complete tests that can come to one because we always fail. We go so far, we fail. We get over one temptation and drop into another one. We've never known the full testing. Why? Because we fail. But here is one who went the whole way. He knows about every test you go through, my friend. And He does not have to experience failure to understand the test.

I repeat the statement. The more holy one is, the more you realize the severity of the testing, more than the one who has failed when tested.

And our Savior, being the sinless, holy Son of God, went the whole extent without failure. And because of this, He is able to succour, to know exactly what you go through. Remember He worked as a man, as a carpenter. He was a real Man.

I would suggest you read sometime the Gospel through Luke, all 24 chapters. Read it through, the whole business right through. Read about our Lord as a Man in the midst of men, how He came as a child, having been born in Bethlehem of Judea and as a boy 12 years of age, a son under the law. At 30 years of age, He started a ministry which sparked murderous jealousy in the hearts of religious leaders who were not satisfied until they nailed Him to a cross.

And He could say, “The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” My friend, He went the farthest limits of temptation for you and me and never failed God. He never sinned. That’s why I love this verse because, being tested, He is able to succour those who are tested.

Now, before we leave these first two chapters, may I just repeat that there are four distinct grounds in chapter 2 for the humiliation of Christ.

First of all, Godward—there was God’s glory, the guarantee that the purpose of God would be completed.

Secondly, there must be the destruction of Satan’s power, even over death.

Thirdly, He must make propitiation for the people. What people? His people. That is, He must remove all barriers between God and His people. He must satisfy the righteous character of God and make it possible for God to declare His people righteous. And His people are all who put their trust in the Savior.

And the fourth thing, because we are still here in frailty, still on earth, still in weakness and sometimes in failure, we have a merciful and faithful high priest who understands exactly what we go through.

So, He had to become a Man, incarnate, who came down here in humiliation to satisfy God that His purpose might be consummated, to destroy Satan and his power, even over death, to make propitiation for

the sins of God's people and to be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.

As long as we're on earth, remember it, my Christian friend, you are the distinct object of His care, of His love, of His devotion.

I repeat it. Do you think for one moment that, if Christ loved you enough to die for you and put away your sins, He's going to let you go? And you who have put your trust in Him, become a child of God, been cleansed by the blood of Christ, brought into a relationship with Himself, God has a tremendous interest in you.

I would suggest you read the 17th chapter of John where our Lord in His high priestly prayer for us could say, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given me out of the world. They were yours and You gave them to Me. And so Father, You keep them, I have kept them this far, You keep them the rest of the way," (verse 9 in my words). Oh, how glad I am today that I have a Savior who is touched with the feeling of my infirmities. I've got Somebody who really perfectly understands me.

This is what I want to get into your heart, into your life. And at the end of chapter 2, it is wonderful to talk about the cross. We thank God for the perfection of that work. How wonderful that He destroyed the power of the enemy. I rejoice in this before God. But oh, to know that I have a Savior in heaven who knows everything about me and really cares for me. His love for me never, never ceases. It never grows cold, never is lukewarm even when I'm in frailty and failure. What a Savior we have!

Oh, Christian friend, why don't you live for Him today? Communicate with Him. Lay bare your heart before God. He understands all about you.

You say, "I don't know what to say."

Yes, you do. You get down and just tell Him. I don't care how you tell Him. Just tell Him all about yourself, your frailty and how you need Him and how you love Him.

By the way, how long ago is it since you told the Lord how much you love Him? Wouldn't it be a nice thing to do that, a good thing, good

for your soul to tell the Lord how much you love Him? He always loves you.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, He knows I love Him."

Yes, but go ahead and tell Him.

This is communion.

May the Lord make this to be a day for you filled with joy and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Himself.

Chapter Three

Our Lord has a three-fold ministry to perfect, to finish. He has finished one. On the cross, He finished the work of redemption and the revelation of His Father to men. And then He's doing a new work now at the right hand of God as our high priest. He is representing us. He's praying for us. And then, He's going to come to do a third work. After He completes His ministry of completing the church of Christ, then He comes to the earth to reign as Lord of lords and King of kings.

We find in these first two chapters the superiority of the Lord Jesus over angels as the Son of God in chapter 1 and over angels as the Son of Man in chapter 2. At the end of chapter 2, we have the wonderful thing that our Savior is undertaking—He's dealing now with His people, for a high priest is one who represents the people to God, something He perfectly, completely does for us.

Now, when we come to the third chapter, it just seems as if the writer of Hebrews is fearful that we miss the amazing thing about the person of Christ. Let's read just the first two verses of chapter 3 of the book of Hebrews.

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

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

Now, briefly, may I suggest that here we have Jesus Christ, the Son of God, superior to Moses, the great law-giver. And the very first thing the writer wants you to do is to consider, to gaze intently, upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now, first of all, he says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," Why in the world does he say "holy brethren"? Why holy? Well, you remember that verse 11 of the preceding chapter reads, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." This question of

being “brethren” is one of relationship; “holy” has to do with the position of being set apart for God. You cannot be in Christ and not take the position of being holy. There can be no fellowship or union with Christ without this. God has called us to union and fellowship with Himself.

You know, I remember those verses so well in Philippians chapter 3, the 20th verse, where the Apostle Paul says, “Our citizenship is in heaven.” We’re a heavenly people. And in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3, he speaks with great joy, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.” Oh, this union with the Savior and the joy it brings to you and to me.

My Christian friend, what do you know about your Savior? The writer of Hebrews is pleading with these Hebrew Christians and with you to consider Jesus Christ. He has set you apart. He’s redeemed you. He’s joined you to Himself. You are related to God. You are His brethren, and you are holy because of this relationship. He said you are “partakers of the heavenly calling.” You belong to the glory.

Now, consider Jesus Christ. Take knowledge of Him. And may I say that here is one of the keynotes of this epistle. You remember in chapter 1, verse 2 that God is now speaking to us “in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things.”

In chapter 12 of Hebrews in the first two or three verses, he said, Therefore leaving to one side the things of the past, being surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, (which you have in chapter 11), “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The thought of the writer here is to gaze steadfastly upon this wonderful person, the Son of God and the Son of Man. Rivet your attention upon Him. You know we spend so much time occupied with ourselves, and often we become self-sympathetic and want people to

take notice of us. We get so occupied with our accomplishments or our failures, one or the other.

But, oh, to get occupied with the Son of God. Consider. Set your heart and your mind. Rivet your attention upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man. This is what we need today.

You see, the character of Christianity is the place it gives Christ. If you go to church and Christ is not the center of your gathering, it is not a Christian meeting. It's just a mere religious meeting. Christ must be the center. He must be the object of your faith, your worship, your praise, and your thanksgiving. He must be the center. Our meditation of Him, as the psalmist said "will be sweet" (Psalm 104:34).

And He is the sweetest of all. He's the most wonderful, wonderful, wonderful Savior. He's the only Savior. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the holy calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

Now the apostle of our profession is not Peter, not Paul, not John, but the Son. Remember that God is speaking to us, not through Moses, but through His Son. First of all, He's the Apostle. He's the one through whom God speaks. That's what an apostle is. He's a sent one. He's a messenger. God, as we had in the first chapter, is speaking to us now in His Son, not through the sages of old, not through the prophets, not through Peter or John, except as he speaks through their written word. But God is speaking through His Son. And He must be the center.

I wish in some way I could put this in words the way I feel. He—must—be the center. In the book of Colossians, when the Colossian church was looking at shadows, legalism, false doctrines, mysticism, the false philosophies of men, they were getting their eyes off Christ, their Head.

May I say very clearly and very bluntly, when Christ is no longer the center of our heart's affections, we can fall into any sort of thing. My friend, may I urge upon you, do not seek an experience. Seek Him. He must be the center. And I warn you, if you're seeking an experience, you'll get an experience of one kind or another; but it will not be a spiritual one.

Spiritual experiences only come from occupation with Christ, the Son of God because of your relationship and fellowship with Him. He was the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. As an Apostle, He was like Moses. As a High Priest, He was like Aaron. And He's superior to both of them. And this is what the writer is talking about.

He is saying, I want you to consider One who is absolutely superior to anyone who ever lived, superior to Moses, the great law-giver, superior to Aaron, the high priest. In fact, Aaron is called the saint in the Psalms. And yet Jesus Christ is superior to all.

Oh, listen, Christian friend, don't be occupied with a man, however wonderful and brilliant he may be or how gifted he may be. Don't be occupied with an organization. Be occupied with Christ. This is where you have worship. This is where you have your strength. This is where you find peace. This is where you find satisfaction. Consider, rivet your attention on Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And this is what we're going to do through the rest of the book of Hebrews, especially through chapter 10. We're going to be occupied with the superiority of Jesus Christ, superior over the angels, superior over law-giver Moses, superior to High Priest Aaron, superior to Captain Joshua of God's host, superior to any other person who ever lived.

Don't you think it would be wise for us as Christians who claim to love Him, who claim to trust Him, to learn all we can about Him?

What do you know about Him?

What do you really know about Him?

May I plead with your heart, Christian, to consider Jesus Christ. He will never disappoint you. He will always meet your need, and He'll never leave you nor forsake you. There is no Savior like Him, no Lord like Him. Then let's give Him the rightful place in our hearts and lives.

And why not start today with all your past accomplishments and failures. They're in the past. Don't occupy yourself with your own self and your own self-will. You get occupied with the Savior. He's the One who is altogether lovely.

Now, I would like to read again the first few verses of the third chapter in Hebrews.

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

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

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

3:4. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

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;

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.

And may I say to you today that He must be the center of your affection and your devotion, not only the object of your faith. When Christ becomes the object of your faith, of your trust, and you become a Christian, then what? Then He becomes the object of your affection and devotion. And this causes you to enter into the field of obedience and communion and fellowship with Him.

And we have here that He's the High priest. He's the one who gives us access to God. He's the One who is faithful as Moses was faithful in all his house.

May I say this. Faithfulness is the characteristic of those who are in His house. And just as Moses was the messenger of God to Israel, Jesus is God's messenger to us. And just as Moses was faithful to God in His ministry to Israel, Christ is faithful in His ministry to us who have accepted Him as our Savior.

Faithfulness is the sign of belonging to His house, my friend. Our belonging to His house will be evidenced by our faithfulness to Him.

You know, I have to repeat this every once in a while. God never rewards greatness. He rewards faithfulness. Since you belong to the house of God, faithfulness ought to characterize your life. In other words, the outward manifestation that we belong to His house is faithfulness.

Now, in verses 3-4, you have our Lord superior in glory to Moses. For this man, Jesus Christ was “counted worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch as He who hath builded a house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God.” Our Lord being the builder is far superior to the house. Moses was a part of the house, that is, the house of God. But our Lord is the builder. And He has more glory than the house.

Now, in verses 5-6, He is also superior in position to Moses. For I read,

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;

3:6. But Christ as a son over his own house.

In other words, the son is higher than the servant. Moses was part of the house. But Christ was the owner. Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant. You remember God said to Joshua, “Moses my servant is dead.” You have it in the book of Joshua 1:2. Moses was faithful in the house of God as a servant. But the Lord Jesus Christ was faithful in God's house as a Son. And faithfulness is trustworthiness. God could trust Moses to do a job. God could trust His Son.

Again I would remind you of John, chapter 13, verses 2 and 3, where the Lord speaks of the fact that the Father has committed all things to the Son because He is the Son of Man. God could trust Him to do the job that He was supposed to do. God could trust Moses when He told him in Exodus 3, “Come now, let's get going. I want you to take this people of Israel—take them out of Egypt.”

And you remember in chapters 3 and 4 of that book, how Moses withstood God. He rationalized his position. He rationalized his unbelief. And he tried to rationalize the unbelief of the people. He dodged the issue until God just got him in a corner and said, “Listen, I'll be with your mouth. You will be to Pharaoh instead of God. You're My representative. Aaron will be your spokesman, your mouth piece.” And all the way through the 40 years in the wilderness, you have where Moses was faithful to God.

And I'm telling you, you talk about the opposition to Moses. You talk about the people of Israel. Ten times, they murmured against God. They would have killed Moses and Aaron. But he got down before God in real intercession for the people of Israel. He was faithful to God, even in the midst of terrible circumstances.

I wonder, my Christian friends, can we openly declare that we belong to the High Priest of God?

Can God trust you down here on earth with His testimony?

Can He trust you with His Word?

Can He trust you to be faithful to Him wherever you are, whatever your circumstances are? Faithfulness is the characteristic of those who belong to the house of God.

Now, we belong to the house of God. And if I claim to belong to the house of God, then that which should characterize my life before men will be my faithfulness to God. Are you faithful to Him?

You know, I deal with a lot of people and I remind them, God always rewards faithfulness. It may be I'm talking to some today.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, no, I don't have any gifts. I'm shut up here in my house with my family. And I don't get out very much, and I don't have any gifts. I can't teach a Sunday school class, and I just don't seem to be able to do anything for God."

Listen, my dear friend. God has given you a family. He's put you where you are for one purpose—to be faithful to him. That's all He asks. That's all He asks.

He wants us to be faithful to Him in the little things. And you know Jesus said, "If you are faithful in the little, you will be faithful in the much." And if you're not faithful in the little, I'm sure He will not give you the much (Matthew 25:23).

May God grant today that whatever may have been in your life with its failures and frailty and weaknesses, whatever the past may have been, may you today enjoy walking with God and being faithful to Him.

This is the mark of belonging to His house.

It was the mark of Moses.

It was the mark of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be the mark of every Christian.

If we belong to His house, it will be evident by faithfulness to him and His Word.

You know there are a lot of people today who are more occupied with Moses and the law than they are with Christ and His gospel.

And you say, “Don’t they fit together?”

No. All Moses and the law can do is prove to you that you are a sinner, needing a Savior. This was the purpose of the law—to make sin exceedingly sinful. But though the Law showed what we were and revealed what we are and the things that we’ve done, it offers no remedy—no remedy but sure judgment. For he that breaketh the law in one point is guilty of all (James 2:10).

And the Bible says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10). That’s one side of the picture.

Now, our Savior came to put away sin. He came to redeem sinners. He came to transform law-breakers. And because our Savior is superior in person to Moses in this particular, He also was faithful in the things God gave Him to do. And as I said earlier, faithfulness is the characteristic of one belonging to the house of God.

Now, Moses was in the house of God. And our Savior is superior in verses 3 and 4 because the builder has more glory than the house. And in verses 5-6, His was a superior position because the Son is higher than the servant. Moses was part of the house whereas Christ is the Owner. Moses was faithful in God’s house as a servant. Christ was faithful in God’s house as a Son. And again I repeat, faithfulness is trustworthiness.

Now, we come to the question, “What is the house of God?” We come to verse 6. He has just said, “But Christ as a son over his own house.”

3:6. Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Now, it might be well for me to suggest here, right through the book of Hebrews there are a number of “ifs” that come in. Sometimes we take those “ifs” in the King James Version especially, and we make them a condition. This verse would be better read like this, “Whose are

we, seeing we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

The house of God is the true dwelling of God in the midst of His people. It was true in the Old Testament and it is in the New. Whenever God comes into the midst of His people, that's God's house. For example, in the Old Testament, God dwelt in the tabernacle in the midst of Israel. God was there guiding and directing them day after day after day. He was in their midst and the glory of God overshadowed the tabernacle, the evident manifestation of the presence of the living God. And everyone in Israel belonged to the house of God.

You say, “But they didn't all go into the land of Canaan.”

We'll come to that before the end of the chapter. In fact, this is used as a warning to us concerning certain things we have in Christ.

So let me come down to the one question of the house of God. For example, in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 22, if I may deal with the present day house of God. He's talking about the church of Christ as a building, a building which is built upon the foundation of Christ Jesus; and each believer is a member, a stone in the building. We are a “habitation of God through the Spirit.” You take in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 5, Peter speaks of believers “as lively stones in the building”—living stones in the building of God. In other words, God is building a building today.

You remember in Isaiah 66, the first two verses, Isaiah quotes God as saying, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where can you build me a house where I may find my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made.”

For example, we talk about church buildings today and people call them the “house of God.” In a certain sense, that's true because that's where God's people meet and God is in the midst of His people. In that sense, it's the house of God. But the building itself is not the house of God. It's the people of God who are.

Let me refer to that passage again from Isaiah 66 and finish the second verse. “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have

been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”

What is God saying? “You can’t build a house of mortar and stone for Me!” Solomon could say when the temple he built was finished, “The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded” (1 Kings 8:27). No, God dwells in the midst of His people, and He dwells in the heart of the humble and the contrite.

Now, this is the revelation we have in the New Testament. All the believers on earth today are called the “House of God.” As I said a moment ago, this was true in the Old Testament; this is true in the New Testament. Now, these aren’t dealing so much with the church, the body of Christ. We’ll speak of that in a moment. The church as an entity is made up of real believers in Christ. But wherever people are gathered and they call themselves the “children of God,” they are God’s house on earth. That is where He dwells.

For example, when our Lord was on earth in His day, you remember when He drove out the money-changers from the temple, He said, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13).

Jesus recognized even in His day that that building was called the house of God. He said it was His Father’s house. And wherever men are gathered together today in the name of the Lord Jesus to worship and to praise Him, it’s called the house of God. For example, in 2 Timothy 2, Paul is telling his son in the faith, Timothy, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour” (verses 19 and 20).

In 1 Timothy chapter 3:15, Paul says, “If I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Today, the church of Christ on earth is the house of God.

We believers today in Christ have infinitely far more than they had in Moses. Christ is over His own house, collectively and individually. For example, collectively the Church is the house of God when believers gather together to worship and praise.

On the other hand, each individual believer becomes a house of God and is indwelt by God today. You have it 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, where Paul says, “Don’t you know that your body has become the sanctuary of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, that you have in God and you are not your own? You are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit.”

Why don’t you rejoice today, dear Christian friend, that God lives in you and that your body is the sanctuary of God? That wherever you are, under any circumstances, even in spite of your frailties, God lives in you.

And remember our Lord says that when He comes, He’s going to come to abide with us forever.

And now, he’s got a little reminder to give us in verse 6, “seeing we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Now, he doesn’t say, if we hold fast our salvation. But if we hold fast our boldness and glory in hope. The writer to the Hebrews has something of the same mind as the Apostle John in the book of Revelation where John writes to the seven churches. John is so concerned that the people of God not lose their fervency of love for the Savior. You remember in Revelation 2, it is easy for us to lose that freshness of spiritual enjoyment of Christ. It is so apt to pass away so quickly.

John says, “I have this against thee, thou hast left thy first love.” And the writer of Hebrews is concerned that they not hold back their boldness and the hope they have in Christ.

You know, weakness is a spiritual peril. We are to be bold in our faith and to glory in the hope that we have in Christ. In other words, there is a need for perseverance, not to keep our salvation, but perseverance to glory in our faith and in our hope which we have in Christ. You see, Christ must be the center.

I say this sadly. Too many of us have lost our fervency of love for the Savior. Remember when you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, you came out of darkness into light. You came out of sin into Christ. You were hopeless and now you've got hope. In fact, now you not only have faith and you have peace and you have hope, but you have fellowship and joy because He is faithful. I tell you, you can count on the faithfulness of God. The trouble is we get our eyes off Christ, the faithful one; and we get our eyes on ourselves.

It's so easy to do that. Especially if you've had a wonderful experience. It is so easy to get occupied with the experience. It is so easy to get occupied with the organization in which we serve the Lord. It's so easy to become occupied with passing, transient things. It is so easy, brother, sister. I know it. It's so easy to be occupied with our very ministry and the blessings we have in giving forth the Word of Life. I know what I'm talking about. It's so easy to miss Christ, to miss that heart hunger for Him, that fervency of love for the Savior.

You know in the Ephesian church in Revelation chapter 2, they didn't lose their love. The Lord said a lot of things to commend them. They hated the things He hated. They were a wonderful church, possibly the most spiritual church of the first century. But only God could know this one thing. He missed their fervency of love for the Savior—that freshness.

Do you remember your first love—my, when you were bubbling over with joy in your Savior? You couldn't get over the fact that you had your sins forgiven. You couldn't get over the fact that you were a child of God, that you never, never would come into judgment, that you had eternal life, that you were bound for eternal glory. My, the joy of it.

Then, things came in. And people came in. And self came in and you were robbed of that fervency, of that freshness, that love for the Savior, you know. And then you became down-hearted. And you got to the place where you began to condemn yourself and you said, "Well, I guess there's no use for me. I just can't hold out."

Oh, brother, let me be very honest. You can't hold out either. Neither can Mitchell hold out. I don't know of anybody else who could

hold out. Even the Apostle Paul couldn't hold out, not even Peter, James or John.

“You mean nobody can hold out?”

That's right. He holds us. We don't hold Him. Faithfulness characterized Moses in the house of God. Faithfulness characterized the Son of God in the house of God. And faithfulness to Him will characterize you because you belong to the house of God.

Now, the moment I say that, some of you are going to say, “But, Mr. Mitchell, you know I sure fail God.”

I'm not saying that you're free from failure. What I'm saying is this—that there's a difference between you and the unsaved person in that you're faithful to Him. You're still trusting Him. You still believe in Him. He is your Savior. And faithfulness is trustworthiness. I want this clear in your mind.

Now, having said that, we come to the difficult part of chapters 3 and 4 where we have the second warning in the book of Hebrews.

And again, I wish in some way, I could put this to you just the way I feel about it. Consider then Jesus Christ who is the High Priest of our profession. He's always faithful and you can trust Him to keep charge and to rule His own house. His faithfulness—I'm just putting it a different way now—His faithfulness is our security. And the very fact that He makes us secure, because He's faithful, promotes in me a great yearning and a great desire in spite of my frailty to be faithful to Him. Now, that's fair enough, isn't it? That's what He wants. He wants us to be faithful to Him.

Now, from chapter 3, verse 7, right down through chapter 4, verse 13, we have the second warning in the book of Hebrews. And this is the danger of unbelief. There is a certain sense in which unbelief is in every one of us. And the thought here in this second warning is that some of God's people do not enter into rest. This is the rest of our faith.

In chapter two, the first warning was concerning not to neglect the salvation God has proffered. But having accepted God's salvation, the next thing is, am I enjoying His rest? Romans 5:1 says we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a gift from God. You have it in John 14:27, “My peace I give unto you” and “Come unto me

all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). But all believers, although they’ve received the gift of peace and Christ gives rest, it’s only as we take His yoke upon us, as Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest” (Matthew 11:29).

This is the rest that the writer is talking about here in the book of Hebrews, chapters three and four. He’s talking to saved people, talking to his own people who have never entered into the rest of God, that continual, daily experience of rest, peace and trust in Him. You have it in Philippians chapter 4, verse 7, “And the peace of God shall keep (guard) your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus.” The God of peace shall be with you always. He’s not saying we’re not saved. He’s not bringing any question mark about that. He’s talking about the question of our entering into that which God has provided. This is the second warning.

Unbelief kept the people of Israel from entering Canaan, the place of rest. And unbelief keeps many of God’s people today from enjoying the rest they have and should have in Christ. Unbelief is a very, very common thing, not only in the outside world, but among God’s people. Every once in a while, we find cropping up some unbelief in certain truths that God has given us concerning His Word. Now that doesn’t affect our relationship to God. It does affect our growth. It affects our usefulness. It affects our joy. It affects our hope. It affects how well we go on with God.

You know, I said at the very beginning there are five warnings in this book and can I give you those five in a little different way? The first one is to unbelievers, not to miss His salvation. It may be to unbelievers who mix up with God’s people; that is, they attend church, they belong to the professing church, and in that sense they could belong to the house of God, just like the Jews. All Jews were members of the house of God in Moses’ time. But the great warning in chapter one is not to miss God’s salvation.

The second one is written with respect to carnal Christians and they’re warned not to miss God’s rest, which we have in chapters 3 and

4. And in chapter 6, the warning is to babes in Christ. He wants them to go on to full maturity.

And then the fourth one is in chapter 10. And here is the end of the argument of the book of Hebrews, where he warns that refusing Christ and His work on the cross means sure judgment. That's called the willful sin. And the fifth one, and you notice one goes into the other, is to despise the grace of God like Esau. There was no repentance, but sure judgment.

Now, I repeat it again, the first warning is not to miss salvation, chapter 2. The second warning is not to miss His rest.

Now, you'll notice in verses 7-19, you have the illustration given to us of how there were those in the house of God in the day of Moses who missed God's rest. Now, very simply, he takes up the fact that all who came out of Egypt were redeemed. You remember the Passover lamb had been slain. I'm quoting from Exodus chapter 12. And then God led them all out of Egypt, led them across the Red Sea, led them into the wilderness, and led them out that He might bring them into the promised land. This was the intent of taking them out of Egypt.

But you and I well know from the history that all those who came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. Only two men went into the land who came out of Egypt, and they were Caleb and Joshua. These were the two spies who came back with the good report. Even Moses, even Aaron did not enter into the land. They all perished in the wilderness. And it was because of unbelief.

Now, they were still His redeemed people, but they did not enter into their possessions like a great many Christians today. I'm not going to question their trusting the Savior or their faith in Christ, but for some reason they've never entered into the rest that God has for them.

Now, the reason for it is given in verses 7-11 in the illustration of how Israel failed.

3:7. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

3:8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness,

3:9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

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

3:11. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

Now, let me stop here. Why did Israel fail in the wilderness? Because they were not faithful to the Word which God had given to them. “Today if you will hear His voice.” The Word of God is always for today.

For example, you take verse 7, “Today if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts.” Verse 13, “Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” You’re to be exhorted about that. Verse 15. “While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

Listen, my friend, the Word of God is always for today. The solemn word here is to avoid faithlessness. May I repeat it? Remember they were a redeemed people, but they did not enter into rest. And the appeal of the Holy Spirit as the author of Scripture is that they did not heed the Word of God.

You remember, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God (is God breathed), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Failure comes because we do not heed the Word of God. And when Christians fail, when they are not faithful to the Word of God, they enter into declension. They do not experience the rest of God. “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

Do you realize that Jesus Christ is talking to you today through His Word? And the danger is not to listen to Him. My friend, the wise thing is to read His Word and to listen to what God has to say.

You know one can feed the intellect on the Word of God, and miss the life of it. It doesn’t get down into your heart. You see, you remember in Acts 16 that when Lydia, that business woman, heard the Apostle Paul give the gospel, she became one “whose heart the Lord opened” (verse 14).

Has your heart been opened to Him? You've heard the Word of God. In fact, I say this very sadly that there are thousands of people who belong to churches who've never, never heard the Word of God, never obeyed the Word of God. Many have just joined a religious organization. There's been no relationship with the Savior.

And this is the warning, "Today if you will hear His voice." But how does He speak today? Through His Son. And I say, you can have your mind filled with doctrine and have your heart empty. May God grant that your heart will be open to the Word of God, so that the Spirit of God can reveal to you the glories of Christ.

These Old Testament people neglected the Word of God; they were disobedient. Ten times God says, "You rebelled against Me. You stiffened your neck ten times." And if the Bible is God-breathed and it's God's message to you and to me, we are to take it and to live in it today. And again I say the Word of God is for us today.

Not to feed on the Word of God is a sign of spiritual declension. This is what chapter 3 is talking about. And if you have been neglecting the Word of God, my friend, may I appeal to you to start reading it today. And believe what you read.

Now, we come to the second aspect of how the danger of unbelief concerned Israel. You remember we had in verses 7-11 how Israel failed because they spurned the Word of God? And in verses 12-15, the writer talks about the need for perseverance for I read in 12-15,

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

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

3:14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

3:15. While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Now, first of all, the warning here is not to harden your heart. Unbelief is a product of an evil heart. I'm sure of that, and I'm sure that the great majority of God's people in one aspect or another will find

signs of unbelief in their heart and life. Satan will see to that. Now, the writer is talking to Christians. When there's a living God in heaven and a believing heart on earth, my, what fellowship they have together.

But what I'm after today is this. Never excuse unbelief as a weakness. It's an evil. When you and I begin to question the Word of God, my friend, that's a manifestation of evil in your heart. I may not understand all that the Bible says. I may not understand all the doctrine of the Bible. I may not understand all the verses in Hebrews 3. But I'm to believe what God says. Unbelief, I repeat, is the product of an evil heart. And the appeal in verse 13 is that we ought to exhort and to encourage each other. What for? To believe the Word of God, to be obedient to the Word of God.

Notice, there are seven appeals here. In verse one we are to consider Jesus Christ. In verse 7, we are to hear His voice. In verse 8, we are not to harden our heart. In verse 12, we are to take heed to these things. In verse 13, we are to exhort one another. And in verse 14, we are to hold fast. And in chapter 4, verse 1, we are not to fear.

I am concerned about one thing, that God's people stay in the Word of God lest we become cold and indifferent and then become hardened to the appeal of God that we live for Christ. He wants us to enter into His rest, the rest of faith and to live as joined to Christ Himself. That's rest. That's the experience of peace. That gives us joy in the midst of sorrow and affliction.

Today, my friends, heed His voice. Harden not your heart. Take the Word of God and believe it. Read it, believe it, feed on it, and grow in the grace of God.

It is so easy for us to do something wrong, and then our life becomes cluttered up. We don't confess that sin and we're not cleansed from it. And then after a while, it doesn't seem to be so bad. So one thing leads to the other. And the first thing, you know, we've become indifferent to the holy character of the God to whom we've been joined. And this is what the writer is talking about.

Unbelief is not something to be tampered with or played with. Unbelief is a terrible thing. Did you hear me? Unbelief in the Word of God is a terrible thing because this is where God has revealed to us the

revelation of His Son and the revelation of His purpose and the revelation of the salvation He has for men and women. And today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.

The writer is not talking about the unsaved. He's talking about the brethren. He's talking about those in Christ. And let's be realistic and confess the fact that a great many of God's people know practically nothing about the experience of real rest in God. Israel never did, never did. It was a redeemed people. They were no longer in Egypt. They had seen His power, but they perished in the wilderness. They didn't get to the promised land, the place of rest.

And so, in verses 14 and 15, the exhortation is for patient continuance.

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

3:15. While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast till the end—not the beginning of our faith, but the beginning of our confidence steadfast till the end. While it is said, “Today if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.” We are to hold firm; we are to guard our fellowship in the midst of a world of apostasy and spiritual declension.

How can I do that? By listening to His Word. By listening to His voice. By not stiffening our necks against what God has to say.

Let's be real about this thing. We are living in a world where many profess Christianity. We are living in a day when everything is in chaos, not only socially and economically and world-wide, but even in our own blessed land, even among so-called Christians. There's an unsettledness, there's a restlessness, there's a certain measure of indifference and coldness of heart and in many cases, hardened hearts. May God deliver you and me if we claim to love the Savior. Let us never come to that place of hardness, which leads to total indifference.

You know it is bad enough for a person to be indifferent to the things of God. But it's a worse thing when we're satisfied in our indif-

ference. And it's so easy for a Christian to become satisfied in His indifference by neglecting the Word of God. Again we come to it three times in the passage. "Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart as in the provocation."

Well, what was that? Provocation, as you know, was found in Numbers 13 and 14, the story of the spies who went into the land; and we're going to come to that in a few moments. But only two came back with a good report. And the result was the evil report brought back by the other 10. Instead of believing the good news of the two who walked with God, the people believed the 10 who were full of unbelief. And the result was, they perished—all of them perished in the wilderness. Which leads us to the next division, verses 16-19 having to do with Israel's unbelief and failure. And you'll notice there are three questions here and three answers. Or if I may say, there are three stages of sinful attitude in verses 16 down through 19.

3:16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

3:17. But with whom was he (God) grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

3:18. And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

3:19. So we see then that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Now, let me take the three questions and answers. First of all, who was it who having heard did provoke? That is those who refused, who refused, to enter the land—all who came out of Egypt. Again, you come back to Numbers 13 and 14, the day of provocation when they refused to go into the land and went back into the wilderness. Unbelief in the Word of God caused them to go back.

Again I remind you that they were a redeemed people. They were God's people. They had the law. They had the tabernacle. Moses was their leader. Aaron was their priest. And they came out of Egypt. But how many who came out perished? All except two.

The second question is, “With whom was He vexed 40 years?” The answer was “those who sinned.” God judged them and they fell in the wilderness. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

Third question, “to whom did He swear, they would not enter into his rest?” The answer is, “to those that disobeyed.” To those who were obstinate. This is the fruitage. This is the result of unbelief.

And may I remind you, by the way, that Moses likewise did not enter in because of unbelief. Let me get it very clear in your mind. They were a redeemed people. And they perished in the wilderness because they had a heart of unbelief concerning what God wanted for them. God wanted them in the land of Canaan, the place of rest. And when these 10 spies came back with an evil report about the giants and so on, the people turned away from the land of Kadish-Barnea and went back into the wilderness. And God could do nothing with them in the way of progress. They were unwilling to take God at His Word. Hence, they spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Take heed. Hearken to His Word, lest there be in you that same spirit of unbelief.

Again, I repeat it. Unbelief persisted in results in hardening. And there came a separation among God’s people. Some perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Others entered into the land of Canaan. Why? Because they obeyed the Word of God. Those who perished, perished because they were disobedient to God’s Word. Those who entered into Canaan, entered because they obeyed His Word.

In other words, if you want to enjoy the rest of God, you also must take heed to hear what He has to say. Obedience is the manifestation of our trust in Him. They did not trust God to bring them into the land. God wanted them in the place of rest, in the promised land where there was the corn and the wine and the grapes and so on. But they perished in the wilderness, everyone of them. They perished in the wilderness because of unbelief, except Caleb and Joshua, the two men who brought in a good report.

My friends, may I ask you, are you missing God’s rest through unbelief? Why don’t you take the Word of God and live in it today?

You say, “I don’t understand it.”

Listen, just read it. Ask the Lord to open your understanding, and He will do that. But above all, keep your heart occupied with Christ Jesus who is the living Word, the Son of God. And you'll enjoy real rest. Real rest. And may you enjoy it today.

Chapter Four

Now, in chapter 4, the first 10 verses, the writer is encouraging us, and here we have the second main thing—the fact that God always accepts faith. He recognizes faith, however frail or weak it is. He brings us into rest, the experience of rest. Let me break this section down to two or three things. The rest of faith is in chapter 4:1-3.

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.

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.

4:3. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Now, let me just stop here for a moment or two on this question of the rest of God which you also have later on in verses 4-8. We are to fear, lest like Israel we fall short of the fullness of divine blessing. God had much in store for Israel (the “them” in verse 2), but they fell far short of it because they didn’t believe. God’s promises are always for those who believe. The Word needs faith to become operative in our life. And, my friend, you and I can’t treat Christ the way Israel treated Moses. Our gospel, our good news, is far more precious than the good news they heard.

Now, notice what it says. He warns us, lest we miss (lest we come short of) the rest He has for us. “For unto us was the good news preached, as well as unto them.” Now, what was the good news preached unto them? That it’s time to enter the land of promise. He took them out of Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea, brought them through the wilderness to Kadish-Barnea, as we had in Numbers 13 and 14.

We were dealing with that in our last chapter. And they never got into the land. The good news was “Let us go in and possess our possessions.” This was the Word of God to Joshua and Caleb and Moses.

“Why these giants are nothing to us; they are just bread for us,” the two men said. “We have a God who brought us out of Egypt. We have a God who split the sea. We have a God who watered us and sheltered us and cared for us in the wilderness. And our God can bring us into the land.”

That was the good news. Israel didn't mix the good news with faith, and so they did not enter into rest. “For we which hath believed do enter into rest.” This is the privilege today for you and me as Christians. And the fact is that those who did believe in that day entered into rest. Who? Caleb and Joshua. They entered into the land. The good news was that the Israelites were to enter the land, no longer as slaves, but as God's people, redeemed. But they turned back. The fullness of faith enters into the fullness of rest.

May I repeat that? The fullness of faith in God's Word brings to you experimentally the fullness of rest. Oh, how wonderful it is today in the midst of a world that's topsy-turvy and chaotic, that you and I can have real rest knowing that God is working all things out of the council of His own will (Eph. 1:11). In fact, my friend, I'm just living day by day in the expectation of the coming of the Lord for His own people. It may be today.

But the predominant thought here is not rest of conscience through redemption, but the rest of heart through surrender and obedience.

Again I say, the land was waiting; the rest was there. God had promised it to them, but they lacked faith to believe Him and come into the land. The danger Israel faced was not whether the angel of death would see the blood on their door. The danger was not in leaving Egypt. The danger was not the Egyptians at the Red Sea. The danger was to break down on the way and perish in the wilderness.

I'm sorry to say, too many professing Christians perish in the wilderness. They have never entered into rest, experimental rest in the midst of a world that's absolutely in need of a Savior. When

circumstances look dark, we need to know that we have perfect rest, perfect peace. Why? Because we believe the Word of God. “And He that shall come, will come and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:37). And we not only have rest of heart, but we also have hope. And that hope is based on the Word of God.

Now, starting in at verse 4 and going through verse 8, we have the second thing regarding the rest of God. And here we have the illustration, not so much of Israel but the illustration of creation's rest. Creation is an illustration of the rest of God, which He had and we can enjoy, for I read—

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

4:5. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

4:6. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

4:7. Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time (he's quoting the 95th Psalm, by the way); as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

4:8. For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

4:9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

4:10. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

In other words, even Joshua when he entered the land of Canaan had no rest. The Israelites had war. They were surrounded by enemies. And might I add, even those who entered the land, that generation that walked after God, soon failed by not believing the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the history of Israel in its failures, in its victories as an illustration for you and me. He doesn't want us to miss the rest that God has for us.

Oh, listen, I know I've gone right through these two chapters quite a bit, possibly in a hurry; but what I'm trying to get to your heart is this. Too many of God's people have missed what God has for them today in a world of sin and shame and corruption.

You can have real rest of heart, experimental rest, for it depends upon your obedience to His Word. And as you read the Word of God, believe it. It never says, believe it and understand it, then you'll have rest. Believe it, believe it, and enter into the rest of faith, that rest that comes from God alone. This is the joy of a Christian who is walking in fellowship with God. And when you live in fellowship and walk in fellowship with the living Lord and are obedient to His Word, you enter into a life that is so different, a life of peace, a life of rest, a life of joy, a life of hope.

Do you have that today? It can be yours, my friend, as you trust the Savior.

Now, in verses 4-8, we have the rest of God and the rest of creation. That is, God's rest after having made the creation is an illustration of God's rest for us. He finished the work of creation, and I read in Genesis, chapter 2:2, that God did rest from all His work. He came to the place of rest having finished this matter of creation. And may I suggest also that even in Canaan they didn't have real rest as verses 7-8 say. David in the 95th Psalm speaks of the fact that they had no rest when they came out of Egypt, when they came into the promised land. And Joshua (not Jesus as given in the Old King James Bible), spoke of a future rest in verse 8.

Do you have real rest? There's no rest for the believer, rest of heart without heeding the Word of God.

Again I come back to it, the Word of God is always for today. And Joshua, though he brought them into the land, could not give them rest. Why? Because they did not believe the Word of God. They trusted themselves and they got themselves into trouble. They refused to put out the enemy tribes.

Now, let—us—trust the Lord Jesus Christ who has brought us out of sin, out of judgment, out from under the authority of death; and He brings us into the very holiest of all that we might have real rest in Him.

Now, in verses 9 and 10 we have the Sabbath rest. And may I just suggest that this is a rest from works.

4:9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

4:10. For he that is entered into His rest, he hath also ceased from his own works as God did from His.

This is the same as the rest of God. It is the rest that comes from fellowship and dependence upon God. Listen to it. It says here in this passage, “we enter into His rest.” This is a matter of present experience.

Did you notice in verse 1 it speaks of his rest. In verse 3 and verse 5, it speaks of my rest, “we which have believed do enter into rest.” And then he goes on to speak of the fact that Israel did not enter into God’s rest. You have it in verse 5, “if they shall enter into my rest.” In verse 4 he rested. And in verse 10, we enter into God’s rest, into His rest. It is a rest from striving through believing, ceasing from self-effort and letting God do the job. No more striving, just simply resting in Him. You see, faith sees what God says to be true. And so we rest in what God says. God rested. He finished creation. The believer rests in a finished redemption. Could I suggest this? It says here, “He that is entered into His rest, he hath also ceased from his own work as God did from His.”

May I quote from, I think this is from Griffith Thomas, I’m not too sure of where I got this, but listen to this, “The unsaved man says, ‘Not Christ but I.’ The babe in Christ, the one who is just saved, speaks of ‘I and Christ.’ But the I comes first. ‘What I can’t do, of course, He will do. But I come first.’

“And then you have the growing believer in Christ who says, ‘Christ and I.’ But the ‘I’ is still there. ‘Most gets done by Christ, but I must add to what Christ has done.’ But the mature believer, a man who has entered into God’s rest, says it is ‘Christ alone. Christ is all.’ And that person ceases from his own works. Christ lives in and through that believer.”

This is the rest of faith. Christ has completed the work.

My friend, let me say very kindly. Neither you nor I nor anyone else can add to what Christ has accomplished for us. Please, please do not add to the work of Christ. When Christ said, “I have finished the work,” when He said, “It is finished” (I’m quoting John 17 and 19), He completed the work. And the very fact that He was raised from the dead is God’s guarantee that He finished the work.

Listen, my Christian friend, if you really believe that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, then you must believe first of all, that He finished the work, that you can't add to what Christ has done. He wants you to revel in that, to believe what He says is true and to enter into rest.

When one comes to that place, may I suggest, there's a rest there and a peace that passes understanding. It doesn't matter what happens in the world, what the circumstances are, what your afflictions are, what your misunderstandings are. There's a real peace and a real rest. We know that He works all things out after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). He is the one who lives in His people. He is the one who lives through His people. He's the one that does it. We are His channels of expression.

Now, we come to the warning and exhortation in verses 11-13.

4:11. Let us labour therefore (or if I might change the wording, Let us give diligence therefore) to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

4:12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner (a *criticoss*) of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

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.

Now, here we come to a tremendous scripture. Here is both a warning and an exhortation. It is a warning that we should give diligence to enter into His rest, to make haste to be earnest. Why? Because disobedience to the Word of God would rob us of this blessing of rest and the experimental peace we can have with God. Are we saved by faith? Yes. Are we delivered by faith? Yes. Then let us keep on in faith. And we are to give diligence here. It's so easy for us to trust the arm of the flesh—what we will do.

Allow me to read three or four verses from the book of Galatians, just in this connection, where Paul raises the same question in Galatians

3:1-5 when he says, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, (You’re bewitched. Why?) that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

He asks the question and the answer is so obvious. Listen to him. “Received you the Spirit of God by the works of the law? Or by the hearing of faith?”

The answer is, of course, by the hearing of faith.

“Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

Of course not.

“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?”

Of course, by the hearing of faith.

Do you remember Romans 1:17 says that the Gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith. In Galatians 3:11, the just shall live by faith. In Hebrews 10:38, the just shall live by faith. It’s not from faith to works or from works to faith. It’s from faith to faith.

You know, it’s an amazing thing how easy it is for us. And I’m very frank to confess it. It’s so easy for us especially to trust religious flesh, good flesh, instead of trusting the Savior. It’s just the human natural thing for us to want to do something to get some credit. And my Bible says, “No flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). Indeed it says, let him who glories, glory in the Lord. I’m sure this is one of the reasons why God doesn’t trust His people with the very power that He wants them to have, because He can’t trust them with His power.

I’ve met Christians who are crying and praying for power.

My friend, be careful about that. What would you do with it if you had it? Why, do you know that you already have the power that raised Christ from the dead? That's what Ephesians 1:19-20 declares, and what Romans 8:11 declares. Paul could say in Colossians 1:29 that I strive according to the working of him who "worketh in me mightily."

And one could go on in the scriptures. We don't even use the power He has already given to us. God can't trust us with His power. And there can be no power manifested apart from simplicity of faith in Him as it is revealed to us in His Word. That's what we have here. Notice it.

Let us therefore be eager, give diligence, make haste, be earnest to enter into that rest lest any man should fall after the same manner as Israel did when it departed from the living Word.

Then he goes on again in verses 12 and 13. And you notice there, we have that which searcheth the hearts. God uses certain things to stir up the saints of God.

Namely, what? The Word of God. That's what you have in verses 12 and 13. You remember in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. "All scripture is given by inspiration." Or may I start back at verse 13 where Paul writes to Timothy and says in effect, "Timothy, in view of the last days when evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ."

Now, remember, he's talking to a Christian. Timothy is not an unsaved man. He's a Christian. He's a worker. He's a co-worker with Paul. But to be saved from the generation, from evil men and seducers, from the subtleties of false doctrine and Satan, continue thou in the Word of God.

And he adds in 2 Timothy 3: 16 and 17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Word of God is our guard. It's in the Word of God where He has revealed Himself to us. And, my friend, I wouldn't give you the snap of my fingers for anything

that's contrary or is outside the revelation He has given to us in the Word of God.

Now, look at these two verses.

First of all, in verse 12, the Word of God is quick.

4:12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This word "quick" means the Word of God is living. It's powerful. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It even pierces, dividing asunder spirit and soul and joints and marrow. It is a *criticoss*, a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

Then, in verse 13, God searches the heart.

4:13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, for all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

My friends, remember, the Savior said, that every idle word shall be brought into judgment. He knows your thoughts, as the 139th Psalm says. He knows your thoughts afar off. There is nothing done in secret that He doesn't know all about. He knows the very secrets of your heart. Did you ever stop to think of it? Not only your words? Not only your actions? He even knows your motives. I will have more to say about this in a moment.

The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow. It's a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. It can do what no surgeon's knife can do. It gets right down into your very thinking, into your very motives.

It penetrates even to the hearts of men. It's an amazing thing. One can discuss and argue and dialogue with people. You can hear the various philosophies of men, and you can stand there calmly accepting them. And then somebody comes along with the Word of God, and it

goes way down into your very heart. It just cuts way down into the very quick of what you are.

That's why, my friend, I say, it's an exceedingly dangerous thing for a person to trifle with the Word of God. It deals with the very innermost recesses of your being. That's why in chapter 3 and chapter 4, the Word of God is for today. For today if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts. The Word of God is for today.

The Word of God is able to criticize your life. It gets right down where you live. And again I say, it's very, very dangerous to trifle with God's Word. I know what it says in chapters 3 and 4 where we've been talking about a hardened heart through unbelief. We talk about an evil heart of unbelief, an erring heart, a disobedient heart. Are you willing to let God's Word search you? Please, please, never be afraid of the Word of God.

If your doctrine does not stand in the light of the Word of God, then let the doctrine go. Something's wrong either with you or with your doctrine, if you're afraid to let the Word of God shine on what you believe.

You say, "But Mr. Mitchell, I have certain experiences."

My friend, I can't go by your experiences and you can't go by my experiences. We have to go by what the Word of God has to say. The Word of God gets right down into your vitals.

May I be allowed to read to you from the 19th Psalm. You know the 19th Psalm divides in two. The first thing is the revelation of God through creation. You remember, "The heavens declare the glory of God" and so on. There is no place where their voices are not heard.

The second place for the revelation of God is in His Word. Verse 7, "The Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:7-11).

I couldn't help reading that from the 19th Psalm concerning the Word of God. As somebody has said, "It convicts of sin. It converts the soul. It cleanses the conscience. It consecrates the life. It corrects the wrong. It confirms the right. It comforts and encourages. It is truth for the mind. It is love for the heart. It is power for the will."

Now, verse 13.

4:13. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The second thing we have here is that God Himself searches the heart. He knows everything. Neither is there any creature, any creature on earth that is not manifest in His sight. He sees everything. Every creature is manifest in His sight. What a searching declaration this is. The Word of God searches. God Himself searches. Do you remember 2 Chronicles 16:9? "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." In the 139th Psalm, He knows our thoughts afar off. He knows when we go out, and He knows when we come in. He knows when we stand up and when we sit down. And though I "take the wings of the morning" and fly to the farthest ends of the earth, there I will find God waiting for me.

Oh, listen, in Romans 2:16, it says, God is going to "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" according to Paul's gospel. The very secrets of men. The thing that you thought nobody knew a thing about, the thoughts that went through your head, the desires you have in your heart that not even your family knows a thing about. You think nobody but you knows; but, my friend, God does. That's why Jesus said to the Jews of His day, "Every idle word will be brought into judgment."

Listen, my friend, we're dealing with a living God. We're dealing with a living God. You can fool men. You can fool women. You can fool anybody you want to. But you can't fool God.

Am I talking to Christians and you think you're getting away with things? My friend, you're not. You can pull the wool over the eyes of the pastor or the preacher or the Christian worker or your friends, but you're not fooling God, my friend. Your life is an open book before

Him, and you've got to give an account of yourself to God as one of His children. I'm talking about you, one of His children.

Paul says, "It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Don't you think we need the Word of God to keep us clean? We need the Word of God to direct us day by day. We need to feast upon the Word of God, so we can become strong. And we've got to be willing to let God use it in our lives to search us out.

So read the Word of God and you see things in there that you didn't know were there. They are there. They are there, my friends. If you want Mitchell's heart, it's in the Book. If I want to see your heart, I'll find it in the Book. You may cover it up. But my friend, it's there. These are two tremendous verses. The Word of God searches your heart. It's a *criticoss*, a discerner. It criticizes the very thoughts of your heart and life. And everything is open to the eyes of God with whom we have to do—the very secrets of your heart.

Don't you think it would be a wise thing for us who are Christians to come before God in confession of sin and be cleansed, and then to go on and live in His presence?

You remember in our first two chapters and the first few verses of chapter 3, we had our Lord as the Son of God superior to angelic beings, chapter one. In chapter 2, as a man Jesus, He was superior to angelic beings. In that chapter, we had the purpose of God for the earth is to be through that Man. In the beginning of chapter 3, we had Him superior to Moses and Aaron. And now, starting in at verse 14, I would like to read, 14-16. And if I may be given the privilege, I'd like to read from chapter 2 and pick up the connection. You remember there was a warning given to us which took nearly two chapters. Now, let's pick up the thought that the writer has for us. In verse 17 of chapter 2, talking about our Savior—

2:17. Wherefore in all things it behooved him (Jesus Christ) 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 (propitiation) for the sins of the people.

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

4:14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession (or confession).

4:15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

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.

Now may I say just a few words before we enter into the study of the priesthood of Christ? The priesthood has to do with God's people, especially with their tests and trials here on earth. As the mediator, our Lord reconciles man to God. You remember in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5, there is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." And as the mediator, He reconciles man to God. And then our Lord is spoken of as the advocate. And as the advocate He restores believers on the ground of confession which we have in 1 John chapter 1, verse 9 and 2:1-2.

You remember, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

As the mediator, He makes peace for man before God. You find that great doctrine in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. As the advocate, He restores believers, the children of God, back into fellowship with God on the ground of confession. And may I just stop here? I think maybe I should say this because a great many people have never seen the difference between relationship and fellowship. When a person accepts the Savior, he comes into right relationship with God. He becomes a child of God. And this relationship is eternal. It never changes. But fellowship is a daily situation. And there's no restoration to fellowship without confession.

Now, I know there are those who teach that Christians do not need to confess their sins. This is not true. This is absolutely not true. Sin

breaks the fellowship, but it does not destroy the relationship of a Christian. It breaks his fellowship with God. And when he confesses his sin, as 1 John 1:9 says, If we confess our sin (I'm talking to Christians), He's faithful and righteous to forgive us and to cleanse us, and so on.

The advocacy of Christ has to do with the restoration of fellowship. As a mediator, He reconciles man to God, making peace for him. And then as our priest, as found in the book of Hebrews, He sustains and provides for the believers in their very weaknesses. I hope I've made myself very clear. Relationship is a guaranteed eternal fact. We've become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. But fellowship is a different situation. And please, may I suggest, don't rob yourself of the intimacy of communion and fellowship and a walk with God because of unconfessed sin. Confess your sins, and the moment you mean business and confess your sin, really meaning it, then He forgives you and He cleanses you and fellowship is restored.

Now, when we come to the book of Hebrews, our Savior is given to us as our High Priest. You never read, for example, that you have an advocate with God. We have an advocate with the Father. Advocacy has to do with God's people, with the children of God. This is the truth of the epistle of John. In Hebrews, we have a High Priest with God. We do not read of His being a High Priest with the Father.

In Hebrews, God is dealing in His governmental dealings with His people. Hence we need a High Priest, someone to plead our cause before God, one to stand as our representative.

In fact, for example, if I might just give you a word concerning this, you will notice in chapter 6 our Lord is set forth as an anchor, that is He holds us steadfast in the midst of the storms of life. He's also spoken of as the One who is our hope. He's spoken of as the One who is our forerunner. He's entered into the presence of God for us. That is, He's a guarantee that we too, shall enter the presence of God (chapter 6, the last verse).

And in chapter 7:25, He is our intercessor, for we read in that verse, "Wherefore he is able also to save them" perfectly, all those who "come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for

them.” And then in chapter 9 verse 24, He now appears “in the presence of God for us.” That is, He’s our living representative.

So we find between these chapters, chapter 4:14 right down into chapter 10, that the work of our Savior as a High Priest is superior to all Old Testament priests and their priesthood as well as their work. Again I repeat it, our Lord is set forth in this book of Hebrews as our High Priest. And He’s a real priest.

And I read here in chapter 6:19, He’s my anchor. I need an anchor in the midst of a world of storms and troubles. Don’t you think you need an anchor? And He is our anchor, which anchor speaks of our hope, being anchored to the soul sure and steadfast. The storms may beat, my friend, but the anchor never shifts; and the ship is held by the anchor in the storms of life. Christ is our anchor as well as our hope.

And then, he says in 6:20, He’s our forerunner, entered into the presence of God as our guarantor, or should I say, the guarantee of everyone who is in Christ. He guarantees our access into the presence of God. Isn’t that wonderful?

And then in chapter 7, we’re down here in frailty, and I need someone who can pray for me. And so I find in chapter 7:25, He’s able to save perfectly everyone who comes to God through Christ. That is, every believer, why? Because He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He never gets tired of praying for us. He knows exactly what you go through. He knows all your tests and your trials. And he is able to pray for you and succor you as we had in chapter 2:8. He is able to succor those that are tested. And then in the 9th chapter verse 24, He now appears in the presence of God for us.

My, how glad I am He stands before God as my living representative. God always sees us in His Son Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing this is, that I have a perfect, glorified, Son of God who loves me with an everlasting and unfailing love. He’s always representing you and me who are His people. My friend, what a Savior we have.

He knows our thoughts, knows our actions, knows our very motives. And He’s praying for us in our frailties. He’s remembering you in your weakness and is sufficient for you even today. Why not go along

today with that thought in your mind, with that truth welling up in your heart? You have a real Man in heaven, Christ Jesus, who's touched with your infirmities; and He's praying for you according to the will of God. He knows you inside and out. You know that? He knows you even when everybody else misunderstands you, and you think you're alone in the world. And some of you dear people who are shut-in, that's the way you feel, don't you—kind of alone in the world? And you're hungry for the Lord to come. Yes, but you remember, He never gets tired of praying for you.

Most of us say we'll pray for people and then sometimes things crowd in and we don't get to it. But He never forgets. He never fails us, and He is always praying for us. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. And He ever represents you and me before the Father. My, how glad I am that the Son of God is representing me before the Father. Aren't you, Christian, glad, too, that the eternal Son of God, the One who took away your sin, who burst the bonds of death and was exalted to God's right hand, having all authority, is there representing you?

My, you know the Lord has a lot of interest in you and me. And He'll take care of His interest. He's praying for us. He's representing us. Now, why don't you revel in Him today? Enjoy your Savior and Lord today. Never mind the past with its failures. Be real about it and confess it to Him and He'll cleanse you. But enjoy Him today and, my friend, it will fill His heart with joy and fill your heart with gladness.

Now, this section starts chapter 4 verse 14, and runs right through chapter 10, verse 18; and we're dealing with this great theme, the superiority of the priesthood of Christ. Our Lord is our anchor. He is our forerunner. He's our intercessor. He's our representative. He's all that I need. And, because I have more to say about this, I would like to read once again from chapter 2 verses 17 and 18, and then jump right from there to chapter 4 verse 14.

Now, you say, "Why do you do that?" Because chapter 3 and chapter 4 down through verse 13, you have a second warning in the book of Hebrews. So we pick up the discussion and the argument that the writer gives to us.

2:17. Wherefore in all things it behooved him (Jesus) 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 (propitiation) for the sins of the people.

2:18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted (tested), he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Now, chapter 4:14:

4:14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

4:15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

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.

Now, I read those verses because as I said a moment ago chapter 4:14 follows chapter 2 verse 17 and 18. We have just been reading in chapter 2, that our Lord is a faithful and merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God. Now, when we come to chapter 4, verse 14, we have four wonderful things given to us in condensed form.

For example, in verse 14, where our Savior is, we read, "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." Our High Priest is not on earth. He's in heaven. Allow me to read from chapter 8, the first verse, "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;"

You remember as we began this epistle to the Hebrews, I mentioned the fact that four times in the book, we read that our Lord, after His death and resurrection, went back to heaven and is on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He has the place of authority over all created intelligence in the universe. In chapter 1, verse 3, "He sat down at the right hand of God."

And chapter 8, verse 1, "He sat down, where? In the heavens." In chapter 10, verse 12, "This man, by one sacrifice for sin, forever sat

down at the right hand of God” In chapter 12, verse 2, “Looking unto Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despised the shame and is sat down at the right hand of God.” In other words, our Savior today is in the glory as our High Priest.

Now, this is what the writer is going to talk about—the person of our High Priest. There’s no place for Him as a high priest on earth. He’s in heaven. He finished His work on earth. He died for us. But now, He’s in heaven interceding on our behalf, representing us. As I said a moment ago, His work on earth was finished and will never be duplicated and will never be done again. That’s why in John 17:4 He could say, “Father, I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do.” And John 19:30, He cried out on the cross, “It is finished.” And the resurrection is the guarantee that that work on the cross perfectly satisfied God for us. He’s our Redeemer.

But now, you and I as Christians and—when I say Christians, I mean those who have come not just into a mental assent to some doctrine or some creed or some church organization, but into a real personal relationship to the Savior Himself. This is what a Christian is, one in whom Christ dwells.

You and I are still down here in frailty. We’re in bodies that are frail, that have desires. We’re in a world that’s opposed to the Savior. We’re surrounded by sin. We’re surrounded by lawlessness and what have you? And how can a Christian walk on earth under such circumstances? We have a High Priest in heaven who understands exactly what we’re going through.

