

The Relationship Between Endurance and Heaven

We have need of endurance. This is a word of exhortation, and we know that the book of Hebrew is a letter of strong exhortation. The Lord in His mercy realizes that the closer we get to His coming, the more we need to hear the straight truth from His Word. We are so thankful that we have this wonderful word together from the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:32-39—But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Hebrews 2:9-18—But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me. Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins

of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Let's pray:

We do come to you tonight, Father, amazed at Your love for us that involved the sending of Your Son, and now His close attachment to us, His love for us, which we have seen. And as we are gathered here, as we have prayed together, sung together, listened together, we would ask that Your Holy Spirit would be the Interpreter to us in these last days, so that Your Spirit would be the One who exhorts us to find this endurance that leads to great reward. We are thankful for all the saints gathered here tonight. We pray that you would refresh our hearts, refresh our bodies, give us clear minds to see the things that we can see from Your precious Word. We commit this time to You; we thank You in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

The Lack of Endurance Means the Soul is Short

I would like to place this verse "For you have need of endurance" together with Numbers 21 by way of contrast. This is the episode where the saints in the wilderness experienced the serpents and had to place a bronze serpent upon the pole.

Numbers 21:4-5: "Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.'"

What I want you to notice in this passage is this phrase: "The people became impatient." To me it describes what it means to lack endurance. Literally in Hebrew it says, "Their soul was short."