Now, the next question He raises, who is this High Priest? And in verse 14, it is Jesus, the Son of God. This is His person. You remember in chapter 2, verse 9 we read, “We see Jesus, the representative man, crowned with glory and honor.” After He had died and tasted death for us, He was crowned with glory and honor—Jesus the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was nailed to the cross, the one who was raised from the dead.

And when you come to Hebrews chapter 4 verse 14, our writer takes the Son of God of chapter 1 and the Jesus of chapter 2 and puts

them together in the same person in chapter 4. Who is our High Priest who is passed into the heavens? Who is this on the throne of God representing us? Who is this Man in heaven praying for us? Jesus the Son of God, One who is God and one who is real Man.

May I say something that I've said before? It's an amazing thing that there is a real Man at the right hand of God, One who was tested as you and I are day by day. He knows all the tests of life, and He's able to succor us. And this is the work that our Savior is doing.

You remember in the book of John chapter 17, verses 18 and 19, our Lord said, "As thou hast sent me into this world." Here He is talking to His Father and in His prayer He says, "Thou hast sent me into the world, even so send I them into the world. And because I know the world in which they live, for their sakes I sanctify myself on their behalf that they in turn might be set apart by the truth."

I say again, the Lord knows exactly what you go through. And to me it's an astounding thing that there's a Man in heaven, a sinless Man yet who understands, who cares and knows what I'm going through and who is interceding on my behalf. My High Priest who represents me before the eternal God is Jesus, the Son of God, a real Man and yet God who was manifest in the flesh. That's who He is.

Now, in verse 15, we have what He is or, if you please, His character. I read,

4:15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tested like we are, yet without sin (or sin apart).

This is what He is; and, again, He's not only this in His person, but in His character.

You see, the divine glory of the Son of God does not hinder His understanding our infirmities. He knows what we go through. Why? He's lived down here. He's been tested as a man on earth. He knew what suffering was. Indeed, I would say this. His suffering was all the more intense because He was sinless. You remember in 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."

And in 1 Peter 2:21-22, we read, He left us “an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” In 1 John 3:5, I read, You know, talking about our Savior, “you know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” And the very fact that He was sinless, absolute in holiness, the testings were far more severe than you and I will ever go through.

Jesus, the Son of God, your Savior and my Savior knows everything you go through. He's able to enter into your tests and trials and is able to succor you. He is able to meet your need. He is sufficient for you. Now, it may be you might cry out with the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians and said, “Who is sufficient for these things?” And his answer was, “Our sufficiency is of God.”

Our Lord was tested, but not enticed. In John chapter 14, verse 30, our Savior said, “The prince of this world cometh, and findeth nothing in me.” What did Jesus mean by that? “He findeth nothing in me.”

There is nothing in Me to which he can appeal. But He was tested. He knows the intensity of testing. You and I do not know the intensity of testing or suffering. Why? Because we fail so often. We go along and we fail. We go along and we fail. We never reach the ultimate of testing. But He went the whole way. He knows the whole business.

Now you might say to me, “Why, Mr. Mitchell, nobody's tested like me. Nobody understands what I'm going through because nobody has experienced what I've gone through.”

My friend, there is One who knows exactly what you go through and He can enter with you into your tests and trials, afflictions and sorrows. He's able to strengthen you, to succor you, to give you hope in the midst of a situation that might be hopeless. He gives you joy and blessing even in the midst of sorrow. Oh, He can comfort you and strengthen you because He's the only One who really, fully, completely understands you. He was tested in all points like we are. He's never failed. He never failed—never failed.

Now, in verse 16, we have what He does. And this is an amazing verse, you know.

4:16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace (what for?), that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

“Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace.”

I received a letter one time from a person who said, “You know, when I fail God, I’m afraid to come into His presence. I’m so weak. I’ve failed so much. I’ve come to the place where I’m afraid to come into God’s presence because I’m such a failure. As a child of His, I fail Him so much.”

Now, the writer of Hebrews says, “We have one in heaven who knows all about us, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He’s been tested in all points. He’s able to succor us.” And it’s to us He says, “Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace.” What for? “To obtain mercy, to find grace to help in time of need.”

He’s not saying this to the child of God who is reveling in His presence and enjoying His fellowship. He’s talking to failing Christians, weak Christians, stumbling Christians, the ones who need mercy. Perhaps you are discouraged and down-hearted, and you’ve gotten yourself so occupied with yourself, so full of introspection, that you’ve gotten yourself right down to the bottom.

Listen, it’s to you, to you that He says, “Come with boldness to the throne of grace.” Why? Because there is on the throne of grace the Man of grace, Jesus, the Son of God, who’s touched with the feeling of your infirmity. My friend, if He can’t meet your need, who can? Who can? No preacher. No organization. No rite. No ceremony. Who can meet your need? There is one. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth. The Son of God.

So, I say to you, stumbling Christian, weak Christian, possibly disheartened Christian, come with boldness to the throne of grace. And by the way, you’ll find all the way through the epistle the eagerness of God to have His people come with all their frailty into His presence with boldness. Where to? The throne of judgment? Oh, no. Oh, no. He has transformed the throne of judgment into a throne of grace.

Did you hear what I said? Our Savior at the cross and in resurrection and now in His exaltation has transformed the throne of judgment into a throne of grace.

You know, I talked with a troubled Christian just yesterday who was scared about coming into judgment because of sin.

The believer will not come into judgment. He could be chastened. “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth” (Hebrews 12:6). We may be judged with respect to rewards. But in the matter of sin, He said, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). Come therefore with boldness to the throne of grace.

Every child of God stands in the presence of God covered with all the merit and the beauty and the righteousness of Christ. You’ve got just as much right, and I say this very reverently, you can come into the presence of God even as Christ comes into the presence of God. Why? Because God has accepted you in the Beloved—in His Son, Jesus Christ. Hence, let us come with boldness to the throne of grace.

In Romans chapter 8, we came to Him crying, “Abba, Father”—Father because of relationship.

Mother, Dad, when your child comes to you crying in its need, what do you do? You take the child into your arms. Where can the child go but to its dad or to its mom?

Can’t you come to God, the blessed, eternal, sovereign and yet gracious, loving God and come with boldness to His throne of grace? What for? Do you need mercy? It’s there for you. Do you need grace? It’s there for you. Are you in a time of need? He can meet that need. Oh, how we have robbed ourselves of what God wants to do for us and in us now.

My dear Christian friends, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is touched with the feeling of your infirmities. And He says, “You come to the throne of grace. Come to me. I’ll give you all the mercy, all the grace, all the strength you need.”

My friend, He’s your High Priest. He represents you. That’s what He’s doing today—meeting the needs of His people. So we can say with the Psalmist, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1).

I tell you, it is wonderful, isn't it, to have one who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

I don't know who you are, my friend. I do not know your circumstances. I do not know your frailty, your weaknesses nor your failures. But I know Christ. I know the Savior. I know the Lord.

And I want to tell you that He's a wonderful Savior. He's a marvelous Lord. And He knows just what you need. He is the only One who can meet that great need.

Many today are running to drugs, into oriental mysticism, trying to find something to which they can lay hold. My friend, turn to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He's the only one who can perfectly, really meet your need and satisfy your heart. So why not? Why not do that today?

Christian friend, enjoy your Savior today. Enjoy your High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, today.

He understands, and He will meet your need.

And the Lord richly, wonderfully bless you.

Chapter Five

And you know, I'm having such a wonderful time myself in this book of Hebrews which I believe is one of the great books of the New Testament. Again may I suggest that you get into your heart and into your mind the book of Romans—the revelation of His grace and the book of Ephesians—the revelation of the Church, the body of Christ and the book of Hebrews—the revelation of Christ's present ministry for His people. At the cross He did a perfect work and put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. Now, He's praying for us. He's representing us. He's our Anchor, our Hope, our Forerunner, our Advocate.

We've been dealing with the last three or four verses of chapter 4, where we find in verses 14-16, that our High Priest, the One who represents us, is in heaven. Who is He? In chapter one, He's the Son of God. In chapter 2, we find He's the Son of Man. He's Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, a real Person who is both Man and God. And we have what He was in verse 15. He was holy, sinless. That's His character. And then in verse 16, we have what He does.

4:16. Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace and there obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now, the question is raised, can the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, qualify as a real priest? You see, there are certain qualifications for one to be a priest, especially a high priest. The people of Israel in Judaism had a high priest, and then they had priests under the high priest. And these were the sons of Aaron. It was limited to a family. And they had to have certain qualifications.

Now, when I come to Hebrews chapter 5 and go right on down the first ten verses, the question is raised, is this Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, really our High Priest? Can He qualify? Is He a true priest? This is the question raised, and there are six qualifications given, and I'd like to give them to you.

First of all, in the first verse, and I'll take them one at a time—

5:1. For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

The first thing concerning Him, He must have fellowship with man. He cannot represent men before God if He's not a man Himself. We've been following this through in chapter 4, the last three verses. We had it also in chapter 2, verses 17 and 18. Jesus, the Son of God, was a real Man. He lived in the midst of people. And, hence, He can qualify to be High Priest for His people because He too was a real Man. That's the first thing.

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 second thing, the second qualification, He must have compassion on both the ignorant and the erring. Or, in other words, He must be sympathetic with men in their weakness and their frailty. You have this in the second verse, "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, on them that are out of the way," The priests in the Old Testament were men of the tribe of Levi of the house of Aaron. They knew what people went through, and they had compassion on them. Our Savior is full of compassion for failing, weak men and women.

Read the gospels and especially Luke how often Jesus saw the multitudes who had been all day without food, and He had compassion on them. A leper ran to Him to be cleansed; and Jesus, full of compassion, put His hand on him and cleansed him. And so one could go through the gospels. Our Lord can qualify as a priest because He's full of compassion upon those who are weak and those who are erring.

5:3. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

The third thing, the priests must be able to offer sacrifices. This was the bond of union between the priests and the people. The people brought their sacrifices, and the priest offered each one, putting his hands upon it and confessing the sins of the people. Now, you remember

in the book of Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 14, I read, “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?” He Himself became the sacrifice, and now He is the One who is sufficient to offer sacrifice for us in our need.

5:4. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

The fourth thing in verse 4, he must have authority from God. Human qualifications are not enough. You're not self-elected. God must call you. And the man who is called must be God's living representative. You remember when our Lord spent all night in prayer on the mountain. He came down early in the morning and from the great number of disciples who were following Him, He chose 12 men to accompany Him (Luke 6:12-13). He did the choosing. They did the following.

You take John 15:16. What does it say? “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” No man can become a priest because he wants to. He must be called of God, as was Aaron. Not anybody in Israel could be a priest under the Old Testament. He must be called of God. Did you ever stop to think, my Christian friend, that when you accepted the Savior, you not only became a member of the family of God, a child of God, a son of God, but He also put you and called you into the priesthood?

I'm not talking about a man-made priesthood. I'm talking about what God says. In I Peter chapter 2, verses 5 and 9, Peter says, “We believers are a holy priesthood.” We're a holy and royal priesthood. The trouble is most Christians fail to realize that we have a tremendous place in God's program and purpose on the earth. We represent Him to men and we represent others to God. When you and I come into the presence of God and plead for men and women, whether it be for sinners or whether it be for the saved especially when you pray for God's people in their need, you're taking the place of a priest. And God has called us to do that. He's given us the right and the privilege and the honor to come

into His very presence to the throne of grace and there plead for others. We're called to do that. We have authority from God.

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

5:6. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

And then the fifth thing, in verses 5 and 6. Priesthood is based upon sonship. Now you go to chapter 7 for a moment—chapter 7 and verse 12. At the end of verses 11 and 12, where I read these right on down to verse 14—start of verse 14.

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?

7:12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

7:13. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

7:14. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Priesthood is based on sonship. As I said a while ago, not any Jew could become a priest, not even any one of the sons of Levi. He must be of the house of Aaron. It was limited to the house of Aaron. Now, it's true the Levites had a very, very particular place with respect to the service of the tabernacle and the temple. But it was the sons of Aaron who were the priests. It is based on sonship. Our Savior could have said, "Likewise, I'm not only a real Man having compassion upon the erring, able to offer up sacrifice and being called of God, but my priesthood is based upon an entirely different sonship."

"Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten Thee." As the Son of God, He takes His place in the Melchisedec priesthood, that holy priesthood, that royal priesthood.

Now then, when you come to the Melchisedec priesthood, you find his story, of course, in the book of Genesis, chapter 14, when he visited Abraham. You have it in the 110th Psalm. You have it in Hebrews chapter 7. But there are two priesthoods, the first being the Aaronic priesthood for which our Lord could not qualify because He was not of the tribe of Levi or of the house of Aaron. So, if our Savior is a high priest, there's only one other priesthood left, and that's the Melchisedec priesthood, the royal priesthood.

When we come to chapter seven, we'll read, "It is evident our Lord came of Juda," of which tribe nothing is said concerning the priesthood. Judah was the royal tribe, and our Lord is after the order of Melchisedec. As I said when we come to chapter 7, we're going to go into more detail concerning the Melchisedec priesthood.

5:7. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; (or he was heard because of his piety);

5:8. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

5:9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

5:10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

The sixth qualification, He must know what it means to suffer. In verses 7 to 10, we see the intensity of the suffering of Christ. Now, it's rather remarkable that this is given to us in the book of Hebrews. I'm sure that the writer is referring back to our Lord's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Could I stop here a moment? We have three times in the record where our Savior, as a Man in the midst of men, wept.

For example, in the gospel through Luke chapter 19, verse 41. Our Savior, you remember, came up from Jericho and was on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified. And when He saw the city, He stopped and He cried in effect, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I would love to have delivered you and saved you, but you've chosen a destroyer instead of a

deliverer.” And Jesus wept. And His was loud weeping as He wept over Jerusalem.

Or as you have it in Matthew 23:37. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” Instead of receiving Me as your Savior and Deliverer, you’re going to choose a destroyer. And in 70 A.D., they were destroyed.

The second mention of our Savior’s weeping is in John 11:35, possibly one of the shortest verses in the Bible. Just two words, “Jesus wept.” This is a different word than you have in Luke 19. This is not loud weeping. This is a silent, deeper, deeper word. He was weeping within Himself because death had touched His friend Lazarus. And when He saw Martha and Mary weeping in sorrow, our Lord took the time to weep with them.

You know, can I say something here. To me, to me personally, this is one of the most astounding things in the Bible concerning our Savior—that He took time out to enter into the sufferings and sorrows of Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus. He wept with them.

Why didn’t our Lord just say, “Now, Martha and Mary, wipe your tears away. I’m going to raise Lazarus from the dead.” He was going to do that.

No, no. Before He raised Lazarus from the dead, He stood by the two girls and wept with them. I say this was a much deeper emotional experience than He had when He wept over the city.

Now, the third time our Lord wept was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke tells us that He wept as it were drops of blood, and an angel came and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43-44). And you remember He cried out, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). He could say in Matthew 26, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death” (v. 38).

In John chapter 12, he could say, “What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (v. 27). This

again is a different word. This is the cry of a broken heart. With strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to deliver Him out of death.

As you know, resurrection was the answer. He was heard because of His piety. I say again, resurrection was the answer to it. But that did not free Him from the agony in the Garden where with a broken heart, He could cry out, "My father, if it's possible, if there's any other way out of it, let this cup pass from me. My soul is exceeding troubled, even unto death."

That's why in chapter 2, you remember He went right down into the bowels of death. He tasted death for you and for me because of your sin and my sin. Oh, my friend, my Christian friend, may I plead with your heart today? Please, please don't read your Bible and forget what our Savior suffered on your behalf and on my behalf. He went right down into the bowels of death and poured out His soul unto death. As Isaiah 53 said, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."

Did you ever stop to think of the price our Savior paid for you and me? Here is the holy, sinless, righteous Son of God in intense agony. Why? Because He was going to be made sin for us. All the sins of the human race, all the murders and lies and adulteries and immorality and troubles of the human race were laid upon Him. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," cried John.

My friend, He knew what suffering was. Our Lord can really qualify to be your High Priest. You ought to get down and thank God that you have One in heaven who is able and willing to plead your cause. You see, we can't go to the rest of the book of Hebrews (I'm talking about our Savior's being our High Priest, our Representative, our Intercessor, our Advocate) if He can't qualify. So when you read these qualifications remember our Lord did qualify to be your High Priest.

And I'm going to ask you some questions. I read this verses 8 and 9,

5:8. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered

5:9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

The questions are, “Did our Savior have to learn obedience?” Did our Savior have to be perfected? What did the writer mean by this?

I wish you would read it, my friends, pray over it; but above all, today, will you remember this, that you have a Man in heaven touched with the feeling of your infirmities. He’s absolutely sufficient to meet your personal, individual need.

Why don’t you get occupied with Him? Why don’t you walk with Him? Why don’t you enjoy your Savior? I’m not talking about enjoying some experience which you shout about, but about enjoying Christ for Himself. My, this delights His heart. It will fill you with joy and peace.

My friend, did you ever stop to think of it? Jesus was the only One whom God could trust with His authority, with His power, with His compassion. You and I fail all along the way. He never did. As He could say in John 13:3, “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,” God could trust His Son to carry through for the fulfilling of His purpose for which He came. And He was heard.

Now, in verses 8 and 9, these two verses have been misunderstood a great deal by many of God’s people. Now, did Jesus have to learn obedience by the things which he suffered? No, His obedience to His Father brought Him into suffering. The suffering was the outward manifestation of His perfect obedience. He was always obedient.

In Luke chapter 2 as a boy He could say to His parents, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (v. 49). In John chapter 8, “I do always the things that please Him” (v. 29). Did He not say in the garden of Gethsemane, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt”? (Matt. 26:39). And the very suffering through which He went was the outward manifestation of a perfect, complete obedience to His Father.

But what about the next verse? “And being made perfect.” Wasn’t He always perfect? May I remind you of that word “perfect” in the book of Hebrews. It means the finishing of a task, the accomplishment of a purpose. And having fulfilled His purpose through suffering, he finished the purpose for which He came to become a sin offering for you and me. He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.

You see, our Savior knew why He came. And though it meant intense suffering, the Father could trust Him to be obedient unto death,

even the death of the cross. And His very obedience, I'm repeating this, His very obedience was evident by His suffering. And being made perfect, having completed the purpose for which He came, He became the author, He brought into being an eternal salvation for all those who would obey Him. Did you ever think of it?

My friends, when you and I accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior we accepted One who went through the fulfilling of God's purpose, even to be made a sin offering. He went through the agony of death. He suffered. And having finished the job, having completed the purpose for which he came, He could bring us eternal salvation, eternal salvation—not salvation for one year or five years or ten years, but an eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

Now, what do we mean by obeying Him? Well, Romans chapter 1 says, We are called "for obedience to the faith" (v. 5). In other words, when you and I accept Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior, we are obeying the Word of God. The Jews one time said to Jesus, "What shall we do that we might do the works of God?" What was His answer? "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:28-29).

Remember at the cross, Jesus did nothing in man. He did something for man. My friend, He did something for you. What did He do? He bore your own sins in His body on the tree. He died that we might not die. He put away your sins that you might be freed from sins. You say, "How can I experience this?" By simply receiving Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. This is the obedience of faith—to put your trust in the One whom God has sent.

Now, we come to the third warning of the book of Hebrews which starts at verse 11 of chapter 5 and runs right down to chapter 6, verse 20, the whole of chapter 6. This third warning which we have in Hebrews has been, I'm afraid, greatly misunderstood by many of God's people. This passage has been taken, and I'm very realistic and very frank when I say this to you, this passage has been taken as if a man can come and accept the Savior and be lost and lost forever.

Now, I want you to read and reread these verses from verse 11 of chapter 5 right on down to the end of chapter 6. This is the third

warning, the danger of declension, the danger of not going on to maturity.

Now, the second warning, which was in chapters 3 and 4, was that the people of God would not enter into rest. This is the rest of the heart. Rest of conscience came through the cross, but rest of heart is dependent upon daily walking with Him.

Now we go from missing God's rest to a worse thing, spiritual declension. In verses 11-14, you have spiritual degeneration. Or can I put it lack of growth? Let me read it to you. He's talking about our Lord's being after the order of Melchisedec in verse 10 and then he says,

5:11. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

5:12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

5:13. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

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

6:1. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.

The writer is saying let us go on to maturity, to full growth or, using the word that is here, let us go on to perfection that the purpose of God in our lives might be completed.

Now let me divide this whole section of the third warning into three parts. In chapter 5, verses 12-14, he rebukes these Hebrew Christians because of their lack of maturity, because of their babyhood, because of their lack of growth. And then in chapter 6:1-8, he warns them of the danger of degeneration, of declension. And then in chapter 6, verses 9-20, he encourages them to go on with God.

You keep those three things in mind and I'll be taking them up as I go along. Now let's consider where the apostle rebukes these Hebrew

Christians because of their lack of growth. Listen to him, speaking of the priesthood of Melchisedec—

5:11. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Did you ever think of it? May I say this is true today. A great many Christians are dull of hearing. The trouble is not the teaching they hear. But the fact is that their hearing is no good. For example, the book of Amos chapter 8, verse 11 says that the time is going to come when men shall be hungry. There shall be a famine not for bread or for water but a famine for the hearing of the Word of God.

You remember in chapter 3, verse 1 of I Samuel, “In those days the Word of God was precious (I’m quoting the King James version), the Word of God was precious and hence there was no vision.” And, if I may change that word “precious,” it’s not as if they valued the Word of God but just the opposite. If I am to put it this way, “In that day, the Word of God was scarce, and because the Word of God was scarce; there was no vision.”

And you remember Proverbs says, where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18). In other words, you’ve got declension. And the reason for the trouble in Samuel’s day was because the people of God were not receiving, were not getting the Word of God. Hence they became dull of hearing. This is the trouble today.

How I rejoice, by the way, in home Bible studies where a person can bring his neighbors in and can hear the Word of God, where they can sit around and discuss the Word of God. I thank God, here in my city and wherever you are, that there are those who are having these Bible classes where Christ is the center.

You be sure that Christ is the center, and there’s not some false doctrine being propagated. But there’s no question today that the Word of God is scarce. That is, the Word of God is not being given. They’re dull of hearing, dull of hearing. And there shall be a famine not for bread nor for water but for the hearing of the Word of God.

You take, for example, in chapter 6, verse 12, he says, “Do not be slothful, sluggish, in hearing the Word of God.” God wants us to go on;

and, when we do not make progress in our Christian experience, we become slothful. When we do not make progress in the knowledge of the Word of God, we go backwards. We become indifferent. We become cold. We become sluggish. We become dull of hearing.

Where are you today? Is there in your heart a real hunger for the Word of God?

Let's look at the next verse, verse 12. Now he rebukes them.

5:12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles (the Word) of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

He rebukes them because in verse 12, they've been Christians for years and instead of giving out the Word of God, they're always on the receiving end. And if they can't get what they want, they quit the church and go to hear somebody else. So they run from church to church trying to find something. Did you ever stop to think this might be a sign of babyhood, a sign of dull hearing?

Now, I'm well aware of the fact that there are many, I'm sorry to have to say this, there are many churches where the Word of God is not given. I'm sorry to hear that. But thank God there are places where you can hear the Word of God.

But when you go to church, my Christian friend, do you go just because you like the preacher? Or do you go to worship the Lord? Do you go to give or do you go to get? And if you don't go to give, to minister unto the Lord, my friend, you're the loser. You're going to try to get something. If you don't get it, you don't go. So what do you do? You stay home and listen to tapes or something else?

Listen, friend, you go to church to minister to the Lord. If you don't do that, you become dull of hearing. And the very next verse declares, you're acting like babes.

Are you dull of hearing? Are you sluggish in your Christian life? When for the time that you have been a professing Christian some of you 30, 40 years, 20 years, 10 years, are you giving out the Word of God? Are you telling people what you know? Or are you sluggish? Are

you dull of hearing? You're not growing. You're not growing in knowledge and grace. And you remember this was the great exhortation at the end of his epistle, "grow in the grace and knowledge of God." Please don't stand still. Grow. Let us not be old babies. Let's be mature Christians, passing the Word on, being useable in the hands of the Spirit of God, of taking the Word of God and giving it to others.

Now, I come to the rebuke in verses 12-14.

5:12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need...

Oh, the room there is for teachers to teach the Word of God.

If you were to ask me, "Mr. Mitchell, do you have any real special burden on your heart?"

I would say, "Indeed I do. Will you pray with me that the Lord would raise up in these last days men who will expound the Word of God? Only thus can the people of God be established in the truth. Only thus can the world outside know something of the reality of a life, of a gospel of good news from God concerning His Son."

Again I want to repeat it, the average person, even the average church member has very little conception of the God we worship—His character, His righteousness. His purposes, His sovereignty, His authority. We know so little about it. We talk about His love and His grace, rightly so.

But, my friend, the reason why our love for the Savior is so cold and lukewarm is because we have never seen the God that we claim to believe and worship. And we've become dull of hearing. When for the time we ought to be ministering the Word of God to others, somebody's got to come along and teach us all over again the very first principles of the oracles of God. The very first things about salvation. That's what the writer is saying here.

In fact, he says in verses 13 and 14, you're in spiritual babyhood. Everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness. He's a baby. They have the capacities of babies instead of adults. May I suggest to you that babyhood is wonderful in only one place and that's in babies.

Strong meat, good thick bone steak, thick steaks belong to them that are of full age, those who are mature, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

You remember Peter says in I Peter chapter 2, verse 2, “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” You feed milk to babies. You don’t take thick porterhouse steaks and give them to babies. It’s just for mature people, those who have grown up. In fact, I would say sometimes we wonder if we talk to people of God, even the very terminology today is unknown.

We talk about the grace of God.

They say, “What in the world is that? What do you mean by that?”

You talk about being born again.

They say, “What do you mean by that?”

You talk about the coming of the Lord.

They say, “What do you mean ‘the coming of the Lord’?”

You talk about the rapture that translates the church. They don’t even know what you are talking about. When for the time they ought to be teachers, someone’s got to teach them again the very first simple things.

I Corinthians chapter 3 mentions this statement, “Are ye not carnal.” You’re acting like babies.

I was thinking of someone the other day, you know. You certainly deal with a baby 18 months of age far differently than you would deal with a young man 18 years of age in the same family. And certainly you don’t judge the family by the baby 18 months of age. You’d rather judge the family by the 18-year-old boy. Babies do things that, well, that’s just what babies do. When you grow up, you don’t expect to do a lot of those baby things.

Too many Christians today have never grown up. They rejoice that they are saved and are children of God, but that’s about as far as they’ve gone. They say they’re going to heaven, but they don’t know what in the world it means. They’re looking for the coming of the Lord, what for? Because they love Him. I’m sorry that most of the time, they just want to get out of the trouble they are in.

But somewhere along the line we have missed not only this relationship with the Savior, we've missed growing in the grace of God. We've missed coming to understand the things of Christ. For God hath hidden in Christ all his "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). But, my friend, they're hidden there. And if you want to have the grace of God and the knowledge of God and the wisdom of God, you've got to find it in Christ Jesus, God's Son. But they're hidden there. And you've got to get into the treasure chest to enjoy the treasure. You don't sit and twiddle your thumbs. You don't get it by running from this church to that church to hear this man or that man. If you really want to go, my friend, you've got to get into the Word of God and feed yourself. You feed babies who haven't learned to feed. But adult people, they're supposed to be able to feed themselves.

Can you take the Word of God and feed yourself? Or are you still a baby? If you're a babe in Christ, then desire the sincere milk of the word like a baby reaching out for milk bottle. Are you a baby? No. You don't feed on milk, do you? You feed on steaks, if you can get them, that is; but you feed on solid food.

So the writer of Hebrews is saying here to these Hebrew Christians, "Because you're not growing, you're still like babies. I've got to teach you the first things all over again." Because he said in the end of the verse, chapter 5, verse 14, "Strong meat belongeth to those that are of full age," those who are mature. "Even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

And he goes on now in the first 8 verses of chapter six, warning them of the danger of not going on to full growth when he says,

6:1. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ (the teachings of Christ), let us go on unto perfection (let us go on to full growth, let us go on to full maturity); not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

6:2. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

6:3. And this will we do, if God permit.

We would like to leave all these fundamental things in the background. We would like to stop working on the alphabet and 2 plus 2 makes 4, and go on to higher things. Do you have to be told again? Does your heart have to be refreshed on the simple foundational truths of the gospel? Now, I'm not just talking about faith in Christ. I'm talking about what Christ has accomplished.

Do you know what Christ really accomplished on the cross? Do you know what He meant when He said, "I have finished the work that you gave me to do"? Do you know what He meant when He said on the cross, "It is finished"?

What was finished? Or does one have to go back and teach the first principles of the teachings, the oracles of God? Do we have to go back and stay with the principles of the teachings of Christ, the simple things. "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 are the rudiments. Shall I go on to full growth or shall I go back and repeat all these things? This is what the writer of Hebrews says.

And in our next lesson, I want to take up these first 8 verses of chapter 6 of Hebrews. I repeat it's a portion that's been very, very sadly, sadly misunderstood. And I trust we might be able to make it so simple that you will rejoice with us in the marvelous redemption that we have in Christ. Read it through.

Read it over and over and over again. In fact, read the whole passage, chapter 6 of Hebrews. Go back to the 11th verse of chapter 5, and read that whole portion through. The third warning gives the danger of not going on to maturity, to full growth and becoming a man or a woman in Christ.

May you start today to feed on the Word of God yourself, and the Lord bless you for His name's sake.

Chapter Six

We've been discussing this third great warning that the writer of Hebrews has given to us, the warning of not going on to maturity, to full growth. This is the third warning in the book of Hebrews. Remember, the first one in chapter 2 told us the danger of neglecting God's salvation. The second warning was the danger of missing God's rest, the rest of heart. At the cross, we have rest of conscience. But if we do not go on with God in faith, we do not have rest of heart.

I'm afraid a great many Christians, and I mean real Christians, have very little experience of the rest of God. This has to do with what our Lord said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That's rest of conscience. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). This is the experimental rest, rest of heart.

Now, the third warning, the third danger is that God's people will not go on to full growth, to maturity. And the writer says, "I would like to give you some thick steaks, right down to the wonderful things that we should talk about." Which means I'd like to talk to you about the Melchisedec priesthood and about Jesus Christ's being after the order of the Melchisedec priesthood. "But I'm wasting my time with you," he says, "because you're dull of hearing."

5:12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.

I've got to feed you on milk instead of strong meat. He starts in chapter 6 and gives them the warning. Where I read,

6:1. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine (teachings) of Christ (these early principles), let us go on unto perfection (maturity); not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

6:2. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

6:3. And this will we do, if God permit (if God allows us).

This is what we'd like to do, but you are dull of hearing. You're babies. And I don't know whether I can leave these simple principles of Christ when you act like babies. You're sluggish. And, my friend, may I say when a Christian doesn't feed on the Word of God, he becomes sluggish in spiritual experience. Now let's look at this warning.

There are three couplets here. The first one concerns personal relationship to God, "repentance from dead works" and "faith toward God." I needn't talk about that. Repentance is changing your mind. You turn to God from self, as 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, "How ye turned to God from idols." The second one is faith. We receive the things of God by no other way than faith. This is very simple—just repentance and faith. Paul speaks of this in the book of Acts, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Now, the second couplet has to do with relationship to each other—the doctrine of baptism and the laying on of hands. Now these two go together. They deal with testimonies one with the other and here, by the way, the word baptism is the word "washing." It's taken from the Old Testament from the doctrine of washings. You remember he's talking to Hebrew Christians. They knew what he was talking about.

When you go back to Old Testament economy, the Mosaic economy, you'll find that the Jews washed things a certain way. They washed their pans a certain way. They did things by washings. You see, every time a priest came into the tabernacle, he had to wash his hands at the laver of cleansing. It required a daily washing of hands to come into the presence of God. This has to do with testimony and fitness to come into the presence of God. And the laying on of hands concerns relationship one to another.

Now the last couplet is our attitude to the future life. It speaks of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. You find resurrection and judgment all over your Old Testament. Job could say, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day

upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25-26).

And David could say, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15). Isaiah could say, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise” (Isaiah 26:19). Daniel could say, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

Our Lord taught in John chapter 5:29 that there is a “resurrection of life” and a “resurrection of damnation.” Martha used that when she said of her brother, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24). Six times in John’s gospel chapter 6, our Lord says, “I will raise them up at the last day.” Resurrection is a truth all through the scriptures. There’s no such thing in the Bible as a spiritual resurrection. It’s physical.

With our Lord, the same body that was nailed to the cross was raised from the dead. People knew about resurrection.

What about eternal judgment? Yes, they knew about that, too. They knew that men are going to stand in the presence of God to be judged. Some people try to get out of it by saying, “There’s no such thing as God. God is dead.” All right. But they can’t get away from the fact that they’ve got to face God.

Men and all hell fight this question of resurrection and judgment. When Paul went down to philosophical Athens, what did he preach? Jesus and the resurrection. What did they say? “Let’s hear what this babbling has to say. He brings certain strange things to our ears” because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. They went up to Mars Hill and Paul talked about the God of creation and then he ended his message by saying that God commands “all men, everywhere to repent.” Why? “Because he hath appointed (set apart) a day, in the which (when) he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

And, when they heard that, they would have no more of it (v. 32). Why didn’t they want to hear about the resurrection? Because it

means sure judgment. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

So, you have at the beginning of this sixth chapter, things they knew. They knew about a relationship to God by repentance and faith. They knew about a relationship to each other by their various washings and laying on of hands. It's a Jewish background, no doubt about it. And they knew about the future life, resurrection and judgment.

Now I know so many Christians have been disturbed about this passage of Hebrews chapter 6. And as a rule, they don't go back to chapter 5, verse 11 where you have the background of why he could not feed them on the Word of God and give them strong meat. They were still babies. The writer thinks it is foolish to give babies a thick T-bone steak when he has to feed them on milk. They were not able to discern, not able to masticate, to make the truth their own; so he's got to go back to simple things.

In the first two verses, let me repeat, you have three couplets. Someone has said, "These are the A, B, C's of spiritual truth—my relationship to God, my relationship to others, and my relationship to the future."

Now, in verse three, he makes this amazing statement that we would like to leave these principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to full growth. "And this we will do, if God permit." And he goes right back to the first one. And that was the doctrine of "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God."

Allow me to say this, in chapter 5, you had it in verse 6, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." In verse 10, you have "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." In chapter 7, the first verse says, "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham," and so on. You notice the writer wants to talk about the Melchisedec priesthood. He wants to speak of the fact that Jesus Christ is after the order of Melchisedec.

Let me remind you again, there are only two priesthoods in the Bible. There is the Aaronic priesthood (you had to be in the family of Aaron to belong to that) and the Melchisedec priesthood. Our Savior could not be after the Aaronic priesthood because He was not born into

the tribe of Levi nor was He of the house of Aaron. Chapter 7 says that our Lord sprang out of Judah which is the royal tribe “of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (verse 14).

Now, the Melchisedec priesthood had to do with one who was both a king and a priest as a royal priesthood. But the folly, says the writer, of my talking about the present ministry of Christ as our High Priest, when you saints of God are not completely satisfied with the work our Lord came to do when He took His place in the human family, His work on the cross, His work to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. We would like to talk about Christ's present ministry in heaven, but I'm just wasting my time talking about that when you're not clear and sure about what the Lord Jesus did at the cross.

Or let me mention it a different way. These Jewish people for 1500 years had been taught the sacrifices that could never take away sin. And when a Jewish man or woman sinned, for him to be brought into personal relationship with God, he had to bring a sacrifice. It could be every day. He might bring a sacrifice called a sin offering or a trespass offering or a peace offering or a burnt offering. These were the different offerings you find in the book of Leviticus chapters 1-7.

Now, says the writer, you cannot do this with our Savior. In the Old Testament, it was a continual sacrifice for sin. In the New Testament, Christ died once for sin. And it's no use my talking about Christ's present ministry, representing me, praying for me, advocating my case, when I'm not satisfied that He did a complete job at the cross.

With that background, we can face this passage. We would like to go on and talk about other things, says the writer, about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, His present ministry but I'm not going to do it when you are not established in the first ABCs of Christianity, that is repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me read it. “We'd like to do this if God permit.”

6:4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

6:5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the

world to come,

6:6. If they shall fall away, (it is impossible) to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

6:7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

6:8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

6:9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Now, it is true that there are many expositors who believe that these were not real Christians he's talking about, that they were those like the Jews at Kadish-barnea who came to the edge of the land and then went back into the wilderness. They had the fruit in their hands. They had the pomegranates and grapes and the corn of the land, but they rejected the open door and went back into the wilderness. There are those who believe that this has to do with men and women who have heard the Gospel, have considered the Gospel, who knew that Christ died for them; but they've turned their back on Christ and gone back into their sin and unbelief. They support that claim because the word "faith" is not mentioned here.

Now, that might be an explanation of this, but may I say, it would rule out one very, very difficult thing. It is impossible to renew them to repentance. Apparently there must have been a repentance at one time, otherwise he would not write about being renewed. Indeed, I would say this portion has disturbed a great many Christians. Were these real, real Christians in Hebrews six?

May I repeat that Jesus Christ will never again die on the cross? As Hebrews 10:12 says, "This man by one sacrifice for sins forever." Or chapter 9 says, "He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin." It's never going to be repeated. Hebrews 9:28 says He's going to return to the earth without (apart from) sin. The sin question was settled at the cross. That's where yours was settled, my friend, at the cross in an act once and for all.

Now, I'm sure, if I were to say to you, do you believe that? You would say, "Why, of course I believe that."

Do you really believe that?

Now, listen to this. First of all, let's see what you have. Here's a description of what they have. Notice, "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened" and it means, not to be repeated. They came out of Judaism into Christ—once. They were once enlightened. The second thing was they have tasted of the heavenly gift. That is, they had experienced, the heavenly gift.

The same word "tasted" is the same word used in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 9 where it says that Jesus Christ tasted death for everyone.

Did Jesus Christ go into death?

Did He die?

Or did He just come to the edge of it?

They had experienced the heavenly gift. As the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15), referring to our Savior.

"And who were made partakers of the Holy Spirit." And this verb "to partake of," is the same word used in Hebrews chapter 3, the first verse, where it says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." *Metochos*—"Partakers of." You find it in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, in verses 17 and 21, Ephesians chapter 3, verse 6, and so on. It means more than "going along with."

I mention that because there are expositors who claim that these were not Christians, but they were "going along with" the Spirit of God. And because the word "faith" is not mentioned, they preach that they were not real believers. But I can't take that when I realize that the word "partakers" is used in the New Testament a number of times to mean "to be made actual partakers of the Holy Spirit," "partakers of the inheritance," "partakers of the heavenly calling." It means more, I say, than "going along with."

And then the fourth thing, "They had experienced the word of God and the powers of the coming age." They had tasted and seen that the Lord was good (Psalm 34:8). As you have in 1 Peter 2:2-3, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow

thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (good).” This is the same word. They’ve experienced the Word of God; they’ve experienced the powers of the coming age, the power of the Spirit in their lives.

Furthermore, in verse 6, they had repented. “If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” You can’t renew a person’s repentance if they haven’t repented. So, it says in verse 6, “If they shall fall away.” Now, the word there, “to fall away” means to have a lapse. “Fall away” means to slip. In fact, the noun means a trespass or an offence. And here it means possibly more than this or backsliding. It means, a turning away or a falling by the wayside. “If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them to repentance.”

Now, he’s dealing here with an impossibility. And what is the impossibility?

It is impossible to renew to repentance those who have once repented. When a person comes to the Savior and is saved, the death of Christ once for all is sufficient for that person. And the impossibility is that if a believer sins, and I take the meaning that is commonly used here, if a Christian backslides, it’s impossible to renew him to repentance. If a Christian sins and is lost, then he’s lost forever. There is no hope of renewal. You see, my friend, he’s dealing with an absolute impossibility because it’s impossible to put Christ back on the cross again.

There are some Christians who hang around the cross. Now, I’m a great believer in what Christ did on the cross. I believe that He did a perfect and eternal work, once for all, for ever. These Jews had been taught, every time they sinned, to bring a sacrifice. The writer says, you cannot do that here.

As Hebrews 10:4 and 12 say, “It’s not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins . . . but this man (Jesus Christ), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down.”

My friend, if you are saved, you’re really saved. And then if you can be lost by failure or by sin, you can’t go back to the cross to be saved all over again. He only died once for you.

“Then what shall I do?” you ask.

Ah, my friend, that's why we have a High Priest. That's exactly what he is saying.

"Folly for me," says the writer, "to talk about Christ's present ministry interceding for us and advocating for the people of God, when we're not satisfied that Christ did a perfect work on the cross." Listen, my dear friends, if Christ had not done a perfect work on the cross, He would not have been raised from the dead. You think about that!

In fact, there are some people in some churches who keep Christ on the cross continually. He's always on the cross.

As one woman said to me one time, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I've been saved and baptized six times. And bless God, I'll be saved again if I need it."

She felt no need for a Man in heaven praying for her, no need for a High Priest. All she thought she needed was Christ on a cross. Then how do you know He's finished the work? You don't know unless you believe that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. And when the Father raised him from the dead, it was God's personal proof to you that Christ's work on the cross is absolutely perfect and sufficient. The work of Christ has fully satisfied the divine, righteous, holy character of God. God is satisfied with the work of His Son.

Are you? Are you satisfied? Are you satisfied He did a job once for all or do you want to keep Him on the cross? No, in this passage, the writer is talking about an impossibility, the impossibility of Christ's dying the second time and the impossibility of your being renewed unto repentance.

If you're a Christian and you fail God, then you take 1 John 1:9 and come into the presence of God. Be real about it. Confess your sins as a believer, as a child of God—not at the cross, but at the throne. He's no longer on the cross. He's on the throne. And when you come to the throne and confess to Him your sin, He's promised to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

As our High Priest, He cares for my present need. This is what the writer is talking about. But he's not talking about it if you're not sure that our Lord did a perfect work on the cross.

Some years ago, when speaking at a Bible conference, I had occasion to speak on the present ministry of Christ—what is Christ doing for us Christians now as our High Priest, as our representative, as the One who is our Advocate, our Anchor, our Hope, our Refuge, our Forerunner, and so on.

After the meeting one day, one of the dear pastors came to me and said, “Mr. Mitchell, if what you say is true, then our whole denomination is wrong.”

Now I said, “**Never mind** what I say. What does the Bible say?”

A great many people believe in the cross of Christ, that He died for our sins. They believe in the coming of the Lord back to the earth again to reign. But in between the cross and His return to the earth, they fail to realize that our Lord is our High Priest, that Christ is no longer on the cross. He’s on the throne.

When a Christian sins, two things are impossible. It is impossible to put Christ back on the cross to be a Savior for sins. And, secondly, it is impossible to renew anybody to repentance. The writer of Hebrews here is dealing with an impossibility—the impossibility of Christ’s dying again for our sins and the impossibility of being renewed to repentance.

Now, look at that verse.

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

Now, remember, He’s talking especially to Hebrew Christians.

I’m not going to go back over our past lessons on whether these were Christians or not. I’m taking it from the context. But let me repeat that there are certain things they had in verses 4-6, their description, and so on. And remember these were Hebrew Christians who had been accustomed each time they sinned to bring another sacrifice.

Now, says the writer, you can’t do that with our Savior. If you go back to the cross, you are declaring that the blood of Jesus Christ is of no more value than the blood of a bull or a goat. The sacrifices of the Old Testament just covered sin. Our Lord died once and put away sin.

And when we come to the beginning of chapter ten of Hebrews, we'll see where he again brings up this question of the superiority of the work of Christ at the cross. Our Lord did a perfect work. I want this to get right down into your heart, as well as your mind. Our Lord will never, never die again with respect to sin. He's through with the sin question. And when a Christian sins, his fellowship is broken. Then he confesses his sin to his Advocate as you have it over in the epistle of 1 John, chapter 1.

Again, may I say and I don't mind repeating this too, there is a great deal of difference between relationship to the Savior and fellowship with the Savior. Relationship is an act once for all based on the cross of Christ. He put away my sins once for all when I took Him as my Savior. I became a child of God. And that relationship carries on. It is an eternal relationship. We're born of God. We're a child of One who is God. And if He is eternal, then His children will be eternal because we've been made as 2 Peter 1:4 says, we've been made partakers of a divine nature.

What I need now as a believer is fellowship. And sin breaks that fellowship. And instead of going to the cross to be cleansed, we go to the throne in confession. And on the ground that our Savior has put away those things, He can cleanse you and forgive you so your fellowship can be restored and you can go on living for Him.

Now, I trust I've made myself clear. There can be no revealing, I repeat this, there can be no revealing of the priestly work of Christ until they have seen the finished work of Christ at the cross. It is impossible for Christ to go back to the cross. I know there are churches who believe in the continual sacrifice of Christ. This is a complete denial of the resurrection and glorification of the Savior. He finished the work once for all for ever. He's through with that. Now, it's a matter of fellowship with those who have really accepted the Savior.

Now, you see what He's after with these Hebrew Christians who are hanging around the sacrifice instead of going on to the living Savior on the throne.

Starting in verse 7, he takes up fruitage of this.

6:7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

6:8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

6:9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Now, the writer believes that the real believer will bring forth fruit unto God. You remember, our Lord spoke of this in John chapter 15, verse 16, when He said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”

Now, if I might just ask here in verses 7, 8, and 9, what is it that accompanies salvation? Well, of course, the believer’s works that will glorify God.

6:9. We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

The believer’s works are going to be tried by fire.

6:7. 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:

6:8. But that (ground) which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

We don’t burn the ground. We burn the thorns and the briars that the ground produces. Every Christian is going to have his works tried by fire. If I may quote from 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 11-15: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay stubble . . . the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is (If it is gold, silver, precious stones, it will stand the test of fire. If it’s wood, hay or stubble, it will be burned up).

And we’re persuaded, says the writer, concerning you. We’re persuaded of better things of you than thorns and briars and things that

are fit for the fire. We expect and we're persuaded that things that accompany salvation will be those works that will glorify God, even though we may speak the way we do.

As you have it in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, where Paul writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The good works do not give us life. Good works are the expression of the life you already have in Christ.

A Christian life is only the outflow of a life you've received from God. Through the cross you've received life. Through His death and resurrection, you've received life. Now, how is that emphasized, how is that revealed, by good works? The writer says to the Hebrew Christians, "We are persuaded that you will not produce works that are fit for the fire, but the works that accompany salvation, even though we speak as we do."

6:10. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

God never forgets. God is never unrighteous to forget what Christ has done for you. And God will never forget what the Christian has done in His name. Every little thing. You remember, our Savior one time said, "Even a cup of cold water given in His name shall not lose its reward" (Matthew 10:42).

God will never forget the things you have done for Him. He'll not forget what tests and trials you've had. He'll not forget the very little things that you thought were inconsequential. He remembers those too. That little act of kindness, that word of comfort to somebody or the bringing of the gospel to some poor soul, dead in trespasses and sins. Sometimes the things you forget about—that day that you spent time pleading with God for somebody who was in trouble. He'll never forget any little thing you've done for Him.

And please don't fall back and say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I've never done much in my life for God. And you know I live a kind of humdrum life. I'm tied to my home with my children, etc. etc."

Listen. Listen. While you're washing your dishes, praise the Lord. He'll not forget that either. It just warms the heart of God when His people are thankful. Praise Him and glorify Him, even in the very little, little things of life—the little act of hospitality of when you try to meet somebody in their need or your prayers for somebody who's in trouble. God is not going to forget the least thing you've done for Him or for His people.

And the writer's confidence is based on the righteousness of God. God is not unrighteous. He's a righteous God. And He will never forget what you've done for Him. Do you know, that's a real encouragement, isn't it? And that's what we have from verse 11 down to verse 20. You have now, his encouragement. In verses 11 and 12 we have his great desire for them. Let me read it to you.

6:11. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

6:12. That ye be not slothful (don't fall asleep and don't be slovenly), but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Let me just stop here a minute. In these two amazing verses, his great desire for them is to manifest diligence. "That you manifest the same diligence." To what? To the full assurance of hope until the end.

You know, I kind of like that. Keep on being diligent. The danger is for us to get, oh, shall I say tired, slothful, sleepy, dull of hearing, indifferent. Oh, no, manifest diligence the one to the other in the full assurance of hope.

By the way, when he talks about the full assurance of hope, he's talking about the complete experimental aspect of salvation, the full assurance that the hope we have in Christ will be completed.

You have, for example, in chapter 10:22 where he speaks again of the full assurance of faith. We start the Christian life in faith. We continue in faith, knowing that what God has promised He is able also to perform.

In Colossians 2:2, Paul talks about the full assurance of understanding. As you go on with God, you get the full assurance of understanding and the next verse says, "For God has hidden in Christ all

his treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.” Go on to understand the wonderful things you have in Christ.

I’ve oftentimes read that Jesus Christ is God’s treasure chest. God has hidden in Christ His treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now, get into the chest, into the treasure chest and look at the things you have in Christ. And it will reward you a million-fold to spend time meditating upon what God has said about His Son, Jesus Christ, about what He has accomplished for us and what He has yet to do.

So, you have in this 11th verse the full assurance of hope. Be diligent, to the full assurance of the hope to the end.

Why?

Because, you’re moving on in the blessed hope when the Lord Jesus shall come and the completion of salvation will be yours. You start at the cross, and you’re saved. He’s praying for you now as your High Priest, keeping you day by day, caring for you as the Great Shepherd of His people.

What for?

Until you stand in His presence conformed to the image of Christ, transformed to be just like Him. This is the full assurance of hope.

I’m saved by grace—that’s the foundation of my salvation. I’m saved by faith—that’s how I receive my salvation. I’m saved by hope—that’s the completion of my salvation when the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, shall be in the presence of God just like Jesus Christ. That’s the full assurance of hope.

My friend, I am just as sure as I am talking to you that Christ died on the cross and rose again. I am just as sure that He’s my High Priest at God’s right hand praying for me, representing me, advocating for me. I’m just as sure that I’m going to stand in the presence of God conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

And as John in his epistle could say, “When we see Him, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2). Even the Psalmist could say in the 17th Psalm, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness” (v. 15). What a prospect! What a hope! So we can say with the Psalmist in the last verse of the 23rd Psalm, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

And what is the guarantee of that? The cross.

At the cross we were cleansed. On the throne He keeps us clean. As Jesus said in John to Peter. "He that is bathed needeth not but save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit:" (v. 10). He died once for our sins. And in the confidence of our hope, the full assurance of our hope, we're positive that one of these days every believer shall stand in the presence of Christ conformed to His image.

Rejoice in that today, my friend.

Now, we come right down to the encouragement. And here he takes up the question of a contract that has been sealed. May I read, then from verse 13 down to the end of the chapter 6 of Hebrews.

6:13. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

6:14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

6:15. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

6:16. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

6:17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

6:18. That by two immutable (unchangeable) 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:

6:19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

6:20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Now, he takes up this question of two unchangeable things, His promise, and His oath. First of all, this faith and patience was manifested in Abraham (Genesis 17). When Abraham came into the land, he was 75 years old. Now he is 99 years of age. God not only promised him a seed, but sealed it with an oath. And once the covenant has been sealed, it cannot be changed by either party.

God appeared unto him and said, "I'm the El-Shadai. I'm the Almighty God. Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (v. 1). Now Abraham had waited a long time for the coming of Isaac; and Isaac, the promised son, is not yet born. But Abraham believed God. So, you have faith coupled with patience.

And God confirmed it with an oath as you read here. He could swear by no greater, so He swore by Himself (v. 13). Speaking of God, let me repeat:

6:14. Saying, Surely I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

6:15. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

6:16. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

6:17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise (to His children) the immutability (unchangeableness) of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

6:18. That by two immutable things (two unchangeable things, his promise, and his oath) . . .

You see, there are three oaths in the book of Hebrews. We had one, for example, in chapter 3, verse 11, where God swore that those who were full of unbelief would not enter into rest. That settled it. And then in chapter 6, verse 13, you have where God swore by Himself concerning believers, concerning the inheritance. And then in chapter 7:21, our Lord is High Priest by the oath of God, hence an unchangeable priesthood. We shall see that when we come to chapter 7.

The main thing here is that God swore by Himself. All that God is is behind His word. Psalm 138, verse 2, reads something like this, "for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Now, that's the King James version. May I give you a revised text on that verse. "Thou hast underwritten every word by thy name." His Word cannot be exalted above His name because the Word is dependent upon who He is. But God has underwritten every word by His name. That is, the very character of God is behind everything He says.

Listen my friend, you can count on the Word of God, the unchangeable word of God. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). First Peter chapter 1, verse 23, refers to "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

God encouraged Isaiah (40:8) by saying that the life of man is as the grass of the field, and the glory of man is as the flower of the grass. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever." The 119th Psalm says, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

What I'm trying to get to your heart today is that you can certainly trust the Word of God.

Now I'm well aware that some will say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I don't understand the Word of God. There's so much of it I don't understand. I read it and read it, and sometimes I get nothing out of it."

Now, that may be true, but whether you understand it or not does not change the Word of God. The promise of God is unchangeable. The oath of God is unchangeable. And when God swears by an oath, my friend, you can bank on one thing, that that's exactly what it is. And when God swore to Abraham that of his seed there would come One in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, that's going to be carried out even yet.

And as one reads the scriptures, we find that God is still going to bless all the nations of the earth through the seed of Abraham. And as Galatians chapter 3:16 says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

You see, friend, that is why, when one takes the Word of God, there comes to our heart assurance and peace and settledness.

So many say to me, "Brother Mitchell, what if I don't hold up?"

Listen, when you really accepted Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, that means you came into relationship with Him. I would remind you that Philippians 1:6 says, "He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform (perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ." The covenant that God makes with the child of God is

absolutely unchangeable. It's eternal. The very character of God is at stake. Isn't this in the mind of our Savior in John 17 when He says, "Father, I have kept these men right up till now. Now, you take them and you keep them the rest of the way" (John 17:12, 15).

Neither Peter, James or John could keep themselves. Even the Apostle Paul couldn't keep himself. And you can't keep yourself. Neither can I. But we are put into the hands of our immutable, unchangeable God, whose Word is eternal and will not be changed. And all the powers of hell will not change what God has declared.

Oh, listen Christian friend, you stick to the Word of God. And when someone comes along who tries to confound you and say it's untenable, that it's not worth reading, that it's all false, that it's all full of mistakes, close your ears to it.

If the Bible is not the Word of God, then, my friend, we have absolutely no revelation of God Himself. "He has underwritten every word by His name." And God swore to Abraham. And when He couldn't swear by anybody else, He swore by Himself. And when the covenant was made, signed and sealed by the oath of God, it could never be changed. Why don't you stand upon the eternal, unchangeable Word of God today and know that what God has said He will surely perform. You read it today and believe it.

Now we are halfway through this critical chapter and I would like to review quickly where we've come because this is a chapter that has caused a great deal of confusion among many of God's people. It has been interpreted in so many ways.

And yet, when you take the whole book as it is and take the context, you must come to the conclusion that it would be impossible for the writer to talk about the present ministry of Christ when so many of God's children are not satisfied with the completeness of Christ's work on the cross.

So, he talks to these Hebrew Christians that, when for the time they should be teachers, they have need of someone to teach them the very first things of the gospel of God. And in chapter 6, he warns them about this very thing. He deals with an impossible situation, the impossibility

of being renewed to repentance, the impossibility of crucifying Christ afresh.

He goes on to encourage them by saying,

6:9. We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.

In other words, we're sure that you will not bring forth thorns and briars, but fruit that shall bring glory to God. Real salvation will produce real fruitage.

And then he encourages them in the fact that God has made a covenant with His people. And He confirms it by an oath,

6:18. That by two immutable (unchangeable) 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:

Remember this, will you please? Faith and patience go together. We see the patience of faith manifested in Abraham when God declared unto him that he would have a seed through which the whole world would be pleased. And He confirmed it by an oath. And He swore by Himself that by two immutable things, His promise and His oath in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation; we might have hope and so on.

The Word of God is underwritten by His name (Psalm 138:2) by the divine oath, by the divine promise.. The very righteous character of God is at stake. God is not going to trust men. And once a covenant is made and sealed, it can't be broken by either party. God made a covenant and sealed it by His oath. And remember, it's impossible for Him to lie. God has spoken. It's time we people believed what God has said.

Now I'm well aware of the fact that all hell and possibly most men are arrayed against the gospel and against the Word of God. But, remember, it is forever settled in heaven. It's just as sure as God is on the throne, just as sure as God who could never lie, just as sure as the resurrection and glorification of Christ Jesus. God has given His Word.

That's why Paul could say in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed." Now, please don't repeat that verse, I know "in" whom I have believed. Leave the word "in," out. It spoils the whole thing. "I know whom I have believed." And my friend, when you know whom you believe, you're persuaded that He will keep that which you have committed unto Him against that day.

It's an amazing thing to me that so many Christians seem to enjoy being full of doubt, seem to enjoy being saved and lost. They fail to realize the righteous character of God. And may I say, very bluntly and yet realistically, the reason why people, even God's people, do not love the Lord as they should and appreciate His grace is because they've never seen the righteous character of God.

Do you know why men do not accept the Savior? It is because they have never seen the righteous, immutable, unchangeable character of God. Quite often Christians will quote to me Hebrews 13, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." And they make the statement that Jesus Christ will do the same things today that He did when He walked the earth.

That is not so. He's not talking about the things He did 1900 years ago. The writer of Hebrews is talking about the person of Christ in His character. God deals with people in different ways. You can't put God in a rut. But Jesus Christ in His person is the same yesterday and today and forever. He's absolutely righteous, absolutely holy in His character.

And I say this, that when God makes a statement, when God gives you a promise, when God says, "He that believeth on me, I give him eternal life; he shall never perish, will never come into condemnation—he passes from death to life," God means exactly what He says. And don't read into it what is not there. Don't read your doctrine into it. Take the Word of God. He has underwritten every Word by His name.

And when He said to Abraham, way back there in Genesis chapter 17, when Abraham was 99 years of age, "I'm going to give you a boy," He gave him a promise that through that boy all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And He confirmed it by an oath, an unchangeable thing—His promise unchangeable, an unconditional covenant,

absolutely dependent upon God and not man. When God swears by Himself, no power on earth or heaven or hell can change it.

My friend, this is the kind of a God we have. He's a righteous God. But He's also a loving God. And He's encouraging us in spite of our frailty and our failures that He'll keep His Word, even when we Christians are unfaithful. He abides faithful. He cannot deny Himself.

Now, having said that let's look at the rest of the chapter, verses 18 and 19 and 20. Let me read these verses again.

6:18. That by two immutable (unchangeable) 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:

6:19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

Let me stop there. Because of His unchangeableness—in His character, in His Word, in His promise, in His oath, we have fled for refuge to Him. We came as sinners, and we accepted the provision made through His Word that Jesus Christ was the sinner's Savior, that He died for you and for me, that He was raised again from the dead, that He was exalted at God's right hand, having all authority, all power under His feet. And this gives us hope. This gives us courage. This gives us comfort. This gives us a place of refuge.

And it says here, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." In other words, our hope is based upon the unchangeable promise and oath of God, the unchangeable Word of God.

Sometimes we sing this song, you remember,

"My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand."

And as dear Samuel Rutherford used to say, "Remember, my brother, the Rock never ebbs or flows. The Rock stands immovable in

the midst of all the storms of life. And the believer is anchored to the Rock of Ages.”

The seas may toss and the storm and winds may blow. Afflictions may shower upon you. Your heart may be full of sorrow and weakness and failure, but your anchor is set upon Him. You're anchored to the Rock of Ages. You're standing on the immutable Word of God. Indeed you're anchored to the One who is absolute in righteousness, and what He says He will surely perform. My, what a Savior is this! What a God is this!

I again make this statement: Too many of even God's people fail to realize the wonder of our Savior in His character, His very righteousness, as well as His love and His grace, His long-suffering and His patience. But we're anchored to Him.

Were you ever in a boat in a storm and you threw the anchor out? The anchor is not affected by the storm. The anchor lays hold of the rock. The boat may toss, may pitch, may roll and the storm may rage; but when you're anchored to the rock, my friend, you're safe. That gives us hope. That gives us consolation. That gives us a refuge. Indeed, He's a refuge from the storms.

My friend, Christian friend, enjoy Him today, won't you? Just set your heart and mind upon Him. Take the Word of God and believe it whether you understand it or not. It will do something in your life that nothing else will do. For you remember the Word of God is a moral cleanser. It will cheer your heart. It will comfort you in your sorrow. It will give you joy in the midst of pain. Believe it. Rejoice in the Lord! Praise Him for His faithfulness!

Now, may we go down to verses 19 and 20 where we read,

6:19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

What hope? The hope that one of these days, we shall be conformed to the image of His Son, the hope that the salvation which He hath given to us will be experienced in all its fullness when these very bodies will be changed and when we shall see the Savior and spend eternity in the presence of the living God in perfect fellowship with him.

This is the hope we have. And knowing that God will not change His Word, that His character demands that it be completed, that our hope is sure whatever the storms of life may be, however hard the wind may blow, however severe the tests and the trials, we have an anchor steadfast and sure.

And it's anchored where? Within the veil, within the very presence of God. That's why we have these songs about Jesus Christ being the Rock of Ages. "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee."

You see, we're in Him. And where is He? At the right hand of the Majesty on high. He's the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth. And we're anchored to Him whose word never changes. We're anchored to the one who never lies. We're joined eternally to the one who is the sovereign God and who is my Savior and your Savior.

We are "anchored within the veil." Now, look at the last verse,

6:20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, (who is the forerunner?) even Jesus, (the man, the one who was raised from the dead) made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Jesus Christ is entered into heaven itself for us. As Hebrews 9:24 says, He now appears "in the presence of God for us." The safest place in the universe is at the throne of God, the center of the universe. The place where we have real peace and joy and hope is in Him. Why? Because all authority is His. And we've been anchored, we've been joined, we've been united to the eternal Son of God.

And I want to say, this is what is in the mind of the writer.

And, I say this reverently, we are just as sure of entering the presence of God, acceptable, perfect, complete as we are that Jesus was raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand. My friend, do you need more than this?

Look at those words in the last two verses, the last three verses. We have a refuge. We have a hope. We have an anchor. We have a forerunner. What is a forerunner? A guarantee that all who follow Him will be where He is. That's what I said awhile ago. I'm just as sure of coming into the presence of God acceptable as I am that Jesus Christ is already there.

That sounds like a strong statement, doesn't it? But, my friend, nothing short of that will do. If this is not true, then we haven't any sure salvation. I want this to get into your very vitals, into your very vitals.

Now, John, the Apostle, put it a different way when he said, "We have boldness" (I'm quoting 1 John 4:17), "We have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world." He's my forerunner. He's my guarantee of acceptance in the presence of God, just as sure as Christ Himself is in the presence of God.

You say, "My, you're making that very strong."

Yes, I intended to make it strong. I want you to see it. And remember this is by the immutable promise and oath of God—two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. Having accepted the Savior, we not only have an anchor, not only have a hope, but we'll see Him face to face. We not only have a refuge to which we can run, but we have a guarantee and that guarantee is the risen, exalted Jesus Christ our Savior.

I tell you again, my, what a Savior we have.

I like that little chorus,

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

Is it real? Is it sure?

May I remind you of Hebrews chapter 10, verse 14, when he said, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever." That's a finished transaction. He hath perfected forever.

Who?

Those whom He hath set apart.

Whom did He set apart?

Those who accepted His Son as Savior. "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us:" (Hebrews 10:15). The Spirit of God would not indwell anyone unless that one could stand in the presence of God in all the perfection of the Savior.

My, that's pretty strong language.

My friend, this is what the book says. It's the unchangeable, unbreakable, eternal Word of God. By one offering, He hath perfected everyone whom He hath set apart.

Who are those?

The ones who accept the Savior. For you remember sanctification in the book of Hebrews is always on the ground of the blood of Christ, on His sacrifice. And the Spirit of God is come to bear testimony to this very fact.

This is just like you have in Romans chapter 8, where you have the Spirit of God in verses 14 and 16 bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, the sons of God. The Spirit of God witnesses to the fact of our sonship.

And in Hebrews, the Spirit of God witnesses to our perfection in Christ on the ground of the cross—not on the ground of your good works, not on the ground of some ceremony, but on the ground of what He has accomplished. And the resurrection is the proof of it.

And now, His entrance into the presence of God is a proof, a guarantee that everyone who is in Him has access into the very presence of God.

Oh, my Christian friend, why don't you revel in this? Why don't you rejoice in this? How many Christians have robbed themselves of peace and joy of blessing because they're looking at themselves instead of Him.

Listen.

Listen, friend, Your eternal salvation depends upon an unchangeable, eternal Savior. It is impossible for Him to lie.

And you and I stand upon the promise of God, and that which He has started He will perfect. God never starts a job he doesn't finish. We can be fully confident, fully persuaded that He which hath begun a good work in you shall perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Aren't you glad about that? Doesn't that thrill your heart? Doesn't that make you want to fall in love with the Savior who has done so much and who guarantees so much? Oh, God forbid we should have any

unbelief which is the product of an evil heart. Believe what God says, not what you feel. Feelings go with the wind. Feelings come and go. The Word of God abideth forever.

Fall in love with Him and enjoy Him today. Get your eye off of yourself. Get your eyes on Christ.

Get your eyes off others. They will fail you.

Get your eyes off movements. They will fail you.

Put your eyes on the Savior, your Forerunner, your Anchor, the Guarantee of your hope. He's the one who can perfectly satisfy your heart.

And the Lord bless you for His name's sake.

Chapter Seven

We're starting in at chapter 7. We've just finished the 6th chapter where our Lord God has sworn by an oath in which it is impossible for Him to lie, that by two immutable things, two unchangeable things, His Word and His oath, He guarantees this salvation we have in Christ.

Someone has put this 6th chapter in this way: "The earnestness of faith, verses 1-8, the energy of love, 9-12, and the endurance of hope, 13-20."

Now he begins to talk about the Melchisedec priesthood. I would like to read the last part of the last verse of chapter 6 and then go into chapter 7.

6:20b. Jesus made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

7:1. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

7:2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

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.

We come to the question of Melchisedec and the Son of God. Now the writer raises the question, Is Christ's priesthood a real one? You know that the Aaronic priesthood was the very heart of Judaism. And this was a real question with the Jew, a very vital question. So the writer of Hebrews must prove our Lord's priesthood to be absolute, to be final and to be permanent.

Now in chapter 7, the person of our Lord is in view, not His work. We will come to the work of the priest in chapters 8 and 10 where he is

dealing with the superiority of the person of our Lord. But here He's a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

When I talk about Him in these few verses may I suggest there are those who believe that Melchisedec and the Son of God are the same person. Now this is not so. Let me remind you where you have the testimony concerning Melchisedec.

In the 14th chapter of the book of Genesis, when Abraham came back from the slaughter of the kings and delivered Lot and his family and the people of Sodom, you have the historical, short and concise narrative of where Abraham met Melchisedec who was the King of Salem. He was also the high priest of El-Elyon, the most high God.

In Genesis 14, you have the history; when you come to the 110th Psalm the 4th verse, you have the prophetic side of this that there is going to be One coming someday who would be a priest after the order of Melchisedec; and now in Hebrews chapter 7, you have the doctrinal part which is based on chapter 14 of Genesis and the 110th Psalm.

Now, the main thought the writer gives us here is "he abideth a priest for ever." Melchisedec is given to us as a type of the Son of God so that the Jew will see proof of the superiority of our Lord as a priest. Now, remember, that Melchisedec was both a king and a priest. He was the king of Salem, which is the king of peace. The word "salem" means peace. He was also a high priest.

Now, it means that there were others living in Abraham's day who knew God. You know, sometimes when we read the Bible, we think Abraham was the only one in his day who knew the living God. That's not so. Abraham was given to us, possibly as an illustration that there were those in his time who really believed in God. Abraham is brought to us because God made him a promise, took him out of his idolatry in Ur of the Chaldees, gave him a promise, gave him a land, and gave him a family right on down through the centuries.

Now Melchisedec didn't come out of the loins of Abraham. He didn't belong to the Jewish people. Job knew the Lord as El-Shadai. He wasn't a descendant of Abraham either, I don't believe. In other words, there were those who really believed in the Lord beside Abraham.

Now Melchisedec was first of all King of righteousness and then King of peace—righteousness first, then peace.

By the way, in the Bible you find these two things are knitted together continually. There can be no peace without righteousness. You remember the 32nd chapter of Isaiah, verse 17 says, “The work of righteousness shall be peace.” Or you take the 26th chapter of Isaiah, “When thy judgments are in the earth, then the nations of the earth learn peace” (the actual word in KJV is righteousness) (v. 9). There can be no peace in the world without righteousness.

You, my friend, can't have peace with God unless there is righteousness. And that's what Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God.”

I'm digressing, I recognize, for a moment. But there are so many, so many who have no peace. Even Christians don't experience that wonderful peace. Why? Because they've never seen themselves as standing before God in all the righteousness of Christ. “The work of righteousness is peace.” And this man Melchisedec was King of righteousness first and then King of peace.

Now, the intention of God is that no record be given about this man Melchisedec. He doesn't mean in verse 3 that he had no father or mother or any ancestors. But rather, he is given to us as a type of our Savior. The intention of God is that no record be kept of his genealogy or who his father or who his mother was, where he was born, when he died.

By the way, let me digress for a second again here. In Zechariah chapter 6, verse 13, we have where it is prophesied that our Lord will be a priest upon the throne. And as you know priests do not sit on thrones. Kings are the ones who sit upon the throne. But Melchisedec was one who was both a king and a priest. And when we come to Zechariah, speaking of our Lord as He returns to the earth to reign over the kingdoms of the earth, He will also be a priest upon the throne.

Now in order for Melchisedec to be a type of the Son of God in priesthood, he must be scrutinized with great care. Every priest was scrutinized to see if by his very descent he could fit into the priesthood. That's why you have mention of genealogy here.

But with the Melchisedec priesthood there was no genealogy. He was made like unto the Son of God. He does not say the Son of God was made like unto Melchisedec. It does not say that the Son of God was Melchisedec. It says just that Melchisedec came into the history of man as an illustration of the Son of God in His person as a priest “for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” He is revealed as a type of the Son of God, in order that he might show to us the kind of a priesthood our Savior would have.

Our Savior's work started after death. The Aaronic priesthood ended with death. Our High Priest never dies, hence He has an unchanging priesthood. Our Savior is superior over all other priests.

Now then, from verses 4-10, we come to the next part of this passage. We're dealing with the superiority of Christ in His person in verses 1-10. And here you have the relationship of Melchisedec and Abraham. May I read those verses.

7:4. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

7:5. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

7:6. But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

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

7:8. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

7:9. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

7:10. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

Now, this is a very simple argument here. The writer must prove that the Melchisedec priesthood is greater than the Aaronic priesthood. How does he do it?

Abraham is greater than Levi. Why? Because Levi came out of Abraham. But Melchisedec is greater than Abraham on two grounds.

First of all, he received from Abraham a tenth of the spoils. And when Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils, he was recognizing the superiority of Melchisedec. And then we find that Melchisedec blessed Abraham. “And without contradiction,” says the seventh verse, “the less is blessed of the better.”

So, if Melchisedec is greater than Abraham, and if Abraham is greater than Levi, then Melchisedec is greater than Levi. Now, that's very simple, isn't it? Our Lord could not be in the Aaronic priesthood; but if He is a priest, then he must be in the Melchisedec priesthood. And hence His is an eternal priesthood.

May I repeat from Psalm 110:4, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Now, we come to chapter 7, verses 11-28. And here we have that our Lord's priesthood is a perfect priesthood in contrast to the Levitical priesthood which was imperfect.

The purpose of the priesthood is the perfecting of God's people for fellowship with Him—to be brought nigh to God and kept nigh for the purpose of fellowship with Him. That which the Levitical priesthood in past days could not accomplish, Christ Jesus today on the throne of God as our High Priest is able to do—the job of perfecting His people for intimate fellowship with God.

What I want to get into your heart, my friend, is that God has made the provision for you and for me to come at any time into His presence and have personal fellowship with Him, with the living God Himself.

Now the writer is going to prove to us that our Lord was a perfect priest doing a perfect job. Now, let me again read verses 11-14 which give to us the purpose of the priesthood.

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?

7:12. For the priesthood being changed, (from the Aaronic priesthood to the Melchisedec priesthood), there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

7:13. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another

tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

7:14. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Because the Levitical priesthood was powerless to do the job, of necessity there must be a change of priesthood. But remember, when you change the priesthood, then you must change the law. You must change the covenant. And this is what we have here in these three or four verses.

So, I say, if I change from the Aaronic priesthood to Melchisedec to Christ, then I must change from law to grace. You can't have both law and grace. They just don't mix.

Now, let's look at it. And I'm going to repeat some of these things. The purpose of the priesthood is to bring God's people into the presence of God for the purpose of intimate fellowship. It might be well for me to suggest that back of God's great purpose in the redemption of men and women is that He will have a people through eternity with whom He can have fellowship and that they will have fellowship with Him. So they must be in that position of being perfected in order to have that fellowship.

So, you know that no religious rites can give you this. Keeping the law doesn't give you this, Going through ceremonies doesn't give you this.

There must be life. There must be a righteous standing. One must stand in the presence of God in all the righteousness of Christ.

If you and I are going to have fellowship with God, intimate fellowship with a holy, righteous God, with a God who is light and righteous and love, then we must be fitted to come into His presence.

This the Levitical priesthood could not do. So, if God is going to have a people, there must be a change of priesthood. And there must be a change of covenant. It was not possible, when we come to chapter 10, for example, it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sin. But this man Christ Jesus, by one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.

Now, let's look again at the verse, the priesthood verse:

7:12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law (or a change of covenant).

In the book of Galatians chapter 3, verses 10-13, we read that “the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live by them.” And “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.” It says “cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” That means that no one has ever kept the law. Hence everyone who was under the law is under the curse.

My friend, you can't get away from this. You put yourself under the law and Moses, and you immediately put yourself under the curse because the law says, Cursed, cursed not blessed, not happy, but “cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

And as James says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). And then I love the verse which says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

And then, you remember in Romans chapter 10, verses 3 and 4, speaking to the Jews, who “Going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

In Galatians chapter 4:4-5 I read, “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” That He might deliver us from that law and that we might receive the adoption of sons.

The law never made sons. The law never made anybody the children of God. The law cursed; the law is a ministration of death. The law demands perfection. But nobody has ever lived up to that demand except the Savior. And please do not say that the Lord kept the law for you and for me. He didn't. He met the demands of the law at the cross.

When you and I are saved, we're joined to a risen, glorified Son of God. All the law can do is to bring you to the cross. As Galatians 3:24-25 says, "The law was our school master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

What I'm trying to say to you, my friend, is this (and please forgive the repetition): Here are two great covenants, two great principles; and you can't mix them. If I change from Levi to Christ, if I change the priesthood from the Levitical to Christ, then I must change the covenant. The heart of the law is the priesthood. And the purpose of the priesthood was to perfect God's people for fellowship. This it was absolutely powerless to do.

So, if men and women are going to stand before God, fitted for His presence and fitted for His fellowship, another priesthood must arise to do the job. And this is what the writer is saying. Our Savior was after the order of Melchisedec. And that which the law was powerless to do, that which the Levitical priesthood was powerless to do, our Savior has done. I repeat it, my friends, you can't mix these two covenants, these two principles—faith and works, law and grace, Christ and the Levitical priesthood.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship (not our own), created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." But who produces these works? Philippians 2:13 tells me it is God who "worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

How I would like to see God's people in that place where they will revel in the person of Christ—not only knowing that Christ died on the cross as a fit sacrifice to put away every sin, but knowing He has satisfied divine righteousness, holiness and justice making it possible for you and me to have life in Him. Then we will be fit to come into the presence of God because our Savior is there.

Isn't it wonderful that you and I can come at any time, under any circumstance into the very presence of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and know that we have access into His presence and that you and I can have daily fellowship with the living God Himself? My friend, this

is what we want for you today. This is what we want for you everyday. God has made the provision in Christ for you and me to have blessed, intimate fellowship with Him.

Now, may you have that joy today. The past with its failures, with its accomplishments is passed. Is there something between you and the Lord? Confess your sin. As 1 John 1:9 says, He'll cleanse you and forgive you." Go on and enjoy fellowship with God Himself. And remember He, Christ, the risen, glorified Son of God, is your life and He's your High Priest representing you.

Which lead us to the second thing in this division. In verses 15-17. The prophetic word indicates that One must rise after the order of Melchisedec. Now God intended centuries before that He would change the priesthood.

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

7:16. Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

7:17. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Now here you have the prophetic word which, of course, is the 110th Psalm, the 4th verse, showing that God intended centuries ago to change the priesthood. And this priesthood would not be after the law, but after the power of an endless life.

Look at the contrast in verse 16. Our Lord who was made "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life, for he testifieth, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

Notice the law and grace, the contrasts. The law restrains; grace enables. The law is external; grace changes a life internally. The law is of the flesh, hence due to change. But grace is life, eternal life, hence unchanging, which leads me to verses 18 and 19. The very fact there's going to be a change of priesthood means that the old was insufficient, that the old was powerless. Let me read it.

7:18. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

7:19. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Will you please mark this. The rise of a new priesthood signified that the old was inferior. If the new has power to do a job for eternity, that implies the old is powerless to do the job that God wants done.

I'm reminded of Romans chapter 8, verses 2 and 3. Do you remember those two verses? "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (now, that's the law of Moses, sin and death). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness (righteous requirement) of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The law made nothing perfect.

Why? Because it was imperfect. The law is holy, just and good (Romans 7:12). The trouble is not with the law, my friend. The trouble is with you and me. The law demands, but we can't meet the demands. The law demands righteousness. But we don't have any. The law demands that you never sin. But we do sin. The law says you must die if you sin, "for the wages of sin is death."

What can the law do for you? Nothing, except condemn you. And the law and the Levitical priesthood are tied together. You can't have one without the other. Neither the priesthood nor the law could fit men and women for the presence of God.

Certainly the law and priesthood could not take sinners and transform them into saints. It couldn't transform them into righteous beings. It couldn't transform them into eternal beings, into sons of God. The law could never do that. The law made servants, not sons.

Now, God is going to have a people, I'm repeating this, with whom He can have fellowship. This is an amazing thing to me when I meet people today with all their frailty, weaknesses and failures. Nevertheless the way is open for men and women to come to the very

presence of God, and not only come into a right relationship with Him, but be fitted for wonderful, intimate fellowship with God day by day.

In verse 11, right on down through verse 14, we have the purpose of the priesthood is to perfect God's people to come nigh unto God and enjoy His fellowship. This the Levitical priesthood could not do, hence there must be a change of priesthood. And in verses 15 to 17, we have where in the 110th Psalm, the 4th verse, the prophetic word informs us there must be another priesthood that will rise after the order of Melchisedec, because the Levitical priesthood was powerless to do anything. It was limited.

And then, in verses 18 and 19 the very fact that there's going to be another priesthood to arise, shows that the old priesthood was inferior. It didn't do the job. If the Levitical priesthood could have done the job by taking hell deserving citizens and fitting them for the presence of God, for his fellowship, then there would be no need of a change, no need for Christ to come. But man could not keep the law of God. Man was rebellious and the law demanded his death. The law cursed. The law judged. The law shut you out from the presence of God. The law never brought people to God. The law barred them from the presence of God. So there must be a change of covenant. There must be a change of priesthood.

And how glad I am to say that in His wonderful program and purpose God has made provision to have a people in His presence in relationship to Himself as His children. We have the right and the privilege to come into His presence any time for fellowship. This is what we're dealing with—the marvelous fact that you and I can have intimate fellowship with God today. Provision has been made. We have a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is able to succor us. He understands all about us.

Now when we come down to verse 20, Christ's perfect priesthood guarantees the perfection of God's people—first of all because of the divine oath, verses 20-22.

7:20. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

7:21. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an

oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

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

Guaranteed us perfection, why? Because of a divine oath. Now, if the Aaronic, the Levitical priesthood, had been by the oath of God instead of by birth, it would have been an eternal priesthood. There would have been no need for a change. They would have been able to do the job. But our Savior, because they were powerless to do the job, was appointed to be the priest of His people by the divine oath. Hence He is the mediator of a better covenant.

You remember 1 Timothy chapter 2, the 5th verse, reads, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

I'm reminded of that verse in the book of Job where Job cries out, you remember, “Oh, that I had somebody who could put his hand on God and put His hand on me” (Job 9:33 in my words). What was he crying for? A mediator, One who could perfectly satisfy God and perfectly satisfy His people. This, the Levitical priesthood could not do.

So, now, first of all, His perfect priesthood guarantees that the job is going to be done. His was an eternal priesthood, first of all because of the divine oath. Now, secondly, it was not subject to death. In verses 23 to 25 we have an amazing scripture. Look at it.

7:23. And they truly (that is the Levitical priests of the Old Testament) were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

7:24. But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

7:25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost (perfectly) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

You see, in the Old Testament death came in and stopped the priesthood. Their ministry ended with death. But our Lord's priesthood is an eternal priesthood because Christ lives forever. His priesthood did

not start before the cross. His priesthood started after death. Hence, He lives forever. It's an unchanging priesthood.

Furthermore, His cannot be changed or passed on to somebody else. And by the way, what a blow this is to all man-made priests. Did you hear what I said? No one can take His place. He's the High Priest. He's our High Priest before God. It cannot be changed. It cannot be added to. It's a perfect priesthood because it is an eternal priesthood, nor can it be passed on to somebody else. This is what took place in the last priesthood when a priest died, somebody else took his place. He lived some years, died, and somebody else took his place.

Now, we come to this 25th verse. Listen to it. Wherefore (because his priesthood is by the oath of God, because he is ever lives and because His is an unchanging, eternal priesthood) he is able to save perfectly everyone who comes to God by Him. Why? Because he ever lives to make intercession for us.

Will you please notice that verse. "Wherefore He is able to save perfectly." He provides a perfect, complete salvation. Here we have the crowning verse of the whole chapter. We have a risen, ascended, living Christ on the right hand of God. And He is able to perfect every, every, every child of God. The strong ones. Yes. The weak ones? Yes. The mature Christian and the one who is immature. He is able to perfect every believer. Every real, true child of God today is going to stand before God in all the perfection of Christ.

Have you ever followed that word "able" through the New Testament? For example, take this book of Hebrews. In chapter 2, verse 18, because He's a real man, He's a merciful and faithful High Priest. And because He went through tests and trials, He's "able to succor" us when we're tested.

In chapter 4, verse 15, where it speaks of our High Priest—you remember concerning sin apart—He is able to sympathize with us. Why? Because He was tested in all points as we are. You have it in verse 25 of this chapter. He's "able also to save" to the very end.

You know, I'm tempted to give you some verses on the ability of our Savior. Some Christians need to know this.

Take Jude 24 for example. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

In 2 Corinthians chapter 9, the 8th verse, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

Take 2 Timothy 1:12, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Take Philippians 3:20 and 21 when he says, “our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change (He is able) our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

In Romans 16:25. “Now unto him that is of power (He is able) to stablish you according to my gospel.”

In Romans 14, verse 4, when we criticize somebody, I read, “God is able to make him stand.” Oh, listen. He’s able to save you and fit you and make you perfect to stand in the presence of God. My, friend, what a Savior! What a Lord we have!

Please, don’t for one moment question the ability of our Savior who put away sin, who conquered death and the grave and who never leaves you or forsakes you.

His priesthood has never changed. It doesn’t cease. And no one can take His place. You know it is an amazing thing when you think of it. No person can take His place because His is an eternal priesthood by the oath of God. It’s perfect. He is able to save perfectly everyone, everyone who comes unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercessions for us.

Now, in chapter 6, we found where our Savior is our forerunner, our guarantee of entrance into the presence of God. He is our anchor, our hope, our refuge. He is able to take care of us. You remember in John 13:1, “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” In Ephesians chapter 5:26 and 27, He’s going to be able to present the Church unto Himself, a holy church having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.

In Philippians 1:6 we have, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it (shall perfect it) until the day of Jesus Christ.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

Now, the assurance or the ground of this is because He ever liveth to make intercession for us. You know I couldn't help but think of that verse in Luke's gospel, chapter 22, where the Lord says to Peter, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (verses 31-32). Now, there's no question that Peter failed miserably. Peter failed. But his faith didn't fail.

Now, you say, “Wait a minute there now, didn't Peter deny His Lord with oaths and curses?”

Yes, yes, he did. Three times. It wasn't over in a second either. Quite awhile after the first one, he denied his Lord the second time. And then one hour afterwards he's still there and again denied his Lord.

Then I read, “The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.” (Luke 22:61). I do not know what Peter saw in the eyes or face of the Lord; but, whatever it was, Peter went out and wept bitterly. He loved the Savior. But his faith didn't fail. Why? Because of the intercession of the Lord.

My friend, if you say that Peter's faith failed, then you are declaring that the prayers of our Savior are not adequate; they're not sufficient. You're suggesting that our Savior is not perfect in what He does. No, Peter himself failed the Lord. But his faith didn't fail. In fact, in the death and burial of our Savior what Peter lost was not his faith, was not his love, but his hope. As the disciple said, “We had hoped that He would have restored Israel” (Acts 1:6).

And Peter says in 1 Peter 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” You see, friends, we have a Savior who is praying for us and His prayers avail.

Isn't it wonderful to know there is not a second of the day that our Savior stops praying for you? You remember back over there in the book of Exodus, chapter 17, the very first battle that Israel had after she left Egypt was with the Amalekites. How was that battle won? How could this race of slaves defeat such a war-like tribe as Amalek? Well, we read that Moses was on the hilltop praying.

And as long as Moses prayed, Israel prevailed. When Moses stopped praying, Amalek prevailed. And you remember they propped up his hands, Eleazer on one side, and Hur on the other. And they kept his hands up until the going down of the sun. And we read that Israel discomfited the enemy. By the sword of Joshua? Yes. But the secret was the prayers of Moses.

You know our Lord's hands do not have to be propped up. He ever lives to make intercession for us. The guarantee is our Savior. He's going to bring every believer into the presence of His Father on the grounds, not only of His cross, burial and resurrection, but His present ministry.

In fact, I would say this, Christian friend, if it were not for the intercessions of Christ, you nor I nor any other believer could stand five minutes on the earth without failure.

You remember that verse in Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled (having accepted the reconciliation in Christ), we shall be saved by His life"—not by His life as He walked among men, but His life as He now lives it at the right hand of God on the throne as our Intercessor.

My, how glad I am that the Lord Jesus Christ is praying for us. You remember in the book of John, chapter 17, we read verses 9 and 10 when He says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." He is saying, "Mine they were and You gave them to Me; now Holy Father, You take care of them."

Our Lord today is not praying for the unsaved. He's praying for His people. What for? That they may stand before the Father perfect in every way.

My, friend, what a hope, what assurance, what certainty, what peace of heart as well as peace of mind this brings to the believer. Christ guarantees your perfection before God. Revel in that truth today. Be occupied with the Savior. And love Him with all that is in you. God has made absolutely wonderful provision for us to walk in daily blessed fellowship with Him and know something of an intimacy with God Himself.

You know, this is what I want for you and for my own heart, not just to be straight in our doctrine—though that is amazing and that is wonderful; we should be straight in our doctrine—but to be in love with the Savior.

When one comes to the book of Hebrews and sees God's marvelous provision for us, he knows that even now every minute of the day, every minute of the day and even between the minutes, the Lord is taking care of His people.

Now, look at verse 25 of Hebrews chapter 7. We're dealing here with our Lord's guaranteeing His precious work for us, His present ministry. He is a priest by the oath of God, and His priesthood was not subject to death. Hence His ability to do a perfect work, to save clear through to the very end, or to the uttermost, all of us who come unto God by Him because He ever lives to make intercession for us.

The unsaved man comes to the cross to be redeemed, to be saved, to be a child of God, to be justified. But for the believer, the provision for our daily need is not at the cross, but in heaven at the right hand of God. At the cross we experience the grace of God. But my present need and your present need is met by the present ministry of Christ according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

You remember we have that in the book of Ephesians chapter 3 where Paul prays that we might be made powerful and strong by His spirit in the inner man. How? According to His riches in glory.

In Philippians 4:19, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Grace proceeds from the cross. The riches of glory proceed from the throne. And this is what we are dealing with in the book of Hebrews. Our Savior is no longer on the

cross. He died once for our sins. He'll never again die. He's been raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand.

What's He doing? He's praying for you and me. Listen to that verse again.

7:25. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost (perfectly) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

He is able to save perfectly to fit us, not only for heaven, but to fit us for fellowship with God.

Now on this question of Christ's praying for His own, He's not praying for the world. I said He died for the world. He is praying just for Christians, for His people. You find that in Romans chapter 8, verse 34, where He's now making "intercession for us." Or in verse 27 of the same chapter, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

And again may I repeat from John 17, "I pray for them," the believers. "I pray not for the world." He died for the world. But He's praying for you and for me. He never gets tired of it. He always prays for us.

Oh, what an encouragement this has been to me personally, to know the Lord never stops praying for me, never stops undertaking my case.

It's amazing thing, isn't it? In spite of our frailty and weakness and often failures, He never, never stops praying for us. You know it is a wonderful thing for us Christians to pray for each other, and rightly so. But, oh, to know that our Savior never forgets. He's always remembering you, praying for you.

As we found in John 17:18 and 19, remember, "Even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself (I set myself apart on their behalf), that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

And then remember, may I add this? Remember too, the Spirit of God is praying for you. Believer, listen. The Spirit of God is not praying

for the unbeliever. He convicts the unbeliever of sin. He's praying for the believer.

Romans chapter 8, verses 26 and 27, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Did you notice that? We do not know how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. He "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He who knows the mind of the Spirit, that's the Son of God, understands what is the mind of the Spirit. Why? He makes intercession for us according to the will of God.

My, what provision God has made for us. The Son of God is praying for you. And are we not exhorted in the scriptures over and over again to pray without ceasing for each other? Paul could say remember to pray without ceasing for God's people. We've got quite a job, haven't we? Christ is praying for us, the Spirit of God is praying for us and we are to pray for each other.

By the way, who is going to pray for the unsaved? Did you ever stop to think of that? Who will pray for the unsaved members of your family if you don't? Who is going to pray for your neighbors if you don't? Who's going to pray for the unsaved masses in the world if the Christians do not pray?

Nobody will. Christ died for them. The Spirit of God convicts them. You are to witness to them, and you are to pray for them. That's what Paul means in Romans 9:2-3. He called God to be his witness.

What for? "That I have great heaviness and continuous sorrow (I have unceasing pain) in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (who are Israelites)."

And he follows along in the first verse of chapter 10 of Romans when he said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

This is what broke Jeremiah's heart. Do you remember Jeremiah 8:20, 22? "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we're not saved. Is there no balm in Gilead?" Does anybody care? "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears" (Jeremiah 9:1).

You see, in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul says to Timothy, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority.” It’s God’s desire that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. I exhort that men pray everywhere, holding up holy hands without doubting.

Oh, what a challenge to us today. It’s one of the greatest needs of the hour. God’s people need to pray for each other and for the unsaved and be burdened for the great mass of people for whom Christ died. And then when you pray for them, you’ll witness to them. And when you witness, you’ll pray more for them. You see, this is our responsibility.

I’m not worried about being cared for. Christ is praying for that. I’m not worried about my faith failing. Christ is praying for that. And He never fails. His prayers always avail, and He never gets tired.

Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful thought. The Lord never gets tired of praying for you or for me because he loves you and He loves me. He loves everyone of His own. The strong ones? Yes. The mature ones? Yes. The weak ones? Yes. The babes in Christ? Yes. He prays for us unceasingly, guaranteeing that we shall stand before God in all the perfection and all the beauty of Christ. I say, what a prospect. And what a hope and what assurance we have in the Savior.

Now the last thing in the chapter is that He guarantees the perfection of His work because of His fitness in His character and in His work.

For example, in verse 26, we have the character of our priest. We read: “

7:26. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

Did you notice His character? Who was there that ever lived in the world like our Savior? In fact, He was the only one who could be a fit sacrifice for us. The very character of Christ guarantees the perfection of His people—not only His work on the cross, but that which He is doing now.

Notice what it says, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy.” In his character He was absolute in holiness. He is harmless, guileless, free from malice. He was undefiled, free from defilement, unsullied. Did you ever stop to think of it? The Lord could say to the enemies of His day in John chapter 8:46, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” I tell you, I wouldn’t want to say that to anybody, even to my friends. But our Lord challenged His enemies, “Which one of you convinceth me of sin?”

And you remember that His own friends wrote of Him, “He was without sin. In Him was no sin. He did no sin. He knew no sin.” If you want to follow that through I would suggest 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, and 1 John 3:5, 1 Peter 2:22-24. I think we spoke of this, you remember, in one of our preceding lessons. He’s holy. He’s without guile. He’s undefiled. He’s separate from sinners.

What do we mean by that? He’s free from all sin in His person. After His resurrection, our Lord was through with sinners. He’s interceding for His people.

Did you notice that after our Lord cried out on the cross, “It is finished,” no wicked hands ever touched Him? It was loving hands that took Him from the cross. It was loving hands that wound Him up in the linen cloth. It was loving hands that put Him in the tomb. He never appeared to sinners after His resurrection. He just appeared to His own people.

Today He is on the throne. He’s not dealing with the world. He’s dealing with His people. Now, you stop and think about that. He is the One who represents you and the One who is praying for you, the One who guarantees His work as the High Priest who cares for His people, guarantees their perfection as One who is absolutely holy, and guileless, and free from defilement and separate from sinners.

He came to the world to put away the sins by the sacrifice of Himself. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). He’s not dealing with the world now. He died for the world.

I wish in some way I could get that into your mind, Christian friend. Your Savior is no longer on the cross. He’s on the throne. He’s

the eternal, perfect, sinless, absolutely holy, righteous Son of God. And He is representing you, pleading your cause because of His perfection in character.

I tell you this is not like the Old Testament saints who were very imperfect. They were under the sentence of death. But this Man, Christ Jesus, is sinless, holy, harmless, separate from sinners, eternal in the heavens. And I read, He's "made higher than the heavens." That is, He's entered into the very presence of God. The One who died for you, who loved you is now in the very presence of God representing you. And that's His character. His character demands the perfection of His people.

And then in verse 27, His work was sufficient. And His sacrifice was sufficient for us.

7:27. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests (in the Old Testament), 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.

You see, their sacrifices could never take away sin, so they were continually being offered. Please, my friend. Don't put the sacrifice of Christ on the same plane or having the same value as Old Testament sacrifices. Those sacrifices were offered year by year continually. Every day they were offered. But our Savior died once because His was a perfect sacrifice, a complete sacrifice, a sacrifice that absolutely satisfied the divine character of God. And because it absolutely satisfied the divine character of God, He guarantees the perfection of His people.

Now, remember this is the theme of the chapter. What was the priest's job? To perfect God's people for intimate relationship and fellowship with God. This they could not do because they were an imperfect priesthood and because their sacrifices were imperfect. They could not take away sin. But our Savior, by the oath of God and because His priesthood started after death and hence is eternal, is able to perfect us. This is because of His character and because of the perfection of His sacrifice which you have in verse 27.

And now, the last verse,

7:28. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity (that is they are not perfect); but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

You see, our Lord's priesthood was freed from human weakness, and His appointment was due to the divine oath. Because He was perfect, absolute in obedience to His Father, both in character and in work, He now is at the right hand of God. He's now in heaven, as the Son, set apart, consecrated forever.

Again I come back to the thought: Christ on the cross gives me peace of conscience, but Christ on the throne gives me peace of heart. His death cancels our condemnation.

"There is therefore now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." We shall not come into judgment because of the perfection of His work. His death cancels our condemnation and judgment. But His present life in heaven guarantees our access into the presence of God. We'll stand before Him in all the perfection of Christ.

Now, we've come to the end of chapter 7. May I reiterate one or two things.

What I want you to see starting at verse 11 is that the purpose of the priests under the law was to take God's people and perfect them for the presence of God, for His fellowship, to have communion with God. This they could not do because of the imperfection of the priesthood as well as the imperfection of the sacrifices.

And if I change from Aaron or from Levi to Christ, then I must change from law to grace. This is what He is talking about in the chapter.

Then, the writer goes on to say that the old, because of its imperfection, could not perfect the people of God. The law made nothing perfect. But with the bringing in of a better hope, grace perfected the people of God. The Old Testament priests moved off the scene because they were imperfect. Death came in, and somebody else took their place. It was a constant change of priesthood.

But our Savior's priesthood started after death. Death doesn't touch Him. His priesthood was by the oath of God. And He guarantees

that perfection by His intercessory work and by His fitness in character and work. And now where is He? He's at the right hand of God making intercession for us.

So, we go back to chapter 4 just for a moment and we read, "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... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (verses 14 and 16).

Oh, my friend, when I think of the provision that God has made for you and for me, I would plead with your heart to walk with him in perfect communion. This means, you know, you communicate with God. God communicates with you. This is what communion is. It's communicating one with the other.

Did you do that today? Did you come into the presence of your Lord and communicate to Him what is on your heart? And then, did you open your Bible and let God communicate with you by the Spirit through the Word?

See, friend, this is the life of faith. This is the life that pleases God. This is the life of joy, the life of peace, the life of rest, and might I add, also, the life of usefulness.

The Christian life is life lived in the presence of God, in obedience to His Word. Christ has made full, wonderful provision.

Now, may you revel in Him today—not only for saving you, but also because He keeps you, and guarantees your perfection.

And the Lord bless you this day for His name's sake.

Chapter Eight

We start a new division in the 8th chapter. We've just been dealing in chapter 7 with the marvelous thing—that our Lord Jesus Christ on the throne of God guarantees the perfection of His people, not only because of His intercessory work, but because of His character and because of His sacrifice which is perfect and not to be repeated. Not like the Old Testament priesthood where they offered sacrifices every day, and they themselves were very imperfect. And being imperfect, they were unable to do the job that God wants done for His people.

But now when we come to chapter 8, we have another contrast between the Aaronic priesthood and our Savior. The first 6 verses deal especially with the fact that our Lord's priesthood is a heavenly one in contrast to the Aaronic priesthood which is on earth. In chapter 7, we have the person of the priest before us. In chapter 8, we have the work of the priest. In fact, from chapter 8 right down into chapter 10, we have the work of the priest with respect to His sacrifice.

Now, the Melchisedec priesthood which we had in the beginning of chapter 7 sets forth the person of our Savior as a high priest. But when we come to chapter 8 and follow through chapter 10, we have the Aaronic priesthood given to set forth the work of Christ. In other words, the writer is giving a contrast now between our Lord's work and the Aaronic priesthood with its sacrifices. And in the first two verses we have the fact that our Savior has His priesthood on the throne in heaven.

8:1. Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

8:2. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

You notice that our Lord is on the throne as a priest. Now you remember in Zechariah 6, verse 13, it says, speaking of our Lord's coming to the earth to reign, "That he shall build the temple of the LORD . . . and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

Now you and I well know that the priesthood did not come from the tribe of Judah. It came from the house of Aaron from the tribe of Levi, whereas the kingly line came through the tribe of Judah. And as we had in chapter 7, it is evident that our Lord did not come from the tribe of Levi, but from the royal tribe of Judah.

But now, if He's a priest, He cannot be after the order of Aaron. He's after the order of Melchisedec; and Melchisedec, you remember, was a king-priest. So you have in Zechariah 6:13, when our Lord returns to the earth, he's going to build His temple, and He will be a priest upon the throne.

And it's this present priesthood of Christ that we appropriate as believers. He's a true minister. He is still serving and is far superior to Aaron. Aaron's ministry was on earth, but His ministry is in heaven. I'll think you'll find that very clearly set forth in these first two verses.

Again may I remind you that this is the second time in the book where we read of our Lord's sitting down or "set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." We had it in chapter 1, verse 3. We have it again in chapter 10, verse 12, and then we have it again in chapter 12, verse 2. Aaron's ministry was absolutely limited to the earth. Our Lord's ministry as a high priest is in heaven, an eternal priesthood. No one can take His place.

And my friend, don't let anybody fool you on this. No one can take the place of our Savior. There are no substitutes. No one will ever take His place because His is an eternal priesthood.

Now, we come to the proof of His priesthood in verse 3.

8:3. For every priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices (that is, he has a ministry): wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

"This man" is sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high in the heavens. And who is this one? Go back to chapter

4, verse 14, “Jesus the Son of God.” Now in verse 3, we have the proof of his priesthood. Every priest must have a ministry. And what did they do in the Old Testament? They offered up gifts and sacrifices.

You have this in chapter 9 verse 9,

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

They had to have a ministry; otherwise, they wouldn't be priests. They had to offer up sacrifices because of the frailty of God's people. And, if our Savior is a real priest, then He must have a sacrifice. He must have a ministry. Our Lord must not only be a royal priesthood which we had in chapter 7, but His also must be a sacrificial priesthood.

Then the writer goes on to tell in verses 4-6 where He has His priesthood. He can't have it on earth, verse 4,

8:4. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

8:5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

8:6. For now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator (messenger) of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

In other words, you have here in verses 4-6 that our Lord's ministry could not be on earth because there was a priesthood already on earth. As we said awhile ago, His priesthood started after death. And the great theme of the epistle is right here that Christ is in heaven as a high priest. He's associated with heaven, not earth. And Christ has nothing to do with the earthly family of Levi or Aaron.

When you come to verse 5, you have the character of the earthly priesthood. Theirs was just a copy of what Moses saw in the heavens. The tabernacle was just a shadow of the real. But Christ's priesthood is in connection with the real. Hence it is superior to the earthly priesthood.

Now, I'm not taking the time to look up all these scriptures that have to do with Moses. He was told to copy what he saw in the mount. In other words, the tabernacle was only a copy of what Moses saw in heaven. You find in Exodus chapters 25, 26, and 27, Numbers chapter 8 and also in Acts chapter 7 that this tabernacle was just a shadow of the real.

So, it's very obvious that if our Lord's is the priesthood connected with the real, then it must be superior to the ones that were connected to the shadow. This is what you have here in verses 4 and 5. Now in verse 6 His was a superior ministry because He deals with a heavenly people. They are people who belong to heaven.

"You mean that is you and me?"

Yes, if you love the Savior. For you remember Philippians 3:20 says, "Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We don't belong to the earth. We're just pilgrims, just strangers traveling through. We're not tourists. We're pilgrims, strangers, passing through. We've got a ministry to do for Him. And He has a ministry to do for us. And we cannot do our ministry down here if His ministry in heaven is not perfect. You see, friends, we're shut up—if I could say it this way—we are shut up to what Christ is doing with us today. He's dealing with a heavenly ministry.

Now you'll notice in verse 6 that His superiority is three-fold. It's a better ministry because it is heavenly. It's spiritual, not temporal. He's dealing with realities, not with shadows. And then He talks about a better covenant. He's the mediator of a better covenant, absolute, not conditional. It's eternal, not temporary. And then it's established upon better promises because they are spiritual. And it deals with a heavenly inheritance, not a merely earthly inheritance.

So you see, that our Lord is superior, which ever way you look at it, in His character, in His work, and what He is in Himself. And now He's bringing in a new covenant which is spiritual and not carnal, which is spiritual and not temporal, which is real and not shadows, which is absolute and not conditional. And His promises have to do with an

eternal inheritance, not a merely earth inheritance. It pertains to a spiritual one.

Now, I say in chapter 7 the covenant is sure because of His person. In chapter 8, verse 6, the covenant is sure because His work negotiates it. We had in verse one His is a royal priesthood; in verse 3, it's a sacrificial priesthood; in verse 5, it's a heavenly priesthood; and in verse 6, it's a perfect priesthood.

Someone has well said, I think Griffith Thomas is the one who says this, "The true knowledge of a heavenly Christ makes heavenly Christians." Can I repeat that? This is a quotation. "The true knowledge of a heavenly Christ makes heavenly Christians." Now don't you think it is time for believers to take our place with those who belong to a heavenly Savior, who deals with the real and not with shadows.

Oh, I've met so many Christians—you can't find a flaw in their doctrine; but for some reason, they've never entered into the reality of a life in Christ Jesus.

My friend, listen. God wants you to experience real life. Isn't that what you want? Don't you want real life?

Yes.

Where are you going to get real life?

In Him is life.

And God wants it to be real in your life and to go on day by day enjoying your Savior who is absolutely perfect. He has done a perfect work and is doing a perfect work now in heaven at the right hand of God on your behalf. And I repeat it, He's not dealing with shadows; He's dealing with reality. And, if you want reality and life, my friend, you'll find it only in one place—in Christ Jesus.

I know we're still on earth, but we're to live on earth as if we're already in heaven. In other words, we are a heavenly people joined to the eternal God. We are the children of one who is God.

Now, starting in at verse 7 and running through to the end of the chapter, we have that our Lord's covenant. The new covenant is far superior to the old covenant.

8:7. For if that first covenant (that is, the Mosaic covenant), had

been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8:8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

8:9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

8:10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

8:11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

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

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.

Now, I've read that whole passage because I wanted to get into your heart the fact that our Savior has a covenant, a new covenant which is far superior to the old. If there is to be new priesthood, it demands and needs a new covenant. And our Savior is not only a minister of the sanctuary, the heavenly one; but He's also the mediator the new covenant. And the great question raised is, Is the new covenant better than the old? The Jews will not throw over the old covenant until they have the new covenant?

Now, let me again remind you what we had in chapter 7, verses 11 and 12.

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?

7:12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law (of the covenant).

Now, I'm well aware of the fact that there are many folk today who say that we Christians are under the law of Moses. Then, my friend, according to Hebrews if you're under the old covenant of the law, then you must come under the Levitical priesthood. You can't separate those two because the law was given through the mediation of angels in connection with the Levitical priesthood. And if I change from Levi to Christ, then I must change from law to grace.

Again allow me to repeat this fact. There are two entirely different principles in the Word of God, law and grace, works and faith. They're two different principles. And you can't have both of them. As Paul could say in Romans 4:5, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Or you go to Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11 where the Apostle Paul talks about Israel, who spurned the precious grace of God. They did not receive it by faith. And what they sought and what they wanted, they missed because of their works.

Now, here we have it again in chapter 8. If there is to be a new priesthood, there must be a new covenant. And I repeat the question raised, Is the new covenant better than the old?

Now, in verse 7, we have the need of a new covenant. "If the first covenant, (that is, under the law of Moses), if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. But finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel" and so on.

Now, there's nothing wrong with the covenant except it could not produce that which it demanded. What's the matter with the old covenant? It is not perfect. It didn't meet man's need. Why? Because it lacked the power to do so. And the trouble is that men never realized the inadequacy of the covenant.

I want us to stop here for a moment because of the confusion today about it. There are so many who believe they're saved by grace, but you must keep the law of Moses as a rule of life. There are those who say Christ completed the Levitical law, the sacrificial law, at the cross but not the moral law.

May I say, the moral law demands perfection. The law of Moses says, Thou shalt and Thou shalt not. And, if I break the law in one point, then I'm guilty of it all. In fact, the Bible says in the book of Galatians, chapter 3:10, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The law has no extenuating circumstances. The law is pure; it's righteous; it's good. There is nothing wrong with the law, except it did not give you the power to obey the law. It was given for a distinct purpose, and that purpose was to reveal sin in the human heart.

You remember in Exodus chapter 24, when Moses told the children of Israel about the covenant, they said, "All that the Lord our God has said, we will do." And by the time you get to chapter 32, they're worshipping the molten calf. They're breaking the very first law, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

What Israel did not see was that the law was not given to save them. The law didn't give them any power to fulfill the law. The law demands. And being powerless, they failed, just like you and me.

My friend, I'm not against the law of God. Don't misunderstand me, except to say, it does not have the power to come into your life and change your life. It demands of you that which you cannot do. As Paul could say in Romans chapter 7, "I had not known lust until the law said, Thou shalt not covet." And that, which Paul thought was going to give him life, brought him death.

You remember in Romans chapter 8, the third verse, we read, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (because of sin), condemned sin in the flesh" and so on. Notice, nothing is wrong with the law. The trouble is with us. And what the law could not do was because it was weak through the flesh. The old was unprofitable.

You say, "Well, now, you can't say that."

Well, I'm just saying it, my friend. The law of God in the Old Testament was unprofitable to men and women in the sense of delivering them from sin. It demanded righteousness. It demanded sinlessness. It demanded perfection. And breaking it in one point means you're guilty of all. This is what the book says, "Cursed is everyone who

continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," I'm quoting again from Galatians 3:10.

Now, what shall we do about this? God is going to set the law aside as being unable to meet man's need. Then why did God give us the law? The law was given to prove that men were sinful. The law was never given to save. The law never forgave. The law is a ministration of death. The law made sin exceedingly sinful. It was impossible for the law to give life. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness was by the law. If salvation could come by works, by keeping the law, then Christ died in vain.

What I'm trying to get to you, my friend, is the fact that the law of God which is holy and just cannot do anything for you. It demands perfection from you. It demands absolute obedience from you.

You say, "But no man can do that. I'm not made that way."

That's right. That's why God sent His Son to die for you. The law was weak through the flesh. Please, please remember. I haven't got anything against the law. I can say with Paul in Romans 7 that the law is holy, just and good. We are the ones who are frail. We were the ones who could not keep the law. The law stirs up the desire for sin. And by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be saved.

May I repeat that? I'm quoting Romans 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified." No man shall be saved. You can't tell me about one person who's been saved by keeping the law. It was never given as a means of life to the sinner, nor was it given as a rule to believers. Galatians 3 says that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and, having come to Christ, we are no longer under the schoolmaster.

God finds the law inadequate to meet man's need. The trouble is that you and I do not see the inadequacy of the law. We still have a feeling of "If I can just do the best I can, if I can just keep the law and the 10 commandments, if I can just keep the golden rule, well, everything is going to be fine."

No, my friend, the tragedy is that it will not be fine. Because the law demands perfection; and, if you're realistic about it, you and I well know that all of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Even though you have been a sinner in the past and from today you promise God you'll never again sin, that will not save you. What about your past sins? No, the law says you must die. So God has put the law to one side as being inadequate to meet your personal need. That was why He sent His Son.

Allow me to say something I've said so often. Please, my friend, remember, there would have been no need for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to have come to this earth and die for you and me and be buried and raised again, there would have been no need for Him to come at all, if there was any possibility of a person's being saved by his good works or by going through certain ceremonies. I repeat it, the law was given to show us just what kind of folk we are. For what purpose? That we might run to Christ and be saved. That we might run to the Savior and pass from death to life.

Now, in having said that, in verses 8 and 9 you have the promise—God has promised a new covenant. Let me read it to you.

8:8b. 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:

8:9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Here is the new covenant, quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. You know it's an amazing thing how Jeremiah starts that 31st chapter in the third verse when he says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." What an encouragement to this weeping prophet, when everything around him was ready for captivity. For you remember that Jeremiah prophesied right through until Judah went into captivity to Babylon. He saw the whole thing.

My, what a wonderful encouragement it must have been to him when God said, "One of these days, I'm going to make a new covenant. And it's not going to be dependent on Israel. I will make them perfect. I will accomplish what I want to do." There's no doubt here. He will not fail.

Now this covenant is made with Israel, not the church. It's true that all the blessings of it are ours in Christ. But he's talking here for the encouragement of these Hebrew Christians. The people of Israel failed, and God knew they would fail under the old covenant.

"But I'm going to give a new covenant," He says. "And I will make the new covenant with the house of Jacob. And it's not going to be like the old one which was dependent upon them. But I'm going to make one that's going to be dependent upon Me," says the Lord. It's a wonderful thing when God says, "I'm going to perfect that which I have promised. I'm going to give them a new covenant. And I'm going to change their hearts and their lives. I'm going to do the job."

And, brother, when God says He's going to do it, there's no power on earth or hell that is going to change it.

By the way, can I suggest this to you? For those of us who have accepted the Savior, may I remind you of Philippians 1:6? God says through the Apostle Paul, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you shall perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Or, in John chapter 17, verses 11 and 12, where our Savior said, "Father, I've kept these men thus far, now, you keep them the rest of the way."

What I'm trying to say to you is that God, and I say this reverently, God has made Himself responsible for perfecting His purpose in all who put their trust in Him. God is not going to leave it to chance. He's not even going to trust you to carry it through. The Spirit of God comes. He indwells us. And He guarantees to finish the job God starts.

I tell you we've got a wonderful Savior. We've got a marvelous Lord. May you enjoy today the wonderful, wonderful truth of a sovereign, faithful God who will take care of His own. For you remember, He bought you for Himself. He'll take care of His possession. Praise the Lord for that today.

Now, forgive me for repeating, we've had in the beginning of the chapter where our Lord's priesthood is a heavenly priesthood. It's an eternal priesthood. It's a perfect priesthood. And hence the covenant that

He's going to make will be a perfect one, a complete one. It will not be dependent upon man.

The trouble with the old covenant, the legal covenant of the law, is it demanded so much; and man couldn't meet the demands. Now, the old covenant never gave you authority or the power to keep it. Hence it failed in the job that it was supposed to do, to perfect God's people for the presence of God.

Now, God says, I'm going to make a new covenant. He promised this in the Old Testament. You find this both in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In Jeremiah 31, especially verses 31-34. And I mention this again because dear Jeremiah, perhaps like you, was one who stood alone for God in the midst of a nation that was in real spiritual declension. And it must have been a great encouragement to him to know that there was a time coming when God would make a new covenant with the house of Israel, a covenant which God Himself would perfect.

And on top of this, it was not going to be dependent upon man and upon Israel. And there is no doubt here. God will never fail. Just like today, for us who have accepted the Savior, God has promised that one of these days we'll stand in the presence of God looking just like Jesus Christ, His Son. God has promised that. That's why Paul could say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

My friend, it's a wonderful thing to have that assurance that what God has declared He will surely perform. We feel like dear Sarah in Hebrews 11, verse 11, "She counted God faithful who had promised." If this depended on us, no one would ever, ever get to glory. No one would ever stand before God in all the perfection of Christ, in all the righteousness of Christ. But we will because God is doing it.

This new covenant is not dependent on man. All that God asks of men and women is to put their trust in the Savior. And that's not work, that's just putting Christ as the object of your faith. You take him into your own life, make Him your Savior, and count Him as the One who is your life. This is all a part of the gospel. And this is what you receive. You may not understand it all. But when you accepted the Savior, you received not only a divine pardon, but the impartation of divine love,

and the impartation of divine life. And it's only God who can keep us even in these days with all that we have. Not one of us can keep ourselves. Isn't it wonderful that under the new covenant, God is going to do it? He's going to take care of us.

Now, you notice in verses 10-12, what the covenant is. Allow me to read these verses.

8:10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: And I will be to them a god, and they shall be to me a people:

8:11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

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

Now, let me look at these four wonderful things in this new covenant.

First of all, may I suggest to you that this is to all believers now. It is a spiritual covenant, not a carnal one. This is going to be in their hearts. My, what a revelation, that God who has tested them for centuries is now going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel. And He's not going to write the law on tables of stone. He's going to write it in their heart.

And this is what God has done for us. Yes, right down to our very motives, the very center of our being. Did you ever stop to ask how in the world can a man live a Christian life if it were not for the fact that the Spirit of God has come to live inside him? That when you and I accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, He came to live in us.

And a Christian life is one that is lived by the Savior through His people. It is not something you do. What is my responsibility as a Christian? I just yield myself to him and make myself available for God the Spirit to live out through me, by my words, by my actions, something of the very heart and character of God. This is practical Christianity. I can't live a Christian life and you can't. But the Spirit of

God who indwells us, if we yield ourselves to Him, will live out His life through us.

Is not this the appeal of the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 6:19, “Don’t you know that your body is the sanctuary of God?” And if it belongs to Him and He lives in you, then, my friend, there’s no reason why the life of God cannot be manifested in you and me.

How will it be revealed? By the words that I say. By the actions and works that I do, by my very attitudes, by my very motives. Please remember this. God has made a covenant which is a spiritual one, not a carnal one.

Notice the second thing about this covenant. Israel is going to be possessed by God. He’s going to lay hold of His possession. They belong to God. They are going to be joined to Him. My, what a privilege. What a privilege that the nation Israel, one of these days, is going to be possessed by God.

Certainly, that’s not so today. If you were to take a trip to the land of Israel today, you would not find the people of Israel in communication or in worship or in praise of the living God. Many of them are atheistic, secular, materialistic. Very few are really worshiping the living, eternal God. But the day is coming when the whole nation shall be possessed by God.

Did you ever stop to think of it? “I will be to them a God; they shall be to me a people.” You know, you find this over in the book of Zechariah after they have come through their time of trouble, the time of Jacob’s trouble. I read that the Lord shall say, “This is my people, and they will say, Jehovah is our God” (Zechariah 13:9). And in Jeremiah they’re going to say concerning our Lord, “The Lord our righteousness.” This will be the name He shall be called, The Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16).

You don’t see that today. But, my friends, this is what God says. The time is going to come when they are going to be possessed by God. He’s not only going to write His new covenant upon the tables of their hearts, but God is really going to possess His people. Isaiah says that men shall call them (that is, Israel), the priests of God, the ministers of God (Isaiah 61:6).

Moses could say in that day ye shall be the head of the nations, not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13). You see, it's a wonderful thing to know that when God comes into an individual's life or into a nation's life and possesses that nation or possesses that individual, then the work of God in that life will be accomplished. This is the new covenant God's going to make with us.

It is going to be a spiritual covenant. They are going to be possessed by God.

Now, the third thing. And I read here in verse 11,

8:11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

All shall know Him. There will be no need for teachers then. We certainly need teachers today. But in that day, there will be no need for teachers. Their knowledge will be full. You know, for us believers today, I might remind you of that wonderful passage in I Corinthians chapter 13, where the Apostle writes, "Now, we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known" (verse 12). It's a wonderful thing to know that though now we don't know very much, in that day our knowledge shall be complete.

You remember in Colossians chapter 2, verse 3, we read by the Spirit of God, that all God's treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hidden, wrapped up in Jesus Christ. That's why in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, we read, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (verse 24).

Now, we know a little. I know so little. You know so little. We see through a glass darkly, but in that day, we shall see Him face to face. And this is going to be the experience of Israel in that day when our Lord returns to the earth and makes this new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah. No man shall say to his neighbor, Know the Lord.

You know today it is very difficult. You can talk to your neighbors and your friends, and realize how few there are who respond

to that which you have to say. Ignorance of the Word of God and ignorance of the ways of God are the order of the day now.

Even in this blessed land of ours with all the Bibles and churches and preaching that we have, so few, comparatively speaking, know very much about the Lord. They spurn the Word of God. They spurn the Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and hence they miss the very life that they could have in Christ Jesus.

So we have thus far, three things about this covenant. I think it was Dr. Griffith Thomas who said, "We have a deeper revelation, a higher privilege, and a fuller knowledge." This is the new covenant which God is going to make with the house of Israel.

And may I ask you to keep on reading the book of Hebrews. Read it as much as you can. And I'm sure the Lord will make it very precious to your heart and life.

I find the more that I study this amazing book of Hebrews, the more I realize the perfection of the work of our Savior for us, that He is really a perfect Savior. He did not just take care of me when I accepted the Savior and then let me loose. No, He continues the work of saving us daily from the power of sin, perfecting us for that wonderful position and place and experience that we are going to have through eternity. The Lord is not leaving anything to chance.

What God asks of men and women is that they put their trust in Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. This is a matter of relationship between them and their Lord. I'm not talking about believing some doctrine, however good that doctrine may be, or even the very facts of the gospel, but a personal relationship to the Savior. I find so many people who know all the facts of the gospel. They can tell you that Christ died for their sins according to the scriptures. They can tell you that He was buried and He was raised up again and exalted at God's right hand.

They say, "I believe those things," and yet they don't have real life.

And allow me to say a word concerning that for a moment. I have the privilege of teaching a number of Bible classes and I have been amazed the past few years, even the past few months in meeting people

who have been in evangelical churches all their lifetime but have never experienced real life in Christ.

Now, this is a tragedy. I repeat it again, and again, and again that life, spiritual life can only come through the relationship between a man and His Savior. There must be that relationship established. I think that's what John means in John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Or in Matthew 11 when our Savior said, "Come unto me, and I'll give you rest" (verse 26). Or John chapter 6, "He that cometh to me" (verse 37). What I'm emphasizing is personal relationship with the Savior.

Now, when we come to the Savior and are saved, we become the children of God, our sins are forgiven, we receive eternal life and so on.

Now, does the Lord let us go our own way?

No. Our Lord now is doing a perfect work in heaven on the throne of grace. He's there to meet my present need, your present need. It doesn't matter what the need may be, He is there to meet that need. And being the sovereign, all-powerful God and being a wonderful Savior and loving His people with an everlasting and perfect love, He is able to meet our need.

My friend, we can say with Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16).

When I think of the present day situation, not only in our own blessed land, but throughout the world, when I see these precious, precious thousands of young people, high school and college age, who are groping for something real, we Christians have got a tremendous responsibility and a wonderful honor and privilege to bring to them a life that is real.

But you see, it's got to be real in you and me first. I can't impart that which I don't have. But when we accept the Savior, fall in love with Him, and realize something of the wonderful, wonderful grace of God for men and women and the divine provision for our need, then we can go and with joy proclaim the good news from God.

Now I would like to finish Hebrews 8 with respect to this new covenant which God is going to make with the house of Israel, the benefits of which for the most part are experienced today by God's people. Now let's read verses 10-13 again.

8:10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel in those days, saith the Lord, I will put my word, or my law into their minds and write it in their hearts. I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

8:11. They shall not teach every man his neighbor, or every man his brother, saying Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

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

8:13. In that he saith a new covenant, He hath made the first one old. Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Now we've had three things about this new covenant. First of all, it is spiritual. It's not carnal. It's going to be in the hearts of the Hebrew nation. It's not going to be on tables of stone. Here you're going to have a real revelation of God in the hearts and lives of the whole nation, a whole nation realizing their relationship to God.

And then, that nation is going to be possessed by God. Now, here it has to do with Israel as a nation. For us Christians, it's a wonderful truth that when you and I accept the Savior, we belong to God, and God belongs to us. We're joined to Him. He becomes our righteousness.

And then in verse 11 (I know I'm repeating) under the new covenant, all are going to know the Lord with no need for anyone to tell somebody else about the Savior. In this day when our Lord returns and sets up His kingdom and Israel is redeemed, He's going to write into their hearts and give them His knowledge. And not one of them will go to his neighbor, "I want you to know the Lord," for all shall know Him.

Now, that's not true today. Not true in our country. It's not true in your neighborhood. It is not true in my neighborhood. Very few, comparatively speaking, really know the Lord. So that makes me, makes you responsible to make known to your neighbors and friends today

something of the glories of Christ and the provision He has made for them.

And then you have this wonderful statement, verse 12. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

What a wonderful truth. Allow me to read from chapter 10, again when God speaks of putting His laws into their hearts and their minds and remembering their sin and iniquities no more, not forever.

You know, in Zechariah chapter 13, the first verse, you have this wonderful truth that in the day when the Lord restores Israel as a nation to Himself in Jerusalem there will be a fountain open "for sin and for uncleanness." God's going to make provision with respect to their sins. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

You know, I was preaching on this one time here in my town. And after the meeting was over, a dear friend came to me and said, "You know, Mr. Mitchell, I don't think you're right. You made the statement that our sins and our iniquities will not be remembered no more, forever."

I said, "That's right."

Well," he said, "that can't be true. If I remember my sins, don't you think God will?"

I said, "Listen to what the Book says. You're talking from a finite view of things." And I said very frankly, "When you and I stand in the presence of God, no one can produce any evidence that I was ever a sinner. And today I can enjoy the very, very wonderful truth that God has not only forgiven us our sins and forgiven me my sins, but I'll never see them again, no more forever. As the Psalmist says in the 103rd Psalm, 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us'" (verse 12).

Did you ever stop to think, my friend, this is what Christ has done? "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son has cleansed us" (1 John 1:7). He not only forgives us, but He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. I wouldn't be able to come into the presence of God. I wouldn't even look forward to heaven. I wouldn't look forward to an

eternal glory with God, if I thought for one moment that my sins and my iniquities would be remembered.

My friend, this is good news that when you and I who trust the Savior come into the very presence of God, no one in heaven or earth or hell can produce any one of my sins; for the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son has cleansed us from all sin.

Isn't this what Jesus means in John 5:24, when He said, "He that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, into condemnation." Isn't this what Romans chapter 8 the first verse says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Oh, listen, friend, their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Ephesians 1:7 says, we have the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Ephesians 4:32 says that He has forgiven us every sin for Christ's sake. And if I were to follow along in 1 John chapter 2, verse 12, he writes unto the people of God and says, "My little children, you know, you know your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

Ah, listen, friend, our Savior on the throne has so dealt with the sin question, that when you and I who put our trust in the Savior stand in His presence, there can be no condemnation, no judgment.

See, the old covenant couldn't do this. It's not possible and when we come to chapter 10 of Hebrews, it's not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats can take away sin. Nothing in the Old Testament could do away with sin.

Now, it is true believers are going to be judged for their works with respect to rewards; but, when it comes to the question of sin and iniquity, the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son hath cleansed us from all sin. This is something the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices could never do. Hence, the very fact that God is bringing in a new covenant means, signifies, that the old is done away with. God is through with it. It has no more authority over us.

Now, revel in that today, will you please. The very fact that God is making a new covenant means the old cannot do the job right.

I am sure that in these days when there is so much confusion, it is a wonderful thing to come to the Word of God, which the Psalmist says is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalm 119:105). And to know that in this day of change, the Word of God is established forever. The Psalmist says, "Forever, oh Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

And then, because we go through this world and get tarnished, how glad we are again for what the Psalmist says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). And "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

If ever there was a time in the history of the Christian church in the last hundred years when we needed to expound the Word of God and know the Word of God and know the purpose of God, it is today.

One is amazed to see the lack of knowledge among God's people for the Word of God. Remember to read it and reread it and reread it. You can't read it too often or too much.

Read it slowly so you can be able to masticate something of the wonderful truths which God has put there for you and for me. Too many of us skim the Word of God when we come to read it. Hence we miss something of the beauty and the sweetness that we have in Christ Jesus.

Chapter Nine

Now, when you come to chapter 9 and run through into the middle of chapter 10, the writer begins to speak of the superiority of the work of Christ over all the sacrifices of the Old Testament tabernacle because His ministry and His work at the cross are far superior to anything that man has ever done.

Now I would like to be very brief on the first ten verses of the 9th chapter of Hebrews where we are dealing with the old sanctuary. We have in the first five verses of chapter 9 the furniture of the tabernacle. And then from verse 6 down through verse 10, we will find where this service is inadequate and the sacrifice is inadequate. Let's look at it for a few moments.

9:1. Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

9:2. For there was a tabernacle made; the first (which is called the holy place), wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.

9:3. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

9:4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

9:5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

We're talking about all in the holy place that speaks of the present ministry of Christ in types. For example, the candlestick speaks of the person of Christ. The Holy Spirit would be the unseen oil which kept the light burning. And you will notice the candlestick illuminates all in the holy place. There was no natural light seen there.

I'm reminded of that verse in 1 Corinthians 2:14, that says, speaking of the unsaved man, "But the natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” It is impossible to know spiritual things without the Holy Spirit. You have that in John chapter 16, verses 13-15, when our Lord said, “When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” He will take the things of mine and show them unto you. “He will show you things to come.”

You have it also in John 14:26, He will “bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” The Spirit of God is the teacher of God’s people. Indeed may I say that it is impossible for the human heart by reason to know the wonderful things of God.

The trouble today is that people have taken the philosophies and the reasonings of men and have accepted them in preference to the revelation God has given us. And when men spurn the revelation of God, as given to us in the person of our Savior through the Word of God, then, my friend, they’ll never know real spirituality.

You say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, you’re getting very, very narrow.”

Yes, that’s exactly what the Bible says. “Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction . . . narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life” (Matthew 7:13-14). So the Spirit of God, the Author of scripture, is the one who guides us and leads us into all truth.

The candlestick reveals the impossibility of seeing anything in the whole place apart from the light it sheds forth which speaks, of course, of the Spirit of God’s revealing to us the glories of Christ.

The second thing in the tabernacle was the table of showbread. Now, this was the place where you had the loaves of bread. And it’s the place where the priests ate together and had fellowship together. It was the center of communion and fellowship.

The table speaks of Christ in the act of maintaining His people. The bread, of course, speaks of Christ in the act of sustaining His people. You have it in John 6:48-51, when our Lord said, “I am that bread of life . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” You see, we have our Savior maintaining and sustaining His people.

The table was the center, I say, of communion and fellowship. You have the nourishment for the priests. You have harmony. And yet, the

bread must be personally appropriated, just as the Lord says, "I am the bread of life." Unless we appropriate that Bread and make Him our own, we will not enjoy fellowship and communion with the living God. Jesus Christ is our Nourisher, and He can take care of us day by day and can satisfy the very longings of our heart. And the Lord means that because perfect, eternal, continual satisfaction is found in only one place. It is found in Him. He is the one who can satisfy. No human mind can begin to delve into the depths and wonders of this little statement. "I am the bread of life." In other words, I am the only one who can really satisfy the human heart.

Now, the next thing you have is the veil in verse 3.

9:3. And after the second veil, that tabernacle which is called the holiest of all.

Now, the veil speaks of the humanity of Christ. We have this in Hebrews 10:5, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me," fitted for suffering. And in that same chapter in verses 19-20. We have "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."

Now, remember the veil was a barrier. It kept men out from the Holiest of all. It shut God in and shut man out. And when our Lord died on the cross, you remember, the veil in the temple was rent in twain, signifying there was no longer a barrier between men and God (Matthew 27:51).

You'll notice that the writer of Hebrews did not go back to the brazen altar. The brazen altar speaks of the work of our Savior on the cross to put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself. But he brings you into the holy place which speaks of Christ in His present ministry. Our Lord now is on the throne of grace. He's in heaven with an eternal, perfect, spiritual ministry. But the writer takes these Old Testament types to give us the truth of what they represent concerning our Savior.

And, as I said, the veil speaks of the humanity of Christ. If you were to go into the holy place in the light of the candlestick and gaze upon the veil, you would see that amazing piece of embroidery, the gold

and the blue and the purple. And this speaks of our Lord in His character as a man in the midst of men. In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 20, “The veil, that is to say, his flesh.” There was only one way of entrance into the holy place and that was by blood. And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin and makes it possible for us to come right into the very presence of God. He perfectly satisfied divine righteousness for those who put their trust in Him.

Someone has well said that Christianity is a religion of access. I use that word “religion” as a very broad term in a very broad sense. This is one thing that Christianity, the gospel, gives to us. We have access into the presence of God as Hebrews 11:6 says, “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.” Or, putting it in very simple language, faith says that God is accessible.

Yes. The veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Our Lord bore away our sin in His own body on the cross. And now, there's no barrier between God and men. You can come into the very presence of God on the ground of the shed blood of Christ. His sacrifice at the cross was sufficient in the sight of God to take you, my friend, right into the very presence of God to enjoy His fellowship.

This is the veil. His perfect life revealed our imperfections. His death brought us into the presence of God.

And now, we come to the ark in verse 4,

9:4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

9:5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

The ark speaks of the person of our Savior as both Man and God. It is made of acacia wood and covered inside and outside with gold. The gold speaks of His deity, the wood of His humanity. This is the place where God met with man in the days of Moses. He would meet in between the cherubim. The mercy-seat is where God was satisfied. Inside the ark of the covenant was the broken law of God. The people

had broken that law. But between the broken law and the eternal God was the mercy-seat with shed blood upon it.

I want you to see this.

This is where God met with Moses. This is the meeting place between God and man, the mercy-seat. Now, remember that verse in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." It is no longer a throne of judgment, but a throne of grace, a mercy-seat. The law says, "You must die." But God has provided a sacrifice to meet the demands of the law. He died. He took your place and my place, and now we have access into the presence of God at the mercy-seat.

And all we see here in the holiest of all is gold, the glory of the person of Christ. And isn't it wonderful that God has arranged a mercy-seat where man can meet with Him. And this gives us the aspect of God's work for us with respect to what the Savior has done for us.

Remember in Romans chapter 3:25 and 26, we read, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." I'd like to change that word. He set Him forth as a mercy-seat for us, "through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Isn't it—wonderful—that God has provided mercy? Are you catching the excitement, the joy that I feel about this? In Titus 3:5, we read, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." We go back to the Psalmist who says, "His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 106:1, 107:1, etc.) What a wonderful thing it is that God has arranged a mercy-seat. This is where we meet with God. The very holy, righteous character of God is satisfied with the work of His Son. As a result, He has changed the throne of judgment into a throne of grace.

Oh, listen, friends, our Savior has become our mercy-seat.

Now, inside the ark, there was the manna God had provided for them, which speaks of our Savior, the Living Bread. You remember in John chapter 6, Jesus answered the Jews when they said, "Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness."

“Yes,” He said, “your fathers ate manna but they are dead. But if you eat the bread that I’m going to give you, you’ll never die.” How wonderful this is that you and I can feast upon the Savior, the Living Bread from heaven.

Then you have Aaron’s rod that budded which speaks of the risen Christ, our life.

Just one more thing.

The cherubims of glory (verse 5) “shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly” speaks of God in His righteous character looking down over the mercy-seat.

Now we’ve come to verses 6-8, where we read that the service of the tabernacle was inadequate. What do we mean by that? It could not do the job it was meant to do. It could not perfect the people of God. Why? Because the priesthood was limited. It was restricted. It was imperfect. Let me read it to you.

9:6. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle (the holy place), accomplishing the service of God.

9:7. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

9:8. The Holy Spirit this signifying (or the Holy Spirit teaching us), that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

You see, the priest’s privilege was to come into the holy place. But he could go no farther. Only the high priest was allowed to go in, just once a year on the Day of Atonement. He went into the holiest place and sprinkled the mercy-seat and made an atonement for the sins of the people. He offered a sacrifice for himself because he was a sinner, and he offered a sacrifice for the people who also were sinners. Access into the holiest of all was restricted to just one man. And the Spirit of God teaches us that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. In other words, may I say that no one could come into the presence of God except the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. The

veil shut them out and shut God in. This shows the inadequacy of the Old Testament sacrifices to fit man for the presence of God.

And then, when you come to verses 9-10, notice that not only was the service inadequate, but the sacrifices offered were inadequate. I mean by that that they could not accomplish spiritual realities. For example,

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

9:10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (until the time when Jesus Christ would come).

You remember it says over in chapter 10 of Hebrews, it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats can take away sin (verse 4). These sacrifices could not cleanse the conscience. All the Old Testament sacrifices did was to cover, never take away. Even these priests, when they brought their sacrifices, still had a consciousness of sin. These sacrifices could not perfect the people of God.

We used to sing that song, "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away the stain." Or, we might sing the other chorus, "I need no other argument, I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me."

The writer of Hebrews is contrasting here the inadequacies not only of the Old Testament service but also of its sacrifice. All that the priest did, all the sacrifices they brought, could never take a sinner and fit him for the presence of God. These were things, as verse 10 says, that were "imposed on them." They were shadows, types, illustrations, pointing to the time when Christ would come and would fulfill every one of them.

For, you remember, here was a trespass offering, and here was a sin offering, and here was the peace offering, and here was the burnt offering. You go to Leviticus the first seven chapters, and you have

these four offerings. There were 5 offerings, but the meal offering had to do with respect to His life among men.

The trespass offering, the sin offering, the peace offering, the burnt offering were just shadows of the real. And, when our Savior came, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It was not possible, whatever man did, for the conscience to be cleansed from sin. We get this, of course, when we come to chapter 10. For example, if I might run ahead of myself here to chapter 10, the first three verses,

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

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

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

In fact, when a Jew wanted personal forgiveness, he came to the brazen altar. But for the nation on the Day of Atonement just one man had the right and the privilege to come into the holiest of all and that with the blood of a goat to sprinkle the mercy-seat and make an atonement for the sins of the people of Israel.

Oh, listen, friend, I'm so glad we're not dealing with shadows. How glad I am that the Lord Jesus Christ did come. His sacrifice has put away sin and cleansed the conscience.

Do you know of anything that men can do that can cleanse their conscience from sin? You remember in 8:12, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever." Every time a Jew brought a sacrifice, it was a remembrance of a sin he had committed because his conscience was not cleansed.

But my friend, when you and I accept the Savior, He cleanses our conscience. That's why we have peace with God. If our conscience were not cleansed from sin, we couldn't have peace with God. We would have no hope of coming into the presence of God acceptable. We wouldn't have eternal life. We would have nothing. Oh, how glad I am that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He died on the cross, did a perfect job.

And He did it for you. He did it for me. So that when we come to the next division in verses 11-14, we find that His ministry was far superior to the ministry we find in the Old Testament. His sacrifice was far superior to the sacrifice of the Old.

Notice that the writer is going over and over and over this again because it was very difficult for the Jews to really believe that the ordinances which God had given them could not do the job. In chapter 7, the priests could not do it because they were imperfect. What was their job? To perfect God's people for fellowship. This they couldn't do.

Now our Lord has come and, what they could not do, He has done. And I want to glory in the good news, my friend, that when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior, we have every right to come into the very presence of the living God to fellowship and commune with Him. We can communicate with Him, and He will communicate with us in His precious Word by the Spirit.

Is not this an amazing thing? It's a wonderful thing, a startling thing, that you and I, born in sin, we who have sinned all our lifetime—it seems to be the very natural thing to do is to sin—and yet, and yet, by faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son we have the right, the confidence to come within the veil into the very presence of a sovereign, eternal God and commune with Him.

Shame on us! We come so rarely into the very presence of God and spend time with him. We get our lives so cluttered up with what we think are important things that have got to be done. Yes, I know. I'm very well acquainted with that. We think they have to be done. But nothing is more important to do than to commune with God.

You know, friend, we always have time to do the thing we want to do. Now you think about that. Isn't it true? We can always find time. We can always work it out to do the thing we want to do. Do you want to come into His presence? Do you want to rejoice in the Savior who has broken down the barrier between you and God? Do you want to enjoy Him for Himself?

Oh, listen, Christian friend, spend some time today with Him. There's nothing between you and the Savior so enjoy Him today.

Which brings us to verses 11-14 of chapter 9. And we find that our Savior in His ministry is so superior to the old. Remember His ministry is a spiritual one; the old, the Levitical, was a temporary one. The new is eternal and spiritual after the order of Melchisedec. Now, let me read verses 11-14 of Hebrews chapter 9.

9:11. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

9:12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

9:13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

9:14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Now, you notice in verse 11 our Savior is a better High Priest. And, because He's a better High Priest, His ministry is superior. He is High Priest "of a greater and more perfect tabernacle," not temporal but eternal, not made with hands but that which is eternal in heaven. As we had in chapter 8, you remember, His priesthood started in heaven after He had finished the work on the cross. Now He's on the throne.

So let us come to verse 12 of this chapter, an amazing verse,

9:12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Now may I suggest that "blood" in scripture always includes a death suffered and a life offered. When you speak of the fact that our Lord's blood was shed to cleanse us from sin, you're speaking of the fact that He suffered a terrible death. He was crucified. But He offered His life for us that we might not die. His was a voluntary sacrifice. And on the ground of the shed blood of Christ, because He poured out His life as a sacrifice for us, we have access now into the presence of God within the holiest of all.

Indeed I would suggest that the blood here expresses the complete obedience of Christ unto death. You remember the book of Philippians chapter 2, the 8th verse, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He was faithful unto death. He poured out His life for you and for me. We were the ones who had sinned. We were the ones who should have died. We were under the curse of a broken law. We were the ones who should have been cast out. Instead of that, our wonderful Savior came and died our death. He suffered what we should have suffered. He poured out His life for you and for me.

Faith declares that God is accessible. Is it not a wonderful thing, then, that you and I who have sinned, who have rebelled against God, we have wanted our own way, we've lived in self-will can now come through the precious work of Christ and come into the very presence of God? He doesn't have to die again, does He?

There are those who would keep Christ on the cross continually. There are well-meaning evangelicals who would like to keep Christ on the cross. They've never gone beyond the cross. I am not limiting or underestimating the tremendous work of Christ which He did on the cross. But, my friend, He's no longer on the cross. He was buried. He was raised again from the dead as a personal proof to you from God that Christ's work on the cross need never to be repeated.

As Romans chapter 6 says, "In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (verse 10). Or Hebrews 1:3, "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 10:12, "This man by one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." In Hebrews 9:26, "He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He was manifested to take away our sins, once for all, for ever.

May I plead with you Christians today, please remember, our Savior just needed to die once. It's not your value of the blood of Christ that counts. It's God's value. It is not what you see. It's what God sees.

My friend, listen, the value of the work of Christ is what it does toward God. When Christ died on the cross, He not only put away your

sins, but He satisfied the righteous character of God for you and for me. It's the value God placed on the blood of His Son.

9:13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

9:14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God . . .

I repeat it, if a Jew in the Old Testament put such a value on the blood of goats and of heifers, what do you think is the value of the blood of Christ? I repeat it, my friend. It's not what you see; it is what God sees.

In Exodus chapter 12, God said to Moses, "You'll take the blood of the lamb and you'll sprinkle these side-posts and the lintel of the door. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you." The judgment that fell upon Egypt did not fall upon Israel. Why? Because it was a value that God had placed upon the blood of the lamb. If God could see that in typology, then, friend, let us not dishonor the Lord by keeping the Lord on the cross. He finished the work on the cross. He perfectly satisfied God. And I read here in this 12th verse, He "obtained eternal redemption for us."

The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee that He did exactly that thing. This is why we talk about a perfect Savior, a real Savior, an eternal Savior, a sure Savior. Christian friend, revel in Him today, won't you? And thank God He did a perfect work for you at the cross. And because He died, you will never die.

Now in verse 12 we have where our Lord's sacrifice was a much better sacrifice than any that was ever offered in the Old Testament.

9:12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

9:13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

9:14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Again, His sacrifice was just once for all. It is never to be repeated. It is in contrast to the Old Testament sacrifices that were repeated continually. And He entered once into the holy place. The barrier has been removed between God and man. As Paul could say in 1 Timothy 2:5, there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, the Man who suffered to put away sin, the Man who removed the barrier between God and man.

It has been said that a yoke of oxen pulling on one side and a yoke of oxen on the other side, pulling in opposite directions could not rend the veil. In one split second, God rent the veil when Christ finished the work. There was no longer a barrier between God and men. It signified that the work of Christ perfectly satisfied God for you and for me.

Mark what it says in verse 12, he “obtained eternal redemption for us.” He bought for you and me an eternal redemption. In the book of Galatians there’s a word called *exagorazo* which means to purchase out of the market, never again to be for sale. It means to redeem for the purpose of setting free.

Another word, used quite commonly in the New Testament for the word redemption, is the word *lutroo* which means to set free, to emancipate because the price has been paid. So you have here, “He purchased for us an eternal redemption.” Remember that He bought you and me for Himself. In Romans 3:24, we read, “Being justified (being declared righteous) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Redemption had to do with sin, justification has to do with righteousness, propitiation has to do with God, reconciliation has to do with the world. These are different aspects of the work of Christ and their relationship. Redemption has to do with sin. And when the Lord redeemed you, He bought you for Himself.

In the book of Acts chapter 20, verse 28, I read where Paul said to the Ephesian believers on the shore at Miletus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

That word is another word. It means to buy something for yourself. You know what I mean by that. You can buy something for somebody else and they may not like it. But when you buy something for yourself, you certainly know what you want, you know how much you're going to pay for it, and you obtain what you purchase. It's yours. Now God looked upon you and me; and He paid a terrific price, the life and death of His Son.

What for? Because He loved you and He bought you for Himself. And by the way, may I remind you that God will take care of His own possessions. That's why the Spirit of God indwells every believer. The moment a person accepts the Savior, he/she is not only redeemed and forgiven, but the Spirit of God comes into the one who has been redeemed and guarantees the eternal redemption of that believer. Oh, may we never dishonor the work of Christ.

You know, I find some Christians who do not put enough value on the blood of Christ any more than the Jews did on the blood of a bull or a goat or a sheep. But Revelation 1:5 speaks of the One who has "loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." In Revelation 5:9 the multitude of saints in heaven are singing, For thou "hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

The value of the blood of Christ is that it redeems us from sin for all eternity. He obtained for us an eternal redemption. It's never to be repeated. I want this clear in your minds. Christ died once for our sins. He redeemed us once. It's an eternal redemption. It is never to be repeated. I repeat it again. What a wonderful Savior. What a marvelous Lord we have. Don't you think we ought to worship Him, trust Him and love Him?

9:12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

9:13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

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

from dead works to serve the living God?

We've been dealing with the sacrifice of Christ in verse 12, how that His sacrifice was once for all for ever. It is never to be repeated. And that's why he entered into the holy place. He bought you and me with an eternal redemption, with an eternal loosing. He redeemed us from all iniquity. He redeemed us from the law. He redeemed us from the curse of the law. He redeemed us from this present evil world. And allow me to use those scriptures again: Titus 2:14, "that he might redeem us out of all iniquity;" Galatians 4:5, "to redeem them that were under the law;" Galatians 3:13, He "redeemed us from the curse of the law;" and Galatians 1:4 He redeemed us "from this present evil world." Notice in verses 9:13-14 here He guarantees this.

Sometime sit down and read the book of Romans chapter 5, the first eleven verses, where we have those other "much mores." Take, for example, verse 9 of that chapter, "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Verse 10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If God loved me enough to reconcile me to Himself when I was His enemy on the ground of the blood of Christ, don't you think He'll keep me reconciled now I'm His child? Much more, much more, much more. Someone has well said, "We are in the much more care of God."

Now, notice in verse 14, He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God. In 1 Peter 1:19-20, we also find mention of the eternal Son of God who offered Himself "without spot" to die for you and me. Remember this, will you, please. He through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. What for? To purge your conscience from dead works. The sacrifices of men could not do this. How much more shall the blood of Christ, the eternal Son of God, purge your conscience from dead works.

May I suggest this to you for your thinking? Our Lord, when he offered Himself without spot to God, did three things. In that one act He put away your sin. In that one act, He freed you from the law and its curse. In that one act He freed you from dead works. Anything and

everything that man has tried to do has failed. And these three things cover the whole business.

Man was an absolute, complete failure. He couldn't save himself. He couldn't do anything to save himself. So God the Son, back in eternity, offered Himself to the eternal Spirit to become a sacrifice to put away your sins, purge your conscience, to fit you for the presence of God. He did a perfect work. And in that perfect work, He put away our sins for all eternity. So, we could say with Paul in Romans 8:1 that there is therefore now no judgment, no condemnation, for those who are in Christ Jesus.

You'll pardon me if I dwell on this for a wee bit, won't you?

When you think that the Lord Jesus through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, when you remember that it was back in eternity that the Father and the Son purposed not only the creating of a human race but the redemption of a human race and the redemption of sinners, don't you just marvel?

And all through the Old Testament history, we have where God in type and shadow revealed the fact that He was looking forward to the time when He Himself would make the provision for sinners to be purged from sin, to be no longer guilty sinners but saints of God, no longer children of wrath but children of God, no longer under the sentence of an eternal death but having eternal life in Christ, no longer afar off but made nigh, no longer cast out but taken in.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ" in verse 14? Oh, Christian friend, it's not your value or any man's value of the work of Christ. It is the blood of Christ that satisfies. It's the tremendous value that God has placed on what Christ did at the cross.

And then we have the rest of the verse:

9:14. Purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He poured out His life. As Hebrews 2:9 says that He tasted death for you and me. Here we have it in the verse, "He through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God."

What for?

To purge you, to cleanse you, to free you from sin, from this present evil world. And in this verse, it is to purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. In fact, I will say this to you, my friends, very bluntly, you cannot serve God if your conscience has not been purged, cleansed from dead works.

“Dead works? What do you mean by that?” you ask.

Dead works are good works, religious works that men do to merit favor with God. Here's a man who becomes very, very religious. And he's hoping that by his very religious acts, by his ordinances, by the very things that he does, he's going to merit favor with God. That's dead works.

Another man says, “Well, I'll take my good works and I'll contrast them with my evil works, my sinful works, my bad works; and, if I've got more good works than bad works, then God will take me in.”

My friend, you know what dead works are—works that men do to merit salvation or to try to find merit with God. Dead works. Now, I didn't say that, God says this. Dead works.

When Christ died on the cross, He not only died to put away your sins, but He died to cleanse the conscience, not only from sin, but from dead works, the very things you're trusting in.

“Do you mean to tell me that God won't accept things that I've done?”

That's correct, absolutely correct. The only man, the only woman that God will accept are those who are in Christ Jesus, who've accepted God's way of redemption.

You remember in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, listen to it, “Don't you know,” says the writer, “that your body is the sanctuary of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, you've been redeemed, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Isn't it wonderful? That the precious blood of Christ cleanses the conscience. We are no longer sinners. He removes all the guilt from our conscience. We have peace with God. He removes dead works—this covers up the whole business—in order that I might live unto God. My

friend, Jesus Christ did a perfect, perfect, eternal, complete sacrifice; and God raised Him from the dead to tell you, to confirm to you that He was absolutely well-pleased with the work of His Son.

Friend, today, believer in Christ, why not turn every moment over to Him. Let Him live His life through you. Stop your deadly struggling and struggling and struggling which gives you no peace, gives you no satisfaction. Let Him do it. Ah, peace of conscience, peace of heart. This is what God wants you to enjoy.

But too many believers are staying in the outer court of the brazen altar and have never come within the veil or, should I say, within the holiest of all and been occupied with the person of Christ, to be occupied with Him, to enjoy Him for Himself. Let us honor then the works of Christ by entering into His presence, into the very presence of God. What for? To worship Him? Yes. To thank Him? Yes. But, also, to serve Him.

Now when we come to verses 15-22, we have another division of this chapter where we read that His death confirms the covenant.

What we're dealing with from verses 15-22 is that the death of Christ confirms the covenant which He has made with His people. And you'll find this under three heads. His person gives efficacy to His work in verse 15, His sacrifice makes effective the testament or the covenant in verses 16 and 17, and then His sacrifice confirms the old covenant in verses 18-22.

9:15. And for this cause (that goes back to verse 14, because of who he is) he is the mediator of the new testament (covenant or agreement) 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.

You see, it was not only necessary for His death with respect to redemption, but also He had to die to fulfill the covenant in order that these who believed in the Old Testament might have an eternal inheritance. And His work is not only for us today, but for all in the past who believed the promises of God.

You remember Romans 3:25 where we read, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” In other words, in your Old Testament, they looked forward to the one who should come. It was not possible under the old system, under the Mosaic economy for the conscience to be purged from dead works or the conscience to be purged from sin. So, the old covenant couldn't do very much for them. But they believed God.

So, our Savior not only had to die for their redemption, but He had to die to confirm to fulfill the covenant in order that these whom He had called in the Old Testament might receive an eternal inheritance. There could not be an eternal inheritance until sins were put away, for you remember in the Old Testament, sins were just covered. On the Day of Atonement they were covered for a year. But now, Jesus Christ through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God and put away sin for all eternity. Our Lord did not cover sins for a year, or for twenty years, or for 100 years. He put away our sins for all eternity. Which brings us, of course, to verses 16 and 17, where we read that His sacrifice makes effective the covenant. In other words, His death was necessary.

9:16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

9:17. For a testament (or a will, or a covenant), is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

You make a will, you sign and seal it, but it's of no value until the testator dies. If I make a will concerning what little I have in the earth, it's of no good to anybody until I die. So that, when I die, then the covenant or the will is administered and it's valuable. You have that here. His death was necessary, as it is true of any will or testament. That's why I say the sacrifice of Christ makes effective the covenant.

And then, you notice in verses 18-22, not only did His sacrifice make effective the covenant, but it also confirmed the covenant. I read,

9:18. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without

blood (that's the Old Testament, that's the Mosaic economy).

9:19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

9:20. Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

9:21. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of ministry.

9:22. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Now, you'll notice in the passage, under the old covenant, the Mosaic covenant, God's will was not inaugurated without blood. Everything needed to be cleansed. And this is the principle right through the Bible, that without shedding of blood, without sacrifice there is no forgiveness, there is no remission of sin. I repeat it, this is true all through your Bible from Genesis to Revelation. God has ordained that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. There is no forgiveness.

In the book of Galatians chapter 2, verse 21, the Apostle Paul said, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness (or if salvation) come by the law (were by works), then Christ is dead in vain." I'm dealing with a very important thing.

Now, we're going to see this from here right on down through into chapter 10, where he takes up this question of the completeness of His work, verses 23-28. And I want to read those verses. And there are three amazing things. As I read it, you watch the three appearances of Christ in these verses.

9:23. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

9:24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but (He has entered) into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

9:25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest

entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

9:26. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world (age) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

9:27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

9:28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Now here we're dealing with the completeness of the work of Jesus Christ. And having read those verses, I would like to read to you a verse from the book of Romans chapter 8. It's verse 34. Listen to this verse. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Here we're going to be dealing with the completeness of Christ's work. It was necessary for the pattern to be cleansed by blood, that is, these Old Testament sacrifices and the ordinances of the Old Testament, the tabernacle and so on. And if they had to be cleansed by blood, even the heavenly things must also be cleansed by better sacrifices than that of the Old Testament. And this, of course, is what you have in the New Testament. Our Savior's sacrifice is so far superior to the Old Testament, but He had to do it so that the heavenly things might be cleansed.

You take for example Colossians 1:20-21, "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable" and so on.

The very heavens must be purged on the ground of the blood of Christ.

In Philippians chapter 2 and verses 9-11, again you have it. Our Lord in verse 8 was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth (in hell); and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

I want you to see the value that God has placed upon the blood of His Son, that the whole universe has to be cleansed on the ground of His sacrifice. Not the blood of bulls and of goats. That's not sufficient. That couldn't do the job, not even here on earth. But our Lord's sacrifice—is—sufficient. And for this reason: He has entered into heaven Himself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. He's not doing something in us. He is doing something for us today.

Where is He? He's at the right hand of God as our High Priest. Now, I'm reading verse 24 of Hebrews 9, the last half of the verse. Jesus Christ has entered . . .

9:24b. into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

How? As our representative. You remember in the first verse of chapter 8 we read,

8:1. We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This is where He is. What do you think He's doing? He's representing us.

Isn't that a wonderful, wonderful truth, that Jesus Christ—the holy, righteous, risen, glorified Son of God—is in the presence of His Father representing us? Don't you think He'll do a good job, my friend? He's our High Priest. He's now appearing in the presence of God for us.

Did you ever stop to think of what we've just had? In chapter 6 we had He's now our anchor, He's our refuge, He's our forerunner, He's our hope. In chapter 7:25, He's our intercessor, and here He is our representative. Oh, the marvelous provision that God has made for His people.

Again I suggest to you that God is not doing anything on the ground of chance. The eternal, sovereign God planned this salvation and willed that Christ should come. He came in subjection to His Father's

will, to fulfill that purpose, making it possible for God to pick up hopeless, helpless hell-deserving sinners and to transform us into His children. And now, He takes care of us. He represents us. He's praying for us. He's our anchor, our refuge, our hope, our forerunner. Oh, I tell you, friends, what a Savior He is.

Think of Him as representing you. My, you needn't have any worries, my friend. You should have perfect peace. Jesus, the Holy, righteous Son of God, represents you before the Father. You see every time God looks at you, He sees you in His Son Jesus Christ who is your living representative. And believe me, my friend, when I think of it, it gives me peace of heart—not only peace of conscience through what He did on the cross, but peace of heart. Having purchased us, He's going to care for us.

In fact, if I were to give you a psalm that would fit with that 24th verse I would give you the 23rd Psalm, where He's our good shepherd caring for us. So we can say, "The Lord is my shepherd—my shepherd—I shall not want." What's He doing? He's representing you and me before the Father.

Believer in Christ, why don't you revel in that today, that your Savior never falls asleep, never gets tired. He always represents you.

But you say, "I'm so frail."

All the more reason for the Son of God to represent you. And this is what He's doing today. He's representing everyone of His children before His Father. As Paul could say in Ephesians 1:6, "We are accepted in the beloved." Think of it. We are covered with all the righteousness and beauty and sweetness of the Son of God Himself.

My friend, I repeat it again. What a Savior He is!

Now in verses 25 and 26 He goes back to what He has accomplished at the cross and I read:

9:25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

9:26. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

And this would be comparable to the 22nd Psalm. Now, if verse 24 is Christ as the great shepherd caring for us, then these two verses, 25 and 26, would be the 22nd Psalm, our Lord giving Himself for us. You remember how that Psalm starts, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And this, of course, is our Savior giving His life for the sheep, as you have it in John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

In John chapter 17, verse 4, He could say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” In John chapter 19, verse 30, we read, “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (yielded up the Spirit).”

His was a sacrifice never to be repeated. It was once for all forever. He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin.

Now, when did He appear? At the end of the age. In Romans 5:6, I read, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” In Galatians 4:4-5, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made (born) of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Through His work at the cross, He satisfied every demand of the law. In Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3, you remember, we read, “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 at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Our Savior finished the work at the cross. In 1 Peter 1:18-21, we were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, according to the vain tradition of your fathers, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

When did He appear? At the end of the age.

Why did He come? He came first of all to fulfill the promises made to the fathers.

You'll find this in Romans 15, verse 8. He became a man in the midst of men "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."

In Matthew 26 in the Garden of Gethsemane and in Luke 22:42, He cried out, "Not my will, but thine be done." Do you remember those words in Matthew 26:39? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Notice how reluctant the Holy Spirit is to bare all that took place in those holy moments. More than one gospel says only that He went a third time and repeated those words

Why did He have to come? To meet all the demands of a broken law. You find this in Galatians chapter three. Our Lord was made an accursed thing to redeem those who were under the law. He delivered us from the curse of the law.

And then, of course, He came to put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself. You remember in 1 John 3:5, we read, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." In John 1:29, John the Baptist could cry out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In Hebrews 10:12 the writer says, "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on (at) the right hand of God."

And, you know, I can't help but give you that little wee verse in Luke chapter 19:10, when Jesus says, "For the Son of Man is come."

Oh, how glad I am that He came!

What for? "To seek and to save that which was lost." Oh, aren't you glad Jesus did come? He appeared once at the end of the age.

What for? To seek sinners.

What for? To put away their sins.

What for? To save them from the broken law?

What for? To confirm the promises made to the fathers.

Why did He come? Because He loved you. As Romans 5:8 says, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

My friend, He had to come. How else could men be redeemed? How else could you and I be saved, if it were not for the fact that He appeared as the Man in the midst of men? Not only for the revelation of

the Father to us, as you have it in John 1:18; but He came, my friend, to put away every sin, every barrier, between us and God.

Oh, how I say again, how glad I am that He came. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Now I know I am repeating and repeating certain aspects of the work of Christ. I do want to get them firmly into your mind and heart. But I also want to equip you with content you can use in personal evangelism as you deal with the unsaved.

He came to save. He came to seek and to save us all who were lost in sin. He wasn't lost; we were lost. And He, obeying the Father's will, being in subjection to that will of His Father, came and not only died for our sins, but He died for each one of us personally so that you and I can go free—not only pardoned, not only forgiven, but, my friend, we became new men and new women in Christ. That's what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, in this risen Christ, he's a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

Say, aren't you glad He came? Aren't you glad the Son of Man came?

Oh, believer, why not love Him with all that's in you? And why not seek to please Him today in the midst of a world that's gone wrong? Why don't you and I seek to please the Lord in the midst of this world? Let us show to the world that we have a Savior who not only loves us, but died to redeem us. And may the Lord make it real to you and real to me today.

Now, we come to the last thing in the chapter, His future work for us. He's going to return to reign as the Chief Shepherd in the 24th Psalm where it says, "Be ye lift up (Open up), ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Or 1 Peter 5:4, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

May I repeat that now? Can we get it straight? In 9:26, He's the great Shepherd who is caring for us. And then in the 28th verse, He is the chief Shepherd who is coming for us. The marvelous work of our Savior is three-fold.

Now, in verses 27 and 28.

9:27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;

9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Now death is certain for all.

The moment a child is born into this world, it is born with the seeds of death in it. And death plays no favorites, whether old or young, whether rich or poor, whether wise or ignorant, whatever your color might be. Whoever you are, wherever you are, death is certain.

And then what? It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment. After death, you must stand in the presence of God. Forgiven sin is forgotten sin. God will not condemn you for sin for which you have asked forgiveness. Believers will stand before God in all the righteousness and beauty of Christ. John 5:24 records what the Lord Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (into judgment); but is passed from death unto life."

Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Friend, isn't it wonderful that as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12). Is not it wonderful that He has forgiven us every trespass, every sin. Hence we stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ. This is a marvelous thing to think of, that those who put their trust in the Savior can come right into the very presence of God, acceptable with perfect peace, perfect rest, even with delight.

May I remind you with scripture? Look at Revelation 6:15 where the rich men, every bond man, every captain, general, king, whatever the position may be will cry for the rocks and the mountains to hide them from the face of Him that cometh in His glory "for the great day of His wrath (the wrath of the Lamb) is come, and who shall be able to stand."

That's going to be a great prayer meeting, I tell you. When the people on earth will cry for the rocks to hide them deep from the

presence of the Savior whom they have scorned, whom they have rejected, whom they have ridiculed.

Did you ever think of it? I tremble for my generation—the sarcasm, the indifference, the rejection, the arrogance, the unbelief of man. And in that day, when the Lamb of God comes as a Judge, they will cry for the rocks and the mountains to hide them from the face of Him. Who? The Lamb of God who came to seek and to save the lost. But, having spurned the Savior, there's nothing left but judgment.

I say, how glad I am I'm living in a day when people can hear the good news. It is appointed unto men once to die. For the Christian he goes right into the presence of God, acceptable. As Paul could say, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Philippians 1:23) for absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). This is anticipation.

And Christian friend, why not fall in love with your Savior today? And may He manifest through you not only His mercy, but His joy, His peace, His satisfaction.

Now, when we come to the last verse we have this amazing thing. "So Christ was once offered." How often in this book does the writer speak of the fact that Christ died just once, and that His "once work" on the cross is sufficient not only to satisfy God, but to take hell-deserving citizens and fashion them and fit them for the presence of God through eternity. "So, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;"

In the last verse, it also says,

9:26. And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin apart from sin unto salvation.

Our Lord is not going to return to the earth to complete a sacrifice. He finished the job. My friend, listen, when our Lord comes back to the earth, it's going to be apart from sin.

Now, I'd like to spend a moment here, and I want to tell you this. You may disagree with me, but that's to be expected once in awhile, you know.

Personally, I do not believe that he's dealing here with the translation, the rapture of the church of Christ. For example, the Lord is

not coming for those who just look for Him. If the rapture of the church is dependent on those who look for Him, I wonder how many would go up in the translation?

Nor does it speak of the fact that it's a partial rapture. There are folk who believe that only those who are looking for Him, those who are overcomers, those who live a certain kind of life, will go up when the Lord comes. They believe the rest of the church will be left on the earth to go through the tribulation.

The writer of Hebrews does not even have that in mind. Remember He's writing to the Hebrew Christians. When the Messiah came the first time, He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. When He comes the next time, He's going to come for the deliverance of Israel. "And unto them that look for Him, shall He appear." They will see Him with the eye.

You remember, Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

The prophet Zechariah wrote in chapter 12, the 10th verse, "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." This is to see with their eyes.

When He comes for the Church, we will go up to meet Him in the air. As 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "And the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The world will not see this. All they will know is when the Church is gone.

They are going to say as they did in Enoch's day, "Some of our friends have disappeared. We can't find them."

We're going to be translated in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye according to 1 Corinthians 15:52.

But Revelation 1:7 says, when He appears, they're going to see Him with the eye. Who will see Him with the eye? The remnant of Israel. Every eye in Israel will see Him. People have ridiculed this verse for years, thinking it refers to everyone on earth at the time, even those in the opposite hemisphere. They have said that Christ cannot be seen at

the same time from both sides of the world. Of course He cannot. Every eye—in Israel—will see Him.

At the end of the tribulation period when Israel has been purged of her rebels and the nation is in repentance, this will be the godly remnant. Their only hope is up. They are going to be surrounded by their enemies.

Today, there are enemies of Israel who would like to liquidate the whole nation. My friend, there's a time coming when poor Israel is going to be under the chastening hand of God. Only the godly remnant will be left. The rebels will be purged out. You find this in Ezekiel 20 and in Zechariah 13. And they will be looking up. There's no hope looking out. The nations are opposed to them. Their only hope is from heaven. And they are going to see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, not with respect to sin but to deliver them from their enemies.

Do you remember Matthew 1 says, "And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save His people from their sins" (verse 21). When He comes the next time, He's going to save His people from their enemies, because they're going to be surrounded. And He's going to come without sin to certain ones.

You remember the last word when our Lord left the earth in Acts chapter 1 and they saw the Lord Jesus going up into heaven. And the angel said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (verse 11). And in Daniel chapter 7, He's going to come in "the clouds of heaven" (verse 13).

Our Lord said to the high priest in Matthew chapter 26, "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (verse 64). This was why they crucified Him because He declared He was the one who was the fulfiller of Daniel chapter 7.

But here it is.

9:28. 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.

He came the first time—I want this thing very, very clearly in your mind—to deliver His people from their sins. As He comes the next time, He's going to deliver them from their enemies.

For us, who love the Savior today individually, we're waiting for the coming of the Lord. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trump is going to sound. The dead in Christ are going to be raised, and we who are alive and remain are going to be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. This is the hope of the Church. And the hope of Israel is the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven to the earth to deliver them from their enemies.

Now, I have the whole Bible before me when I read, when I think of this. The only hope for Israel is not from any of the nations of the earth. The only hope for the nation of Israel is the coming of the Lord Jesus as their Messiah from heaven. And this I believe is what he's talking about here. For us, we're waiting for the Lord in translation. For Israel, they're waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

When I talked to a Jew in Israel, I said to him, "Are you waiting for the coming of your Messiah? Do you believe in this?"

He said, "Of course, I'm waiting for Him. That's why I came to Israel. He's going to come back to Israel."

Believer in Christ, live today in anticipation of seeing Him whom having not seen, we love (1 Peter 1:8). And may your day be full of joy and blessing for His name's sake.

Chapter Ten

We have been dealing with the greatness of our Lord's sacrifice from chapter 9:15 through chapter 10, verse 18. The main division of this portion is the superiority of the sacrifice of Christ over all Old Testament sacrifices.

When we come to chapter 10, we're dealing with two things especially in the first few verses. First of all, the fact that the Old Testament sacrifices were very ineffective. They couldn't do the job that God wanted to do. So Christ fulfilled that blessed work of putting away sin for time and for eternity. The law was only a shadow. The law made nothing perfect. The law could not perfect anybody for the presence of God nor could the sacrifices of the Old Testament.

So we find in these first four verses that the apostle gathers up all that is given to us in the preceding chapters concerning the work of Christ and boils it down. Now, let's look at it for a moment.

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

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

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

10:4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Here you have three things manifested concerning the Old Testament sacrifices. The law made nothing perfect in that the sacrifices of the Old Testament could not take away sin. Well, what could they do? First of all we read the Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated. In verse one, they can never with those sacrifices which they offered every year, year after year after year, none of them could make the comers

thereunto perfect. They had to be repeated. Why? Because there was no remission of sins. These sacrifices were temporary. They were not sufficient because they could not remove doubt or fear. The high priest came and offered on the Day of Atonement a sacrifice for the whole nation of Israel, for all their sins every year. For a person to have individual forgiveness, he had to bring his sacrifice every day. Every day!

Now, remember in the preceding chapter, and we will repeat this, our Lord's sacrifice was once for all for ever. Old Testament sacrifices had to be done over and over and over and over again. And I say this very sadly, that we have Christians who put the same value on the blood of Christ, on the sacrifice of Christ, as if Christ had to stay on the cross continually for our sins. He died once. He died once! It was a perfect sacrifice never to be repeated.

Now, the second thing about it is in verse two. The Old Testament sacrifices could never cleanse from sin. Listen to it. "Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." If their conscience had been cleansed from sin, there would have been no need for the sacrifice. But the very fact that they came with their sacrifices over and over and over and over again was because their consciences were not purged from sin. You see, it was impossible. They still had a conscience of sin. They were still guilty.

For example in Exodus 34:7, God says, I'll forgive your sins. I'll pass over your iniquity, but I "will by no means clear the guilty." They were still guilty sinners. Though forgiven, they were still guilty in their conscience.

You see, forgiveness in the New Testament carries with it the obliteration from the memory of God, who said, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7). It was not possible for the blood of a bull or a goat to take away your sin. Christ died. He poured out His soul unto death. What a contrast.

And then the third thing is in verses three and four,

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

10:4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The Old Testament sacrifices were a remembrance of sin, not a removal of sin. A remembrance means an awakening of the mind. But the Jew remembered his sin every time he offered a sacrifice. My, what a contrast, what a contrast. No wonder Jesus said to the Jews of His day, and it comes right down to us today, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). There cannot be any rest if our consciences are not purged from sin. It was impossible for the Old Testament sacrifices ever to do a thing like that. That's why they were offered over and over and over again.

May I run to verse 12, "But this man, this man (Jesus Christ), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." Look back at Hebrews 1:3, "When He had by himself purged our sins." Isn't it a wonderful thing that we have a Savior who can put away our sins?

Notice the next verses.

10:5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

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

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.

10:8. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law.

My friend, we've come to a very, very remarkable portion of scripture. You remember this is a quotation from the 40th Psalm, verses 6-8. Let me take this 5th verse of Hebrews chapter 10 and compare it with the 40th Psalm, just to show you how the Spirit of God begins to interpret what is read in the 40th Psalm and what we have now in the New Testament.

10:5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

Now, when I come into the 40th Psalm, I read these words,

40:6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

40:7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

40:8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

You will notice He says “Mine ears hast thou opened;” whereas in Hebrews 10:5 He says, “For a body hast thou prepared me.”

And one thinks especially of the 21st chapter of Exodus, the first six verses, you remember, where if a man had a bond servant and the Sabbatical year came, he was to set his servant free.

But if his servant loved his master, loved his own wife and loved his own children, he could say to his master, “I’m not going to go out. I love my master. I’m not going to take my freedom. I’m going to stay because of my love for my master and my family.”

Then I read that the master took the servant to the door-post and nailed him to the post of the house so that, wherever that servant went, he carried in his ear the mark of love-service. He was a love-slave. When he went down to the market to do the shopping for the family, actually everywhere he went, there was the mark on his body of his love for his master.

Did you ever stop to think of our Savior? Our Savior went to the cross. And because of His love for you and for me, he still carries the marks of His love. “Behold my hands and my feet.”

Remember after the resurrection He could say to the disciples, “It is I, myself. Feel me and handle me. Look at my hands. Behold the holes in my hands. Behold the holes in my feet, and the hole in my side.” And He said to Thomas, “Be not faithless, but believing.” Quoting John chapter 20, verse 27.

When you and I get to glory, what are we going to see? We're going to see One who is our Savior, bearing in His hands the mark of the nail-prints, the marks of His love for you and for me. Oh, friend, think about it, will you? Meditate on it. He was obedient to His Father's will. The very source of His sacrifice was His Father's will. His ear was not dull.

Oh, the tragedy with respect to you and me. Our ears are dull to what the Father wants us to do. We're so occupied with our own way, doing what we want to do. We've missed so much of what the Father wants us to do.

My friend, and I say this very tenderly and kindly to you, and I speak to my own heart as one who loves the Savior. Do you not think it's time that each one of us got down to the place where the will of our Father is the most important thing in our lives rather than what we want? Can't we follow our Savior in this when He said, "I do always the things that please Him." He also said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me" (John 4:34). "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). "Father . . . not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Oh, that this might be the greatest thing in our life, to be sure that you and I are walking in the will of our Father. Nothing else matters, really. Nothing else matters.

You say, "Brother Mitchell, we ought to give more time to certain things."

Well, my friend, if you do it out of the will of God, it's nothing else but a matter of flesh. It may be good flesh. It may be religious flesh. The important thing is to be in the will of your Father. And may I add this that, when you walk in the will of your Father, you'll manifest more compassion and more love and more tenderness for others than you do now.

Read the four gospels. Read the life of our Savior. He saw a leper. He had compassion on him. He saw the hungry. He had compassion on them, and He fed them. He saw people crying because of death. He had compassion on them and raised the dead.

Oh, listen, friend. Do you not think it would be wonderful for you and for me (and by the way, I'm just speaking to Mitchell more than I am to you), it's about time we knew something of the reality of the life in Christ where the compassion and the tenderness and the love of Christ will be evident in us. Take the time to plead with God for the unsaved, to plead with God for falling and failing Christians. And instead of being critical, be loving. You can talk about His sacrifice, but the source of it all is that He did it because He loved His Father and it was His Father's will. His ear was always open to what His Father wanted to do. Now, let's go on.

In verses 8 and 9, we have His obedience to that will. And someone has said this is the character of His sacrifice, obedience to the will of His Father.

10:8. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

10:9. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first (that is, that which is run under the Mosaic economy), that he may establish the second.

May I just stop here. Obedience to the will of His Father was the very essence, the very character of His sacrifice. The former offerings were done away so that the second might be established as being the only way to God. And again I say in John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And when God raised His Son from the dead, He was telling the world, the whole world, the religious world, the sinful world, that He would accept no other sacrifice for sin except Jesus Christ.

The character of His sacrifice was obedience. My friend, what God asks of you is obedience, the obedience of faith. It is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.

That's why I love to sing that song, "I need no other argument; I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me." And again I make the statement, when God raised him from the

dead, the One who died on the cross and was buried in Joseph's tomb, when God raised Him from the dead, He was telling me, He was telling you, my friend, that He will accept no other sacrifice than the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son.

And, now we come to verse 10.

10:10. By the which will (that is, the will of God) we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Now, the purpose of Christ's death is that He might set apart a group of people in the will of God to stand before God in perfect righteousness, in all the perfection of Christ. Here's an amazing thing. The purpose of the sacrifice was our sanctification in the will of God. All hindrances to fellowship have been removed.

Now sanctification here does not mean purification, but rather fellowship with God. Notice in the book of Hebrews that sanctification is always by the work of Christ, not by means of the Spirit. When we go to other epistles in the New Testament, we find we have sanctification by the Spirit. In the book of Hebrews we are dealing with the work of our Savior, the completeness of that work for the purpose of setting apart a people who will trust Him. We are set apart for intimate fellowship with God.

You know, I wish this could get hold of your heart and my heart. The great majority of God's people are not enjoying God for Himself. We get so filled up with present things and responsibilities and the things of this life with our tests and our trials and our circumstances and our frailty, with our failures and our weaknesses. And for some reason or other, we never get down to the place where we really enjoy God for Himself.

Why did God redeem us, but for fellowship. On what ground? On the ground of the work of Christ at the cross. "By which will." And we've just been reading that our Lord went to the cross in obedience to the will of His Father. This great purpose was fixed way back in eternity. It was a settled matter as we found in the 40th Psalm where He could say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

What was that will? That He should be a sacrifice to put away sin. For what purpose? That He might take men and women like you and me and not only redeem us, not only give us life eternal, not only make us partakers of the divine nature and put away our sins for time and eternity, but that we might stand in the presence of God for intimate fellowship. This is the greatest yearning of the heart of God.

I tell you, my friend, there's nothing in all this whole wide world that delights the heart of God more than to have His creatures, men and women like you and me who have accepted the Savior, to come into His presence and enjoy Him for Himself.

My, how we've robbed ourselves of spiritual joy and spiritual power because we have wanted our own way. We get our whole lives cluttered up with things. We're always doing something instead of taking the time and spending some time in the presence of God—not just to ask for something, not just to make requests, but just to be alone with Him, to enjoy Him. While you're doing your dishes, while you men are in the shop or in the factory or you're driving your car, wherever you are, have a good time of fellowship. Really enjoy Christ for Himself.

My friend, there's something here that the world knows nothing about. And sometimes we've got things all distorted. We think more of our service for Christ, than we do of the enjoyment of Christ.

Now, in this 10th verse,

10:10. By the which will we are sanctified (have been set apart for fellowship with God) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This is true all through Hebrews. We are set apart for fellowship with God on the grounds of the work of Christ. Why do you think God saved you? Why do you think He put away your sins? Why do you think He made you His child? Why did He indwell you by His Spirit? Why is God always faithful to you? Why in the world does He do it?

You say, "Because He loves me."

Yes. But you know that love craves fellowship. If you love somebody, you certainly enjoy the fellowship, and you can hardly wait to get together because you love each other.

Do you love the Lord? Do you really love the Savior? Then why not spend time with Him? It's simple, isn't it? And God has made the provision through the work of His Son for you and me to have real fellowship with Him.

May I again repeat it? Sanctification in the book of Hebrews is not dealing with purification but with being set apart for fellowship with God.

Now, we come to the next part, verses 11-15. We have the guarantee that His sacrifice is sufficient. It's not enough just to have a sacrifice. But what I want to know is, is it real? Is it sufficient? Can it do the job? Can I have real rest and real hope and real peace?

My friends, it is very, very important. We are living in a day when a great many voices are calling. Who in the world is telling the truth? Even over the radio you hear all kinds of programs. Now which one is right? What is the truth?

My friend, let me say very, very bluntly that God not only sent His Son to live a perfect life, to die for you and me and put away our sin and set us apart for fellowship with Himself, but He guarantees the work which He has accomplished and that work is guaranteed by the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

If there is no resurrection, no exaltation, then, my friend, the cross of Christ is a tragedy. His work must not have been completed. He cannot do the job He came to do if there is no resurrection and no exaltation. Now, let's look at these next few verses, 11-15.

10:11. And every priest (talking now about the Old Testament) standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

10:12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

10:13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

10:14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (set apart).

10:15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

Now mark these verses, will you please?

In verse eleven, no sacrifice in the Old Testament could do the job. We had that in the first four verses of the chapter—the impossibility of Old Testament sacrifices cleansing the conscience from sin. Sacrifices could not put away sin. They could not fit man for the presence of God. But this man, Jesus Christ, verse 12, “this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” I’d like to stop here for a moment.

Will you notice how often the writer of Hebrews speaks about one sacrifice for sins for ever, an act once for all for ever. In chapter 9:26 we had “But now once in the end of the world (age) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” In 9:28 we have, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” In 10:10 we have, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” In 10:12 we have, “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” In 10:14 we have, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Notice, one offering.

I want you to keep this in mind because this is what the writer is emphasizing. In the Old Testament, it was sacrifice after sacrifice. They were to be continually offering sacrifices that could never, never take away sin, that could never cleanse the conscience; hence there was no rest, there was no peace. In one act on the cross Christ put away every sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now, look at that 12th verse. We’re coming down to the end of the argument of the superiority of the work of Christ over every other sacrifice that men have made. I’m reading down through verse 15 of chapter 10, where we’re dealing with the guarantee of the sacrifice of Christ.

10:12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

10:13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

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

10:15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

Instead of many sacrifices, He offered one sacrifice for sins forever. Instead of His sacrifice being offered oftentimes continually, His was once for all. Instead of His standing, I read in verse 12, He sat down at the right hand of God.

It might be well for me to remind you in the Old Testament, both in the tabernacle and in the temple (the tabernacle, of course, was the real picture of our Savior) there were no seats. Nor in the holy place were there any seats. There was the golden candlestick, there was the table of showbread, and there was the altar of incense; but there were no seats. There were no seats! They were always standing because they never finished their job.

It's impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin; but this Man Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, whom men nailed to a cross, whom God raised from the dead, this Man by one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God, signifying that His work was completed and perfectly acceptable to God.

Four times in the book of Hebrews (we mentioned this in chapter one of this study), we read that our Savior sat down. Why? His work was finished. Why didn't the priests of old sit down? Because their work was never finished. In chapter 1:3, I read, "When he had by himself purged our sins, (he) sat down on (at) the right hand of the majesty on high."

In chapter 8:1, "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

In chapter 10:12, "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." In chapter 12:2, "For the joy that was set before him (he) endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

I tell you, my friend, I am just as sure of the fact that I'll never again see my sins as I am that Jesus Christ not only died, but He sat down. That's why Peter in Acts chapter 5:31 said to the leaders of Israel, "God hath exalted him." Who? Jesus of Nazareth "to be a Prince and a Savior."

Now, whether you want to believe it or not, the most marvelous thing in God's universe is the Man at the right hand of God, a Man who bears the marks of nail prints in His hands and His feet, the mark of the spear in His side. He's at the right hand of God. That means He's in the place of authority. That's why He could say in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me (all authority is mine) in heaven and in earth." Having all authority, He's the one who rules. He's the one who is supreme. He's the one who is preeminent (Colossians 1:18). This was not until first of all, He had put away our sins.

And may I say, Christian friend, a word to you. Please do not dishonor the work of Christ on the cross by believing that you are saved today and lost tomorrow, saved again and lost again.

I've already mentioned that one dear little woman who said to me one time, "Brother Mitchell, I've been saved six times. If I get lost again, I'll be saved again."

Well, she has never seen what Christ did. Christ died once, not six times, not seven times, just once. He will never again be on a cross. He will never again die because of sin. He's through with the sin question. He settled that once for all at the cross. And I'm sure of that because God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand. This is what you have in verse 12. This Man, Jesus Christ, by one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down at the right hand of God.

For how long is He sat down? Until every enemy is under His feet. And we read of that, of course, in I Corinthians 15:24-25. We read right here that He's waiting until every enemy is under His feet. And when that is accomplished, then He will turn everything over to His Father that God might be all in all.

My, what a hope. What a prospect, that every place of evil, of sin, of rebellion is going to be cast out. And everything will be under His feet. Every tongue in heaven, every tongue on earth, every tongue in hell is going to confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).

Oh, my friend, what a Savior He is. What a Savior! He's the conquering One. And if I were teaching Revelation, I would go further into that. He's the Lord of lords and King of kings.

Now, in verse 14, and I'm not really through with this yet, here we have another amazing statement. These verses are tremendous. Look at verse 14,

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

If I may be a little technical here on grammar, "For by one offering, He hath perfected." That word, "perfected" is in the perfect tense. He hath perfected for ever those who are being sanctified. "Are being sanctified" is in the present tense. You notice again we come to this fact that it's one sacrifice for sins for ever. I keep coming back to this because in counseling with so many people I find it has never gotten a hold of their hearts or their minds that Christ will never again die for sin. Having accepted the Savior, my friends, we're saved for ever. The sacrifice will never, never be repeated.

There's a tremendous difference between relationship to God, perfection before God, and our daily experience or fellowship with God. Now, we have this in verse 14, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever." It's a finished job.

As I said a moment ago, it will never be repeated. A perfect work makes a man who puts his trust in Christ perfect before God in all the righteousness of Christ. Now, we had that in Hebrews 7:25. May I remind you of it? "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost (perfectly) that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The work of Christ on the cross guarantees perfection. That's also Hebrews 10:14.

And may I add one further verse, Philippians 1:6. The purpose of God guarantees perfection, where the apostle writes, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it (shall perfect it) until the day of Jesus Christ."

Now, the same word is used in all three verses. "By the one offering" or shall I put it this way—first of all, we have His past and the present and the future. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever those who are believers." That's the past. In 7:25 of Hebrews, He now appears in the presence of God for us. To do what? To present us, perfect,

complete. "Wherefore he is able to save perfectly every one who comes unto God by Him" because he's praying for us. And the prayers of Christ avail.

My friend, this gives us real rest, does it not? The past work of Christ, the present work of Christ, the future purpose of Christ, all guarantee the perfection of those who put their trust in the Savior. This is not something I feel. This is not something I experience. This is a fact. What God declares has been accomplished. Whether I feel it or not, doesn't alter the fact.

Oh, listen Christian friend, why don't you revel in the Savior? He's the perfect Savior. He's the eternal Savior. Don't trust your works. Don't trust some ceremony. "By the one offering," by the one offering over and over and over again we've had this from chapter 7 through chapter 10. It has perfectly satisfied God once for all. I plead with your heart, does it satisfy you once for all?

Now having perfected us, each one who has accepted the Savior, He perfects us on the ground of the cross; and because of this, He sanctifies us. Now, there are some who would read that verse, that sanctification comes before perfection. He's not saying that. He's saying just the opposite. He is saying that perfection comes first, then sanctification. Perfection is through the cross. And because we have been perfected, we are being set apart for fellowship with Him.

I'm not talking about day by day sanctification with respect to my walk. I'm talking about being set apart for fellowship with God. The moment, my friend, you accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, our God not only pronounced you righteous, but He perfected you through the work of the cross for the purpose that you can day by day have fellowship with him.

And, if I were teaching the letters of John again, I'd point out that He made provision for daily fellowship for you with God. Even when you sin, when your fellowship is broken, you don't go back to the cross to be saved. You go to the throne and there confess your sin to the Man on the throne to whom you've been joined. And He has promised to forgive you and to cleanse you. Fellowship is being restored. You see,

perfection must come first. You can't have fellowship with God unless you stand before Him in all the perfection of Christ.

You don't stand before God in what you do, in the works you've accomplished or the ceremony you've gone through or some church you've joined. You stand before God on only one ground, your relationship to Jesus Christ, God's Son. And that is because this one who is your Savior did a perfect work and God guarantees it. He perfects every believer on the ground of the cross.

Now, may I again give you those three verses.

You say, "Well, we're staying a long time here."

That's right. I planned to do that. I planned it because I realize that so many thousands of God's people have never entered into that rest and that peace, that joy, that confidence of being forever the child of one who is God—that peace of knowing you will never come before God with respect to the question of sin. No one can ever produce in the presence of God any evidence that we ever were sinners. By the one offering He hath perfected us forever.

May I be allowed to do it again. In 9:26, He appeared once in the end of the age to put away your sins by the sacrifice of Himself as in verse 28, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." In chapter 10, verse 10, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." In verse 12, "This man by one sacrifice for sins forever sat down at the right hand of God." Verse 14,

10:14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (being set apart),

10:15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

And because He has perfected the work, He has set you apart for fellowship with Him. In other words, any real believer in Christ can come into the presence of God at any time and have wonderful, simple fellowship with Him. Why don't you enjoy your Savior? Why don't you enjoy the rest in Christ that whatever happens in the world you can have real rest. All the religions of men bring fear, but not His.

My friend, listen. Can I say this? The old covenant brought you into bondage. The new covenant brings you into liberty—not license, liberty. The old covenant and the law brought you into fear. The new covenant in Christ brings you into assurance, hence you have perfect rest. Under the old covenant, you're far off from God; under the new, you're made nigh unto God (Ephesians 2:13). Under the old, you were separated from God. Now in the new, you have fellowship with God.

I tell you, my friend, what more can God do for you? And not only so, but I read in the next statement, “The Holy Spirit also is a witness to us.” A witness of what? A witness of the perfection of Christ's work. As a Christian, you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). This is God's testimony to you personally that, by the indwelling Spirit, the work of Christ for you absolutely, perfectly, eternally satisfies God.

Why don't you rest in that? Why don't you rejoice in that? Why don't you enjoy your Savior for Himself? May your joy be full today.

My friend, why isn't it full? Because you're looking at yourself instead of Christ. And, if I look at Christians, I'll find failure. If I look at Christ, I find perfection. If I look at Christians, I want to criticize them. If I look at Christ, then I want to love them.

Who is the object of your love? And your devotion? Ought it not to be the Savior who did such a perfect work for you and for me? Oh, my Christian friend, revel in your Savior today. The world outside is in turmoil and confusion, rebellion and lawlessness, frailty, and sin and death and suffering. Why don't you enjoy Christ? And then Christ through you will bring peace of heart to others, that they, too, might know the Son of God who has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Believer in Christ, won't you do that? Take those three verses with you—Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 7:25, and Philippians 1:6. The past work of Christ guarantees your perfection before God. The present ministry of Christ guarantees your perfection before God. And the future purpose of God in Philippians 1:6 guarantees your perfection in the presence of Christ. My, what a Savior! What a Savior!

Believer in Christ, take His yoke upon you and learn of Him and you'll find rest for your souls. That's experimental rest. Enjoy your Savior today, won't you?

Now, I'm reading verse 15 right on down to verse 18.

10:15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

10:16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

10:17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

10:18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

The Spirit of God came to indwell us, to bear testimony of the fact that this work of Christ is real, it's true, it's perfect, it's eternal. The Spirit of God witnesses the perfection of Christ's work. The Spirit of God witnesses to our perfection and our sanctification. And He bears witness to the power of the new covenant. This depends upon the Word of God, not on our feelings, not on our experience.

Now, before I leave this, I would like you to notice, again from verse 15 down through verse 18, you have the work of the Father and the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit in your redemption. You have the will of the Father. You have the work of the Son. You have the witness of the Holy Spirit.

You know, this is not the only place you find that. In Ephesians 1:3-14, you have the same thing. You have the work of the Father, the work of the Son, the work of the Spirit.

For example, you have four things in that passage that the Father does. He blesses you, He chooses you to be holy, He adopts you as His sons and He accepts you in the beloved.

And then, there are four things that Jesus does for us. He forgave us our sins, He redeemed us, He brought us into relationship with Him in His purpose and councils and He gave us an inheritance.

And then you have from 1:12-14 what the Spirit of God did. What did He do? He sealed us until the day of redemption; we're put in Christ

and sealed in Christ. So, in Ephesians 1, we have the purpose and the will of the Father, the work of the Son and the sealing of the Spirit.

Likewise in Hebrews 10 we have the work of the Father from verse 5 down through verse 9. And then we have the work of the Son, verses 10-14, and then we have the witness of the Spirit, verse 15 down through verse 17. And then we have the summary verse:

10:18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

That is, there is no further need for a sacrifice. Our consciences have been purged, our sins have been remitted forever, and no more sacrifice is needed. It's happened. It's finished once for all for ever. Again I sing to you that wonderful chorus, "I need no other argument; I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me." Isn't this a wonderful thing?

Now the argument is closed concerning the person and work of Christ, which brings us into a new privilege and into a new responsibility. Indeed from verse 19 of chapter 10 going right through to verse 19 of chapter 13, you have the application, the practical application of the truth that has just been given to us in these 10 chapters.

And here we have the third great division in the book of Hebrews. And this is exhortation. Or should I say it is the application of the truth in the individual lives of His people.

Now, in verses 19-21 we have the result of the work of Christ. We have the conscious experience of the believer in present day privilege of coming into the presence of God.

10:19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

10:20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

10:21. And having an high priest over the house of God;

10:22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ...

In verse 19 we have our access into the presence of God. Do we have boldness to enter? Yes! At any time? Yes! It's not limited. You and I can enter into the Holiest Place into the presence of God. Oh, the wonderful work of Christ for you and me. At any time, under any circumstance, we can come right within the rent veil into the very presence of God.

This brings me to the next verse,

10:19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

10:20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.

We have a new and living way. So, in verse 19 we have our access. In verse 20 we have the way. How can we come into His presence? Jesus said in John chapter 14 verse 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Our Lord could say in John chapter 10 verse 9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Allow me to say this from the gospel through John, life, eternal life, can only be received through the incarnate Word of God. In the epistle of John, fellowship with God can only be experienced through the incarnate Word of God. This is what Jesus meant in John 16:26 when he said, "At that day ye shall ask in my name." That is, you come through Jesus Christ into the very presence of God. Not only having access, but He is the way. You remember in Hebrews six, He's our forerunner as the guarantee. He has entered into the presence of God and, because He has entered, we too shall enter.

Oh, I wish I could make this clear to you. I wish it would come with reality, with power to your own heart and life.

Now, in verse 21, we have the assurance of it. So, we have in verse 19 the access, in verse 20, we have the way. And in verse 21 we have the assurance. What does it say?

10:21. And having an high priest over the house of God.

Our Savior is right there having all authority over the house of God. This is the assurance. This is the certainty that wherever Jesus Christ is, you and I can go as His children, having been joined to Him.

Listen, friend, I'm talking about one of the most astounding things in the world, that wherever Jesus Christ the Son of God is, that's where the believer can go. We have access. He is the way to go; and God has guaranteed that. On what ground? Because our Savior, the one to whom we are joined, is over the house of God.

Now, God grant that today you and I may by faith come into the very presence of the Lord with boldness, yet with reverence—not only to worship Him and praise Him, but to thank Him for all His wonderful goodness to us.

Oh, what a wonderful thing that we can come within the veil and find on the throne of God our Savior and our Lord with whom we can have continual blessed fellowship.

We come to our present responsibility in verses 22-25. In verses 19-21, we had the present privilege of every believer of having access into the presence of God. Now in verses 22-25, we have our present responsibility. And this is three-fold also.

10:22. Let us draw near (because we have a high priest over the house of God who is our Savior) with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

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

10:24. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

10:25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Now in these few verses we have the exercise of faith in verse 22, the exercise of hope in verse 23 and the exercise of love in verse 24. We look up in faith. We look forward in hope, and we look out to others in love.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Don’t stand off and bemoan your weaknesses and your frailty. Come on with the full assurance of faith.

Don’t you believe He’s done a perfect work?

Don’t you believe He has put away your sin?

Don’t you believe He’s covered you with all His righteousness?

Don’t you believe He’s made you a child of One who is God?

Don’t you believe you’ve been joined to the Savior?

Then, “draw near with a true heart and a full assurance of faith,” knowing, believing, assured that our Lord has done a perfect job. Don’t stand off. Don’t stay outside. Come on in. Because you are in Christ and Christ is in you, you have access into the presence of God. I say this reverently.

Sometimes when I hear some people pray, I wonder if they have any reverence. Though the way is opened and though we have boldness to come into His presence, we must still come with reverence. We must come with hearts that are full of worship to Him, the One who bought us for Himself.

Oh, I just love this. This is the ground whereby we can come, having had our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. He has the brazen altar in mind. And you remember in the tabernacle, the brazen altar was where the sacrifices were made for sin. This speaks of the cross. Our Lord put away our sins. He satisfied the divine character of God for you and for me. He’s put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

We’ve been dealing with this in chapters 9 and 10. Our hearts have been cleansed, our consciences have been purged on the ground of the blood of Christ.

What about this idea of the bodies being washed with pure water?

Well, he has in mind, of course, the laver of cleansing. After you leave the brazen altar where your sins are put away, then you come to the laver of cleansing where you are washed. The Word of God gives us a daily moral cleansing. You have this in the 119th Psalm, “Wherewithall shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed according to thy

word” and “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.”

Our Lord could say in John 15:3, “You’re cleansed, you’re clean, you’re purged by the word which I have given unto you.” In the book of Ephesians chapter 5, verse 26, Paul says, that he might cleanse the church with “the washing of water by the word.” In other words, God uses the Word for moral cleansing. The more you and I stay in the Word of God, the more our daily lives are free from sin.

You can’t live, my friend, in fellowship with God and spurn the Word of God. We are in bodies that are frail, that have desires and lusts. We do things; we say things. But the Word of God is a daily, moral cleanser.

And the writer here says we can come into the very presence of God because our hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience. We no longer have the conscience of sin because of the blood of Christ, and our bodies are washed with pure water by the Word of God.

Thus, we draw near. In other words we honor the Word and the work of Christ. And if sin has come into our lives, as God’s people, we will confess our sins. He has promised to forgive us, to cleanse us, to purge us.

I tell you, God has made wonderful provision for you and me in this regard. So let us come. Let us not dishonor the work of Christ or the Word of Christ by staying away. Don’t you stand off. I don’t care how frail you are. You come and run into the presence of God. Throw yourself at His feet. Remember His mercy endures forever. Remember His is the throne of grace. And He’s administering mercy and grace to every stumbling believer who comes.

Let us not live a life that is empty of spirituality.

Oh, how we have robbed ourselves of the joy of a life in the presence of God, day by day, hour by hour.

And by the way, I want to ask you this question: Are you really, really enjoying Christ? You know, I find, comparatively speaking, so few people are really enjoying the Savior. In fact, the way they look, you’d think they were enduring a religion of do’s and don’ts. They know so little of the joy of the blessing of coming into the presence of God

within the veil. This is why he died. This is why these preceding ten chapters are full of the superiority of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the perfect, eternal work of the Son of God, in an act once for all, forever, that put away your sins for time and eternity.

Why don't you honor the Lord by coming into His presence every day? Don't miss a day. Don't miss a day. Come into His presence. Start the day with Him. All through the day think about some portion of scripture. It will keep you clean. But above all I want you to enjoy Him. Do you enjoy the Savior? Do you know much about this reality of life in Jesus Christ, God's Son?

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, I'm just alone in the world."

But my dear brother or sister, let me tell you. You can really enjoy Christ right where you are, even if nobody understands you, even if nobody down here seems to love you. If nobody down here seems to care, He cares, He loves. And the thing He really desires is you, your fellowship.

Do you feel lonely? Do you feel lonely? Friend, you have One who sticks closer than a brother. You have the eternal Son of God who yearns, who longs for your fellowship. I repeat it. It is not that you're waiting for Him; He is waiting for you. The door is wide open. The barrier has been taken away. The veil has been rent. The provision has been made to put away your sins, and God wants your fellowship. I just trust you'll know something about coming into His presence today. And enjoying Him for Himself.

Oh, the wonder of it. Listen to that verse again,

10:22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

And the full assurance of faith brings the full assurance of understanding which brings to us the full assurance of peace and of hope and of joy. You see, it is all tied in.

Now you come to verse 23,

10:23a. Let us hold fast the profession of our hope.

Now, I know the King James Version says there, our “faith.” Well, the word there is *balpidos* which means hope.

10:23b. The profession of our hope without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).

You know, I like that verse that Peter says in 1 Peter 1:3. You see, when our Lord died and was buried, Peter didn't lose his love. He didn't lose his faith. He lost his hope. He had hoped Christ would restore Israel. But he said, Blessed be God that we've been begotten again unto a living “hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Oh, wonderful, wonderful hope guaranteed to us by our precious Savior.

And our hope is just as sure as the Word of God. If the Word of God is not sure, then we have no hope. And I'm telling you, my friend, a person without hope is a pretty miserable person. And I know what I'm talking about. I have met so many people who are without hope. All their hopes are centered upon something down here that's passing, that's transient, that isn't worth a hoop.

I tell you, it's a wonderful thing to have a hope over which death doesn't even cast a shadow, the hope of seeing Him face to face, the hope of being transformed and being made just like the Son of God, the hope of spending eternity in unbroken, eternal fellowship with God. My friend, this is the hope of the believer when we lay our loved ones to one side. It's with the hope of resurrection and glorification.

I tell you, it's a wonderful thing to be saved. It's a marvelous thing to have a Savior who guarantees to us not only joy and peace and hope down here, but that that hope will be realized of seeing the Savior face to face.

Listen, friend, hold the confession of your hope firm until the end. How can we hold it firm? Because He is faithful. It's based upon the faithfulness of God.

My friend, can't you trust God to be faithful to what He has said? Don't you think God will keep His word?

I tell you it's a wonderful thing to be in the keeping power of God. I'll tell you something even more wonderful. He not only has His arms under us, but my friend, we're already in Him, joined to Him eternally,

joined to the Son of God. We are standing before the eternal God in all the merit, in all the beauty, in all the righteousness of Christ. We have the guarantee that one of these days He's going to finish the job. We're going to be just like His Son.

That's why He says in verse 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope firm unto the end." Why? "Because He is faithful that promised."

Now, we have the third thing. The first thing was the exercise of faith, we look up. We have the exercise of hope in verse 23—we look ahead. We look forward. Now, in verses 24 and 25 the exercise of love. We look out to others. We look up. We look forward. We look out. Let me read these two verses.

10:24. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

10:25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Listen to it. We are to stir up, can I reread that 24th verse? "Let us consider one another to exasperate." Isn't that a good word—to exasperate unto love and to good works. To encourage each other in love and to good works. You know, I hear people say, "Oh, that person really exasperates me!" It means you're getting stirred up. He exasperates me.

Yes, I know. I know. Let's use it in the right term here, in the right way. We are to exasperate each other unto love and unto good works. To encourage the brother in love and in good works. You remember in Ephesians 2:10, "We are his workmanship" (the workmanship of God) "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Instead of sitting in judgment on a poor Christian who is failing God, let us exhort him, encourage him unto good works and do it in love.

Do you remember how often the apostle Paul in the epistles to the churches talks about abounding in love, increasing in love one toward another. I'm telling you how we need to love the people of God. I know some of them are ornery. And I know some of them you don't like. I

know, I know all about them. Their personalities clash with yours and you dodge them. And I'm very sorry to say that in a great many of our professing churches the name of the Lord has been dishonored because of the friction between God's people.

But the writer says here, "I want you to consider each other, and to provoke, to encourage, to stir up each other unto love and unto good works." And you remember the Lord Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Now, the writer doesn't stop there. He goes on to say that love and those works will be manifested by our assembling with God's people.

10:25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Isolation from other Christians is a dangerous thing. When you isolate yourself from other Christians, you're walking on dangerous ground.

You say, "But I don't like these Christians."

All right. But you are to encourage them. Maybe they just need your love. In fact, in the book of Hebrews not meeting with God's people is a sign of spiritual declension. I don't care how much you know. I don't care what your experiences are. I don't care how much you've grown in the things of God. In fact, I will say the more you grow in the things of God, the more you will meet with God's people, even when they're in frailty and weakness and they stumble along and do things and say things you don't like. All the more reason for you to love them.

I'm telling you there are a lot of Christians who are dying for some loving manifestation from some of God's people. There are a lot of hungry hearts, lots of lonely hearts, a lot of people today who really need the love of God's people. And if they love the Savior, you are to love them. The Lord loves them, and you are to love them. Instead of judging them, manifest some love. Encourage them to love and to good works.

And again may I say, not to meet with God's people is a sign of spiritual declension. This is what it is here in the book of Hebrews.

I'm reading chapter 10, verses 24 and 25. I want this thing very, very clear in your mind. You see, I yearn to see this among God's people. I want the people of the world to say about your church, about my church, "My, how they love one another." How they love to get together and have fellowship. It is pretty hard to meet God's people and not love them. The Psalmist says, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). With that love, with that appreciation, let us stir them up to love and to good works and meet with them at every opportunity.

Now we come to a very, very interesting portion of scripture. And this is called the willful sin. And I'm going to read from the book of Hebrews chapter 10, verse 26, right down through verse 31.

10:26. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

10:27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

10:28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

10:29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot 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?

10:30. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people.

10:31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now, we've come to a portion of scripture that I'm afraid has been greatly misunderstood. It might be well for me, if I can use the term, to clear the decks before we take up this question of what is the willful sin here in the book of Hebrews. What's the writer talking about?

But, first of all let me talk about believers' sins. I'm just gathering together a few verses of scripture here for you who trust the Savior to know what the Bible says about your sins. For example, in the 103rd

Psalm, verse 12, we read, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” They’ve been removed. In Isaiah chapter 44, verse 22, I read, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions.” They’ve been blotted out. And Micah chapter 7, verse 19, I read that our sins have been cast “into the depths of the sea.” They’ve been cast out.

In Isaiah chapter 38, verse 17, I read that our sins have been cast behind his back. That is, God is between us and our sins. He’s removed them. In Ezekiel chapter 18 verse 22 I read that our sins will not be mentioned again against us. In Colossians chapter 2, verse 13, we read, “Having forgiven you all trespasses.” All trespasses have been forgiven. And then in Hebrews chapter 8, verse 12, our sins and our iniquities are going to be remembered no more for ever. Isn’t that a wonderful thing to think about?

Let me repeat what God says about your sins. They have been removed. They have been blotted out. They’ve been cast out. They’re behind His back and never again will be mentioned against us. They’ve all been forgiven. And they’re never again to be remembered.

Now, that’s concerning believers’ sins. This is the act of God. The moment a sinner accepts the Lord Jesus Christ his sins have been forgiven. May I remind you again of those amazing passages in Ephesians 1:7, we have the “forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” In Ephesians 4:32, “be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” And in I John 2:12, I read, “your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.”

Did you ever notice that—forgiven according to the riches of His grace, forgiven for Christ’s sake, forgiven for His name’s sake. What a wonderful thing that you and I can enjoy sins forgiven. Now, that’s concerning believers.

Now there are three sins that people kind of run together. You oftentimes hear evangelists and preachers talk about the unpardonable sin. Sometimes this passage here is called the unpardonable sin. Sometimes Matthew chapter twelve is called the unpardonable sin.

Sometimes they say unbelief is the unpardonable sin. Let's look at these for a few moments.

First of all, the sin of unbelief. Now there is a certain sense in which every believer, every man and woman on the earth at times, will manifest unbelief. What the writer is talking about, of course, is the sin of unbelief in not accepting the Savior. And possibly one would use John chapter 16 and verses 8-11 where you remember our Lord said that when the Spirit of truth is come, He will reprove, He will illuminate, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. "Of sin because they believe not on me."

Now, it's true that unbelief persisted in leads to eternal judgment. But it's not the unpardonable sin. Everyone of us have had the sin of unbelief, and God has forgiven us. But unbelief in the Savior if it's persisted in leads to eternal judgment. Now that's very true. Our Lord said for example in John 8:24, "If you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." In other words, there's a difference between heaven and hell, between light and darkness, between being saved and not saved, between eternal life and eternal death. The difference is the person of Christ.

The great question to ask the unsaved is, what do you think of Christ? Who is He? What is your relationship to Him? Now I say again that unbelief is not the unpardonable sin. However, I must say that unbelief in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior leads to eternal judgment. Now, that's the first one. The sin of unbelief.

Now, the second sin I want to talk about is called the unpardonable sin, spoken of by our Savior in the book of Matthew chapter 12.

You remember the Jews had come to our Savior, and they had accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Now, our Lord's answer to them was, "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit." He is asking them, "What kind of fruit do you see in my life? If I am an evil tree, I will produce evil fruit. But what have I been doing? I've been casting out demons. I've been healing the sick. I've been feeding the hungry. I've been cleansing the lepers. I've opened the eyes of the blind. I've raised

the dead. I've stilled the storm. These are good things. And if the fruit is good, then the tree must be good."

And they said, "No, you cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons."

Now the Lord's answer was this, "I say unto you..." I'm quoting from Matthew chapter 12:31-32. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men, and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

The unpardonable sin was especially given to these Jews of our Lord's day who saw that God had come into their midst. Everything He did was in accord with His Father's will. He could challenge them in John 8:46, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And you remember at that time, they said, "You're demon possessed."

Now, in Matthew chapter 12, they said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons." They either have to say that Jesus Christ is God and that the miracles of Christ were the credentials of His Messiahship or that He came from hell.

That's why the very first miracle in Matthew is the cleansing of a leper which is found in chapter 8. And the leper was told to go and show himself to the priest proving that Messiah is here. As I say, chapters 8, 9, and 10 of the book of Matthew are full of miracles, both first of all by himself in 8 and 9. And then through his apostles in chapter 10. Our Lord was presenting His credentials. He's really the Son of God. He's really the Son of Man. He's really the Messiah.

Now, with all these evidences and credentials handed to them, the Jews still said that He was from hell, that the works of the Spirit of God through the Savior were not done by the Spirit of God, but by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

You see, friends, this is really the unpardonable sin. Now, there is that possibility that there might be those in this generation who are going to come under the wrath of God because of this attitude. I think this is what Peter says in 2 Peter 2:1 when he says, "But there were false

prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them (denying our Savior as being the master), and bring upon themselves swift destruction (sudden destruction).”

Now, the third is the willful sin.

10:26. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

10:27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries

10:28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.

10:29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

10:30. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people.

10:31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now, in chapter 2 we were warned not to neglect salvation. In chapters 3 and 4 we were warned not to miss the rest that God had for His people. And in chapter 6 we were warned about not going on to full growth, to maturity. Now, we've come to the fourth warning, the sin of despising the wonderful grace of God.

You know, it says over in the book of 2 Peter 2:21-22, “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

You see, we are moving from drifting in Hebrews 2 to contempt in chapter 10. This is despising the grace of God, despising the work of our Savior at the cross, and having a contempt for what He has accomplished. My friend, there's nothing left but eternal judgment. I

say, having turned from Christ and His sacrifice, there is nothing left for them but judgment. Now notice the context.

In chapter 10 of Hebrews, verses 5-14, we had the will of the Father in our salvation. Then we had the sacrifice of the Son. What the Father willed, the Son wrought out even to a sacrifice for sinners. “This man by one sacrifice for sins for ever.” And then, we had the witness of the Spirit of God to the completion and perfection of our Lord’s work at the cross. Now, having heard these things, to turn from the person and work of Christ—there’s nothing left, but judgment.

Now, sometimes the question is asked, “Can a Christian, a real Christian commit this sin?” And I would say emphatically, no!

Can it be committed today? Oh yes. Oh yes, it is being committed today. But I say a real believer in Christ, no.

As a pastor I have had many folk come to me through the years who felt that they had committed the unpardonable sin. They’re discouraged. They’re disheartened and they say, “Well, I must have committed the unpardonable sin.”

Listen, my friend, if you had committed the unpardonable sin, you wouldn’t be going out to see your preacher. In fact, if you had committed the unpardonable sin, my friend, or even the willful sin, you would be totally indifferent as to the person and work of Christ. The very fact that you’re concerned is an assurance that you have not committed that sin.

Now, let’s look at the willful sin.

Here were Jews, for he is talking to Hebrews, who have come mentally to the full knowledge of Christ, the full knowledge of truth. They have heard the Word of God concerning the person of our Lord and the completion of His work on the cross, guaranteed to us by the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having heard this, they deliberately run from it. Because they refuse this Savior in His person and His work, there’s nothing left but judgment.

This is true of the many young people who have been brought up in sound churches and have had the Word of God poured into their hearts throughout their childhood but who have turned away from Jesus Christ as Savior in their young adulthood. What is left, but a certain

looking forward to of judgment. Having heard the precious truth of God's grace in His Son, for these Jews to go back to Judaism, for these youngsters to go back to paganism, leaves nothing for them but sure judgment. But remember, a son doesn't stay in the pigpen. He comes home.

I want this thing very, very clear in your mind. The willful sin, what is it? I read here in verses 27 and 28, having heard the gospel, heard of the wonderful Savior and His work for us, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, (there's nowhere else to turn, except to look forward to judgment).

10:28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

10:29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.

If under Moses' law sure judgment came and they died without mercy, what do you think is going to happen to those who despise the Son of God today? My friends, this is an amazing thing that men should go this far.

What is the willful sin? Verse 29 gives it to you. Putting it in my own language, they despised the person of Christ. They despised the work of Christ at the cross. And they despised the Spirit of Christ, who comes to make things known to them, to reprove them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

If God in His righteousness judges His own people who love Him (and He will judge them as a Father dealing with a child in chastisement), what do you think God will do with those who bitterly despised His Son, despised the work on the cross for men and despised the Spirit of God who comes to bring them to the Savior. There's nothing left but sure judgment. No wonder he says in verse 31, it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The willful sin is not committed by the Christian. Willful sin has to do with one thing, despising the person of Christ, despising the work of Christ, despising the Spirit of Christ.

For example, take today. There are religious leaders in our land today, in fact, throughout the whole world who have no use for the person of Jesus Christ. In fact, they've done away with the person. He's only an idea, the Christ-idea. They call it the Christ concept. They've despised the person of Jesus Christ. They despise Jesus of Nazareth.

When you talk to them about the work of Christ on the cross for sinners, they say, "That's a blood thing. That's a nauseating thing. No, sir, that's a religion of the shambles. We don't believe in blood sacrifice. We despise the work of Jesus on the cross."

Now, starting in at verse 32, and reading on down to the end of chapter 11, we're dealing with the assurance of faith.

10:32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

10:33. Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

10:34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

10:35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

10:36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

10:37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

10:38. Now, the just (the righteous) shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

10:39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Then, he goes into chapter 11 on this amazing fact of the life of faith.

Now, in verses 32 to 34, after this fourth warning in the book of Hebrews about the willful sin, the writer begins to encourage them in their faith. Their very past experiences are to fortify them for the present tests through which they were going. Hence, the proof of the reality of

their faith is given to them as a great encouragement. "Call to remembrance the former days." And he gives you a list of what their experience was in verses 32-34.

It's very simple. They had suffered for the gospel's sake. Certainly, if they hadn't loved the Savior and trusted Him, they would not have suffered for the gospel's sake. Furthermore, they were fellowshiping with the other saints, especially where the Christians were going through suffering and were in afflictions. In other words, they were making themselves one with the suffering people of God.

And then the third thing, they had suffered for the gospel's sake. They were fellowshiping with saints who were in affliction and suffering, even with this man, if it were the apostle Paul who wrote, whoever wrote. He was in bonds, that is, he was in jail. And they were putting their lives in jeopardy by having compassion upon him.

They had lost their own personal possessions. They had been robbed of things just because they were Christians, because of their stand for Christ. And then in verse 34, they had the knowledge of a wonderful hope, knowing that in themselves they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. They had a treasure in heaven. They had laid up for themselves treasures in heaven. And they had the hope of the coming of the Savior. And I want to say, my friend, this was the proof.

If I'm talking to you today, and you wander sometimes in your frailty, in your afflictions, your suffering and your pain or disappointments in life or you don't have the things that you would like to have, you're discouraged and disheartened, my friend, let me encourage you in the Lord. The very fact that the Lord Jesus has come into your life, and you've trusted Him as your Savior, you've enjoyed the forgiveness of sins, you enjoy the fellowship of God's people even some who are possibly not as nice as others ought to be or would be. And it may be you have even suffered in your past experience because you love the Savior, you were scorned by your friends and you were cast out by your neighbors; nevertheless, these are evidences of a new life, of a union with the Savior.

You remember our Lord said in John 15, "If the world hate you, ye know, that it hated me before it hated you." You see, the moment you

and I accept the Savior, we receive His life. We're joined to him, and we've become separated from the world. The world never did understand the Savior. And the world doesn't understand His people. So, the very fact you have these experiences ought to encourage you to prove the reality of your faith in Christ.

And then in verses 35-37, we have the encouragement to their faith.

10:35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

10:36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

10:37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Cast not away your confidence, and if I may change the wording, cast not away your boldness to speak. Oftentimes this word "confidence" has to do with the question of being bold to speak. For example, in 1 John 2:28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence (be bold to speak), and not be ashamed before him at his coming." Why? Because it brought sure reward. You remember in Hebrews 11, verse 26. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." He looked beyond the persecution. He looked beyond the tests and trials. He knew that God was going to meet him and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

You see, my friend, we are just down here in time. We're just in a little wee place in history. But the moment you and I accepted the Savior, we belonged to the eternal Son of God. And, my, the eternal glories that the Lord has in store for His people.

And what are these present tests and trials? We ought to be encouraged, looking ahead. Allow me to quote from Romans 8:18, where Paul could say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in

us.” Likewise in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, when he said, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment.”

Moses took his place with the slaves in Egypt. He counted the reproach of Christ of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And remember that Moses could have been the pharaoh. He was next in line to be pharaoh over the great Egyptian empire. He had been trained and learned in all the learning of Egyptians. He was a military strategist and general in the army, according to Josephus. And yet he put the whole thing to one side. He counted the reproach of Christ greater riches. Why? Because he had a hope within him. And we read here, he had respect unto the recompense of reward (Hebrews 11:26). I say it's a wonderful thing not to cast away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. And what did they need? In verse 36, they needed patience.

You know, faith and patience go together. For we read,

10:36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

I say again, patience and faith go together.

Allow me to remind you of Romans chapter 5, verses 3-5, where Paul says, “We glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

What we need then is for endurance. And the future is ever held out to the believer in testing. For example, in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 7-11 where the apostle Peter says that “the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with the fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” At that time, spirit, soul and body will be in the presence of the glorified.

This is the hope of the believer. And I say at the present time these hours and days and months, possibly years of suffering, are a mere spot

in time, in eternity. And God is working out in you and in me all His wonderful good pleasures. What for? To fit us for the very place He has for us in eternity.

And so, the future is ever held out to us. As Paul could say in Romans 5:10, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (that's by His present life in heaven). If God loved me enough to die for me when I was His enemy, what do you think He'll do for me now I'm His child? More, much more. Even though I'm frail and weak and stumbling and oftentimes failing, I'm never, never for one second away from His care or His love. I want this to be firmly established in your hearts today.

Paul here, or whoever the writer is, is writing to encourage their faith. He's first of all speaking of the proof of the reality of their faith, and then the encouragement of their faith. They were not to cast away their confidence, their boldness to speak because of the reward He holds out to His people. And, by the way, God oftentimes does this. He offers us a reward. What for? To be saved? No. To encourage us to glorify Him among men.

You might want to spend the time to take up the five different crowns God is offering to His people, not to be saved, not to be kept saved, but to encourage them to endure, to have patience in the midst of testing and trials, suffering and affliction. How wonderful it's going to be when we stand in the presence of the Lord, conformed to the image of His Son, and hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou in the joy of the Lord."

And then starting in at verse 37, down to verse 39, we have the encouragement and the assurance. The outlook is very, very inspiring. Why? Because he that shall come, will come and will not tarry.

My friend, if ever I was sure of the nearness of the coming of the Lord for His church, for His own redeemed ones, it's today. My, how we Christians ought to live in continual expectancy of seeing Him, whom having not seen, we love. This is our hope, and this gives to us the reward, the recompense of the reward for everyone of His children. Because 1 Corinthians 4:5 says that all believers will have praise of God.

The weakest ones? Yes. The failing ones? Yes. The falling ones? Yes. We're going to stand in the presence of God conformed to His image.

And here in the book of Hebrews we're dealing with the practical side of this book. Starting in at verse 32 of chapter 10 and running through the end of chapter 11, there is given to us the life of faith, or, if you please, the walk of faith, the assurance of faith.

As we said a while ago in a past lesson, in chapter 12 you have hope, and chapter 13 you have love. And the apostle by the Spirit of God writes to encourage us that whatever age in which we live, whatever the tests and trials of life, they are common to God's people. Even though we're the children of God, we're not freed from the common tests and trials of life. But, rather we can experience the presence of the Lord and the power of the Lord and the joy of the Lord whatever our circumstances may be. It is so easy for us to be occupied with self especially in times of trouble or affliction or disappointment and misunderstandings. It's so easy. And yet, the Lord knows that. He's touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He's praying for us.

Aren't you glad that you have a Man in heaven, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who's touched with the feelings of your infirmities. And there's not an hour of the day He doesn't have you on His heart. He's praying for you. He knows all about you. He knows all about your weaknesses. He knows your frailty. He knows about your failures. He knows how much you can stand. In fact, He has promised us He will not test us beyond that which we are able, but will with the temptation open a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). You see, God is always faithful to His people, to you, my friend.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I'm one of the weakest of God's children."

All right, I'll take your word for that. Even though you're the weakest of God's children on earth yet, my friend, you too possibly more than you think are the object of His care, of His love, of His devotion. My, what a Savior we have! How He loves us! Oh, how He loves us! And would it be that we might respond to that love, even when we don't feel well?

You know, sometimes when you don't feel well, that's the time to revel in Him because He's the one who takes care of us. He knows what you are going through. He has never left you for one second. He's nearer to you than hands or feet. And my friend, He loves you. He loves you with an everlasting love. And I can understand the writer of Hebrews. These dear Hebrew Christians had been suffering. They were suffering not only because they were Jews, but they were suffering because they were Christians.

And Christian Jews, if I can use that term, really suffered in the first two centuries of this era. Because they were Christians and because they were Christian Jews. And sometimes they became very, very discouraged. Very, very discouraged. So the apostle writes to them and from verses 32-34 he gives them the reality of their faith in Christ. Yes, they had suffered. Yes, they had fellowshiped with God's people in suffering. Yes, they had lost their personal possessions. But they had a treasure in heaven, and this is ever held out to God's people in times of discouragement.

And now we're dealing with the encouragement of faith, verses 35-39.

10:35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

10:36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

10:37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

10:38. Now the just (the righteous, the saved ones) shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

10:39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

They were not to cast away their confidence, their boldness to speak, as we have it here in verse 35, because of what God has for them. The future, I repeat it, is always held out to the believer as an encouragement in times of testing. And we were using, you remember, Romans 5:3-5 and 1 Peter 1:6-9, and we closed with Romans 5:10. For if

God loved me enough to die for me when I was His enemy, what will He not do for me now that I'm His child? Much more, much more. Why? Because of the present intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ for me.

But now verses 37-39 talk about encouragement. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The outlook is inspiring because the Lord Jesus Christ would soon come. He came the first time, did He not, without fail? Did you ever stop to realize that when our Lord came the first time, He completed every detail of the prophetic picture concerning His coming?

For example, our Lord chose His own family—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David. And in the very first verse of the New Testament, we have, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David." He chose His own family into which He should come. And He chose the very town in which He would be born. You remember Micah chapter five, verse two, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah . . ." Not only that, but He chose the time when He should come into the human family. As Galatians chapter 4, verses 4 and 5 say, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman."

He also knew how He would be born. Isaiah 7:14, "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." And then He even knew His name. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:21-23). Every detail was fulfilled even to the cross where our Lord said, "I thirst." What for? That the scriptures might be fulfilled. And, when he had said that, He cried out with a loud voice. "It is finished," and bowed His head in resignation to the will of His Father and yielded up the Spirit.

Every detail, I say, of the coming of the Savior, even His work on the cross in detail was completed. If you don't believe that, read the 22nd Psalm and the 69th Psalm and Isaiah 50 and Isaiah 52 and Isaiah 53, all the details of crucifixion.

My friend, if our Savior fulfilled every detail of the prophetic picture concerning His first coming to the earth, He will also fulfill every detail of every prophecy concerning His return to the earth, not to put away sin, but to come as Lord of lords and King of kings and to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

No wonder the apostle writes, “For he that shall come will come and will not tarry.” I’m very much tempted to take up a few prophetic things here concerning this. But I needn’t do that except to make this statement that if ever I was sure we’re living in a day when we can expect the coming of the Savior for His own people, it’s today.

This ought to encourage you, my Christian friends, you who are suffering, you who are in affliction, those of you in sorrow, those of you who are tested and tried and discouraged. My friends, “lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). Be bold for God. Redeem the time, even during these evil days when it’s so difficult for one to live in the midst of this generation. My friend, he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Now, the question is raised, “What shall I do while I’m waiting for His coming?” Verse 38 says, “Now the just shall live by faith,” The righteous shall live by faith, not by works, not by feeling, not by some great experience, not by some great ecstatic utterance. No, no, the just shall live by faith. You see, it is true of every individual believer, irrespective of circumstances or background or gifts of service.

You know I find Christians who say, “Oh, well, that’s for you. I can understand your believing certain things and you can look forward to certain things, but little old me.”

Yes, little old you, my friend. The just shall live by faith.

“Well, all I do is take care of my house and take care of my family. I wash dishes and cook and everything else. I don’t get out very much. And I can’t serve the Lord like some people do. And I can’t attend as many meetings as some do.”

Yes, friend, even then you can live the life of faith. I’m going to take it up in the next chapter. The whole 11th chapter is answering that question, “Can I live the life of faith right where I am in my circumstances?” Yes, yes, yes.

May I make a statement? I want you to think about it because I’m going to use it again. God did not give us Christians faith to change the world. He gave us faith to walk with Him under any and all circumstances This, this is the life of faith. The just shall live, not by works, but shall live by faith.

You know, it is an amazing thing that that statement, “the just shall live by faith” is found in only four places in the Bible—in Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and then, this one in Hebrews 10:38. What shall I do? Live the life of faith.

Allow me to repeat something I said when we were studying Romans. This amazing thing about the just shall live by faith. Taking this book of Romans and the book of Galatians and the book of Hebrews and emphasizing one word in that little statement, “the just shall live by faith,” will give you the key of all those three books.

For example, the great theme of the book of Romans is righteousness, so I emphasize the—righteous—shall live by faith. When you come to the book of Galatians, the great theme of Galatians is the contrast between the law and faith, between works and faith, between law and grace. And so, I would read that verse, the—just—shall live by faith. And when I come to the book of Hebrews, the theme here is life in Christ because of a risen, exalted Savior who cares for us. So the righteous shall live by—faith. And all the more as we see the day approaching.

That’s why we said earlier because of the coming of the Lord, we who are believers should not neglect the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. Indeed, I prove, I recognize the fact that I’m living the life of faith by meeting with God’s people, in spite of our frailty.

When our Lord was on earth, He didn’t spend much of His time with the leaders and the rulers. They accused Him of being the friend of publicans and sinners. His heart went out to those who were in need over and over again. And if I walk and live the life of faith, my friend, then I will manifest something of the character and love of the Savior toward men. The just shall live by faith. Right where you are in your home, in your office, in your neighborhood, in the plant, in the shop, wherever you are, walk in fellowship with God. This is what God wants. The just shall live by faith. I’m saved by faith. I’m to continue in faith.

You say, “Mr. Mitchell, when people have faith they get great things from God.”

And where do you find that in your Bible? The just shall live by faith. I'm not talking about getting things from God. The life of faith is walking in fellowship with God, under any and all circumstances. And the whole 11th chapter is given as an illustration of this very thing.

10:37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

10:38. Now the just (the saved ones, the righteous ones) shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

10:39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

In 37-38, we have encouragement for those Jewish Christians. The outlook was very inspiring because their Savior would soon come. It's a grand thing for a Christian to wait for the Son of God. You know, He's going to work all things out after the counsel of His own will. He knows exactly what you go through. He knows your frailty, and He knows how much you can stand. He's working out a program in you and in me; and, my friend, there's no power on earth, there's no power in hell that can change the purpose of God for your life and my life. He's working out a purpose. He's working out a program; and, when you and I stand in the presence of God, we stand there complete in all the righteousness and beauty of Christ. This is held out as a hope to God's people in the midst of their frailty and weaknesses on earth. The life of faith is a wonderful life, the life of walking in fellowship with Him.

In chapter eleven we will have the walk of faith, the full assurance of faith, the faith that enables a man to live, not merely to enter into the joys and blessings of salvation, but to live for God under any and all circumstances in any age. And the writer will take the heroes of faith and tell us in every age, under any and all circumstances that God's people have always lived the life of faith.

Did you ever stop to think of it? Enoch lived in an ungodly world, but he lived the life of faith.

Noah lived in the midst of a violent world, but he lived the life of faith. What do we mean by that? He walked in fellowship with God. The circumstances of life, remember, showed us that Noah was the only man

perfect in his generation. He was the only one who was not wrapped up in all the sin and corruption of the world before the flood. He walked with God. He was a preacher of righteousness. He obeyed God in the midst of a world that was opposed to him and to God. But he walked with God.

Abraham, what about him? Why, he lived in the midst of a pagan world, an idolatrous world, and he walked with God. In fact, Isaiah said, he was the friend of God. Three times in the Bible in 2 Chronicles 20:7, in Isaiah 41:8, and in James 2:23, he's the friend of God. And friendship, you know, speaks of fellowship, intimacy of fellowship. But when he came to the land of Canaan, he was surrounded by idolatry and moral corruption; yet he walked with God. He was the friend of God.

Did you ever think of Moses in the midst of a stiff-necked people, a nation of murmurers? They were always murmuring about something; yet he walked with God and God talked to him face to face as a man talks to a friend.

You take Elijah. Elijah walked in the midst of an apostate age that threatened to kill anybody and everybody who believed openly in Jehovah. He walked with God. In fact, Elijah thought he was the only one God had left on earth. You remember in Romans 11:4, God says, "Wait a minute, Elijah. I've got 7,000 who haven't bowed the knee to Baal." But Elijah didn't know it. Only God knew it.

My friend, I don't care what the circumstances are. Down through the centuries, God has had a people who lived the life of faith.

Now, first of all before we go into it, let me make one more statement. There's a wrong conception in the minds of evangelical Christians and others that to live the life of faith means a life of getting things from God. We talk about missionary societies who live and walk and serve by faith. We hear talk about missionaries who, oh, they live by faith; but in 99 cases out of a 100, they must think about money in order to keep ministering on the foreign field.

But the life of faith is a life lived in the presence of God in spite of any difficulties and in spite of every circumstance. You know, some people think if they had more money they could live the life of faith.

11:1. Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

One more thing—the important thing is not our faith. The important thing is the object of our faith. You see, in a certain sense everybody has a faith of some sort or another. We don't live 24 hours a day without manifesting some sort of faith. We have faith in friends; we have faith in things. When we sit down in a chair, we have faith in the chair. We sit down and we know it will hold us up. We can't live a day without faith. So, the important thing is not really our faith. The important thing is the object of our faith.

You know, one time three of us men in the Pacific northwest here met together. I was going to have lunch with one of my friends, and he said, "Do you mind if Bill comes along with me?"

I said, "No, I don't care. As long as we eat and have fellowship."

So the three of us had fellowship. These men, by the way, were graduates of Yale University. Bill had been overseas for the National Geographical Society. He was more or less of an evolutionist. He was not a Christian.

And after we had discussed the gospel for oh, possibly an hour back and forth, he said to me, "Now, Mr. Mitchell, I see no difference between us three fellows. We all have faith. You have faith. Dave has faith. I have faith."

I said, "It is not a matter of your faith. The difference is the object of your faith. Dave and I have a risen, exalted Savior, One who came and died to put away our sins as the object of our faith. God raised Him from the dead as the guarantee that that work on the cross perfectly satisfied God. We have a living Savior as the object of faith.

"Bill, what or who is the object of your faith? An exploded hypothesis? Some philosophy of man? Some reasonings of men? Or is it the Lord Jesus Christ? You see a Christian is one who has made Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the object of His faith. Buddhists have faith. Confucians have faith. Moslems have faith. People from different parts of the world in their idolatry have some sort of faith.

“But a Christian is one who has a living, glorified Savior who is at the right hand of God, having all authority over all created intelligences. He’s the object of our faith. He never changes. He is always constant.”

That ought to give you encouragement, too, my friends.

Now, it says here in verse 38, “But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” That is, any one who shrinks because of his persecution will not please God.

It’s not a question of losing salvation. The writer is not talking about that. He just says we’re not to hold back, shrink, take in the sail, get discouraged and disheartened because of the storms of life. He’s writing about the fact that God will not be pleased with us if we become faithless in the midst of persecution.

And then, lest we become further discouraged, he gives us positive assurance in 10:39.

Listen to him now. “But we (and here is the emphatic we), we are not of them who draw back unto perdition;” It’s not a question of doubt. It’s a question of assurance. The emphatic “we” in drawing back has nothing to do with us, but the opposite. We are not of those that take in the sail. We are those who believe to the saving of the soul, that is, to the completion of the work of Christ for us.

We’re saved now.

We are yet to be saved.

And when he talks here of salvation in the book of Hebrews, it is always for His people. He is not talking about the unsaved.

We possess salvation now, and we’re going to have it right through to eternity. It’s the completion of all that God in Christ Jesus has for us, experimentally, which leads us to the next chapter now.

Our faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Chapter Eleven

We have just finished the revelation of the superiority of Jesus Christ over everybody else. His work on the cross is far superior to all the sacrifices and ordinances and shadows of the Old Testament. Indeed, He stands out supreme over all. No man, no thing stands above Him. He is indeed as Colossians 1:18 says the preeminent One.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Now, we come to this question of faith. “The just shall live by faith.” The writer is saying that faith is the human response to a divine revelation, that it’s not what you believe but whom you believe. And when you know whom you believe, then you are confident of the future. That’s why Paul could say in 2 Timothy 1:12, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” It’s a marvelous thing to have a Person who is supreme over all as the object of your faith.

THE TESTIMONY OF FAITH.

11:1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

11:2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

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.

Now in the first verse of chapter 11, I would like to change the wording to bring out the sense of it. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proving of the unseen.” You see, faith is the human response to what God says. God has revealed Himself to us in His Word, for this is the divine revelation. And we by faith believe exactly what He says. You see, faith must have a foundation. It must have a basis upon which to build. And it has. It has the Word of God.

You remember Romans chapter 10, verse 17, says that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We are confident of what we hope for. Why? Because the object of our faith is the One who died, was buried and was raised again from the dead; and the proof of it is the conviction of things not seen. This is what the whole chapter talks about, faith in action.

Why did the early Christians, men and women, young people, boys and girls, go out into the Roman amphitheater to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, to be thrust through with darts, to be burned at the stake, to be crucified, to be dismembered? People die for convictions. They went out singing the glories of one called Jesus.

My friend, was that blind faith?

I remember when I became a Christian, I gave my testimony and someone said, “Well, that’s blind faith.” There is no such thing as blind faith. Faith must have an object. And these dear early Christians, when they went out to their martyrdom, went out praising the One who died for them and rose again. Why? Because the object of their faith was One who had conquered death, who had conquered the grave, and had promised not only to take them to Himself but also to transform them into the eternal, glorified likeness of Himself.

As we make Christ Jesus, God’s precious Son, the object of our faith, let us begin to prove the unseen things, for the unseen things are the eternal things.

Here you have the testimony of faith, “for by it the elders obtained a good report.” Now I said a moment ago, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proving of the unseen. For those of us who are Christians, we have the daily experience of proving the unseen. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:18 the things that are seen are just temporal; things that are not seen, are eternal.

When a believer comes into the presence of God and makes his requests known, God answers that prayer. We are proving the unseen, that we have a living God who knows the needs of His people and who loves to have them come in simple faith and trust Him. He will take care of everyone.

So we have here,

11:2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

11:3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God (by the word of His mouth), so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Here we have the understanding of faith. Not only the question of creation, but the arranging of time. It would be very edifying, I'm sure very enlightening for one to spend time on this matter of creation. But may I say very frankly, it takes more for one to believe some of the theories of men than the simple majestic simplicity of the Word of God.

The Bible starts, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And then, he talks about the reformation of the earth, "And God said, Let there be light. And light was." God speaks and it's done. He created the universe out of nothing.

My friend, if I take the very first statement of the Bible with respect to a living, eternal, sovereign, all-powerful God, I have no trouble with all the miraculous and supernatural things found in the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He speaks and it is done.

As we have it here in this third verse,

11:3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

I say, not only the material creation, but the arranging of time comes into play here. From the time He created the world until 2 Peter chapter 3:13, "The new heaven and the new earth," He is in control. You remember John 1:3 says, speaking of our Savior, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." He's the One who created all things. The man of faith says that God did it by the word of His mouth, the fire of God. God said, and it was done.

Now, this is the understanding of faith. Faith takes God at His word. Whatever God says, my friend, is enough. Do you know, it's an amazing thing to me that if God is going to reveal Himself, certainly He would take care of that revelation. And the trouble today is that too many people prefer the philosophies of men to divine revelation.

There is a living God and He has revealed Himself. When that God speaks, what He says must invariably be true. He not only is the Creator, but He's the Upholder of all things. We have the same in Colossians 1:17, "By him all things consist (are held together)."

Now this is the understanding of faith. God speaks and it is done.

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Now, starting in at verse four of chapter 11 and running through verse 16, we have the life of faith as seen in the early patriarchs. We have the sacrifice of faith as seen in Abel. We have the walk of faith as seen in Enoch. We have the work of faith as seen in Noah. We have the obedience of faith as seen in Abraham. We have the willingness of faith seen in Sarah; and it ends up in verse 16, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

Now I would like to spend a few moments on these verses dealing with this question, "Is it possible for a person to live the life of faith under any and all circumstances?"

Allow me to remind you of a statement I made in the last chapter that God has given us faith, not to transform the world, but to walk with him in the midst of any circumstance, any time of trouble, of affliction, suffering, of sorrow, misunderstanding, disappointment, whatever it may be. The life of faith is a life lived in fellowship with God, irrespective of circumstances. And this has been true down through the centuries.

ABEL—THE SACRIFICE OF FAITH

In verse 4 we have the sacrifice of faith as seen in this man Abel. You find this story in Genesis chapter four.

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.

Now the difference between Cain and Abel was that "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." He came in the divinely appointed way. He brought the firstlings of his flock, and God accepted

Him. God rejected Cain's offering because Cain brought the fruit of a corrupt ground; and God, of course, had to reject such an offering. Abel speaks of redemption through sacrifice, and the hearts of Abel and of Cain are revealed by their sacrifice.

I'm sure if we had looked at these two sons of Adam, you might rather have chosen ruddy Cain to tender Abel. I don't know. All I know is that God looks upon the heart. Cain, as God looked upon his heart, manifested sin, manifested disobedience. He came his own way instead of God's way.

And the heart of Abel manifested obedience to the provision that God had made. Just like people today. There are those who will come and accept God's way of salvation through faith in Christ, a very simple way. We acknowledge our worthiness of death. We acknowledge our sin. We acknowledge that the wages of sin is death and that either we die or somebody else dies in our place. Abel offered the firstlings of his flock. That lamb died instead of Abel, and God accepted the sacrifice, looking forward, of course, to the time when His Son would come, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

This is God's provision. This is the divine way. Man's way is the way of death. As Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

ENOCH—THE WALK OF FAITH

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.

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

Now here we have the walk of faith as seen in Enoch. You find his history in Genesis chapters 5 and 6. He walked with God, but what kind of a world did he walk with God in? Was it a godly world? Was it a sinful world? Well, allow me to quote from Jude 14-15: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the

Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

He lived in the midst of a world that was ungodly and moving fast toward the flood. The thoughts and the imaginations of the hearts of men were evil continually (Gen. 6:5). Enoch walked with God, and he pleased God who manifested His pleasure by translating Enoch so that he should not see death.

11:6. Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is (that he is God), and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

What did Enoch believe? He believed that God not only lived, but that God was accessible to the man of faith.

I don't know of anything in the world that pleases the heart of God more than to have men and women just put faith in Him and trust Him as their Savior, as their Lord, as their God. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. This is what the Bible says, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, that He is God, a living God, a holy God, and that He is accessible.

May I run ahead here. I'd like you to read and reread this 11th chapter. Faith says three things in the chapter. Now, look at them. In verse 6, faith says that God is accessible. In verse 11, faith says that God will keep His word. In verse 27, faith endures because it sees the invisible God.

Oh, I tell you as a pastor for many, many years, I've stood by the bedside of God's people in suffering, sometimes when they've gone out into eternity. And I could never understand how they could endure so much. Then I remember, faith endures because it sees the invisible God. The sufferings and tests of this present day are just mere passing things in view of the tremendous glory that's in store for everyone who believes Him. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him.

You say, “Mr. Mitchell, I can't do that where I live.”

Listen, Enoch lived in the midst of an ungodly world, full of ungodly deeds, full of ungodly words, ungodly thoughts and rebellion against God. In the midst of it, Enoch walked with God. And God enjoyed that fellowship so much that He said, “Enoch, come on Home with Me.” And He translated him so that he should not see death. Why? Because he pleased God. What is it that pleases God? Simple faith in Him. “For 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 please Him.”

The whole 11th chapter illustrates how one can live the life of faith in any age under any circumstance. May I again remind you of the fact that God gives us faith, not to transform or change the world. He has given us faith to walk with Him; and, as we walk with Him, then the world around us becomes changed. The important thing is not our service. We are not saved to serve. The important thing is not even our sacrifices. The important thing is our walk with God. And from our walk with God comes our service and our sacrifice. Our love for God, you remember, is manifested by obedience to His Word. Our love for each other is manifested by sacrifice.

NOAH—THE WORK OF FAITH

Now in verse 7, we have Noah’s work of faith. You find this, of course, in Genesis 6-8 as well as 1 Peter 3:20 and 2 Peter 2:5.

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.

Here is the work of faith. And this work of faith is seen in the building of the ark. He built an ark for the purpose of saving his household from a generation that was coming under the judgment of God.

Now let me take these two men, Enoch and Noah. Enoch walked with God in the midst of an ungodly people that had no time, no place,

no room, no thought for God. And yet, God had a man who walked with Him.

Now Noah did not mix up with the ungodly union between the descendants of Seth and the descendants of Cain. The result of that was that the testimony of the Word of God was gone! But God had a man in Noah who walked with Him in the midst of a world where again the very thoughts and imaginations of the heart of man were evil continually.

And God one time said to him, “I want you to build an ark to the saving of your house.” God gave him the instructions. God was the architect. Noah built it according to the instructions, and I take it from 1 Peter 3 that he was 120 years building the ark. And while he was doing this, he was preaching righteousness (2 Peter 2:5).

Remember when our Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:38-39 that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man? You'll notice that the Lord gave three things that pertain to the days before the flood. I read they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, and they were oblivious to judgment until the flood took them away.

Now there's nothing wrong with eating and drinking. But their life was occupied entirely with material things. There was no spirituality. God was outside of their thinking. They lived in eating and in drinking. They were marrying and giving in marriage. Now, that doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with marriage, but it speaks of the fact that sexual license was the order of the day. Eating and drinking, they were absolutely indifferent to the claims of God. Marrying and giving in marriage, they were absolutely given over to immorality. And then, they were ignorant of the coming judgment. It was not that they hadn't been told, for Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

When I come to 2 Peter 3, I read, that they were willfully ignorant, willingly ignorant.

You know, my friend, we're beginning to see this thing here in our country which has been so blessed of God. We see a total indifference to the person of Christ and to the claims of God upon human life. This question of living a life of immorality and moral

corruption is being answered with what they call “situation ethics.” It’s not a question of right or wrong. It’s just a question of whatever situation you find yourself in. Everything is excused. Sin is no longer sin.

We rationalize unbelief. We rationalize our sinfulness. We rationalize our corruption. We call it “love” when it’s nothing else but lust. And then men are willingly ignorant of the Word of God and ignorant of the gospel of Christ.

My friend, I have talked to people who have said to me, “I don’t want to hear about this. Please don’t talk to me about it. I don’t want to hear it.”

They are willingly ignorant, ignorant of the truth of the gospel that God has given to us in His Son Jesus Christ. And believe me, my friend, just as sure as the judgment of God came upon that generation before the flood, just so the judgment of God is going to come upon our generation—not only in our country, but throughout the world.

Here’s an amazing thing. In the last three or four years we find lawlessness, moral corruption and indifference to God are sweeping the world. In fact, in some countries, the church of Jesus Christ has had to meet in secret. We call it the underground church. And it would not surprise me even here in our country if the time would come when real believers may have to meet in secret.

I don’t know. All I know is what the Bible says. “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.” And I do know that the coming of the Lord is very, very, very near. So one can expect this.

Now, you say, “Mr. Mitchell, this will take place more than likely in the tribulation period.”

I would say it will come to full flower when anti-Christ will reign and rule, when lawlessness will reign. I grant you that in the tribulation period, in the days of the judgment of God upon men, you’ll have this situation. But I see the great preparation for it now. In fact, may I be blunt enough to say that we are coming to a time when the only hope of man is some great dictator, some powerful dictator who will bring order out of the chaos.

What have we got in our own land but confusion? What have you got overseas but confusion? War, lust, sorrow, suffering, affliction, disappointments, what have you? No hope. People are full of fear wherever you turn. Noah lived in that day in the midst of a world where the thoughts and the imaginations of the hearts of men were evil continually, and he walked with God. And even though he preached while the ark was preparing, just eight souls were saved, Noah and his family. In all his preaching, he had no converts. He was all out for God. He walked with God, faithful to His ministry, and had no converts except his own family.

And let me say this to you: God is going to have a people today. I don't know how far the world will go in its sin, in its rebellion against God. But I know one thing. As long as the Lord Jesus tarries, God is going to have a people who will walk with Him in the midst of it.

My friend, if Enoch could walk with God in the midst of an ungodly world, if Noah could walk with God in the midst of a world where the thoughts and the imaginations of the heart of man were evil continually, my friend, you and I who love the Savior can walk with God today. He has made the divine provision.

This is why the Spirit of God indwells us. And as we read this 11th chapter of Hebrews, read it and reread it; and, as we touch on these men, may it come right to your heart, that you, right where you are, can walk and live with God in this generation and be a testimony for Him. Be a person of faith and live the life of faith today which means a life of enjoyment of Christ, a life of intimate fellowship with Him.

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 (He is accessible to the man of faith).

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.

Christ Jesus is our ark of safety. In chapter six, He's our refuge. He's our hope. He's our anchor. He's our forerunner. In chapter seven,

He's our intercessor. In chapter nine, He's the One who put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. So, we believe God. And He is our Savior. We are within the "much more" care of God. And I say this very, very reverently, according to John chapter seventeen, God the Father is responsible for the keeping of everyone who really trusts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior.

ABRAHAM—THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

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.

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:

11:10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Did you ever stop to think that the life of Abraham was a life of separation all the way through? He left his home. He left his kindred. He left his country. He left everything that seemed to be certain to go to a place that was to be uncertain. All he had to stand upon was the Word of God. And I read that he obeyed. He went out not knowing where he was going. God had spoken. That was enough for Abram.

And when he came to the edge of the desert which is called Haran, his father died. By way of note, Abram did not progress in the life of faith until that old man died. In the light of Romans 6, this has significance for us. We will not progress in our walk of faith until our "old man" dies, is reckoned dead.

Then he went up north and came on down through that which is now Syria into the land of Israel, the land of Palestine, the land of Canaan. And then it was filled with tribes that were absolutely immoral, corrupt and idolatrous. And when he came into the land the first thing he knew he became wealthy. And when he got to the land, God said, "I'm going to give this land to your seed."

At the end of chapter twelve, he failed God when he went down to Egypt. But he came out of Egypt with great wealth. And when Lot left him, once again, he was alone with God. And God said in chapter thirteen, “Behold, the sand of the seashore for its multitude, so shall thy seed be.”

And he pitched his tent in a place called Mamre in Hebron, fed on the fatness of communion with God and then in chapter fifteen he heard, “Behold the stars of the heaven, so shall thy seed be.” He believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Then Ishmael was born. And then Isaac was born. And God says, “Get rid of Ishmael.” And afterwards He said, “Offer up Isaac.”

What I’m trying to say to you is that the life of Abraham was a life of separation unto God.

And the two things that characterized Abraham’s life were his tent and his altar. He lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob. They looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker was God. They signified by their life that they were just strangers, just pilgrims. They weren’t having their roots in the ground. And even though they dwelt in the midst of all these corrupt, idolatrous tribes, they lived for God; they walked with God.

SARAH—THE WILLINGNESS OF FAITH

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.

But what about Sarah? Well, you say, “Sarah was the one who was the problem. Sarah got Abraham into trouble in chapter 16 by saying, ‘You take Hagar my handmaiden. You get me a boy out of Hagar.’” And you remember this was not God’s order. She couldn’t wait God’s time. She made Abraham fail on the patience of faith, which you have in Genesis 16. In chapter 12, he failed in the sufficiency of faith. He did not fail in the fervor of faith or the obedience of faith or the reward of faith. No, no, He failed in the patience of faith.

Sarah caused him to fail by telling him to go to Hagar. And yet, you know, an amazing thing, not only did Abraham have to believe when he was 99 years of age that he was going to have a boy. But Sarah had to believe, too, when she was 89 years of age, when there was no hope for Sarah and no hope for Abraham of having any more children.

God said, “Sarah, you’re going to have a boy.” When she questioned him, He said, “Is anything too hard for God?” And He told Abraham in chapter 17, “Abraham, I am El-Shadai. Walk before me and be perfect. At the regular time from now Sarah’s going to have a boy. And you’re going to call his name Isaac.”

Marvelous thing! You’re going to have a boy and not a girl. And to know that before he was ever born, his name was going to be Isaac. Sarah, too, had to believe. For if I see in Abraham the obedience of faith, I see in Sarah the willingness of faith. She was willing to believe in spite of herself that she was going to have a boy, and she was going to call him Isaac. In Isaac would all the families of the earth be blessed.

He was the child of promise, supernaturally born. And she dared to believe in God. Here we see the willingness of faith to receive strength to conceive seed. She was delivered of a child when she was 90 years of age. Why? Because she judged God faithful who had promised, that what God had said, He would surely perform.

My friend, we need some of this real faith today. In spite of all that men, philosophers and some preachers have to say, in spite of all the world says, God will surely keep His word. There’s no reason why you and I can’t believe God and live today in the Word of God in obedience to Him, whatever circumstances may be. It’s what God wants. Let’s not become entrapped with the circumstances around us. As Paul could say in Galatians 6:14, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” The world is a system that’s diametrically opposed to God.

And this is where we live, surrounded by those who are indifferent to God, who are corrupt in their minds, whose hearts are full of indifference to the Savior, who care not for spiritual things; and yet, in the midst of this, you and I have to walk with God. It can be done.

This is the life of faith—walking with God in the midst of any and all circumstances.

So, I say, in Abraham we see the obedience of faith. In Sarah we see the willingness of faith. Now I would like to take verses 12 and 13 and look at what they say.

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.

These are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now, verse thirteen. And I would like for all who are studying this to put themselves in verse 13.

11:13. These all died in faith (Who? Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah), 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.

11:14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

11:15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

11:16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

I've read that for this reason. In verse 10, Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker was God. When you come down to verse 16, they desired a better country, that's a heavenly country in contrast to the country in which they lived. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Abraham was not ashamed of his God in the midst of idolatry. He stood for the one living God. And God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

You know, this gets hold of me, as if God were saying to the whole heavenly hosts, "You see these people on the earth who believe in Me, who have put their trust in Me? I'm their God." Did you ever stop to

think that God, the eternal, living God is not ashamed to be called your God? It's as if He were saying to all the created intelligences in the universe, "I'm their God."

My friend, are you ashamed of Him? May God grant you'll never be ashamed of Him. And, today, won't you walk with God in fellowship with Him?

Now, we go from verse 13 down through verse 16.

THE ANTICIPATION OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

11:13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.

If I may use my own words here, they heard the Word of God. They heard the promises of God. And, although they had not experienced the wonderful promises that God had given to them, they walked in faith believing that just as sure as God had spoken that He would fulfill His Word. So, the first thing was, they heard the Word of God. And, now, you can qualify for that. You've heard the Word of God.

Now, the second thing was they were persuaded of these promises, that is, they believed that the promises were the Word of the living God. A person can hear the Word of God and believe it's the Word of God, and yet not know God.

Oftentimes I hear people saying, "Well, I believe the Bible from cover to cover." That sounds very nice.

Then I generally ask the question, "How much of it do you believe between the covers? How much do you know of the purpose of God between the covers?" Of course, what they mean was that they believe the Bible to be the Word of God. I say a person can hear the Word of God and believe it is the Word of God, but that's not sufficient.

There are many people in our churches, good churches, where they hear the Word of God week after week, month after month, year after year; and yet, they have never, never, never come into a right relationship with God because they miss the third one. They heard the

Word of God, they were persuaded it was the Word of God, now this calls for action.

For the third thing was, “And they embraced the promises.” That is, they made the promises their own. So these dear Old Testament saints not only heard the Word of God and were persuaded it was the Word of God, but they embraced it; that is, they eventually made it their own.

The fourth thing in the verse we read, “And they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” They had a confession. And their confession was that they didn't belong down here. They belonged to glory.

So, you have the four things. They heard the Word of God, they were persuaded it was the Word of God, they embraced it, they made it their own. And they confessed it; they had a testimony.

I'm reminded of that verse in Luke 24 at the end of the chapter, verse 48 where God said to His disciples, “You are witnesses of these things.” In other words, I expect you to testify for me. We have it also in Acts chapter one verse eight where our Lord says, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Spirit of God shall come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses of me in Jerusalem, Judea, in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The apostle Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.” That is, we are God's living representatives, “beseeching men in behalf of Christ (instead of Christ) to be reconciled to God.” They had a testimony by their lives, by their words.

Now, if you take your Old Testament, the book of Genesis, for example, and read these Old Testament worthies, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, David and you follow on down through, you will find these were men and women who walked with God. They had a testimony in the midst of idolatry, in the midst of nations that were absolutely corrupt; yet they walked with God.

Now, let's follow along on this. And I read,

11:14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

Now, remember they lived as pilgrims and as strangers. They lived in tents, in tabernacles. They wandered about from place to place. They knew God. And wherever they went, the nations, the tribes around them in their idolatry and corruption realized here were some people who were absolutely different from everybody else. They believed in the one God, the living God. They didn't have any idols. They didn't live in outbroken sin or moral corruption. They were just different.

And my friend, when you and I have a real experience with the Lord, we're different, too. And our lives reveal what we are. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

And then he goes on to say in verse 15,

11:15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

That is, having left their countries to walk with God, they could have gone back to Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham could have gone back to the world. He could have gone back into the things of the world if he'd wanted to. But once he caught a glimpse of the heavenly reality in Christ, once he caught a glimpse of the promises of God for him, he would not turn back.

11:16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.

They caught a glimpse of what God had in store for them.

And may I just stop here for a moment. My Christian friend, has the world, does the world still have a tremendous attraction for you? When you and I accepted the Savior, we were not only delivered from our sins, we were not only delivered from judgment; but we were delivered from this present evil world. As Galatians 1:4 says, He "gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." "God forbid that I should glory," says Paul, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

Abraham could have gone back to Ur of the Chaldees; but, when he caught a glimpse of the heavenly country, everything else faded out

of the picture. It was true of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3 once he caught a glimpse of Christ in His righteousness, everything else faded out. He had a complete reversal of values so he could say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7). "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him . . . that I may know Him (Philippians 3:8-10a).

Is this the passion of your heart? Are you going to live this year with a real heart for God? Is He the very center of your being? My friend, may I urge upon you not to go back to Ur of the Chaldees, not to go back to the old life. Having caught a glimpse of the Savior, go on with Him.

11:16b. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.

God is not ashamed to be called their God. You know, I kind of like that. It's not that they were ashamed of God, but the fact that God was not ashamed of them.

My friend, may I say to you that the Lord is not ashamed of the work He has done. You remember in Hebrews 2:11, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Of course not, He's not ashamed of the work he's done. He's not ashamed of the cleansing power. He's not ashamed of transforming you from a child of wrath into a child of God. He's not ashamed to call you His children. He's not ashamed to call you brethren, and God is not ashamed to be called our God.

That's why these men in Old Testament times looked for a city. Their hearts were fixed upon the hope that God had set before them. Even though they never realized it as they walked upon earth, they knew God would keep His Word. And friends, God will always keep His Word. As we had in verse 11, faith says that God will keep His word. Now, in verses 17-19, we have another picture of faith in action.

11:17. By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

11:18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

11:19. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Let me just stop here. My friend, since you have really put your trust in the Lord, you are bound to be tested—not to get rid of your faith but to purify your faith, to strengthen your faith. The faith that God gives to us is never destroyed by tests, but is purified by tests.

You remember in 1 Peter 1:7-8a where Peter says, “The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing (offering) of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love;” I say, my friends, faith must be tested, but it is never destroyed. Now, you think about that.

So, when God did test Abraham, it was a real test. He would never have tested him, if Abraham hadn't had faith in the God of the resurrection. Now, let's look at it for a moment.

You remember in Genesis 13, Lot left him. In chapter 21, Ishmael left him. Now, in chapter 22, God says, “Give me your boy Isaac.” The life of Abraham was one of testing. He left His country. He left His kindred. He left His father's house. He lost Lot. He lost Ishmael. And don't tell me he didn't love Ishmael. He really loved Ishmael. The book says so. “But in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

Now, God says, “Give me Isaac—whom thou lovest.” You remember that Isaac was received the first time from the dead. In chapter 21 Abram is 100 years of age. Sarah his wife is 90 years of age. And yet, they believed they would have a boy. And they knew they were going to call him Isaac. God had said this, and the result was that Sarah had a boy at 90 years of age. And they called him Isaac.

Now, God says, “Give me your only beloved son, Isaac, the one whom you love and offer him up for a burnt offering.”

Now you say, “Now wait a minute. Didn't God promise that the heavenly seed and an earthly seed would come through him?”

Yes, yes. You see, even though he slays Isaac, God must come through. He has promised that through Isaac shall all the families of the

earth be blessed. “My covenant will I establish with Isaac” (Genesis 17:21).

Abraham laid him on the altar and drew his knife to kill him, believing, will you listen, believing though he slew his son, God would have to raise him from the dead.

Let me come to Romans chapter four the end of the chapter where I read these words, Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences (because of our offences), and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:20-25).

What is saving faith, but faith in the God of the resurrection! Abraham is called the father of all those who believe. But what is the object of that faith? The God who raises the dead.

My friend, I come right back here. The foundational truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the resurrection from the dead. The death of Christ would be a tremendous tragedy if there were no resurrection. I know you can't separate them. At the cross he bore our sins. At the cross he died our death. At the cross He received a judgment for you and for me. At the cross He cried out, “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But if there's no resurrection, then the cross is a tragedy.

As I was saying in one preceding chapter, the very resurrection of Christ from the dead is God's proof to you, my friend, not only that He's the living God, but that Christ is the only Savior; and the only way of salvation is through Jesus Christ. As He could say in John 14:19, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” So here you have the faith of Abraham—active faith, faith in action, the courage of faith.

“Even though I take my knife and slay my boy,” says Abraham, “I believe that God can raise him from the dead. The El-shadai who is the enough God, the all sufficient God who gave me Isaac the first time from the dead, will raise him from the dead because in Isaac are the promises to be made and to be confirmed.”

This is what you have here, the courage of faith, active faith, a faith that believes God in spite of everything to the contrary. “Though I slay my boy, I know that God will raise him from the dead.”

My friend, this is the faith that pleases God. And when you believe that Christ died for you and was buried and was raised again from the dead, this is the same kind of faith that Abraham had when he offered up his son Isaac. I didn't say you have the same amount of faith. I said the same kind of faith. It's faith in the God of the resurrection.

That's why I believe when we lay our loved ones to one side and God takes them Home and the body goes back to dust, we do it with a positive assurance that just as sure as God raised His son Jesus Christ from the dead, just so is He going to raise everyone of His own children from the dead and glorify them with the glory of His own precious Son.

As our Lord could say in John 17:22, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” Paul could say, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Is that where your trust is, in the God who raised Jesus from the dead? This is the same faith Abraham had when he offered up his son Isaac. If you don't believe that, then you read the last few verses of the book of Romans chapter four when I quoted to you a few moments ago. And this test was met by simple trust. I tell you my friend, we lose nothing by trusting God. Remember that, will you? You never lose a thing by trusting God.

ISAAC AND JACOB

Now, when you come to verse 20, you have this question of Isaac, this man who was raised from the dead. And I read,

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

Very little is said about Isaac. Isaac is the obedient son. And he passed on the promises to his sons, Jacob and Esau. And he blessed them

both. We find that in the book of Genesis 28. And then you have in verse 21,

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.

Now, you take this man Jacob. Oh, what a wealth of truth there is on him from the 27th chapter of Genesis on down to the end of the book. But the only word about him in Hebrews 11 is that he ended his life—this man who lived a very, very up and down experience—blessing the mighty Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And by the way, by so doing he was manifesting his superiority.

As Hebrews 7 says, the one blessed is less than the blesser. And Jacob, this dear old patriarch, put his hands on the head of Pharaoh and blessed him. And he did the same thing with the two sons of Joseph as he blessed them. By faith he did this. Read Genesis 49 where we have Jacob's prophecy concerning all his sons.

And then just a word about verse 22.

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 believed that the time would come when the people of Israel would be delivered from their bondage and be taken out of Egypt. He looked ahead and believed that God would deliver Israel.

He said, "Now, when you go, don't forget to take my bones with you because you're going to be delivered."

This is the life of faith, the life of really believing God in spite of all circumstances. My friend, this is the life that pleases God.

Here we have the life of faith as seen in the Old Testament worthies. These are the ones who are given to us to encourage us to live and to walk the life of faith. And as I have said before and I repeat it, the life of faith is the life of the enjoyment of Christ Himself, a life of fellowship with Him. And I say again under any and all circumstances there's no excuse for any one of us. God is sufficient for our every need, and He has made the provision whereby you and I can walk with Him.

Remember that God did not give you faith to change the world, to transform the world. He gave you faith to walk with Him. And then as your life and my life are changed and transformed, those around us are affected by our lives. As we walk with God, our words, our works, our service, our attitude to others, our whole life ought to be a revelation of the character and heart and love and tenderness and compassion of the Savior.

My, what a need there is for that these days. And whoever you are and wherever you are, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, having become a child of One who is God, then let us live heavenly lives here on earth. Remember we are citizens of heaven.

As Philippians 3:20 says, "Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior." Let us act that way. Let us live that way. This is the life of faith. And as we wait for the Savior, as we had it in Hebrews 10:37 and 38, we live the life of faith. And we have seen this in these Old Testament worthies all the way down to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Joseph.

MOSES

We have before us this man Moses, the man of God, the great law-giver who lived the life of faith. Now that does not mean he never failed God. But the pattern of his life was the life of trusting God. I think all of us realize that even Abraham, Moses and David and the Old Testament worthies, though they walked with God, had times when they failed God. But notice, no failures are mentioned in this chapter. You know, I rejoice in that; and when you and I stand in the presence of God, there will be no evidence of any failure.

There will be no one in heaven or earth or hell who can produce any evidence of our sinfulness, of our failures, of our weaknesses. That's why I love this 11th chapter of Hebrews. None of their failures are reported.

Now, let us look at these verses for Moses starting in at verse 23. I'm saying these things, my friend, because, wherever you live under any circumstance, it is possible that your life will be characterized by a

great yearning to live pleasingly to God day after day, even in our frailty when we fail Him. We run to Him because we love Him. This is the life of faith. Isn't it wonderful to know that you can do it right where you are?

And even the very afflictions of life are from His hands. What for? Because they are the best things for us. You know, He knows you and me better than we know ourselves. He knows more about you than you do,. And he loves you with an everlasting love. All He asks of you and of me is that we walk with Him. This is the life of faith. Now, let's read verse 23 of Hebrews 11.

THE COURAGE OF FAITH

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.

Moses was born under the sentence of death.

Now, his father and mother were godly people. And Jochebed his mother, manifested tremendous faith when she saw that he was "a proper child." He must have been a good little fellow because she determined in her heart in spite of the king's law that he must not die. She made a little ark of reeds, daubed it with pitch inside and outside, and put the baby in it down by the riverside among the reeds. Then she sent Miriam, his sister, to stand watch to see what would take place.

And you remember how the princess, the daughter of Pharaoh, came to bathe in the river. There was a baby in an ark there, and the baby cried. What woman can stand an army of tears from a baby? The tears of this baby Moses were more powerful to the princess than even the great edict of her father who said, "Every boy child of the Hebrews must be killed."

And here is a little Jewish boy in a little ark with Miriam on the bank watching what's going to take place. And the moment that princess saw little Moses, he began to pelt her with his tears.

What do you think she did? Well, what would you do if a beautiful baby pelted you with tears? Why you'd pick it up, of course.

You know, I've been a pastor for a great many years and my custom has been through the years of going down into the nursery of our Sunday School and looking at the babies. And years ago, I used to go in there and pick them up. I just loved to look at them and pick them up and hug them. And then one day, I picked one up and, when I put the little fellow down, he began to cry. So I picked him up again, and he quieted right down. When I put him down, he cried.

Well, how in the world am I going to get to my class? I had a class of adults. And here a baby is keeping me from going to my class because of its tears. I pick it up and it stops crying. I put it down and it starts bawling again. So, from there on, I didn't pick babies up. You see I had the responsibility of teaching older folk in the Sunday school. And I can just see this baby Moses pelting the daughter of Pharaoh with his tears so she picked him up.

"Why," she said, "this is one of the Hebrew children."

And Miriam stepped forward and said. "Would you like to have someone take care of this baby for you?"

She said, "I certainly would, and I'll pay you wages."

So, you see, little Moses came under the care and protection of the daughter of Pharaoh. And whom do you think Miriam took the baby to? Of course, to his mother. And who could take care of the baby any better than the mother? Here is the courage of faith. Jochebed trusted that God would work it out, that her baby boy Moses would be taken care of. You know, it's a wonderful thing to see mothers have faith in God like that.

Mother, do you have faith like that? Do you have the courage of faith in spite of the circumstances of the day and the pressures of the hours that the outside world bears in on you? Won't you take that precious baby of yours and dedicate that child to the Lord, that your boy, your girl, might be a channel of blessing to others? Just like the mother of Moses prayed over Moses. I'm sure she did. I'm sure she longed for Moses to be a real man of God.

You know this man Moses was trained three ways. He was trained first of all on his mother's knee. And then, he was trained by Pharaoh in the court. And then he was trained in the desert by God. Isn't

that wonderful? Trained by his mother, trained by Pharaoh, by the Egyptians, and trained by God.

You know, it's a wonderful thing. All this little fellow learned at his mother's knee, he never forgot—even when he became a courtier, a prince in the Pharaoh's court. And as I read history, possibly Josephus, I find that Moses became a real military strategist. He was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians. He had all the skills imaginable, and yet he never got away from what he was taught by his mother.

Mother, am I talking to you today? Even though your little baby doesn't understand half what you say, will you please, before that child of yours ever goes near the grade school, pour into your child the Word of God.

Take the baby even when it is in your arms and sing to it the things concerning the Savior. And then, when the little child begins to run around, put into its heart wonderful little scriptures like "The Lord is my shepherd." Put into the hearts and minds of your babies and your children the precious Word of God.

I do not know how long Moses was with his mother, a very few years. He spent most of his time until he was 40 in the Egyptian court being schooled to be a king, schooled to be a pharaoh. But he never got away from those first seven years when he sat at his mother's knee and she poured into him the wonderful facts of God in His dealings with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. She taught him the history of how God dealt with His people, of how he was the living God, of how He had given them promises, and that through them the whole world was going to be blessed,. Even though they were slaves in Egypt, they were going to be channels of God for the blessing of the world.

And I can just hear this dear woman, Jochebed who was the mother of Moses pour into his ear the wonderful things of God, the living God. In the midst of idolatry, in the midst of a world of corruption. Yes. And he never got away from it

Friend, listen. We are living in a world today that is controlled and dominated by the forces of evil. I'm well aware of the fact that God in His sovereignty is working all things out after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). But I also recognize that the god of this age has

blinded the minds of those who believe not. You cannot go outside into the world, you cannot read your newspapers and your magazines without realizing we are living in a day when God is being ignored. He's being passed over by others. But you can in your own home before your boy and your girl go out into the world to school, even to grade school, pour into your child the wonderful things of Christ.

And, by the way at the first opportunity, you take your children to Sunday school. Don't send them. You take them yourself. There's a place for you. I don't care how old you are. But may your child, your boys and your girls be impregnated with the Word of God.

And Mother, Mother nobody can take your place. You have a position with your children that nobody else has, not even Dad. And won't you know what Jochebed did. She just poured into Moses' heart and ear the wonderful things of God. She didn't have a Bible like you have. She didn't have a church to go to like you have, but she did know the Lord. And she poured into that precious boy the wonders of God, the living God. I say all the learning of the Egyptians never got Moses away from what he learned at his mother's knee.

Oh, God give us mothers these days who shall teach their children even when they are very, very young. And don't, don't rationalize it by saying they are too young to understand. You pour into their hearts and minds the precious Word of God, and they'll never get away from it. Will you please do that? Here is the courage of faith in the midst of a world that has no place for the Savior.

Do you know when I was a boy I was not raised in a Christian home. My folks didn't become Christians until they were way up in life in their 50s, late 50s. But you know, my mother sent us to a little mission school when I was a laddie to get us off the streets.

And the fellow who ran the mission used to give us crackers. They were what we called ship's biscuits, about the size of a saucer, enough to break your teeth. We used to dip them in tea and for every verse we would memorize he would give us a biscuit. So to get the biscuit, and we were hungry kids, believe me, a ship's biscuit was worth having in those days. And we were poor, but we were good people. And we would memorize scriptures.

Little did I realize that when I became a Christian at 25 years of age, I was going to be a minister, having left the machine shops in my business of tool and dye making to preach the Word of God. I'm sure that a great many of those passages that I learned as a child in this little mission have stayed with me through the years. And I'm sure they have kept me from doing things I might have wanted to do.

So, I'd like to urge upon you, dear friends, and please don't be too hard on me because I'm repeating this. But I'm so desirous that every Christian mother might see to it that her boys and girls know something of the Word of God. Because one of these days they are going to go out into the world that has no place for Christ and no place for God and no place for Christians. And they need to stand for God.

How can they stand without the Word of God? And you remember the Psalmist could say in the 119th Psalm, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word... Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:9, 11). And as dear old John Bunyan wrote in the fly-leaf of his Bible, "This book will keep me from sin or sin will keep me from this book."

Moses never got away, even with all the philosophizing of the Egyptian court with all its wise men and philosophers and magicians, from those few years at his mother's knee. Now, let's go on.

In verse 24, we have—

THE CHOICE OF FAITH

11:24. By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

11:25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Here you have the choice of faith. The time came in Moses' life when he had to make a choice. Here was Moses with all his learning, with all his ability, great gift, power, strong-will, energy, with the whole empire at his feet. And in this empire was a race of slaves, Jewish

people, not wanted, babies killed, but they were God's people. And there came to his mind, one day, that he had to make a choice.

You know, in thinking about this, do you know what I think was the greatest test of Moses? I don't think the greatest test was leaving the court or the possibility of being the next to sit on the throne of Egypt. No, I think the greatest test was leaving his foster mother, Pharaoh's daughter, the one who saved him from death when he was about three months of age. She was the one who nurtured him, the one who trained him in the court, the one who showered her love day after day upon this boy who was her foster child, preparing him, looking at him every day that "this is the coming Pharaoh of Egypt, my boy."

You can just see this. And one day this man, when he's in the prime of life at 40 years of age, turned his back on his foster mother who had trained him and sacrificed for him. He preferred to be with the people of God in their sufferings, preferred to be with them and turned his back on the pleasures of sin which were just for a season.

And, my friend, don't you tell me that Moses didn't have a time. I'm sure this wasn't a thing of the moment. I think he had to sit down and be real about this thing. It's a choice between him and God. And when he chose to go with God, he had to turn his back, not only on Egypt and all the wealth and the honor and the power it would bestow upon him, but he had to turn his back on his foster mother, the woman who loved him with all that she had.

I tell you this was a terrific, terrific decision to make.

My Christian friend, some days you and I have to make decisions. There came the time in my life when I had to make a decision. Would I go on with God whom I was trusting as my Savior or should I go on with the world and turn my back on my Savior? Should I try to carry water on both shoulders, openly religious, acting like a Christian, secretly in sin, desirous, lusting for the power of the world, the honor of the world, the plaudits of the world, the pleasures of the world, the wealth of the world?

Perhaps you or some you know or love have made the wrong decision, openly showing that they belong to the Savior but their heart is in the world. Their heart has become occupied with love for the world.

But may I say, God wants us to walk with Him. To go the other way would be idolatry. It would mean compromise. My friend, Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

Sin pays wages, my friend. Remember this. Sin pays wages and God executes the penalty and it is death. That's what Romans 6:23 says. Sin pays wages. Sin is an awful thing. It was sin that caused the Son of God to go to the cross of shame. Oh, listen, friend, make your choice today. Commit your life to the Lord as a child of God. If sin is between, confess your sin, be cleansed and forgiven. But go on with God today. Choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness or enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Let us manifest then the choice of faith to walk with God. And, my friend, you don't bring back the past. Don't mourn over your past. Repent it. Confess it. Forget it and walk on with God each day.

Now, the third thing is in verse 26 where we have—

THE OBJECT OF FAITH

11:26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

I wonder if I could use Philippians 3 in this, just to illustrate the point we have here. From about verse 6 on down to verse 10, remember, Paul was saying that some were glorying in the flesh. And he said (in my words), "If they can glory in the flesh, if they can be proud of the flesh, so could I if I wanted to be." Then he lists his credentials as an authentic Jew and identifies himself as to his conservative theological position.

He was fervent for God, persecuting the church. Touching righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless. In fact he could say when he stood before the Sanhedrin, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).

But when he got a glimpse of Christ, my friend, everything else faded out of the picture—his honor, his position, the whole business. Everything his life was wrapped up in went overboard. In fact, he could say, "I count everything but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

He counted everything but loss—the good things as well as the bad things—just to be found in Christ, righteous, just to win Christ, just to know Christ.

My friend, this is what you have here in the Old Testament. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And might I say that when you talk about the treasures of Egypt, you're talking about treasure, the gold and the jewels and the silver and all that went with it. As I said earlier, this included the honor of being head of a nation, the power of rulership, the wealth of an empire. He counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. What in the world changed him?

Here you have a complete reversal of values. Here for 40 years he has been living in the lap of luxury, of wealth, of power, of honor, of position. And he turns his back on the whole thing because he got a glimpse of the living God. The apostle Paul, for example, well taught, well trained, a zealot for God, did everything the law required. He was a Pharisee, and yet he was wrong. Once he caught a glimpse of Christ in His righteousness, my friend, everything else came into perspective.

My friend, are you building up treasure on earth where moth and rust corrupt (Matthew 6:20), or have you chosen the reproaches of Christ? Have you counted the greater, greater riches than the treasures of this world because you have recompense unto the reward?

As Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, when he said, These light afflictions are just for a moment. They are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

So, here we have that the object of faith was the person of Christ. And when Christ is the center of our affection and devotion, my friend, everything else will take its rightful place. Oh, God open your eyes and my eyes to the beauty and the glory of Christ. For when we see Him, then we get a true perspective. We get a true value of things. It may be a complete reversal of values. So what? May it be that, as long as Christ is the object not only of our faith, but of our affections and of our devotion.

Now, we come to the fourth thing about faith in verse 27. And here we have the endurance of faith, for I read,

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

In verse 6, faith says that God is accessible. In verse 11, faith says God will keep His Word. In verse 27, faith endures because it sees the invisible God. In Colossians 1:15 I read that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. He's the first one in a new creation.

In John 14, He could say to Philip, "Have I been so long with you and you don't know me? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believe me, I am in my Father and my Father is in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." And here Moses saw the invisible God. And having seen the invisible God, who was Pharaoh? Who was anybody? Even the mighty Egyptian empire meant nothing to this man Moses. He endured in the midst of persecution and opposition and, indeed, under the sentence of death. He endured because he saw the invisible God.

You know, as a pastor I have seen God's people endure, endure such things because they have seen the invisible God. I think one of the greatest miracles on earth is to be in the presence of some man or woman suffering excruciating pain. They know they haven't got many more days to live on earth, and yet they are still glorifying the Savior. They have had a glimpse of glory. They've had a glimpse of heaven.

Oh, I tell you this life in Christ is so wonderful. It's so marvelous. I'm amazed that Christians who confess to believe Him and love Him know so little about it in their lives. Oh, the reality of life in Christ, esteeming the reproach of Christ. He endured because he saw the invisible God.

Do you? Did He not say, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). Is it not written, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Hebrews 13:5). And believer, may Jesus Christ, God's Son, be the object of your affection and of your devotion even today.

Now, in verse 28 we have—

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

11:28. Through faith he (Moses) kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Now, remember that the Jews were not saved from the judgment and from death because they were good or because of their character or because of some religious observance. God had said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Not when I see your good works. I’m fully persuaded that the Jews in Egypt were no better outwardly than the Gentiles, than the Egyptians. Except for one thing, they believed God. And they manifested their belief by obedience. The lamb was slain. The blood was applied. And when the death angel passed through the land, they were delivered.

Hebrews 9:22 says, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5:7, we read that Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. That’s why you have in Colossians 1:20, “He made peace through the blood of his cross.”

And as you have it in 1 John 1:7, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, can cleanse us from all sin. It’s not your works. It’s not your character. From man’s viewpoint, it’s the obedience of faith. From God’s viewpoint, He sees what Christ has done. And when our faith is placed in the Son of God and in the work He accomplished for you and for me, then, my friend, we are free from judgment and we’re free from death.

Now, starting in at verse 29 and going right down through verse 31, we have the triumph of faith. And I would give you three things here in the triumph of faith: first of all at the Red Sea, then at Jericho, then the story of Rahab in verse 31.

RAHAB—THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH

11:29. By faith they (that is the Israelites) passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying (trying) to do were drowned.

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

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

Will you please mark these three things in the triumph of faith? Here you have a whole nation, one, manifesting confidence in God's Word. With the Red Sea in front of them, the army of Egypt behind them, the mountains on each side of them as God deliberately led them into a box, what shall they do? Instructions were given and Moses smote the waters with his rod. The waters parted, and the nation of Israel walked through as on dry ground. The Egyptians tried to follow them and were drowned. The waters came back and covered them.

And may I suggest here there is always danger when trying to imitate somebody else's faith. If there's genuine trust in the Savior, my friend, you belong to God. You become His child. You have eternal life. If you're trying to imitate somebody else, that's a false thing. You come under the judgment of God. Nothing delights the heart of God more, and I've said this so often, than just believing what He says is true whether you feel it or not. By faith, they passed through the Red Sea; and the Egyptians, imitating what they did, were drowned.

Now, the next one in verse 30, “

11:30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were encompassed about seven days.

You know, this is the most unreasonable thing that I know of. At Jericho we see man's weakness, and yet we see God's power. Obedience opened the door for the power of God to be manifested.

Did you ever stop to think that that's so today? The power of God is always manifested in obedience, the second thing in the triumph of faith. Look at the story. Here God said to Moses, “You take the people of Israel and go for a walk each day. Walk around the city and go back to your tents. Do that for six days. The seventh day go around seven times, blow your trumpets and the walls will fall flat.” That's the most unreasonable thing in the world.

Listen, friend, the Bible says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell flat,” not by their tramping, not by their walking, but by obedience to the

Word of God. And I repeat it, obedience brought the power of God and their deliverance.

May I suggest to you that obedience in your life will bring the power of God. You see, faith and obedience go together. Manifest your obedience or, if I may use a different term, manifest your love for the Savior by being obedient to His Word.

I trust today that your faith is genuine; that it's real. And I pray God that you may experience something of the life of faith, this life of fellowship with the Lord Himself, and experience day by day His delivering power.

Which leads us to the third thing concerning Rahab. You find this, of course, in the same chapter of Joshua 6.

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

The story of Rahab is found also in the book of James 2:25, where I read, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way." In other words, her works were the works of faith.

Now, here's a Gentile woman who somewhere along the line has heard, along with the rest of the Jerichoites, that a nation of slaves was coming out of Egypt. This woman Rahab received the spies. She had heard about the deliverance out of Egypt, how they crossed the Red Sea. No doubt the spies informed her and gave her a report of the God whom they served. She believed the report. By the way, Isaiah 53:1 says, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Rahab believed the report. And because she believed the report, her work of protecting the spies was the manifestation of her faith in their God. So that, when the walls of Jericho fell flat, everyone in Rahab's house, everyone who was with her in her house, was preserved. And you remember later on when you come to the book of Ruth, you find that Rahab was the grandmother of King David.

Think about these Old Testament stories. "These things were written for our admonition unto whom the end of the age is come." (1 Corinthians 10:11). God has put these instances into the Old Testament

for you and me to see how God works in obedience to faith. So we find in these three verses 29, 30 and 31 the triumph of faith at the Red Sea and Jericho and with Rahab.

Now, starting in at verse 32 and running down through verse 34, we have the exploits of faith. I would like to remind you of a little verse in Daniel 11:32 which says “The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.”

THE EXPLOITS OF FAITH

11:32. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

11:33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

11:34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

My friend, what a passage of scripture. You talk about the exploits of faith! The time would fail me to talk about these men. The time would fail me to talk about Gideon. You find him in Judges 6-8. This man Gideon stood alone for God in the midst of a nation in spiritual declension, that had even gone into idolatry. Gideon was the man who stood for God in the midst of it all.

And then we have Barak in Judges 4. You find Samson in Judges 13-16. I know quite a few jokes are made of Samson, but let me tell you this. Samson, even though he failed God, loved God. He had his weakness. But he manifested tremendous faith in the midst of a nation in positive declension.

May I just stop here and say this, that in every time of spiritual declension God has His men of faith who will stand for Him.

This was true before the flood. As I said at the very beginning of this chapter, Enoch walked with God in the midst of an ungodly world. Noah walked with God in the midst of a world when the thoughts and

the imaginations of men were evil continually. Abraham walked with God in the midst of an idolatrous world.

What shall I say about the rest? When men are stiff-necked, apostate, in declension, rebelling against God and His revelation and His Word, God will always have those who will trust Him. That's why the writer of Hebrews says by the Spirit of God,

11:32a. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

All these men lived in a time of spiritual declension, yet they lived the life of faith and experienced the power of God.

Do you, my friend?

Every affliction, every test is nothing less than an open door for God to demonstrate His presence and His power. I repeat what I've said so often. It is only in the hard places that you really get to know God. This is when faith is purified. Faith is never destroyed by testings and trials and afflictions. Faith is purified. Faith is strengthened.

And here you have the exploits of faith. What about David and Samuel and the prophets? Need I go into this? You have the story of Samuel in 1 Samuel and you have the story of David in 2 Samuel. Look at their achievements:

11:33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

11:34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,” (that is, they put down idolatry and moral corruption), “obtained promises,” (I suggest 2 Samuel 17 when David had the wonderful promise from God concerning him and his family), “stopped the mouths of lions,” (this speaks of Samson in the book of Judges and Daniel for whom God stopped the mouths of lions), “quenched the violence of fire,” (I suggest Daniel 3 when the three Hebrew children

were cast into the fiery furnace in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The Lord delivered them from the fire. There wasn't even the smell of fire upon their garments.), "escaped the edge of the sword," (I would suggest David. "By faith I ran through a troop. By faith I leaped over a wall." By faith he did certain things.), "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

"Woman received their dead raised to life again."

Did you ever stop to think of the kind of people in the Old Testament whom God used? "An hundred of you shall put 10,000 to flight" (Leviticus 26:8). As Romans 8 says if God be for us, who can be against us? (verse 31).

These great worthies, these men who lived the life of faith, prove that obedience brings the power of God. When everything seems to be contrary, when things look absolutely impossible, that's when God moves.

Sometimes He doesn't move because we haven't come to the end of our resources. We think we'll do 79 percent of it and God will do the rest. Oh, no! Not even if we thought we could do 5 percent of it and God did the rest. No. He uses you and me as channels to display His power and to manifest His love and His grace.

So here you have the great exploits of faith; and may I give you that verse again in Daniel 11:32,

"The people that know their God shall do exploits."

You say, "My, that's wonderful."

Well, may I suggest something just as wonderful. In verses 35-38 we have

THE ENDURANCE OF FAITH

You know, I sometimes wonder, I'll just suggest this, that there's more faith manifested in endurance than in exploits. It's wonderful to do exploits for God. It thrills your heart to see God do something, manifest

His power in delivering people and so on. Well, what about the endurance of faith. Listen to this.

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

11:36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

11:37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented:

11:38. (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Here you have the endurance of faith. And may I suggest, my friend, the endurance of faith is just as real as the exploits of faith. You see, the exploits of faith are out in the open. You see them and you praise God because God answered your prayer and manifested His power. Wonderful thing.

But did you ever think it takes more faith to endure? It's less seen, but it's just as real. As I say, it was all right to do the exploits. But here is the faith that endures in suffering, in affliction, in weakness; and it calls for just as much faith to endure suffering patiently as it does to have faith that does exploits because the faith that enables us to endure is also the same faith that equips us to do the exploits.

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

In other words, as Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 4:17 that these light afflictions are just for a moment as we have our eyes upon the glory, upon the promises of God. They endured afflictions and sorrows and tests and pain and suffering and living in dens and caves of the earth.

My friend, this calls for the endurance of faith. And let me say again, I'm of the persuasion it takes more faith to endure than it does to

do exploits. The trouble is the one who does exploits is put on a pedestal. The one who endures is not seen, except God sees him; and God is magnified through him.

It may be I'm talking to some today who are in trouble and in affliction, and you are patiently enduring it. Ah, my friend, God sees that. And He's going to reward that. It's just as great to God as some of the great exploits of faith you have in the scriptures.

Let's take a moment to look back through the 11th chapter where we have the life of faith manifested in God's people down through the centuries. Irrespective of circumstances, God has always had those who lived the life of faith. And may I again remind you that God has given to His people, faith, not so we can transform the world but so we can walk in fellowship with Him.

And that's what the life of faith is, the life of continual walking with God in His fellowship, with His blessing, in His word. It's the enjoyment of divine life. It's the enjoyment of a fellowship beyond the ken of men. And we've been dealing with this walk of faith, the triumph of faith and the exploits of faith.

These are God's people. These are men of faith. They wandered about in sheepskins, goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered in deserts, in mountains, and lived in dens and caves of the earth—"of whom the world was not worthy."

One of the greatest needs among God's people today is this endurance of faith in the midst of afflictions, in the midst of sorrow, in the midst of misunderstanding.

Did you ever stop to think of it? What causes angels to be astonished when God's people are in affliction, in pain, in suffering? Instead of cursing God and blaspheming, they are quietly resigned to the will of God and thanking Him for His presence and the enjoyment of His fellowship.

Like one dear old man who loved the Savior could say, "I can't see to read my Bible. I'm too weak to pray. So I've just put my head on His blessed bosom, just enjoying Christ for Himself."

Ah, the endurance of faith. When I think of the people I have met in these past years, saints of God, unknown by the world—in fact, for

the most part unknown by many of His own people. But we find there the endurance of faith. I say, my friend, this is just as real as the exploits of faith, the faith that enables one to endure.

“Women received their dead raised to life again.” You find that, of course with Elijah and with Elisha in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. “Others were tortured” and slain. Why? They looked for “a better resurrection.” They were looking forward to the time when God would raise them from the dead and their bodies would be transformed. “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings.” One can’t help but think of Joseph and Daniel. You have those who “were stoned” like Naboth.

Did you ever think of it? Sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, wandering about in deserts and living in sheepskins and goatskins—destitute, afflicted, living in dens and caves of the earth.

But listen to what God says, “Of whom the world was not worthy.” What does that mean?

My friend, they were too good for this world. The world wasn’t worthy of having them live in it. They were testifying by their actions that they were just strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Look at this 11th chapter in verse 16 and read that God is not ashamed to be called their God.

The man of the world says, “Who are these weak people?”

Weak, yes. Christians, yes. They don’t mix up with the world. They don’t do this, and they don’t do that. Yes. They suffer and they are in sorrow and they are misunderstood.

God said, “Yes, they’re just too good for this world.”

Sometimes I think of that when I see some of God’s dear saints here in my town. And I’ve seen them elsewhere. They are unknown by other people; but, my friend, they are living testimonies to the holy angels of God. And they reveal in their very life and actions not only the endurance of faith, but also the wonderful grace and faithfulness and keeping power of the living God.

Oh, that we Christians might know something of this life of faith—not only the exploits of faith, but the endurance of faith. And God says, the world is not worthy of them. The world looks upon them as being fanatics or as those who have something wrong with them.

No, my friend, God says they're too good for this world. And sometimes I believe that God takes from this world some of these dear, dear, dear saints who have known so much suffering. He takes them home. Why? Because the world isn't fit to have them live in it. And the only reason we Christians are living in the world is because He still has a job for us to do. He wants us to snatch brands from the burning, that those around us might know of our Savior Who not only redeems and saves but who keeps us and fits us for the presence of the living God. I wish in some way I could put into words the way I feel about this.

I wish we could get the true perspective of how God looks at His people. We think that the men who are great in God's sight are preachers and teachers and missionaries. Not necessarily so. You will find that some of the greatest saints of God are suffering saints. I think of Amy Carmichael of India, over twenty years in great frailty yet mightily used of God. Her writings have been a benediction to thousands of people here in the homeland and around the world.

Oh, may you and I get a true perspective of values. It's not the one that shouts who is the great one. It's the one who lives the life of faith, whether in the exploits of faith or the victory of faith or here, the endurance of faith.

And then, you will notice he sums up the whole thing in verses 39 and 40. You come to the end of the chapter, and I read,

11:39. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

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

God had given them promises, and they never had those promises fulfilled in their lifetime. But they believed God.

You see, friends, today this amazing eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews tells you and me that irrespective of any circumstance, the Lord wants you and me to live the life of faith. With some, you'll have exploits. With most of us it's going to be a question of the endurance of faith.

I think of our missionaries, these dear men and women who have gone to different lands to live in the filth among the diseased who are in darkness. I've seen the conditions under which they have to live and I've seen what they have to eat. It takes nothing short of the power of God to live under such conditions. And yet, they are happy because they are in the will of God. You may never hear about them. They are quietly doing their job, right where God has put them.

It may be I'm talking to some who say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, you know if God had called me to a mission field, my, that's just the way I would live."

No. Friend, are you walking with God where you are? In the circumstances under which you live? You see, God puts us where He wants us as the best place for us to serve him, to live for him. If your whole time is filled up with your family, washing dishes, taking care of the house, cooking meals, and you say, "What opportunity do I have of pleasing the Lord?" Well, my friend, right where you are, you can take care of your family, take care of your house and your husband and your friends and do it as unto the Lord.

When we are faithful in the little things that God gives us to do, then He may move us up to do greater things. But if I'm not faithful in the little things, if I can't walk the life of faith where I am now, how do I expect to live or to walk the life of faith in some other place?

No. God knows exactly where we are. He will not test us beyond what we are able. He will with the temptation open a way of escape. God is faithful to you. What He wants us to do is to live and to walk with Him.

This is an amazing thing, isn't it? That in the 20th century, you and I can live the life of faith.

He's put us right where we live, in that town, in that village, in that home right where we are and right where we work. That's the place to start to live the life of faith, a life of fellowshiping with God. He knows about our circumstances. He knows our frailty. In fact, He knows us better than we know ourself. And it's because He's put us in those circumstances that our faith might be tested. Yes. That our faith might

be purified and we might become strong. And, then at the right time, always on time, God will put us where He wants us.

You see, God works at both ends of things. He works on you, and He works at the other end. And, when you're fitted for the job that He has for you, the job will be right there waiting for you. So you be faithful. That's all He wants of you. He wants you to be faithful right where you are.

Remember, God never rewards greatness. He rewards faithfulness. And He knows exactly where you are. He knows all about your circumstances. He knows all about your weakness. He knows all about your frailty. He knows everything about you. And He loves you. And He cares for you. And it's because He loves and cares for you, that He leaves you right in that place where you are.

So may I again say, God has given you faith not to do some tremendous thing, exploits of faith. No, He's given you faith to walk with Him under all your circumstances. This is the life that pleases God. And may I say, it's the life that gives you the real rest of heart. It gives you peace of mind. It gives you real satisfying joy, even in the midst of suffering and pain.

Now, may the Lord grant to you today that joy and expectancy with your heart filled with your love for Christ. And right where you are today, won't you start to live the life of faith, the life of precious fellowship with him?

Confess your failures to Him, yes. He has promised to forgive you and to cleanse you. What for? Because He wants your fellowship more than you want His.

Now, isn't that an amazing thing? He wants your fellowship more than you want His.

Why don't you just get together with the Lord and have a wonderful time together—today.

Chapter Twelve

We're starting now on the 12th chapter of this marvelous book of Hebrews. We've just finished the 11th chapter, the chapter on faith, the life of faith, a life of fellowship with God. In chapter 12, we have the question of hope. And, then, when we come to chapter 13, we have the question of love. So in the 11th chapter you have faith, in the 12th you have hope, and the 13th you have love.

You know it's an amazing thing, by the way, as you read the epistles of the New Testament to note how these three wonderful facts, faith, hope and love, are given to us continually. Of all your writers of the New Testament who speak of this, if I were to be a little particular, I would say Paul is the apostle of faith.

And then when you come to Peter, he's the apostle of hope. Peter is writing to those who are going through suffering; and, hence, they need hope. Paul takes us as sinners and transforms us into the children of God; and he deals with our standing and our position in Christ, our fitness to come before God. Whereas Peter, he's encouraging the people of God in their suffering, in their affliction and possible martyrdom; and what they need is hope.

When we come to the epistles of John, John is dealing with the family. He's the apostle of love; and, hence, the great theme of the apostle John is fellowshiping with God day by day. The gospel through John is how to get life, and the epistles of John are how to enjoy that eternal life which we have with the Father in Christ Jesus. So we enjoy that life by the intimacy of fellowship with God.

Now we come to chapter 12 of Hebrews. It has to do with this matter of hope. I would like to read the first four verses.

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,

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.

12:3. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

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

Here we have the confession of our hope. And he brings before us, first of all, this question of a race. Now, you take this first verse,

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,

12:2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher (the perfecter) of our faith.

There are just three or four things I want to say here concerning this matter. First of all, let us consider the great cloud of witnesses. Some teach that there are those who witness the kind of life we live, as if the people of God in heaven, the saints in heaven together with angels, are looking down on us and witnessing our lives.

Now I question whether that is the thought of the Spirit of God here. He has just given to us in the 11th chapter a multitude of witnesses, starting with Abel where we had the sacrifice of faith and Enoch who had the walk of faith and Noah with the work of faith, Abraham with the obedience of faith, and then the endurance of faith, and so on. These Old Testament worthies are witnessing to us that Christians in any age under any circumstance can walk with God. They are our encouragement to run the race while we wait for the fulfillment of our hope, looking unto Jesus.

This gives us hope. This gives us the confession of hope, the incentive to live by faith, to live for God. We can look forward with anticipation to the completion of God's purposes in His people and the completion of every promise. This is what you have in mind here in the first verse of this chapter. "Wherefore being surrounded." These Old Testament worthies brought testimony to the fact that you and I can live the life of faith which would be the encouragement of hope.

For you remember in Romans 8:24-25, “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.” You see, if it were not for hope, we’d soon be discouraged. All these Old Testament saints lived in hope; and, while they were waiting the completion of God’s purpose in the human family, they lived the life of faith.

So here we come to this question of hope which is held out to us as it was held out to them as an encouragement and incentive to live the life of faith.

Now mark the preparation for the race, for I read, we are to lay aside every weight, every hindrance, every encumbrance and the sin which so easily besets us, and we are to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus. Let us lay aside that sin which clings to us like a cloak, like a man trying to run a race with a long coat on or a woman running a race with a long dress on. Her steps are very short. They are encumbered because of the things they are wearing.

So we are to lay aside every weight, every encumbrance, every hindrance, and especially the sin which so easily besets us—that sin which clings to us or, as someone said, “the sin that is greatly admired by many—the sin which captivates our heart.” There are those today who say this is the sin of unbelief. That could be true.

But let me go beyond that. Is it not true that most of us have some special thing in our lives that saps out our spiritual strength, that hinders our living the life of faith, that blurs our vision of Christ? It robs us of living the life that is pleasing to God, and it blurs our vision of the hope we have in Christ.

You say, “Mr. Mitchell, I’ve prayed about it. I’ve set my will, I’ll never do it again.”

But you do. You do, and you put yourself in the way of temptation. You allow this one thing that clutters up your life. It keeps you from a life of commitment to God. If it’s a sin in your life, it’s something that keeps you from enjoying the presence of Christ. It is something that hinders the Spirit of God from living the life that He wants to live through you.

And don't ask me what that something is. You know what it is. With some it's unbelief. With some it's a pet habit. With some it's a question of desires of the flesh. With some it's a question of fear of what men and women might think of you, and you refuse to give it up. It is the thing that clings to you like a coat and that hinders you from running the race with patience.

We have a lot of people who get stirred up in a meeting. They go to some Bible conference. They go to a revival meeting. They get stirred up. It lasts about a week. It may last a month, and they're back in the old rut again. Yes, it's a spasmodic thing, not what He wants here. Let us run with patience the race set before us, just steadily plugging ahead.

Do you remember that in Isaiah 40:30-31, "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." And if I may change the wording of that passage, I would read it this way. "They that entwine their hearts about the Lord should exchange their strength; they will exchange their weakness for His power, for His strength. And then, they mount up with wings as eagles; they get God's vision. They shall run and not be weary. They shall become God's messengers. And they shall walk and not faint even though the path may be rough." You see, the key of it is entwining your heart about the Lord. Anybody can go along for a week; but we are to run with patience, with determined endurance.

I remind myself of the woman who said to Dr. Louis Sperry Chafer one time, "It's no use talking to me, Dr. Chafer. I can't hold out."

"No," he said, "that's right. I tell you what you do. Why don't you live the next 24 hours and just trust God for the next 24 hours?"

So she came back the next night and he said, "Well, did you trust God today for the 24 hours?"

"Oh, yes, and I had a wonderful time."

"Well, trust Him tomorrow for the next 24 hours."

And by the end of the week, he said, "What have you got to say now?"

“Why,” she said, “how foolish of me. The Lord keeps me every 24 hours. He’s kept me this week. He’ll keep me the rest of the way.”

You see, we get our eyes on ourselves. We get our eyes oftentimes on our frailty. We get occupied with our failures and with our weaknesses instead of Christ. Notice what he says, “They that entwine their hearts about the Lord shall exchange their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” There are many who start well. They really start well, and then they faint en route. Why? Because they look at others or they look at themselves.

I’ll say very candidly—if I were to keep looking at Mitchell, I would faint, too. And, if I look at you, I’ll faint. I’ll faint for you. But we are to run with patience the race that is set before us. This is determined endurance, not a spasmodic thing because the very next verse says, “Looking unto Jesus.” Rivet your attention upon Jesus. Get your eye on the goal.

You remember in chapter 3, the first verse says, “Consider Him.” Now, looking unto Jesus, look away off to Jesus. Look away from every distraction. Even look away from these Old Testament worthies in chapter 11. Or, if I might put it, get your eyes off the spectators and get your eyes on the goal. You know that, when men run a race, they don’t watch the spectators. If a person is running in a race and begins to look at the spectators, my friend, he’ll soon drag behind. Runners don’t even look at the ones running along side of them very much, except to spur them on. If they see someone getting ahead of them, that really spurs them on to get ahead. That’s what you have here.

Look away off to Jesus, the object of our faith—not only for our salvation, but for our daily life of faith because He’s our hope, as 1 Timothy 1:1 says, “Jesus Christ, which (who) is our hope.” Look away off toward him.

By the way, do you know of anyone more righteous than He? Do you know of anyone more lovely than He? Do you know of anyone you’d rather look at than He? Ah, this is our problem. We like to look at ourselves. We like to look at others. We like others to look at us, too. So we detract them from the Savior. Let us gaze upon Him, unto Jesus, who

not only is the object of our faith and the life which we live day by day, but He's also the captain of our salvation. He's the perfection of our faith.

Look at what it says. "Looking unto Jesus, the author, the captain of our faith." That is, He's the leader of those who believe. And He's the perfecter of faith. You know, He's going to finish the job He started.

You remember Ephesians 2:8 and 9 and Philippians 1:6. Many Christians are worried about losing their faith. That's because they are occupied with their own faith instead of being occupied with the Savior who is the object of our faith.

My friend, don't worry. Worry and faith are poor bed-fellows. There's no need to worry because He who starts the job is going to finish the job. Isn't that what Jesus had in mind in John 17 when He said to His Father (my paraphrase), "Father, holy Father, You keep these fellows that You've given to Me. I have kept them thus far. You keep them the rest of the way."

Did you ever stop to think that you are in the hands of the eternal, sovereign God to be kept? It's not that you are keeping yourself, my friend. You couldn't do that for five minutes. God is taking care of you.

And sometimes people say, "Well, I'm not worried for myself, but I'm worried about the other believer. He's so weak."

My friend, can't you let him be in the hands of the Lord, too? If the Lord takes care of you, can't He take care of the other believer? You think He just takes care of the strong ones? Well, my friend, he takes care of his weakest child. If I may quote from the Psalms when he says, using an Old English expression, "The Lord cocked His ear." Can't you see the Lord on His knees with His hands cocking His ears, listening to the faintest cry of His weakest child. Why? Because He wants to take care of each one, and He does take care of them. "And he which hath begun a good work in you shall perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

My friend, isn't it a wonderful thing? He's not only the captain of our salvation, but He's the perfecter of our faith. And believe me, He who starts the job will always finish what He starts. Do you know of anything that God ever starts that He doesn't finish?

Men do. I've seen men start houses and then not finish them. I've seen men start on certain tasks and not finish. Sometimes you and I start on tasks that we vow we're going to complete, and we faint en route. This is the trouble with many Christian workers. We start a job, we see a purpose, we get a vision of what is to be done, we start well, and then we drop en route.

My, I'm so glad that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior, never starts a work He doesn't finish. When we put our trust in Him and when we've accepted Him as our Savior, He's started a work in us; and our God will never, never be happy, will never be filled with joy, will never be satisfied till every one of His children stands in His presence conformed to the image of His Son.

My friend, look away to Jesus. And, if you haven't been doing this, start today. Look away to Jesus. He's the captain. He's the perfecter of our faith. We have the guarantee that that which He starts He will perfect, He will complete.

And with your permission I would like to read again the first four verses of this chapter.

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

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.

12:3. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

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

Ephesians 1 speaks about the question of God's hope. Now we have it here, "who for the joy that was set before Him." He had a hope, the hope of having a people in heaven in eternity with Himself, the hope of completing the purpose of God for man, for the earth, for the universe. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross; and

He despised the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Did you notice this? For the joy that was set before Him, the joy of a complete redemption, He was willing to go through suffering, testings, trials, misunderstandings, crucifixion and being cast out. He went through it. He patiently endured because He saw what was ahead of Him. "For the joy that was set before him," the joy of a completed, guaranteed redemption for men. I love those verses, Jude 24-25, which say, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior."

Did you ever think of the joy that is going to be Christ's when He presents you and me to His Father? You know, sometimes we sing that song, "Oh, that will be glory for me." Do you remember that? I think sometimes we ought to sing, "Oh, that will be glory for Him," for the joy that was set before Him. As Hebrews the second chapter says, "He's going to bring many sons into glory."

Remember that passage, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor that he by the grace of God should face death for everyone." What for? That He might bring many sons into glory. The hope of the Savior is that all who put their trust in Him will stand in the presence of God, looking just like Jesus Christ. This is His joy. This is His hope. And because of that, He endured. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross."

By the way, may I say, my friends, He never despised the cross. He endured the cross, but He despised the shame. For you remember when our Lord was crucified, they disrobed Him. And for one who was living in that part of the world, even for a man or a woman to have any part of his body exposed was a terrible shame. Even the men, from their necks right down to their feet were clothed.

My friend, Jesus Christ had His clothes taken from Him, and He was nailed to the cross totally naked, made a thing of shame. I say He never despised the cross. He endured the cross. He despised the shame. He patiently endured the purpose of God for His life in order to be a

Redeemer, to be a Savior. And for the joy that was set before him through that suffering, through that work at the cross, He perfected redemption for mankind.

My friend, can't you look away to Jesus, and can't you and I patiently endure whatever it costs, so that He will be glorified and magnified in our life? And notice what happens. Because He endured the cross and despised the shame, I read that He sat down "at the right hand of the throne of God." Because he went down in humiliation, joyfully, willingly, in perfect subjection to the will of His Father and the purpose of God, God highly honored Him and gave Him a name that is above every name; and He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

By the way, this is the fourth time in Hebrews where we have our Lord sitting down. Having finished the work, He sat down. We have it in chapter one, verse three, where you have, "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

In chapter 8, the first verse, He "is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." In chapter 10, verse 12, "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God;" Here, He "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God."

Humiliation in the purpose of God brings the highest exaltation. And as the Apostle could say, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with him." (2 Timothy 2:12). This is in the heart of Paul, the hope of Paul, when he could say in Romans 8:18, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory."

My friend, this is patient endurance because of the hope set before us. Just as Peter wrote to the suffering saints in his epistles, likewise the writer here is talking to these Hebrew Christians who were to rejoice in the spoiling of their goods. They had suffered. Many were facing martyrdom. And the danger was to fail en route, to start well and then faint on the way. He's trying to encourage them to live the life of faith because of the hope that is set before them. And our Savior is given to us as an example.

Notice the next two verses,

12:3. For consider him (get your eyes on him, meditate about him), that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

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

What does the writer mean?

As I said in preceding lessons, God put a heavenly Man on the earth. And the moment He came forward to start His ministry, He was bitterly opposed. In fact, His very birth was met with cold indifference by the religious leaders. He was met with hatred by Herod who sought to kill Him. And down through His life, sinners opposed Him; religious leaders opposed Him. They took Him and despised him and spat upon Him, cursed Him and crucified Him. Why did they do that? Because in the purpose of God who loved you, He went through all this contradiction of sinners against Himself so that He might complete the work of redemption, so that you and I might be delivered from sin, from death and from hell and so that we might become the people of God.

You know, it is an amazing thing today that so many people, even church people have so little love for the Savior, so little appreciation of what He accomplished for you and for me. He endured the opposition and the hostility of sinful men.

Now, you recognize that the gospels are full of this. You can't read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John without realizing the terribleness of the opposition and the envy and the hate of men against Jesus Christ who went about doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil.

When Pilate said, "I will scourge Him and let Him go," they said, "Scourging is not enough!" (Luke 23:13-25). And believe me, my friends, scourging was a terrible thing. To me, one of the vilest, saddest things in the world is the scourging that the Romans perpetrated upon people. They beat them within an inch of their life. Their flesh hung in ribbons. Pilate thought he could get out of it by scourging the Savior; but these blood-thirsty, evil men, religious leaders who hated the Savior, would not be satisfied until He became an accursed thing. They nailed Him to the cross in shame. And because of your salvation, He endured

the cross, despised the shame, enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

Now don't you be weary. Don't you faint en route. But rather, patiently endure. My friend, there is danger in getting weary, getting faint-hearted. It's so easy to slacken up in the race. It's so easy to get weary. How many weary saints there are, weary of the tests of life, weary of the opposition of the world, weary of the indifference of men to what they are going through.

I've had people say, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, the more I testify for the Lord, the more I'm hated, the more I'm ignored, the more people slight me."

Yes, that may be true. But listen, you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. It hasn't cost you your life yet, has it? It hadn't cost these Hebrew Christians their life yet. They hadn't lost their lives for the glory of God, but they were sinning in failing to patiently endure. Believers can become faint because of the way. God has never promised us an easy life. He's never promised us that it is going to be easy.

I'd like to encourage you today. Listen, fellow. Listen, dear woman. I don't care what your age or your experience is; but if you love the Savior, the Lord wants you to patiently endure what you're going through.

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, I can't stand another minute of it."

I know. I know. And the Lord knows. And He says He will not test you beyond that which you are able to bear, but will with the testings open a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). God is faithful to you. In fact, He knows more about your circumstances, He knows more about your frailty, He knows more about your weakness, He knows how faint you are, how little your faith is. He knows all about you; and yet, may I remind you, He still loves you. He never leaves you. He's always with you. Don't faint. And don't get discouraged, don't get disheartened.

You say, "Well, if you were in my position..."

Well, I'm not in your position. But the Lord knows all about your position and your condition. He's right where you are. And you have not yet resisted unto blood. You've never yet become a martyr for Christ.

That is, you've never lost your life for Christ's sake. You haven't lost your life for the glory of God. Jesus did. Remember what He went through just because He loved you. And the writer says here "I want you to consider Him." Wrap your heart around Him. Get your mind filled with him.

Oh, listen. As I said to some folks this week, "Please sit down sometime and read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." You know, many of us love the epistles Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians. My, we just love them all. We love the epistles of John. And some of you may love the epistle to the Hebrews by now. Could I suggest you read the gospels through John, Matthew, Mark, Luke. Read them through.

"You mean just sit down and read them?"

Yes, and will you look at the tenderness of Christ, the loveliness of Christ, the grace of Christ, the compassion of Christ. Remember He went about doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil. And yet, men took Him. They spat upon Him. They accused Him of being demon-possessed. They scourged Him, they crucified Him, they disrobed Him, they spit upon Him. They did everything the human heart could do against Him.

Wasn't God with Him?

Yes, Jesus could say, "The Father hath not left me alone because I do always the things that please Him." And the things that pleased the Father and the purpose of the council of God was that His Son should become a sin offering, a despised one, an accursed thing that you and I might be saved. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He became what I was, sin, that I might become what He is, righteous."

And if you think my friend, that you've really got tests, I guarantee, I can think of some other Christians who are suffering far more than you are. And yet they are praising God. They are thanking God for His presence, His fellowship and for His salvation.

Can't you do that? Let us endure. Let us not faint en route. But let us throw aside everything that would hinder the Son of God's being magnified in our body.

Remember, consider Jesus Christ. Look away to Jesus, the author and the perfecter of your faith. And even though you are feeling faint and faint-hearted, and you are worried about your faith, don't worry anymore. He has promised to perfect that faith; and some of the tests that you go through are for the perfecting, the cleansing of your faith that you might stand complete in all the will and purpose of God.

And I am sure that the Lord is making this wonderful book more and more precious to your heart. It's a grand thing to know that God has not left us to our own ingenuities or to our own abilities, but the Spirit of God who is the Author of scripture has come to lead us and guide us into all truth.

You remember, our Lord said that in John chapter 16, verses 8-11. And then following in verse 13, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you (direct you) into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." And how glad we are for this, that the Spirit of God is willing to take His Word and make it real and precious to our individual hearts, irrespective of how long we've been a Christian or how much we've been taught the scriptures or how long we've been on the way. It is the Spirit of God who imparts to us the deep things of God.

You remember in 1 Corinthians chapter two the Apostle speaks of this, that we do not know the things of God, except that which the Spirit of God reveals unto us. And He imparts, He reveals, He makes the truth to live in us as we read of it in the Word of God. And remember, our Lord said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

This is what people fail to realize, what most Christians fail to realize—the power of the Word of God by the Spirit of God in an open heart. If one's heart and mind are closed to truth, God will not reveal truth to you. But if you really want to know the truth and your heart is open to it and your mind is open to it, the Spirit of God will take the Word and make it very real and very precious to you.

And by the way, may I say, when you read the Word, I mean that you should read it and read it and read it—not just take a part of a verse and run off on a tangent to try and prove your doctrine. Find out rather

what the Spirit of God is trying to say to you through the ministry of the Word of God.

First of all, we are to lay aside everything that would hinder our seeing Christ and anything that would hinder our running the race with Christ set before our eyes. Or as Paul could say in Philippians 3:8 (paraphrased), “All these things that were gain to me, that wrapped themselves around me like a cloak, I’m willing to count but the refuse of the street just to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering.”

Now, the incentive to run the race is, “We ought to look unto Jesus, the author, that is, the captain and perfecter of faith.” He’s the One who leads us. He’s the One who guides us. He’s the One who’s going to perfect that which He has started in us. It is a wonderful thing that He is going to do.

You know, it’s a rather remarkable thing in the book of Hebrews, the various titles that our Savior has. For example, in chapter one He’s the Son of God; in chapter two, He’s the Son of Man; in chapter three, He’s the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; in chapter 12 here, He’s the captain of our salvation; and He’s the perfecter of our faith.

And then, in verses 3-4 we have the example, and our Lord is the example. We are to consider Him, weigh carefully how He lived, how He endured the opposition and the hostility of sinful men. And the danger for you and me is to become faint-hearted with the result that we fail en route. We don’t endure. And you remember in the Old Testament that they sinned in failing to persist in endurance. Half-hearted believers generally become faint when it comes to the tests and trials of life. God wants us to look to Him and to consider carefully our precious Savior. And how in the world can we do that if we do not spend some time reading concerning Him in the Word of God.

Now, we come to the second great thing in this chapter and this is discipline in the family. “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.”

12:5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

12:6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

12:7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?

12:8. But if ye be without chastisement (discipline), whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

12:9. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

12:10. For they (that is, our fathers, our parents) verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

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.

Now, I've read this portion because of its tremendous import. And I would like to suggest the fact that God disciplines His family. He chastens them because he loves them. What for? For the upbuilding and the purification of their faith. Now, in verses 5-8 we have the reason for discipline.

And before I take that up, I'm going to read from Job which says, "Behold, happy is the man whom God (El-Shadai) correcteth (or chasteneth): therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17). And you'll find that also in Proverbs 3:11-12. You remember in the book of Ruth, the first chapter, how Naomi could say, "I went out full, and I came back empty," and she complains about the chastening of El-Shadai.

You know Job was right when he said, "Blessed is the man whom El-Shadai chasteneth." The very fact that God chastens His people is an outward manifestation that we belong to Him, that He is our Father. You have the same thought in 2 Corinthians 6:18.

And may I suggest that it is El-Shadai who chastens us. Now, you remember this name of God, El-Shadai, is given to us first of all in the book of Genesis chapter 17, the first verse, where Abraham has been out of fellowship with God for thirteen years. He's been waiting for a son,

and he's been playing with Ishmael. God steps into the picture and says, "Abraham, I'm El-Shadai. I'm the All-Sufficient One. Walk before Me and be thou perfect. I will do exactly what I want to do? Why? Because I'm the sovereign All-Sufficient God."

One is reminded of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians when He said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" speaking of the tests and the trials and the persecution through which he was going. "Who is sufficient for these things." And he cried out, "Our sufficiency is of God." When you and I know that God not only is the Savior, but He's also the All-Sufficient One, we understand He's the one who chastens.

Now, why does He do it? May I say again in verse six, because He loves us; "for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." Did you ever think of it? He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. The very fact that we receive chastisement is a proof of our sonship, and it's a proof of His love for us.

Now, to be chastened means to be disciplined. I take it that to be scourged is something that happens once for all in a believer's life. It's more severe than chastening. Really, God is bringing us into the place where His will becomes our will, He being the sovereign God who is El-Shadai.

You know, I was one of three boys in a family and my mother raised us boys. And she could do it as I've oftentimes said. She did it with the end of her slipper. You know, my mother used to chasten us about every day. She'd give us a crack with that slipper and have it back on her foot before the first yell ever got out. Of course, practice makes perfect.

But my father whipped me, he chastened me just three times in my life. I remember all three of them. I don't remember the whippings my mother gave me because she did it too often, I guess. She did not do it in anger. She did it because she loved me. She never chastened, she never whipped or disciplined the neighbor's children. Her responsibility was her children. And she certainly disciplined us. And I thank God for this. I always feel sorry for children today who are not disciplined, who are not chastened.

You know, sometimes I hear parents say, in fact a number of men have told me, “When I was a boy, my dad whipped the hide off me. He just punished me beyond all reason. And I’m not going to have my boy go through that.”

Oh, no, but you wouldn’t be the man you are if your father hadn’t chastened you. Now, I’m not holding out for cruelty, nor do I believe that parents ought to chasten the child when they are angry—as a rule, you over-do it—but to chasten them in love.

You know, if my mother chastened me, where do you think I would run after I was chastened? You don’t think I would run to my dad. I’d just get another one. I’d run to my mother. She loved me. She chastened me. I didn’t understand it. But I knew one thing. Even with my tears, I ran to my mother. She’d take me in her arms, the very one who chastened me would take me in her arms and love me. Why? I was the object of her love.

Don’t you think our heavenly Father is the same way? He doesn’t chasten the unsaved, the children of wrath. He chastens His people.

How often I’ve had people of the world say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, you know this dear woman. She’s a Christian. She’s very, very religious. She’s a very, very good woman; but she’s always having something wrong—afflictions, sickness or always something gone wrong. I don’t understand it. Why she should go through so much.”

My friend, God doesn’t chasten you if you’re not a Christian. Why? Because you are not His child. I want to tell you that the moment you and I accept the Savior we come not only into right relationship with the Him and become a child of One who is God; but also, when we become rebellious and willful and want our own way, then the Lord chastens us. And may I repeat that when we’re chastened by God, it’s a sign of sonship? It’s a sign of His love for us.

Now, it’s not very nice, I grant you that. I don’t like to be whipped. But it produces something. And for you to tell me that you love your children and do not discipline them, my friend, it’s not true. You don’t love them enough to discipline them, so that they can become

good men and women. God holds the parents responsible for their children.

Now, I remember in the book of Ephesians chapter six, the first three or four verses, it says children are to obey their parents in the Lord which is right. And this is the first commandment with promise, to obey their parents. But Paul also says to the parents, especially to the father, not to provoke your children to wrath but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is, don't chasten them when you are angry. And don't stir the child up. If you love them, you'll chasten them.

Sometimes I think it is harder on the parents to chasten the child than for the child to be chastened. It's not an easy thing, especially when a child is willful. Then that may call for "scourging." It's what you have here. If a child of God is persistent in his willfulness, don't be surprised if God puts something in your life to bring you right down to where you belong, where you bow before Him in the acknowledgement of your willfulness and sin. And then, you will experience that wonderful love that passes the understanding of men.

The reason for the chastisement, the reason for the discipline is because He loves you. And if you are not chastened, how do you know you're a child of God? It's just these two things that I want. The reason for the chastening, first of all, is the proof of His love for you and the proof of your sonship to Him. So don't be surprised if the Lord disciplines you. And then sometimes, He may have to scourge you.

In other words, He breaks down your will so that you'll be happy to be in the will of God. Why not come into the will of God now? Why not yield yourself to the Lord? Why not be in that place where your life is committed to Him, so that His will will be perfected in you without your having to be chastened. But, my friend, He loves you so much. Oh, He loves you so much, He wants to see you in the place where He will be glorified through you. You remember again that verse in Ephesians 2:10, we are his craftsmanship, we are His workmanship, we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

What for? What for? That God might be glorified in you and in me. And I repeat it, God never chastens in anger. He does it because He loves us. He's working something out in you and in me. For remember,

we were stones cut out of the quarry, and we're in all kinds of shapes. He has to chip us. Sometimes He has to grind us and polish us, fitting us so He can work in us His own good plan and purpose. Sometimes when we rebel against Him, then He has to take the chastening rod and discipline us. It's for our good. It's for His glory. So I repeat it again, the chastening of God is because He loves us and because we are His children.

To me it's a wonderful thing to know that every individual Christian is an object of special delight to God. You have a particular place, my friend, if you love the Savior, a particular place in the very heart and program and purpose of God. Nobody can take your place. You see, you're somebody before God. In fact, you mean so much to God, as the first chapter of Hebrews says, He sends His angels, His holy angels to minister unto you and unto me who are the heirs of salvation. Being the children of One who is God, we come under the rules of the family. We come under the discipline of the Father because He loves us and because we're His children.

He loves us with a perfect, everlasting love. And as the prophet of old said (paraphrased), "The mother may forget her child; I will never, never forget thee" (Isaiah 49:15). And blessed is the man whom El-Shadai, whom the Lord chasteneth (Job 5:17).

You see, friends, the very fact that we are chastened of the Lord is a positive proof to the whole universe, not to just the folks in the church but to the whole universe. God says these are My children; these are My beloved ones. Oh, listen, friends, as Romans 1:7 says, we are "beloved of God." And if you are the child of God, the beloved of God, the object of His love and of His affection, you're going to be disciplined; you're going to be chastened. He manifests His love for you by chastening.

For you to say that you love your children, but don't discipline them, there's something wrong with you or your children. I don't think any mother loves her boys more than my mother. She would lay down her life for us. But, I'm telling you, she saw to it that, when we did something wrong, she told us. She always kept her word.

She said, "If you do this, I'm going to punish you."

And we did it anyway.

She didn't arbitrarily say, "I'll do it tomorrow or I'll do it tonight," she proceeded immediately to do it.

I asked her one time, "Why don't you wait until the next day?"

"Because," she said, "I would have forgotten it and I'm going to keep my word so that when I tell you if you do certain things or say certain things that I'm going to punish you, I have to keep my word to you. Because if I don't, you'll take advantage of it."

Isn't that true. Wasn't that true of you? I'm no different from you folk. You may have gotten away with more than I did, but I have thanked the Lord a thousand times for having such a mother who loved me enough and cared enough for me that when I was wrong and disobedient that she chastened me. That was a sign of the fact that I belonged to her. I was her child.

Now, the second thing about chastisement is in verses 9-11. You remember, the reason for it was in verses 5-8. Now, the result of it is in verses 9-11. And he contrasts here the human and the divine. Let us read these verses.

12:9. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

12:10. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

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.

Now, then, the writer takes the human experience in a family to illustrate God's own love. It says here that when our fathers . . .

You know, I was struck by the fact that it doesn't say "our mothers." It says "our fathers." The father, by the way, is responsible for his family before God. You take that passage in Ephesians chapter 5 about husbands and wives. The husband is the one who is held responsible for his family.

What do we mean by "headship." It says there that the husband is the head of the wife. Yes, that doesn't mean a boss. It doesn't mean a

pope. It doesn't mean you've got to be arrogant. No, it means that God holds you responsible. The man has the place of responsibility and the woman has the place of honor. And, when you both take your place, you have a wonderful time. That's why in Ephesians 6:4 we read, "And ye, fathers, provoke not (don't you stir up) your children to wrath." Fathers are held responsible. So, I read here.

Fathers chasten their children "for their own pleasure." It's what seems good to them. But, when God does it for us, it's for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness—not a man-made holiness, but that which is God's.

"Now, no chastening for the present seems to be joyous." And I'll say it isn't. How well I know it! As I said before, my dad whipped me just three times but I remember every one of the three. He just laid it on. My mother, she did it every day; but Dad—I'll always remember those three times. He may have gotten some profit out of it; but, boy, it was tough for me. But it worked. It worked.

So it is in our heavenly family. Our Father chastens us, and it's not very nice to go through. Sometimes He puts us in the path of affliction. Sometimes He causes suffering. Sometimes He causes disappointments. I don't know how it affects you. In fact, I've seen some Christians who, under the testing and trial and the roughness of the path, get very despondent.

Sometimes we fail to realize that God is allowing this and even doing it for the purpose of bringing you and me into that place of wonderful relationship and fellowship with Himself. It is not very nice to be chastened, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. That is, it produces fruit.

Often we fail to see anything that can be accomplished through our suffering. But, my friend, He does. He does. Do you know why? Because He loves us. Because you are His child. Because He sees a purpose which He is working out in you individually and in all of us collectively. And when you and I stand in the presence of God, I tell you, my friend, we'll be praising Him more for the tests and trials and

maybe the discipline through which we had to go, than all the blessing of the ministry which we may have had.

Discipline? I'm living in a generation that doesn't like the word "discipline." We want our own way. In fact, I'm sorry to say that in many of our grade schools and high schools and colleges and universities, some of these professors teach the students, "You do what you want to do. You do your own thing."

Yes. And when you say, "you do your thing," you can bank on one thing. Most of it is going to be lawlessness, lawlessness. We don't want to be corrected. We want our own way. And it's true with God. Many of God's people want their own way; and so God, because He loves us, chastens us. What for? It produces, even though it's not a very nice thing to go through, it produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby. In other words, it produces a righteous product that brings glory to His name. Our conduct before men and before God is such because our chastening brings glory to Him.

Now, the third thing about chastening is in verses 5-11. I'd like to be very brief on this; but, if you take the same verses 5-11, you'll notice what our attitude to chastisement should be. And shall I say, it's a six-fold attitude and it is very simple.

First of all, in verse 5, we are not to forget His exhortation on chastening.

Secondly, we are not to regard it lightly. It's serious business when God begins to chasten His people. There's some reason for it. So don't take it lightly. Don't shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, I can work my way through it." No, don't regard the chastening lightly.

And third, we are not to faint because it is El-Shadai, the All-Sufficient God, who chastens us. And you know, when He chastens us, He knows when to stop. Some parents, when they chasten their children, don't know when to stop. They don't stop when they've had enough. Then afterwards, they feel so sorrowful for their child that they lean over backwards the other way. And then the youngster gets away with everything. No, God knows exactly how far to go. And we're not to faint, even though the chastising may seem severe. We are not to faint.

And the fourth thing, we are to endure chastening because it is the Father who is chastening us, not an enemy. It's the Father who chastens, the Father who loves us with an everlasting love, the One who loves us right clean through to the end. And we are to endure chastening because He is the One who does it. He's not only the El-Shadai, the All-Sufficient God, but He's a loving Father who meets our need.

And then the fifth thing, we are to be in subjection to this chastening. Why? Because He is our Father. That's personal. He's my Father and your Father. As our Lord could say in John 20:17, "I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father; and to my God, and your God."

And then, the sixth thing is we are to be exercised by the chastening, by the discipline because it's for our profit.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I go through so many tests, so many tests."

Now you ought to thank the Lord for that. Do you know that every test and trial through which we go becomes an open door for God to display His power, to display His grace. And if you are stubborn and you murmur against God (for murmuring is always against God), don't be surprised if God disciplines you, chastens you. Why? Because He wants you to walk in the center of His will. He wants to perfect His purpose in you and in me. And sometimes in our willfulness, in our desire to do what we want to do, we get off the track. And sometimes I'm sorry to say, we as Christians bring dishonor to the Lord. We affect the testimony of the gospel. We become a hindrance to weaker Christians.

And one could go down the line on the things that happen when one is a Christian who walks out of the will of God. Oh, listen, your Father and my Father, our heavenly Father so loves you. He so wants to be glorified in you and in me by our words and actions. Because He loves us, He will discipline us. I wish we could see the hand of God in this.

Sometimes people blame the devil for everything. Sometimes we blame the world for this. Oftentimes, my friend, it is God in His sovereignty as El-Shadai, the All-Sufficient God, trying to get you and me to the place where He can be glorified in us. Isn't that what He wants to do? We are His craftsmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good

works which God has before ordained, which God has purposed that we should walk in them. If I don't walk in them, I say, He hems me in. He chastens me. He disciplines me that His purpose might be accomplished.

Now we come to the third thing, our responsibility; and here we have an exhortation in verses 12-14.

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

12:13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

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

Now, you'll notice in verse 12 and the beginning of verse 13 that we are not to be discouraged. Lift up your hands which hang down. Don't get discouraged. Straighten those feeble knees. Avoid despondency.

Some say when they are tested, "Well, what's the use? There's no use in my going on. I just can't hold out. I just can't stand it."

My friend, to you He says, "Don't get despondent. Don't be discouraged. Lift up your hands and strengthen your knees. Be vigilant. Don't be careless or indifferent in your walk, but be very vigilant."

The very fact that God will keep His Word on every promise He has given to His people ought to encourage us to be diligent, encourage us to endure, even though the suffering and the disappointments may be very, very hard.

Please don't say, "It's no use my going on. I can't hold on any longer."

Well, bless you, dear heart. Nobody can hang on. It's God who holds us. It doesn't depend upon our holding God.

I'm reminded of a father taking his little boy across the street. And the little fellow has a hold of his father's hand. Now, he's not taking care of his father. The father's taking care of him. But because the father has his hand, holding hands as they go across the thoroughfare, there's a rest, a peace. There's a satisfaction in the little fellow because he's in Dad's hands.

You know, I wish we as Christians could realize, we've got really no grounds for despondency even though one might be discouraged. Avoid this question of despondency. In other words, get your eyes off yourself. Introspection is a very, very dangerous thing.

When you get occupied with your frailty and your failures and your weaknesses and you get occupied with the tests and trials through which you go, you'll do exactly what Peter did, you remember, when he started to walk upon the water. When he saw that the winds were blowing and the waves were heaving high, he just went down in a hole in the water. He just began to sink.

You walk with the Lord. He doesn't test you any more than you are able to bear, as Corinthians 10:13 declares (paraphrased), "There has no temptation (no testing) overtaken you but what is common to man, for God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tested beyond that which you are able, but will with the testing open a way of escape." You see, the Lord knows all about you. He knows all about your frailty. He knows all about your weaknesses. I know that.

I'm always confident in that Psalm 103:14 says, "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." He knew all about you when He saved you. He knew every weakness you ever had. And yet, in spite of that, He saved you and He loved you and He cares for you and He is faithful to you. So, don't get despondent—not only for your sake, but for others' sakes lest you cause them to be turned out of the way. So I'm reminded of Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." So, it is here.

And then in verse 14, we are to chase, to pursue after peace and holiness.

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

Now, this is a matter of pursuing, for that's what the word is, to pursue after peace and holiness. Follow peace with all men. You remember in Romans 12:18, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." It isn't always possible to live peaceably

with all people when they refuse it, but as far as possible, live peacefully with all, with your neighbors, with your friends, with your family.

Oh, how the heart of man yearns for peace. I think of the present day situation, not only in our country, but throughout the world. There's a great yearning for peace. I was reading the other day where a group of Arab women and a group of Israeli women got together and had a meeting and the one thing they wanted was peace, peace. They want their children to live in a situation where there is peace. No longer war and suffering and death and sorrow and affliction, but peace. The human heart longs for peace.

Now, those of us who are Christians have peace with God, and we're joined to the God of all peace. And you remember Philippians 4:9 says the God of peace will be with you always. Now, let this seep into our lives and work through our lives. As far as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Let's look again at this verse.

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

There are three indispensable things in the book of Hebrews. In chapter 9: 22, I read "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." In chapter 11:6, I read "Without faith it is impossible to please him." Now, in Hebrews 12:14, I read, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Three indispensable things. Notice the order. You have the work of Christ given to us in 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." There can be no cleansing from sin or forgiveness of sins except through the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His blood and died to put away our sin. And on the ground of what he has accomplished for us, we have been redeemed. But how can I experience this forgiveness, this cleansing, this redemption?

The second indispensable thing, the thing that delights the heart of God as we have been seeing in chapter 11 is faith. God loves people to trust Him; and when He raised His Son from the dead, He was telling us, my friend, that He is perfectly and absolutely satisfied with the work of Jesus Christ. That work on the cross put away our sin and satisfied the

divine character of God. And when we put our trust in the Savior, then we experience redemption.

But how do we trust Him? That's what faith is. Faith is putting our trust in somebody else. And when we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, then we experience redemption, the forgiveness of sins, cleansing power. The fruitage of that will be the third thing, holiness.

“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Now “holiness” is a great word. This has to do with the very character of God. No man can come into the presence of God without that righteousness, that holiness which is the very essence of the character of God. Where are you going to find that?

Now, I'm well aware of the fact that men have doctrines on holiness. And don't be afraid of that word. That's a very, very, very good word, “holiness.” If you say that you are a saint of God, that means that you are a holy one. And, when you and I accept the Savior, He pronounces us righteous. Then he works out in us and through us practical righteousness or, if you please, practical holiness.

But there can be no practical holiness if you are not pronounced righteous before God. That's why I say these three indispensable things run together. You have the work of Christ at the cross “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins” and “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” And now, “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

Again I would say, unless you can stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ, my friend, you just can't stand in the presence of God at all. Nor will you see the Lord. I think that thought is given to us in the book of Matthew chapter 5 in what is known as the beatitudes of our Savior. You remember when our Lord went up into the mountain and taught His disciples saying, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

But how can one become pure in heart? How can one be holy? How can one have a holiness that will stand the test of divine righteousness? Certainly man cannot produce it. And the writer here does not say you produce it. He says, “Follow it.” Pursue it. He says

pursue peace. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He's given us His peace. In Christ we have peace.

But there's such a thing as the enjoyment of peace, the experience of peace day by day in the midst of a world of chaos and sin. Likewise with holiness, every real believer, and, my friend, I don't care if you are the weakest of God's children, if you really have put your trust in the Savior, then you stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ. And as I gaze upon Christ, my righteousness, there is produced in and through me something of the holy character of God.

Putting it another way which I have said often (I don't mind repeating things because that's how we learn): When God redeemed you and saved you and made you His child, He made your body a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. As 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Why do you think the Spirit of God indwells us? Because God wants our very actions and our words and our attitudes, our whole life to be a display of the holy, righteous character of God.

You say, "Why, man, that's supernatural."

That's correct. That's correct. No man can live the Christian life apart from the indwelling Spirit of God. Since you've accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God indwells you, you have a righteous standing in the presence of God. In other words, God has made all the provision needed for you to stand in His presence. And also He has made the provision for you and me to walk with God daily, day by day, so that practical righteousness and practical holiness will be manifested in and through us.

You see, Isaiah 64:6 says, "Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (in God's sight)." They are not holy. Even the best thing you do is just filthy rags to Him. So what are you going to do with this verse, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord?" Well, there is only one place where you can have this holiness, and that is in Jesus Christ.

Don't you forget that God is a righteous, holy Being, and certainly you can't stand before God in sin, in your frailty, in your failure. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from our sins. And we

stand before God the Father in all the holy righteousness of God Himself.

My, what a privilege. And when one sees this, then you pursue it. You want it to be acted out in your life, as Philippians 2:12-13 says, “:Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you.” He does the job. You just become the channel of expression.

May you today enjoy the very presence of the Lord and may His peace flood your heart continually.

Now, starting in at verse 15, and running down through verse 17 we have another warning. It’s a warning against indifference. Now let’s read those verses.

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;

12:16. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

12:17. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Now here we have a tremendous warning given to us. And you notice there are three words or one word used three times—“Lest.” Listen to them. Looking diligently, “Lest any man fail of the grace of God,” “Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and defile many” and “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane persons, as Esau.”

Now let me take up these three things, these three “lests.”

First of all, we are to be diligent. Looking diligently, being very diligent because Satan will deceive us; and, may I add, our own hearts oftentimes will deceive us. You know, it’s an amazing thing how tricky the human heart is. How easy it is for us to rationalize our sins, our failures, even our attitudes to others. We can always find excuses. We rationalize our unbelief. We rationalize our indifference, and we’re on dangerous ground when we do that.

Now, you notice I said, excuses. I didn't say reasons. I'm talking about excuses. And most of our reasons are excuses. That's a sad thing to say. But I sincerely pray, as we take up these three verses which are very, very serious, that God will grant that you and I may never be satisfied to be indifferent to the claims and call of God. May we never become cold. May our hearts pant after Him. David said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks (that is an animal like a deer), so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psalm 42:1).

Is that your desire? Let's look at it. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God" or lest any man come short of the grace of God. It means here failure to go forward. You remember, we had this in chapter four. The Israelites didn't go forward and they perished in the wilderness. Why? Because the exhortations of the Lord to them were not mixed with faith. They heard, but they didn't believe.

He's talking to Christians here about the danger of their becoming indifferent to the purpose of God in their lives and so they miss the mark. They come short of what God has for them. They miss God's best. When you and I accepted the Savior, God had a real purpose for our lives. My friend, I would suggest that you find out what God wants of your life and then get busy and do it. It's not enough to have a vision.

It's not enough to say, "Well, this is what God wants me to do" and then fold your hands. Make yourself available for the Spirit of God in you to do the job. That means a life of yieldedness, of commitment to Him. Otherwise that which God has purposed in your life might not be realized. There are believers who have died prematurely because they have walked in self-will, wanting their own way; and the result is that the purpose of God is not completed in them.

Now don't for one moment think that the purpose of God for everyone is the same. In fact, I question very much if any two believers are alike in the purpose of God. All have the same standing. All have the same relationship. But God doesn't ask everyone to do the same thing.

Now, I know according to Ephesians four, He gave the church apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers. These were gifts, gifted men of the church. For every believer He has a very particular place.

Now, look at the second one, “Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Oh, what a statement. Let no root of bitterness take its place in your heart because, when you become bitter, the result is many others are defiled. Now, what do we mean by that? Well, haven't you met Christians who have come through certain experiences and have been very bitter? Oh, they are bitter. They are just sour bitter. And every place they go, they affect somebody else; and they make them bitter.

For example: Here are two brothers, two brethren, two Christians and they work together. They have lived together. They've had fellowship together; they work in the same church and they had a wonderful thing going and then one does something to the other fellow. I don't know what the cause of it is, but something happens. And the one fellow gets bitter. It may be he's got a distorted idea or an enlarged idea of what the other fellow did or said. But he becomes bitter.

And then he says, “You know what he did to me? You know what he did to me?” And in his bitterness he spills the beans and the party to whom he speaks is affected. So that when he meets the other brother, there is something the matter. There's a shadow between them. There's not that open fellowship like it was before.

Now, you are not sure that this fellow has done this thing, but you're taking the man's word for it because he's bitter. His very bitterness affects you. And it acts just like a wave. It just goes out and gathers other waves and makes trouble.

I'll tell you one of the worst things that can happen to a Christian is bitterness, bitterness. Shame on us Christians when we get bitter. How easy it is to run out and tell the world how our Christian friend is acting. We destroy the testimony of the gospel to the world. Just sit down and analyze it. “Lest any root of bitterness spring up and defile many.” Think of the damage it does. It robs us of joy, robs us of peace, robs us of a desire for the things of God. It comes between us and the Savior. It robs us of living the life of faith. It robs us of reading the Word of God and getting any joy out of it. And it stops our praying and interceding for somebody else. We get bitter, and then we affect other Christians with

that bitterness. And then we hinder the testimony of the gospel to the world.

“Well, Mr. Mitchell, what in the world should I do?”

Well, I would suggest two things.

First of all, get down before God and confess your bitterness of heart and ask the Lord to cleanse you from your bitterness and to forgive you for the way you've maligned your brother.

And then, if it's at all possible, meet with the one who has maligned you, against whom you are bitter and find out the reason why. And when you're praying for yourself, pray for him, too or pray for her. Maybe that's what they need, too. Get down before God together.

Oh, I just plead with your heart. Don't allow any root of bitterness to come into your life. It's a sad thing.

So the first thing is, don't miss the purpose of God for your life. Secondly, don't let any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled.

And then, the third thing “Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” Now, I think, maybe I better stop here because I want to say more about that one. You see, there are warnings to us. And the writer of Hebrews is the Spirit of God exhorting us not to lead others astray, but to run after peace and holiness and to be careful, diligent, lest we miss God's best. And may He grant to you and to me to walk before God so we'll be sweet, manifesting something of the aroma of Christ.

It may be that you think I'm going very, very slowly. Well, I'll tell you, friends, very honestly, I would like nothing better than to start all over again in the very first chapter. When I think of the wealth of the revelation of God in His Son in this book, I'm amazed that so many Christians know so little.

We are to look diligently or be diligent lest . . .

12:16. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

12:17. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of

repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Now it may be worthwhile for us to notice this. We've been having a number of warnings all through the book of Hebrews. In chapter 2 we had the warning about neglecting the grace of God. In chapter three, we had the warning against unbelief. We are to believe the Word of God. In chapter six, we had the warning concerning growing, to not stay as babies. And then in chapter six, don't degenerate. In chapter 10, we had the willful sin which was don't despise the person of Christ, the work of Christ, the Spirit of Christ.

Now we have this question of indifference. Don't depart. Don't be indifferent to God Himself because the result is impurity. And the writer gives the illustration about this man Esau. Let me say first of all that Esau, who was the brother of Jacob, never had a place in his heart for the things of God. He was satisfied to be indifferent to anything that God had for him.

Listen to this first verse. "Lest there be any fornicator (or unclean person) or profane person as Esau." Now, a profane person is one who is a secular person. The word really means "outside the temple." Profane means outside. We talk about "profane history" in church history. What is it? Things outside of God. Esau lived a life outside of God. God had no place in his life. He was a secular person. He was a profane person. Now, you notice what he did.

For one morsel of meat he sold his birthright. Let me take that up first. You find that story in Genesis 25. Remember, that Jacob and Esau, the sons of Isaac, were twins with Esau being born just before Jacob. (Jacob means supplanter.) Now according to the way it would normally go, Esau should have been the one who would get the inheritance. That birthright included not only the material inheritance, but it also involved priesthood in the family. It also meant the possessor would be the one through whom Messiah should come. This is the birthright.

But Esau didn't care who his children would be. He had no use for the altar and the sacrifices which he saw his father Isaac, and I'm sure he saw Abraham offer because Abraham was still living when Esau was born. He knew all about Jehovah or, more technically, He knew all

about El-Shadai, the God of Abraham and the God of his father Isaac. He had no use for them. He preferred to take his bow and arrow and go out and hunt and fish. He was an outdoor man.

One day he came in very, very hungry. I can appreciate that. Did you ever go fishing all day and catch nothing or go hunting all day and shoot nothing? You forgot to take your lunch and you come back so hungry you could eat the whole business. Fishing, you could eat the bait; and you could eat the whole boat and everything else, you're so hungry.

You remember the story. There is no need for me to repeat it except to comment on verse 17. Esau was so, so angry that Jacob had deceived his father and gotten the blessing. And then, you have this little statement, "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 cried and wept before his father, hoping to change Isaac's mind and thus gain the blessing. But Isaac trembled. He knew before the children were born that Jacob would have the place of promise.

Now, I know there are those who take this portion of scripture and say that here's a man who tried to repent and couldn't repent. Though he tried with tears, he couldn't repent. Esau didn't have an ounce of repentance in him. In fact, that's why Jacob had to run away because Esau threatened to kill him. Esau never had a repentant heart. But he tried to change his father's mind.

May I just say this in passing. All who are genuine in their repentance, I don't care who they are or what they are or what they've done, if they are genuine in their repentance before God, God will accept them. You can't limit the grace of God, my friends. As far as God is concerned, sin is sin. Any real heart of repentance is always met by God.

I say again, Esau was not repentant. Esau wept, that's true; but he could not change his father's mind. When you go to the end of your Old Testament, note what it says in Malachi 1:2-3, "I loved Jacob. And I hated Esau." When was this? More than 1500 years afterwards.

What's the difference between the two boys? Jacob panted after spiritual realities. He had a great many weaknesses, but if you read your Old Testament you will notice he's always on the side of the God of

Jacob. He had a heart for God. Esau had no heart for God. He was absolutely indifferent to God with no thought or yearning for God. He was a profane man, a secular man. He lived his life without God.

I trust you are not indifferent to the things of God or satisfied with your indifference; but may the Lord take you and me and fill us with a passion for Christ, that the great yearning of our hearts will be the will of our Father. And may our hunger for spiritual reality be increased. For, I say, my friend, God will meet any heart that is open to Him and that means business with him.

Remember James says, "Draw nigh to God." That is God saying, "Draw nigh to Me, and I will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). He is saying, "I will perform in you that which is My divine purpose, for your blessing is for My glory."

And now, we come to what God has provided for His people. And there is given to us a contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant. And you remember, it's really a question of access. In the book of Hebrews chapter twelve, let's read from verse 18 down through verse 21. Here you have a picture of the old covenant under the law, a legal covenant.

12:18. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

12:19. 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:

12:20. (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

12:21. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

12:22. But ye (you believers) are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.

Now, we have a contrast. We start the contrast between the old covenant, the legal covenant under the law given by angels through the

mediation of angels to Moses, and then the new covenant that we have in Christ.

Now, just a word about the old covenant. You'll find this passage, by the way, in the book of Exodus chapters 19 and 20. You have where God came to Mt. Sinai to give them the legal covenant. And you'll notice that when God came to Sinai, it was marked by terror, by thunderings and by lightning. It was marked by distance from God. There were bounds set around the mountain so that they couldn't go close lest they be killed. He came in a thick cloud and darkness. You find that in Exodus 19:16, 18, and 23.

How different this is compared to what we have in John's Gospel where we find that God is the light that shines in darkness. Or you have in 1 John chapter 1, "This then is the message . . . that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (verse 5).

Under the grace of God He is come out to men and women because the provision has been made. The barrier between has been removed. And instead of the law bringing men to God, it barred them from the presence of God; whereas the grace of God brings us right into His presence.

Now, one needn't spend much time on this because you remember in the book of Galatians 4:21 the Apostle Paul says, "You who would keep the law, do you hear it?" It's manifested by terror, by a distance from God, by thick clouds, by darkness, by death, by a trumpet, by fire. I'm quoting very briefly from chapters 19 and 20 of the Exodus. This is the old covenant of the law.

But now, he said, "We are not they" in verses 22-24.

12:22. But ye are come (or if I may change the word, we are come) unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

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,

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

Let me stop here for just a few moments. Here you have the wonderful hope of the believer. It's not like under the law. God has provided some far better things for us.

May I repeat what I said a moment ago, the law barred men and women from the presence of God. The law demanded perfection. The law demanded sinlessness. The law demanded righteousness. The law demanded absolute obedience; and, if you did not, if you were not obedient, absolutely obedient in every detail of the law, then, my friend, you came under the curse. And time would fail me to go into the book of Galatians on this. You remember in chapter three of Galatians, verse 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." What is the context?

"Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Or as James said, he that breaketh the law "in one point" is guilty of all (James 2:10). And remember as Galatians 3:12 says, "the law is not of faith." Here are two entirely different covenants, two entirely different principles of operation. No one was ever saved by keeping the law because no one ever kept the law.

Pardon me, except the Savior because He did always the things that pleased His Father. People seem to fail to realize that the law never offers you anything. The law curses you. It never forgives. It's a barrier. And when you come to Mt. Sinai, which speaks of the old covenant, it is manifested by darkness and by terror and so on. Man is shut out from the presence of God. The thing that was so terrible was that the people said to Moses, "Let not God talk to us. You talk to us, but not God." This is a terrible thing, isn't it. They were afraid of God's coming to them. They were afraid of God's speaking to them. They were afraid of coming into the presence of God. My, how different the grace of God is.

This is one thing we have here in the book of Hebrews. We have access into the very presence of God. A believer in Christ, under the grace of God, having been forgiven, having been pronounced righteous, having been brought into relationship to the living God, can come not only into heaven itself, but also come right into the very presence of

God, right within the veil and talk with God face to face even as a man talks to his friend.

This is grace, my friend. The two covenants are so entirely opposite. The covenant of the law which bars men from the presence of God and then demands absolute obedience. You may keep the law for seventy years, supposing you could, which I question very much. But supposing you did, and then you just broke the law once. Brother, you're under the curse and you're under the sentence of death. That's all the law can do. Because in 2 Corinthians 3:7 the law is a "ministration of death," not life, but death—not freedom, but bondage.

How different then is the grace of God. How wonderful is what we read in the first chapter of John that the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's grace upon grace, grace upon grace. It's a wonderful thing that there's a way open into the presence of God through Jesus Christ.

I wish in some way I could get to your heart or to people's hearts the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, between law and grace, between works and faith, between two entirely different covenants, different principles, one earthly, one heavenly. One is temporal, the other is eternal. One is material, the other is spiritual. One bars you from the presence of God, and the other one brings you right into the presence of God.

If I'm to be saved by works, then, my friend, I'll have to be perfect in everything I say and everything I do. And if I'm not perfect, then the law demands my death. And either I die or somebody else dies. And the wonderful truth is that in the wonderful grace of God, Christ came and died your death and my death. He bore your sin and my sin and opened a way of access into the very presence of God.

I want you to see this in chapter 19 and 20 of the book of Exodus. They were not only barred from the presence of God, but they were so scared they said to Moses, "You talk to us, we don't want God to talk to us at all lest we die."

Oh, how different, the grace of God. Having accepted Jesus Christ to be one's personal Savior, one can come right into the very presence of God. We can come right within the veil. We can come right into the

sanctuary, into the holiest of all, and there meet with God face to face and have wonderful fellowship.

Now, look at what it says here. We are come to Mt. Sion unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels. You remember in Galatians chapter 4:22-26, the Apostle Paul makes a contrast between Hagar with Ishmael, the child of a bondwoman, and Sarah with Isaac, the child of a free woman. And we read there that Hagar is a picture of Jerusalem which now is, whereas Sarah and Isaac are a picture of the heavenly Jerusalem.

12:22. But ye are come unto Mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

12:23. To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

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

This is what God has provided. We have come to Mt. Sion, to the place of grace in contrast to Sinai where it thunders. We come to the heavenly Jerusalem, that is, the city of the living God, the very presence of God. We have come to a host of angels. That means this covenant is heavenly. It's not earthly like Sinai which is material and earthly. We have come to the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. We have come to the place of grace in contrast to the law. We've come to God, the Judge of all, the One who has complete authority, the One who is absolute in righteousness.

And we've come to the spirits of just men made perfect. They could not be made perfect until after the death and resurrection of Christ. And we've come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. May I remind you of 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." We've come to the One at God's right hand.

This means that we are a heavenly people. It says here we have come to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born. Did you ever stop to think that you belong there? That, when you and I accepted

Jesus Christ as Savior, that gave us a right, a legal right, to come into the very presence of God in the heavens.

In Philippians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, we read, “Our conversation—our citizenship (he’s just been talking about some who are living in the flesh and who are enemies of the cross of Christ), our commonwealth—is in heaven (we are legal residents of heaven); from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” It’s a wonderful thing, isn’t it? We’re citizens of heaven. We belong to an eternal city, to an eternal God. Our destination is the very presence of God where we’re going to see Him face to face.

How then should we live on earth? Am I going to live on earth like a man of the world? Or am I going to live on earth as a citizen of heaven?

You say, “Mr. Mitchell, if you’re a citizen of heaven, what in the world are you doing here?”

Well, I’m just down here on business.

As 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 20, says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” I’m just down here on business. I’m an ambassador of the Lord of glory, of the King of glory. And you know, an ambassador, when he’s in his service, is not home. He’s away on business. Generally, he goes to an enemy country or to some other country. So, that’s where we are. We belong to heaven. We belong to the heavenly Jerusalem. We’re a citizen of heaven. We belong to the commonwealth of heaven.

My friend, when I realize this—My! What a contrast! How wonderful to know that, though we’re living on earth in the midst of a world that has no place for Him, we’re down here as heavenly citizens, away on business for our King, for our Lord, for our God.

Oh, that we might live on earth as heavenly citizens. I know we’ll be misunderstood. Of course, you expect to be misunderstood by the world. We belong to a different country. We’re strangers and foreigners. We’re pilgrims, not tourists. We are pilgrims passing through with a testimony, with a ministry, with some good news for men, that God was

in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, that God has made peace with men.

And now having said this, having given a contrast between the old and the new covenant, between what the old had and what the new has, having spoken of the hope that we have and the blessed certainty of it as we come into the very presence of God, having a citizenship that's in heaven and that we belong to Jesus, the eternal Son of God, the writer gives us a warning. This is the last warning in Hebrews. Let's read then verse 25,

12:25. See that ye refuse (reject) 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:

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 the heavens.

12:27. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Well, let me just go back to verse 25. Now, remember the connection. In verse 24, we have come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. His sacrifice is far more important than the Old Testament sacrifices. His is the only perfect sacrifice, and the only one that satisfies God. He has declared to you and to me, He's made it very, very clear that this is the only sacrifice God will accept. In fact, as I have said so often, and I repeat it, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's proof and witness to you, my friend, and to me that He will accept no other Savior, accept no other sacrifice. He will accept no other way of salvation. This is God's way. This is the sure way. And he goes on to say if they escape not who refused him that spake on earth, "much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." Remember, he is warning Jews who have not trusted Christ. He is not suggesting that sinning saints will lose their salvation. They are secure in Christ!

And so he speaks here of the sureness of His judgment. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him

that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth.”

Allow me to read from Haggai 2:6: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations.”

And then at the end of the chapter, verse 21, he said, “I will shake the heavens and the earth.” At Mt. Sinai one mountain shook, the fire of God was there and they were scared stiff. Even Moses was scared. Do you remember that? We have it here in the preceding part of the chapter. They were afraid, full of fear. They didn't even want God to speak to them. There was no access into the presence of God. If they even touched the mountain, they were going to be killed and come under the judgment of God.

Everything is going to be tested by Him. Everything that is not of God is going to be moved. Everything is going to be tested and tried. You know, the Apostle Peter speaks of this in 2 Peter 3:10-13. Let me take the time to read these verses.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which 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. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (manner of living) and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

We can't get away from the fact, though the grace of God today makes it possible for men to live on earth, even though they despise the Son of God, even though they've rejected the Son of God, that there is a time coming when God is going to bring in judgment. And when He comes next time, the very heavens as well as the earth are going to be shaken. And there's only one place of security.

And now, we have the exhortation in verses 28-29. Having spoken of the fact that God is going to come to judge and He's going to shake everything, we read,

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:

12:29. For our God is a consuming fire.

The writer closes this chapter by saying, "For our God is a consuming fire." And because our God is absolute in holiness and He must judge wherever He finds sin and rebellion and disobedience, we must then serve Him acceptably with reverence and in godly fear.

Now this is not a life that is sour or a life that is hindered from being filled with joy. You don't go around with a long face, sad. No, even though our God is one who is a consuming fire and He's light and He's righteous and He's love, that doesn't affect our serving Him acceptably by walking in His fellowship in obedience to His Word.

And you know, I come back to it again, the manifestation of our love and our trust in the Savior is by obedience to His Word. "If a man love me," says our Lord, "he will keep my words" (John 14:23). "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

You see, this is practical righteousness. This is the outflow of a divine life which is the experience of every believer. I may not understand everything that the Lord does. I may not even begin to know all His purposes for us. But I know one thing for sure. What He has said, He shall surely perform. And because of the fact that our God is a consuming fire, it's well for us to serve God acceptably. And the only way you can serve Him acceptably is to get in the will of God and obey His Word so that the purpose of God and the will of God may be paramount in your heart and life.

And then, do it with godly fear. That is, do it with simple trust, with reverence. You know, sometimes I have met Christians who in prayer demand God to do certain things. I've wondered if they knew what kind of God they were praying to. Oh, it's arrogant to tell God what to do. That's not faith. That's not faith!

My friend, you can't demand God to do certain things. If you're really walking in fellowship with Him, you will come with reverence and with godly fear, recognizing He's our Lord, that He's the omnipotent God. We can't just barge into the presence of God and tell Him what we want Him to do, as if He were our servant.

You remember in our discussion of the epistles of John some time ago, we pointed out in that epistle there was a three-fold revelation of God. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). This speaks of the fact that God is absolute in holiness.

When you come to chapters two and three of the epistle of John, God is righteous. He has to be righteous in His character. And because He is righteous in His character, everything He does is right. I may not understand everything that God does. But He's always right in everything He does. And please don't become a murmurer because, when you murmur, you always murmur against God.

And then in chapter four of the epistle of John we have the revelation that God is love in verses 8 and 16. "God is love." This is the very energy of God's nature toward man. God is moving toward man in love. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). And people have an idea in their minds that with God's being love, you can do anything you want to. You can get away with anything.

No, my friends, that's far from it because our God is not only love and righteous and holy, but He's also a consuming fire. You remember in chapter 10 we had the same thing when the writer says in 10 verse 31, "It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And the Apostle Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Did you ever stop to think about it?

I remember one time reading a sermon by Jonathan Edwards, the great Presbyterian of more than two hundred years ago. A man mighty in the scriptures, he became the president of Princeton Seminary and Princeton University if I remember correctly. And he preached a sermon called, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." And he had men

hanging over hell with the flames reaching up. And they were hanging over hell by a spider's web.

Now, you say, "Well, that was really far-fetched." I wonder sometimes if we haven't missed something about the character of God. We hear so much about the love of God and the righteousness of God and the holy character of God, and rightly so because most people forget that he's also a righteous God as well as a loving God. For our God is a consuming fire."

You remember when the law was given at Mt. Sinai through the mediation of angels to Moses, we find that the people were afraid to come near the mountain. But, now, under the grace of God, we have access into His presence; but that does not change the fact that our God is not only holy, but He's a consuming fire.

Oh, I wish that I could in some way relate to you the tremendous responsibility that falls upon every Christian that we should serve God acceptably, reverently with godly fear. In fact, I would say this. The more you know Him and the more you love Him, the more you recognize the need of coming into His presence with reverence, with worship. This is true with thanksgiving. But there's no such thing, my friend, of dashing into the presence of God, telling God what you want, and dashing out again. That's the way too many of us go.

Oh, in some way, may the Spirit of God be real to your minds and to your heart, that the God, the Lord of the universe, eternal living God, the sovereign God is not only holy and righteous and love, but He's also a consuming fire.

So we have finished chapter 12 of Hebrews and we come to the end of it with a confession of hope because you and I in Christ Jesus are able to stand in the presence of a God who is a consuming fire. Why? Because we stand before Him in all the merit and all the beauty and all the glory of our precious Savior.

And for us who are Christians, may I say a word to you today. In view of what we've been saying in this 12th chapter, do you not think it would be a wonderful thing if you and I as God's children with our commonwealth, our citizenship in heaven, should walk on the earth as

those who are heavenly people? And should we not serve God acceptably with reverence and with godly fear?

The time is very short. There's not much time for us yet to live on the earth. Why then should we waste God's time and our time? Why not live acceptably and serve God acceptably. That means to walk in His will, to be subject to His purpose, to be obedient to His Word, to do what God wants you to do, so that in everything He will be preeminent. That means to count everything but loss, just that Christ might be magnified in our body and in our life, in all that we are.

And remember, He wants us to serve God acceptably with reverence and with godly fear because the time is coming when everything is going to be shaken. And only what we have in Christ is going to stand. Oh, how wonderful to know that we're standing in Christ, not in some things we do or some ceremony we've gone through. But we stand before God in all the beauty and righteousness of Christ. This is the only place of safety. It is the only place of peace. And may the Lord bless you today for His name's sake.

Chapter Thirteen

May I suggest that the **practical** side of the book of Hebrews is before us. At the end of chapter 10 we had where we have access into the presence of God because of the completeness of Christ's work. In chapter 11, we had the life of faith and in chapter 12, the confession of hope. And now in chapter 13, we have the exercise of love. It's a wonderful thing to know that we can live a life of faith, hope and love which will be pleasing to Him.

Now in the 12th chapter we had the question of hope. It fills us with joy in the knowledge that the believer in Christ can look forward to the time when God is going to shake the heavens and the earth, when everything that can be shaken is going to be shaken. But we have a kingdom that will never, never be shaken. What a wonderful thing to be able to stand before God who is not only love, not only righteous, not only holy, but who is a consuming fire. And we shall stand there because we're accepted in the Beloved. All that Christ is before God is where the believer in Christ stands.

Now, there must be a responsibility for such people. As we have been seeing, we are citizens of heaven; but we're living on earth. We're down here as living representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are down here as His ambassadors, beseeching men to be reconciled to God. We're down here to live a life in contrast to the man of the world. We belong, I say, to heaven. Let us live on earth as heavenly citizens, as those who have that wonderful hope guaranteed by the living God that we shall stand in His presence, conformed to the image of His Son.

Now, that brings a tremendous responsibility. So, when we come to chapter 13 of Hebrews, we find set before us this question of the exercise of love, the appeal of love to our hearts. And may I break it down now.

First of all, in the first six verses of chapter 13, we have our individual responsibility, that is, our responsibility as individual believers one to the other. Let us read those first six verses.

13:1. Let brotherly love continue.

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

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

13:4. Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

13:5. Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

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

You will notice the first thing. We are to love the brethren. Now here he's talking to Christians. "Let brotherly love continue." Continue in it. We are to continue to love the Christians, the believers in Christ because we belong to the same family, because we belong to God. And I've got to confess, there are all kinds of believers. You know, the danger is that we Christians become cliquish. We kind of get ourselves into a little company, and we don't live outside of that company. We forget that there are other Christians in the world.

I remember one time a young man came in to the Multnomah School of the Bible. And after he had been there two or three weeks, he said, "You know... you know, there are some real Christians here."

We said, "Why, of course. We all love the Lord here."

"Well, sir, I thought there were no Christians outside of my own local church."

Now, you say that boy was very, very narrow. No, this is what he had been taught. It may not have been taught in words, but certainly by actions. There are some people who believe that their church is the only church on the earth that is right, the only one. My friend, any one who loves the Savior, who has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ belongs to you and belongs to God. "Let brotherly love continue."

Isn't this what the Lord Jesus said in John chapter 13:34-35? "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another... By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is repeated in chapter 15, verse 12, this question of loving one another. In 1 John 3:23, it's the same thing.

What are His commandments? That we should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and love one another as he gave us commandment. In Ephesians chapter 5:1-2, we are to be imitators of God and walk in love as Christ also loved us and gave Himself as a sacrifice for us. And again may I remind you that love for each other is manifested by sacrifice.

Allow me to repeat what I've said so often, and yet I feel like repeating it. My love for God is manifested by obedience to His Word. You have that in John 14:23. But my love for the people of God is to be manifested by sacrifice. So, the writer says, "Let brotherly love continue. Be ye imitators of God as dear children." Because God is your Father, and you are His children, then walk in love. For me to say that God is love and not walk in love is inconsistent. If I say that I'm a child of God who is love, then that which should manifest itself in my life would be love for those who love Him.

It may be that there are a lot of things about God's people that you don't like. That may be true. There are a lot of things I don't like. And it's true that the Lord has some people who don't believe just the way you do. They do things you wouldn't do, and they say things you wouldn't say. But if they really love the Savior, you have to love them. In a family, there's the father and the mother. Perhaps we've got brothers and sisters and some are older than others.

Now you deal with a baby differently from the one who is 15 or 20. And certainly when men deal with men, they deal with them as men, not as little boys. Just so in the family of God. There are, as the epistle of John says, fathers and young men and babes. It's just a question of spiritual growth, spiritual maturity. But irrespective of what they are, we are to love them.

It's an amazing thing you know. Sometimes people have been on the road for 20, 30 years. They've been students of the Bible. They've had a lot of teaching. And then a person comes into the assembly who

has just been saved a few months, and we expect him to get in 20 minutes to where it has taken the Lord 20 years to get us. Aren't we a funny people? My, it's taken the Lord so long to get us where we are, and we expect the other man to get there in days.

Now let's be patient with each other. Love is patient. Remember, 1 Corinthians 13:4 says, "Love suffereth long, and is kind." It doesn't say, "Love suffereth long and then gives up." Perhaps we've had to rise early and go out of our way to pick up someone who is elderly or very young or newly saved and bring them to church week after week; and then we must take them home! We finally say, "I can't take any more of them. I'm tired of being a doormat, just tired of this whole business; and I'm going to give up." Well, you might feel better, but you're not doing the right thing. Love suffereth long and is still kind.

And you know, may I say kindly, sometimes we have elderly Christians whom we look upon as being ornery and we don't like them. You know they might be in that condition because the Christians around them don't love them. It may be they are just hungry for some love. I have met people who have never known genuine love until they became a Christian.

And you know, the trouble is, when these new Christians, young babes in Christ, say something or do something, some of the older ones, who should know better, criticize them and judge them and put their shoulder up to them. They won't have fellowship with them which, of course, discourages the child of God, the babe in Christ. And so he goes back out into the world. We drive them back into the world. Listen, "Let brotherly love continue."

And one of the finest testimonies of the reality of the gospel is God's people loving each other. Instead of saying, "See how they fight among each other," we can say, "See how they love one another."

Now, the second verse tells me what we should do to those who are in need.

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

In other words, be hospitable. In Romans 12:13, we are to be hospitable. We are to open our homes to those who need us. We have in Titus 1:8 and in 1 Peter 4:9 this question of being given over to hospitality because thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

I wonder if the writer of Hebrews had in mind the life of Abraham. You remember in Genesis chapter 18 when Abraham was living with his family in a place called Mamre in Hebron. He was sitting in his tent door in the heat of the day, and along came three men, strangers as far as he knew. So, when they came in, he ordered immediately that they should kill a kid and provide a meal for these strangers. After they had eaten, two of them went on their way to Sodom.

The third one was the Lord Himself. He told Abraham, "Sarah is going to have a boy at the appointed time." Now, if Abraham did not know who He was when He came, he knew who He was now because who else knew that Sarai's name had been changed to Sarah? Only God and Abraham and Sarah knew.

So, when He said, "Sarah is going to have a boy at the appointed time," Abraham knew that he was entertaining God. But he didn't know that when he said to the servants, "Prepare a kid. Prepare a meal for these strangers." And he took them in as guests. He was entertaining the living God, Himself.

You know it's a wonderful thing to be hospitable. I think one of the richest things of life is to have your home open and to receive God's people.

That's what I like in a missionary conference. We have a hundred or more missionaries. They come from every field of the world, and homes are open in the city to take them in.

And how often these saints who have opened up their homes to people they've never seen before have said, "My, we had a wonderful time. We had a wonderful blessing. We were so filled with joy with these dear people. Why we were in heaven." They had such wonderful fellowship around the Savior.

My friend, don't turn down God's children when they come to you. Some of these dear old preachers and these dear missionaries who've been living in very, very difficult circumstances will be a

benediction to you. What are you doing? You're entertaining the ambassadors of the Savior. And you never lose by this. You never lose by it. You'll have joy that you never had before. So be hospitable for thereby some "have entertained angels unaware."

And then the third verse, the third thing about our individual responsibility, is we are to love suffering believers. Why? Because they need it.

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

Now I think this has possible reference to those who are really suffering in their body. And it's a wonderful thing to come into the presence of those who are suffering and to manifest tenderness and understanding and compassion to them.

Some of God's people suffer intensely, and they reveal something of the wonderful grace of God. God knows whom He can trust with suffering. And when we find the saints of God in suffering, sorrow and affliction, possibly in weakness, love them because they need it. Manifest some understanding.

Oh, I think one of the greatest needs among God's people is to understand, to in some way enter into the experience of the one who is before you. It may be in suffering, in sorrow, in affliction, in disappointment, in down-hearted depression, whatever it may be. Come to them and understand them.

Oh, how people need to have friends who understand them. I think this is one of the greatest needs among all of us, especially among those of us who are Christian workers. Kindly understand these people. Have a heart of compassion and tenderness because you love them. Don't criticize them. Don't damn them. Don't give them a swift kick. Really love them. You might not be able to say a word; but somehow or other, they know that you understand what they are going through. This is what love does.

So, you see, in the first verse we are to love God's people because they are our brethren. We belong the same family. Continue in that thing; stay on it. And don't forget those who come to your home or those

who need hospitality. They need it. It may be that you'll be entertaining an angel unaware. And remember the suffering people of God.

Oh, how I wish I could put this thing in words. There are so many of God's people who suffer, who need loving care. You take these dear Christians who have been shut-in. They've had an active life, and now their partners have died and their children are all off into another city and married. They're left alone. They go to a nursing home; and, my, how they need love, how they need understanding, how they need a little cheer.

You know, some of you folk who don't know what to do with yourselves, why don't you do this. Why don't you be a bundle of cheer and go visit some of these shut-in people, some of these who are discouraged, some of these lonely people. My, you would be a real benediction to them. And not only that, my friend, they'll be a benediction to you. It will act like a boomerang.

You go there to give them love and affection and to cheer them up in the Lord and, the first thing you know, you'll go away from there feeling a rush of joy. God has found you usable in the life of one of His children. It pays great dividends. So, I say, here is a responsibility of love. If you've got some friends you haven't seen for weeks and they're shut-in or they are in nursing homes, wherever they are, they're just hungry for some fellowship. Just slip along and do something, will you, today? And don't go with a long face. Cheer them up. Talk about the Savior. Manifest some love.

I remember, one time we had a man here in my city who was nine years on his back. He was a big fellow before he was smitten with his sickness. He was about six foot two, a very, very strong man who reveled in his physical strength. And then he was smitten. And for nine years, he was on his back. He couldn't do a thing. His wife had to feed him and wash him and everything else for nine long years. And I used to go over to see him. Sometimes his body was so covered with sores that you couldn't put a nickel down and not touch a sore, inside and outside.

The doctor said to me once, "Do you know, that fellow according to all medical science should have been dead half a dozen times."

But you see the man was in the hands of God. And one time I took a missionary to see him. I told him about this fellow.

He said, "I'd like to see him."

So, I took him over there. And when we came away, he said, "You know, Mr. Mitchell, I went over there to be a blessing to him. Instead of that, I found him a service station. He really blessed me."

Do you know, that man did more for God in the lives of people in those nine years on his back than he ever did when he was a strong, husky fellow. See, God's ways are not our ways.

And oh, to those of you who are suffering, may I say that the Lord is trusting you with it for two reasons. One purpose is to teach angelic beings something of His wonderful grace. And the second is for you to be a benediction to other Christians so that they may see your fortitude and the presence and power of God in your life. Instead of being a murmurer, be a praiser. Be full of thanksgiving.

And you visitors, when you go to visit the sick, don't stay too long especially if they're in the hospital. But be cheerful and talk about the Savior. Attract them to the Lord who knows and understands every inch of the way.

Now, let's go on to verse four. Love respects the rights of others.

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

God will judge them. We have to respect the rights of others with respect to purity. You know, oftentimes, I see laxity on one side and asceticism on the other. There's an awful lot of difference between liberty and license. Liberty always respects the other person. I'm living in a day when there are a lot of folk talking about liberty and freedom.

But my friend, freedom that does not respect the rights of others is not freedom. That becomes lawlessness; that becomes license. You see, no man lives to himself and no man dies to himself. I may not always agree with what they do, but I've got to respect their rights. That's liberty. That's freedom. That is what has made this country what it is through the years. We have real liberty, real freedom because we respect the rights of others.

And likewise in this sphere of relationships, it says here that marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled. It is for those who are married in the Lord. Let everybody else keep hands off. And you mark what it says, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will surely judge.”

It's an amazing thing, when your Bible speaks of the wrath of God, it speaks of it generally as upon immoral acts or the life of moral corruption. You take, for example, that passage in Ephesians 5:6. He talks about all these sexual, immoral, corrupt things, every one of the lost is doing. And then he goes on to say, “For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” He is talking about the unsaved.

And if the wrath of God is going to be upon the unsaved because of their moral corruption, we believers in Christ who have been born of God should live lives that are absolutely free from all such things. And don't say it's a disease. Don't say they're born that way. It's nothing else but sin. Giving in to the lusts and desires of the flesh is sin.

I could say more about that, but I'm not going to. I want to tell you, my Christian friends, we're living in a day of looseness. Things that used to be looked upon as sacred have now been kicked out, and the Word of God has been pulled to pieces. Men excuse themselves. They rationalize their sins by saying it is love. It isn't love. It's license. It's licentiousness. These who act like that must face the wrath of God, the judgment of God. You can be sure of one thing that God will judge all such. So, respect that and remember what love does. Love respects the rights of others.

Again in verse 5 and 6, love will be content. Now, let's read those verses.

13:5. Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

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

Love will be content. Let your life be marked with contentment, instead of covetousness. You know, some people are making their lives

absolutely miserable because they don't have what the other fellow has. They try to keep up with the Joneses, as the saying is. And my, how discouraged they are. How discontented they are, and how depressed they get because they don't have what everybody else has. Don't covet what the other fellow has. That's what it says here, "Let your manner of life be without covetousness." Be content with such things as God gives you. He'll take care of you, for it is written, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

This is the ground for contentment. Why? Because He never leaves us. Someone has aptly put this, "I will never leave thee in a lurch." And, by the way in that passage in the Greek there are five negatives. "I will never, never, never, never, never leave you, nor forsake you."

Isn't it wonderful to know there is not a second of the day, not a moment of time day or night, that the Lord ever leaves His servant. Did He not say in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (age)." I don't care where you are, what you are. If you love the Savior, the Lord never leaves you for one moment. He knows your circumstances. He knows what you need. Don't grumble, and don't be covetous. That's a miserable life.

And you remember Philippians chapter 4:19 says, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The storehouse of God is never empty. It is always full. The supply is always there, and each one of us is individually a member of the body of Christ. We're individually a child of God. We are each one of us, individually, the special object of the care of God. He knows exactly what we need.

You know, it's an amazing thing how God has always encouraged and comforted His people. You remember when Jacob was running away from Esau in Genesis 28 and came to Bethel that he put a stone under his head. And what was the promise of God? "I will not leave thee." I'll never forsake you. Jacob, you are running away, but I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you (verse 15).

Remember in Deuteronomy 31, Israel is going to go into the land. What is God's promise, "I'll go with you. I'll go with you. You're a stubborn, rebellious, murmuring people, but I'm going with you. I'll

never leave you.” If you look in the first chapter of Joshua, the great encouragement for Joshua was, “Joshua, I’ll never leave you. I’ll never forsake you. I’ll be with you wherever you go. I’ll be with you.” Oh, listen, Christian friends, there’s never a second of the day that the Lord ever leaves us.

You may not understand the circumstances, but He does. And He’s there, my friend, to deliver you. And even if you’re scared to death, if you know He’s present, what will you say? Therefore we can boldly say that “the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

And you know the Old Testament is absolutely full of illustrations of this fact.

Joseph is in prison, condemned to death, and God is with him.

Elijah, under the sentence of death, could storm into the presence of the king and say, “As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand” (I Kings 18:15).

Elisha, persecuted and opposed, could say, “As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand” (2 Kings 5:16).

Daniel in the lions’ den could say to the king, “My God has shut the lions’ mouths.” Who was with Daniel in the den of lions? Why, God, of course.

Here is the apostle Paul in prison. The Jews are planning for his life. Fourteen men have made a vow that they will not eat a thing until they have killed him. I suppose they died of starvation because they didn’t kill him. And what does God say to Paul? “Be of good cheer; you’ll stand before Caesar.”

When I see what some of God’s children go through, I wonder if I could stand it. I don’t know. I will know when God puts me to the test. But I know one thing, whether I come through victoriously or whether I even fail in the test, He never leaves me for a second. He never leaves me for a second.

We can say with Paul in Romans 8:31, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” The fear of man is gone. This is what thrills my heart when I meet some of these dear, dear women, young women, young men out in some mission field, way down there among the headhunters or

among some of these tribes where they don't want to see a white man. And these dear ones take their life in their hands and they go because God is with them. Sometimes the arrow has been put in the bow, but the arrow has never flown.

I remember dear old Pastor MacKenzie who was in Africa. He was telling me that he went through a part of Africa where they were fighting. And when he came to the top of a hill, his helpers were behind him, carrying his load. And as he went through the middle of the army on each side of him were warriors with their war paint and their swords and their spears and their bows and arrows and shields. He tried to give a greeting and never even got a grunt.

He said, "I didn't feel bad until I got through the army and everyone was behind me, and I expected a spear or an arrow in the middle of my back. Then I remembered the verse from the 91st Psalm, 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day' (verse 5). Not the arrow in the quiver, not the arrow in the bow, but the arrow already on its way. Don't be afraid. 'It shall not come nigh thee,' (verse 7) nor touch thee."

And he said, 'I had great peace of heart even though behind me were thousands of warriors ready to kill.'

Oh, friend, listen, as it is written, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we can boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." And He's with you right where you are, right this moment. Isn't it wonderful?

Our next division of the chapter occurs as we come to verses 7-17. Here we see the responsibility of love in the assembly of God's people. Now, let me repeat, in the first six verses we had our responsibility in loving each other as Christians. Now we come to the question of my relationship to the church itself, that is, to the local church from verses 7-17. And let us read verses 7-9.

13:7. Remember them which have the rule over you who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (manner of life).

13:8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

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.

Now, in the assembly, love is to be ever occupied with the person and work of Christ. And this will guide us in our relationship the one to the other in the local church. Notice for example in verse seven,

13:7. Remember them which have the rule over you (those who are your pastors and your leaders), who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

13:8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Now, may I just say this word. Rulers are to be examples to the flock of God. Those who are leaders in the local church are to live as those who walk with God. And the thing that marks them out as true and faithful rulers or workers is they have spoken unto you the Word of God.

I want to say that when leaders and pastors and Christian workers are true to the Word of God and they mean what they teach and what they preach, then their lives will conform to what they're teaching. And if we are real workers for God, we will minister the Word of God and we will watch over God's people and feed them upon the Word of God so that they might grow thereby. We are to be no longer tossed about by every wind of doctrine. People should recognize that our life is the kind of life God wants us to live.

You see, I want you to mark very well, very closely, verse seven. "Remember them (respect them, honor those) which have the rule over you." They have spoken unto you the Word of God. You are to follow their faith, considering their manner of life. And whether we like it or not, when a person says that he is a minister of the Word of God, there are a lot of things he cannot do that you can do.

Those of you who are pastors or teachers or Christian workers or Sunday School teachers, whatever your ministry may be in the local church, the minute you take a place of ministry of one kind or another, you become a marked person. Your life is watched. Your language is watched. Your actions are watched. You know in 1 Timothy chapter 4

verse 12, Paul gives a word of instruction to his son in the faith, Timothy.

Allow me to read these words. “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation (manner of life), in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” I’m reading from the fourth chapter of 1 Timothy, verses 12-16.

You notice the great exhortation, and I’m speaking especially now to those of you who have a place in the local assembly, in your local churches as Sunday school teachers, Sunday school officers, pastors, ministers of the Word of God, those who visit people who are sick and in need, whatever your ministry may be, even in the office. The very fact that you’re ministering means that your life is to be watched, because those who listen to you, those who watch you will follow you. And if a leader does not walk with God, then the possibility is that the people themselves will not walk with God.

You know, someone has well said, “A shepherd cannot lead his sheep beyond that which he himself is feeding.” And if the shepherd himself is not feeding on the Word of God, then he’s not able to give out the Word of God in the power and blessing and clarity of the Spirit of God.

I’m speaking about a very serious thing because today throughout the whole world, not only in America, and North America, but all throughout the world and Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia and the near East, wherever it may be, there is a tremendous need for those who are ministers of the Word of God to preach the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God. It just seems that we get occupied with so many methods and programs and organizations that we miss the most important thing—that we as leaders must minister the Word of God and our lives are to be imitated.

Just as Paul could say in Philippians chapter three, “You follow me, the way I have followed the Lord” (verses 15-21) And how did Paul follow the Lord? He was absolutely given over to the Son of God Himself. He had a tremendous passion for Christ. Christ was the center not only of his ministry but also of his life, of his heart’s affection and devotion. And when one is in that position, then I can understand the great cry of the writer of Hebrews when he says, “Remember them which have the rule over you, they have spoken unto you the word of God. You follow their faith, and you follow their manner of life.” And what is that? Verse eight,

13:8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

Here we have the rock foundation for such a life, Jesus Christ. He’s the same yesterday, today, and for ever. He is the unchangeable, immutable, Christ of God. And the writer is not dealing here, by the way, with His works or His plans, but he’s writing about His person. Now, I recognize when I say this that possibly I might be stepping on some of your toes. There are those who teach that what Jesus Christ did when He walked the earth, He will do today. And that He never changes. He’s the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Now, I would like to take exception to that. Christ in His person, in His character, in His love, in His graces never changes. But His actions among men certainly change.

For example, God doesn’t deal with men today as he did, for example, before the flood or even in Abraham’s day or under the law with Moses or in the times of the prophets. God deals with men in different ways. You can’t put God in a rut and say that if God has done it this way, He’ll always do it the same way. No, no, no, no, no. God loves variety.

And by the way, when I look God’s people over, He certainly loves variety. I have the opportunity of going to different churches to minister the Word of God. I get to look over God’s people, and I’m telling you that He really loves variety. And He works the same way.

For example, you take Elijah. First of all, God fed Elijah by ravens, carrion. And then He had him fed by a widow for approximately three years. And then afterwards, when he was hungry, God fed him by an angel.

Talk about variety. Just because God did something yesterday in a certain way doesn't mean that He must do it the same way today. I do not say He cannot do it. God can do anything He wants to. He's sovereign. He's God. He's omnipotent. He's omnipresent. He's omniscient.

But here the writer is talking about the theme, the heart of the life of those who rule over us, those who are leaders in the local church or in the church of Christ at large. The very center of their life must be Jesus Christ. He's the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Let me repeat that. He's the unchangeable, immutable, eternal, perfect Son of God. He deals with us in different ways. Let me repeat this as well—please do not put God in a narrow rut and say, this is the way God must operate.

Sometimes, I've got to confess, sometimes I've heard people pray and speak and sometimes the chills go up my back because they're trying to demand that God do certain things the way He did 2,000 years ago. No, no. God deals with you just as you are—the circumstances, the individuals, the personalities. God works all things out after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). And we're not going to limit God as to how He shall do it. He can do anything He wants to do. There may be times when God doesn't do what we think He ought to do, but He never changes in His character, in His person, in His love, in His grace, in His tenderness, in His compassion. How He displays that is in the hands of God.

Our business is to teach the Word of God. And our lives should measure up to the teaching we give to those who hear us.

This is what he is talking about in verse nine. Because of this he said,

13:9. Be not carried away with divers (many different) 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.

He wants our hearts to be established, not with eating and drinking, but with the grace of God, our lives manifesting something of the sweetness of the aroma of Christ.

Now I am addressing my remarks for the most part to those of you who may be leaders. And those of you who are not leaders, you are to remember that those who are over you, whether it be a Sunday school class or a Sunday school, or young people's meetings or a church or pastors whatever it may be have become the special objects of Satanic fury, of Satanic opposition. And don't criticize and judge your leaders. Possibly you don't realize the opposition they have. You pray for them.

Even if your leaders and your teachers do not feed you on the Word of God, that doesn't stop you from studying the Word of God and remembering that Jesus Christ your Savior is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. We are to so live that God will be magnified in all that we are and all that we do.

The thing that he's after here is, whether you're the people or a leader, that Jesus Christ Himself, the unchangeable Son of God, shall be the object of your affection, the theme of your teaching. Christ must ever be the very center of your testimony and of your life by the spoken word and by your life among men. We've been brought "out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). What for? "To show forth the praises of Him Who hath called us."

Now, because of that he talks about a danger in verse nine. You see, the danger is to be carried away by false doctrines, just like a piece of drift-wood. It's carried about with the waves, tossed here and there. And so it is with many believers. I'm amazed sometimes that those who belong to good churches can be carried away with all the modern methods of increasing the size of their congregation.

And may I say, indeed I'll give a word of warning. There's hardly a day goes by but what we hear of churches that have been led astray into the world, into different cults, different philosophies and different methods of unspiritual men. They want to be like the world to win the

world. They want to bring worldly ways into their services. They lose their fervency and their love for the Savior.

Some people want anything but the reality of Christ and His Word. They say to themselves, "Oh, if I could only feel something, if I could only have some great experience. Wouldn't that be wonderful?"

Yes. But, my friend, what is an experience? It just passes with the wind. We are to be established in the grace of God, because the grace of God makes Jesus Christ, the eternal, immutable, unchangeable, perfect Son of God the center.

We're living in days of pain, chaos, uncertainty, unrest. Isn't it wonderful to have your faith centered upon a Person, One who never changes, One who is eternal, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever? Oh, I tell you it's only as you are established in the grace of God that you can stand in these days. The grace of God is that which makes God responsible for our salvation, for keeping us, and for landing us in His own presence conformed to the image of His Son. He declares, promises and makes sure that we shall stand in eternity, eternally in His presence, in His fellowship. My, what a prospect!

As I have often times said, God will never be satisfied with any Christian until we stand in His presence conformed to the image of His Son. He's promised this and, my friend, His Word is good, as sure as God Himself. So don't you be tossed about like a piece of driftwood, tossed hither and yon by every strange doctrine that comes along. But you look to Christ. You be occupied with Him and His word. Stay in the Word of God. And, as you read, look for the Son of God.

You see, holiness and godliness do not depend upon the things of the flesh but upon the grace of God, not upon your feelings, not even upon your own will, but upon the grace of God. And what is grace, but love in action, the love of an eternal God toward those who put their trust in Him. This leads me to the second part of this division.

Love always follows Him, verses 10-14. Now mark what the writer says.

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

13:11. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

13:12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13:13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

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

Now, let me just stop here. You see, in verses 10 and 11 and 12, we're talking about Christ, our sin offering. If you go back to the book of Leviticus chapter four where we have instruction concerning the sin offering, the animal victims of the sin offering were never eaten. Now when you take the peace offering, the priests had their part, God had His part, and the offerer had his part. But in the sin offering, the animal offered under the old laws was never eaten. Part of it, the inward parts, were burned on the altar; and then the rest was taken outside the city and burned outside of the camp. If it was slain in the tabernacle in the wilderness, it was burned outside the tent. You see, eating from an altar would be very repulsive to a Jew.

And if I were teaching the book of Romans chapter 14 and the beginning of 15, I'd point out the problem in the early church was the fact that some of these Christians were eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. As far as they were concerned, it meant nothing. To them it was just meat.

But others had a conscience in the matter, and they would not eat meat because it had been offered to idols. They wanted no part of it. So there was quite a division in the early church about this question of eating meat that had been sacrificed. And Paul says that if you eat, to eat in faith and keep your faith to yourself. Don't be a stumbling block to your brother.

But here, coming right down to the sin offering spoken of in the book of Leviticus, it was never eaten by anyone. The inner parts were burned on the altar, and then the rest was burned outside the camp.

Now, he's giving us the fact that Jesus Christ was our sin offering. He was the One who was made sin for us. He was the One who bore all

your sins and my sins. And when he died, He died on the cross at Calvary outside the city of Jerusalem. He suffered as a criminal.

Did you ever stop to think of it? When our Savior died, when He was crucified, it was the vilest thing that could ever happen to a person. He became an accursed thing, nailed to a cross, despised and rejected of men, outside the camp, cursed, opposed, hated, dying as a criminal died.

Let us look at it.

13:12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify (set apart) the people with his own blood, suffered without the camp.

13:13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Or as Weymouth said, "Sharing the insults that were meant for Him would be upon us."

Let us go outside the camp. Let us go unto him outside the camp. This is a call for separation. You don't like that word, do you? My friend, from the book of Genesis right on clean through the book to Revelation, the whole Bible, we must face the fact that the very first step in a walk with God is separation, separation from evil, separation from that which is opposed to the Savior—not only a separation from a sinful world, but from a religious world.

In our Lord's day, in Paul's day, in the early church, it was separation not only from the Gentile world, but separation from the Jewish religious world. What about us today? Allow me to quote from 2 Timothy chapter 3.

Do you remember those verses? "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

In other words, when you and I accepted the Savior, we were not only delivered from our sins, but we go outside the camp bearing His reproach. This is separation. Is it a hard thing? No, no. Not when Christ

is the object of our faith and the object of our love. Let us therefore go to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. Why? Because we have no continuing city here, but we seek one to come. Our citizenship is in heaven. We're a heavenly people. Let's act that way. Let's live that way.

You know, the book of Hebrews could be divided, by the way, into two parts. In the first few chapters we are within the veil, Godward.

What do we mean by that? As chapter ten says, we have access into the very presence of God. Why? Because Jesus is there. Our Savior is there. And wherever Christ Jesus is, we have full access. So the book of Hebrews is the book of access, access into the presence of God. Redeemed sinners can come boldly within the veil into the very counsel chamber of God to the throne of grace and worship Him.

And then in the second part, we are outside the camp in the later chapters, bearing His reproach. We go outside the camp, outside the worldly camp, outside the religious camp. Now, please, it does not say outside the camp of God's people. I'm well aware of the fact there are many who take the stand that we should go outside the camp of all professing Christians. Well, my friend, you'd better leave the earth if you're going to do that. There are some who are looking for the perfect local church. You'll never find it until you get to heaven. We're down here in frailty. We're down here in weakness and, I'm sorry to say, oftentimes in failure.

But we're God's people. Do not, do not despise the fellowship of God's people, even though they may not agree in all the points that you have. We are to go outside the camp of a world that hates Him and of a religious world that has no use for Him. And I would plead with you today to come within the veil and have fellowship with Him. Then go outside the camp bearing His reproach.

Celsius, the Roman historian, says, "For a Roman to be scourged is a nefarious thing, but what shall we say of one being crucified. Do not let even his name be mentioned." And yet Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God, took your sin and my sin as Hebrews 9:26 says, "He appeared once at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." This man, by one sacrifice for sins forever, was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Now, this brings me to the next thought. Love not only follows Him, but love also sacrifices. And here we have in verses 15 and 16 one of those little statements which lets us do something.

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.

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

Let me just take a moment here. Love sacrifices, and this is the privilege of grace. Though we do not sacrifice on altars of wood and stone, we do sacrifice to Him. And the believer here has a three-fold sacrifice, something that costs.

First of all, may I suggest, we should offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God which is well-pleasing to Him. I'm reminded of Romans 12:1-2 where the Apostle Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (a present to him), holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed (do not be fashioned) according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

So first of all, we offer ourselves as a sacrifice to him. He gave all for us. Can not we give all to Him? In other words, make Him first in your life, where your will will be submerged in His will, where His purpose becomes your purpose. This is what He's talking about.

And then, we are to offer the sacrifice of praise. This is what we have here. We are to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name."

Now, you know some folks say, "Well, I don't feel like praising the Lord."

No, there's no sacrifice when you feel like praising the Lord. You know there are times one becomes so filled with the joy of the Lord and the ecstasy of our relationship and fellowship with Him that praise just comes out of our lips very easily. That's no sacrifice. That's no sacrifice. But to really praise the Lord when things are going wrong, when you're

in affliction or sorrow, this is the sacrifice of praise. It costs you something. Sacrifice always costs you something.

You remember some time ago I was speaking on the question of real New Testament discipleship. And I related that little story about the young man who came to the pastor and said, "Pastor, I would give the world for what you have."

And the pastor's reply was, "Son, that is exactly what it cost me. The world."

So we first of all give ourselves, and then we give the fruit of our lives and the sacrifice of praise even when we don't feel like it.. And by the way, with such sacrifices the Lord is well-pleased.

And then, in verse 16 we have another sacrifice.

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

To communicate means to give of your substance when it will cost you something. I know sometimes this can be a real sacrifice. I'm well aware of that. In fact, I might say this, if it were not for God's saints who are poor in this world's goods, giving out of the abundance of their poverty to the things of God, I question whether the work of the Lord would be carried on. Most of the work of God is not carried on by large, large gifts, but by the sacrificial giving of His people. And this is well-pleasing to God.

You remember one day the Lord was standing outside the treasury. And the Pharisees blew their trumpets and threw their money in that box that was by the door of the sanctuary. They wanted everybody to see it. And a dear little old lady came along, a little widow. And as she went by, she just slipped in two mites and passed by. Nobody saw it except Jesus. And when He saw it, He turned to His disciples and said that this woman had given far more than the rest because she gave out of the abundance of her poverty. She gave because she loved (Mark 12:41-44).

Ah, my friend, you know, heaven is going to be a place full of surprises. It's not the amount you give; it's that which comes out of your heart, out of your life as a real sacrifice to God.

You know in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6, the thing that delights the heart of God is faith. You remember in that verse it says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” God is pleased with our faith. It may be very weak faith. It may not be very strong; but, my friend, if there’s real genuine faith and trust in the Savior, my, how this delights the heart of God.

And secondly, not only is He delighted with our faith, but he’s delighted with our sacrifice. So I would suggest again, these three things to your heart. First of all, give yourself as a sacrifice to God. Put yourself in His hands. And then, continually praise Him. I’m talking about real thanksgiving and praise to God even for the tests and trials of life. Oh, how this pleases God. And then when we communicate with our substance, this also is well-pleasing in His sight.

Which brings me to the next verse, verse 17. Here’s the fourth thing with respect to the responsibility of love in the assembly. Love obeys. Verse seventeen:

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.

You know, this is a recognition of a God-given authority. And I believe he’s talking here about the local assembly, when the writer says, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” to God.

Now I was a pastor for one church alone for 37 years. And this used to be a solemn statement to me, that I must give an account to God of how I have taken care of the people of God. Have I been faithful in my stewardship to them? Feeding the flock of God? Guiding the flock of God? Sometimes having to rebuke some of God’s people.?

I want to tell you, my friends, that one of the greatest responsibilities that God ever gave to man was to make him a pastor over some of His people. And, you know, God has all kinds of people in the church, in your church. There are all kinds of personalities, some you

like and some you don't like and some you really love. Some are really cliquish. Some don't like their pastor and sometimes oppose him.

May I suggest what it says here, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." Oh, how often, and I say this so sadly, so sadly, I have friends in the ministry whose hearts have been broken. They have had to leave their pastorate. Why? Because two or three men in the church wanted to run the whole business and tried to run him out of the position and the calling that God had given to him. When they wanted to rule, they wanted to be popes and apostles, even telling a pastor what he must preach.

If that man is preaching the truth of God and seeking to feed the flock of God and wants to please God, you may not agree with everything he says. That may be true. But remember, be very careful about not submitting yourselves to your elders because they watch over you as those who must give an account to God.

You see, there's a responsibility on the pastor's heart, the ruler's heart, and a responsibility on the believers' hearts. And if I may be speaking to those of you who might be elders among God's people, pastors, teachers, superintendents of Sunday schools, may I say to you that you've got to give an account to God of how you've acted, of how you've dealt with God's people.

I wish you could see this, that love obeys. And remember this, each one is given a responsibility. The elders are to teach the people of God, feed them, and watch over them because they must give an account to God. And the people must obey and submit themselves to their elders and, they, too, must give an account to God. And may I say that when the shepherds do their job, and the people of God obey and submit themselves, you've got joy for the elders and you have profit for the people.

I know this is an ideal ministry and assembly, but isn't this what God wants? Doesn't God want us to love each other and to recognize the ones who are over us in the Lord and to honor them for His work's sake. And then to obey and submit because we must give an account to God.

What I'm trying to get to you is the seriousness of the thing. I say this very solemnly because I've seen churches split asunder. I've seen

hearts that used to be full of joy now are bitter. And churches have been smashed to pieces because of no love in the assembly.

Oh, listen, Christian friends, even though you may not agree with everything, maybe you don't like this one or that one and possibly you don't even like your pastor. Remember he is God's man as the leader of the assembly. And if you think he's wrong, I suggest you get down and pray for him.

What I'm concerned about is that we manifest the love of Christ, the one for the other. And love always sacrifices. We sacrifice before God by giving ourselves, by the sacrifice of praise, by the sacrifice of our means, for the furtherance of the gospel. And then we manifest love to the leaders by obedience and submission, and you must give an account to God.

Now I do realize there are times when a good-looking candidate turns out to be inept. Then godly elders and concerned congregations need to really get down and pray and sometimes act. That is why the writer penned verse 18.

13:18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

13:19. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

To move on, we have found that in verse 17 love obeys. Love follows Him. Love sacrifices. Now, we come to verses 18 and 19 and love intercedes.

Here is a request for prayer. You know, I wonder sometimes if the people of God realize the tremendous responsibility that is theirs to pray for their leaders, to pray for their pastors and their teachers. You know as a pastor, oftentimes people will say, "Please pray for me" or "Pray for my family." Pray for this or pray for that one. But how often do we get down and really pray for our leaders? It's so much easier to criticize them than to pray for them. It is much easier to pray God's judgment on somebody than to pray that the Lord might be wonderfully pleased to bless that one. This is the ministry of prayer.

And the grounds for the writer's prayer or the grounds for his request was, concerning his life before God, that he might live honestly before God and before men and that he might be restored to them sooner than they expected, or sooner than he expected. And I take it from this, whoever wrote this book of Hebrews could have been in prison.

Now, may I take a little moment here. First of all, may I suggest this question of the value of prayer. I just feel constrained here to take up this question of prayer, praying for those in authority, not only in the church, but in the nation. If ever the people of God needed to pray for our country and for the church of Christ, it's today.

Here we are, entering possibly an era of lawlessness, of uncertainty, of no peace, of restlessness, of fear. I find that so many have spurned the living God.

People are running after the philosophies of men and they are unsatisfied. They don't know which way to turn. And I believe that the church of Christ especially has failed to pray definitely that the will of God and the purpose of God may be accomplished in this land of ours. I think we have failed to pray for all men in authority, for our nation's leader, for those who are under him, the cabinet, and all those in authority in federal, state, county, city government affairs. I believe that God has put upon us a tremendous responsibility.

You know, I was reading the other day, and I'm going to quote this to you where someone said, "The world which is practically and desperately opposed to the gospel is in desperate need of God's people." The world desperately needs us. Why? Because we are the salt of the earth. This is what the Lord Jesus said, you remember: "You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor, it can't do the job it's supposed to do." What is that? Keeping back all the corruption, keeping back lawlessness. And this is because we Christians have not taken our responsibilities seriously.

That's true. You are children of One who is God. But, my friend, we're still in the world. And what are we down here for? The day is going to come when the Spirit of God is going to take the church out of this world. He's going to remove that which is going to hinder, that does hinder the growth of lawlessness and sinfulness in the man of sin. And

the man of sin, you remember is sin personified, the anti-Christ. But he cannot be manifested as long as God's people are on the earth. We are the salt of the earth. Salt is a preservative. And that which holds back the sinfulness and the moral corruption is the church of Christ, the individual believer indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Oh, I wish we could see this. Even the Apostle here writes and says, “Please pray for me, for we trust we have a good conscience in all things willing to live honestly. And I beseech you the rather to do this that I may be restored to you the sooner.”

You know, I wish God would raise up, again I speak very frankly to you, I wish God would raise up in these last days men and women, God's people who are intercessors, who will pray for God's people and for those of us who are indifferent and cold. I'm not going to question their faith in Christ, but their actions, their lives. They've been caught in the swirl of the world. They've been led astray by false doctrines. They've been set adrift like a piece of driftwood by the false philosophies of men.

I think of dear Jeremiah, for example, crying unto God in behalf of Israel which was facing captivity and coming under the judgment of God. My, how he prayed. How he could say, for example in chapter nine, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (Jeremiah 9:1).

My friends, I just plead with your heart as Paul could say in Romans chapter nine, “I have . . . continual sorrow (I have unceasing pain) in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites.” (Romans 9:2-4). God grant to all of us something of this ministry of intercession where we plead with God for men, especially for His people.

And now, Paul here, or whoever the writer is, prays that he might be delivered early, that he might see them sooner. Which reminds me, you remember, of Philippians 1:19 when he said to the church that he's going to be set free because of their prayers.

But when you come to 2 Timothy 4:6-8, you have an entirely different picture. He doesn't ask to be delivered. He just says "the time for my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Then he knew his time had come. But now in his first imprisonment He prayed that he might be delivered from evil men and that he might be delivered from prison. And he said to the Philippian church, "I know that my deliverance is near because of your prayers."

Now, the writer of Hebrews, I think hints at the same thing when he says, "I beseech you to pray for me." Why? "That I may be restored to you the sooner." Now, this is what you have, love intercedes. May I repeat it. Love follows Him. Our Savior loves sacrifices. Love obeys, and love intercedes.

And now, we come to the great doxology in verses 20 and 21. In fact, from verse 20 to the end of the chapter we have the conclusion of the epistle. Let us read these two verses. What amazing verses!

13: 20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

13:21. 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.

It's a wonderful thing to me, as I think of this great doxology which starts out, "Now the God of peace..." I think I have said this before when we were studying the book of Romans, and I repeat it again. He is the God of peace more than any other title in the New Testament. He's called the God of all comfort. He's called the God of patience. He's called the God of all grace. But here you have He's called the God of peace.

In Romans 15:33 we have "the God of peace be with you." In Romans 16:20 we have He's the God of peace who is going to establish you. In 2 Corinthians 13:11, He's the God of peace. In Philippians 4:9 we have "the God of peace shall be with you." In 1 Thessalonians 5:23

we read, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole being spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless.”

You see, may I refresh your memory? Every believer has peace with God. In other words, the moment a person accepts the Savior, he immediately has peace with God. He's no longer at enmity with God. This is true of all Christians. And then, you remember, we have the gift of peace which we found in John 14:27 where our Lord said, “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” And then we have the fact that Christ Himself is our peace. He's the foundation for our peace. Hence it never changes. You'll find this in the book of Ephesians 2:14. A wonderful thing, this. It is a wonderful thing that the God of peace never changes.

And then you remember in Philippians 4:7 we have, “And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” If I might give you one further, in the book of John chapter sixteen the last verse, where it says, “In the world you shall have tribulation” but in Me you shall have peace. Irrespective of what happens in the world, in Him we have peace. Now, here we are in a world-tossed society. If ever there was a time when the human heart yearned for peace, it's today. Where are you going to find it?

13:20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

13:21. 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.

No wonder in Matthew 11:28-29 our Lord said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest (find peace, experimental peace) for your souls.” At the cross He made peace for us. We have peace with God. And as I walk with Him and you walk with Him, then we experience the peace of God

that passes all understanding. In all the storms of life, there can be that settled rest, that real peace that comes only from God.

And you know, my Christian friend, this is what staggers the world. The world oftentimes says, "I don't know how in the world you can take any more of it. You've suffered so much. You've gone through so much and yet, you're still sweet and still thankful to the Lord."

Yes, my friend, what a sight for angels. Even angels are amazed at the people of God, as they see their fortitude and their rest and that wonderful peace which they're enjoying in Christ when everything around them is to the contrary.

Ah, friend. You remember that amazing picture in the art gallery, I think it was in Chicago. Artists were asked to paint a picture that would portray peace. And the one that won the prize painted the picture of a little bird in a nest hanging on a branch right over a roaring torrent. Here was the roaring water underneath, and that little bird was sitting calmly in its nest on the end of the branch.

You see, friend, we're in a world that's torn to pieces. It is full of sin and lawlessness and corruption. Oh, there are many good things in the world, don't misunderstand me. But the great thing people need is peace. And you find this in Christ Jesus.

Now, let us go on with this wonderful doxology.

13:20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

13:21. Make you perfect.

What is the guarantee of this peace? The One brought from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God. And by the way, this is the only place in the epistle to the Hebrews where resurrection is named.

You see, there was no place in the tabernacle or in the temple that portrayed resurrection, except possibly Aaron's rod that budded. But here where our life is with God, it is brought up. It is fitting that the resurrection be mentioned. If there is no resurrection, then nobody is saved. The guarantee of the work of Christ, the guarantee of the person

of Christ, is His resurrection from the dead. And the God who brought Him from the dead cannot only bring us too from the dead, dead in trespasses and sins, but also perfect us.

I say, my friend, it's a wonderful thing when you think of it. We do not offer to the world a dead Christ, a buried Christ. We offer to the world a risen Christ, a glorified Christ, One who has all authority. Allow me to again remind you that our Savior is presented in three aspects of His shepherd work.

In John chapter ten He said, "I am the good shepherd." The shepherd is a good one who gives his life for the sheep." Now this is comparable to the 22nd Psalm, where our Lord is revealed as the One who died for His people. And then, our Lord also is called the great shepherd of the sheep which we have here in Hebrews 13: "That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep." In resurrection. He is the great shepherd who cares for His people. And this is comparable to the 23rd Psalm.

Why do people enjoy the 23rd Psalm so much? Because it's the revelation of Jesus Christ, not only as the One who died, which you have in the 22nd Psalm, but the One who is the great Shepherd caring for His own, the One who burst the bonds of the tomb and went back to heaven as our High Priest, as our Representative, as our Intercessor. He's the One who cares for His people.

So we can say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul (Yes, even when I fail Him, He restores me): He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

This is the great Shepherd even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And who doesn't? We are all on earth in the valley of the shadow of death. We will fear no evil even when man's greatest and worst enemy comes. The last enemy is death.

And people say, "Well, he's dead. That's the end of everything."

Oh, no, no. For the believer it's the beginning of a new experience of walking by sight. For you remember, now, we're walking by faith; but then we walk by sight. Now, we're in frailty; then we'll be in power.

Now we fail God, then we will never fail Him. Now our fellowship is broken. Then it will never be broken. No, we start a new experience. But we are now in the valley of the shadow of death.

Death reigns over the human race today, irrespective of who you are and what you are, whether you're rich or whether you're poor, whether you're a baby or whether you're an old man. Death reigns today in every country, in every part of the globe, because of sin. And my friends, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Why? Because the great Shepherd who burst the bands of the tomb, who conquered death, is with me. His rod and staff they comfort me.

And He even prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. He anoints our head with oil. Even when the path is rough and we get roughed up a little wee bit and hurt and discouraged and disheartened, He comes along and cheers us up. Ah, He pours out the balm of Gilead. He pours His oil upon us. And the Psalmist says, "My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." Why? Because the One who burst the bands of the tomb is our great Shepherd.

Oh, friend, listen. Dear, dear Christian friend, get your eyes off yourself and get your eyes off people, and get your eyes off your circumstances, and remember the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd of his sheep. He has put away your sins, has defeated death and the grave and guarantees you eternal life in His presence. Oh, the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep. And may I add one further matter. I've talked about the 22nd and the 23rd Psalms.

But He's also the chief shepherd, and you find this in 1 Peter 5:4 where he's talking to preachers and Christian workers when he said, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." As the chief Shepherd He's going to crown His under-shepherds. So as the good Shepherd, He died for us. As the great Shepherd, He cares for us. As the chief Shepherd, He's coming to reward His under-shepherds. I tell you, we've got a perfect, complete, all-sufficient Savior.

Now, mark what He's going to do “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” He is going to—

13:21. 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.

You know, there's a little wee verse over here in 1 Peter 5:10. May I read what Peter says? “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

In other words, the risen Son of God has guaranteed to perfect us. This is the purpose of having a great Shepherd. He just doesn't take His sheep and save them and then let them run astray. No, He works out His pattern in your life and His purpose that he might perfect you unto every good work.

By the way, I'm reminded of another verse in Ephesians 2:10 which says, “We are his workmanship (craftsmanship), created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” He's going to perfect us, to keep us enjoined. He's going to work in you and in me His good plan and purpose.

My friend, these tests and trials of life, the disappointments of life, are part of God's purpose. May I repeat what I've said so often? The tests and trials of life become the open door for God to manifest and demonstrate to you and to me His power, His grace, His love, His compassion. He wants us to know that He's working out a purpose. As Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, these light afflictions are just for a moment. They're working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I tell you, He's going to work in you and me His own good pleasure.

Remember that verse—you know, these verses crowd into my mind—I think now of Philippians 2:12-13, where the Apostle says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” He didn't tell you to work *for* your salvation. He wants you to work *out* your salvation in your life. But it's got to be in there first before it can be

worked out. And He answers that by saying, it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

My, I'll tell you again what a Savior we have. The One who starts our salvation is going to finish it. Again I repeat it, God will never be satisfied with you nor me nor anyone of His children until we stand in His presence perfect, complete, absolutely complete in Jesus Christ. And what for? What's the purpose of it all? Listen. "To Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

In Ephesians chapter one, how often he says that we might be to the praise of His glory, to the praise of His glory, to the praise of His glory. It's all to be for the glory of God. That is the ultimate of it all. All redemption, all the purpose of God in the whole universe, is for the glory of God and the marvelous thing is that you and I have a part in this purpose.

Oh, child of God, child of God, why don't you fall in love with the Savior? The good Shepherd, yes, but He is also the great Shepherd, and the One who is coming for us.

Now, starting in at verse 22, and running through to the end of the chapter we have the final words.

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

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

Here is the confidence that he's going to be set free and that Timothy has already been set free. That's why I believe that one of the reasons we think Paul wrote the book of Hebrews is because of the suggestion here. This book was written probably from Rome.

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

13:25. Grace be with you all. Amen.

And now we've come to the end of the book of Hebrews. I wonder how it has entered into your life.

Could I close with a personal word to you? Friend, we've spent quite a bit of time in the book of Hebrews. Will you read it through

again? How I would love to teach it to you again. Think how it exalts the person of our Lord. There is no one else. He's superior to everybody, superior to angels, superior to Moses, to Aaron, to Joshua, superior in His person to all created intelligences.

Then His work at the cross is absolutely superior to everything in the Old Testament Every sacrifice is only a type of what He has done for us. He has put away our sins. This man by one sacrifice for sins for ever, and by that one offering, has perfected for ever all who put their trust in Him. And then, the wonderful joy of access into His presence, of walking in fellowship with Him, having that wonderful hope that God will exactly do what He said He would do. He'll keep His Word. He's going to come to perfect His purpose in everyone of us. We ought to sing that wonderful song, "Hallelujah, What a Savior." Oh, there's no one just like Him!

You see, even though we see Him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I 'm quoting from 1 Peter chapter one.

So many have told me they never dreamed there were such things in the Bible as the book of Hebrews presents. They say their hearts are blessed when they think of Christ's present ministry, the completeness of His work, the superiority of His person, and then to know the access we have into the presence of God.

For some, it is the first time that they've realized it's possible for us today to live the life of faith, the life of the enjoyment of Christ, the enjoyment of divine life, fellowship with God, then to have the hope guaranteed by our Savior.

Knowing now that God is going to come with the flaming fire and is going to shake everything that can be shaken in heaven and in earth, they are reassured to know that we belong to the kingdom that can never be shaken, not even by the living God—because it is His kingdom!

Would indeed that people's eyes might be opened to the beauty and the glory and the splendor of our Savior.

Let us revel in the salvation He has given to us.

Let us live the life that will bring honor and praise and glory to Him whom having not seen we love.

Amen.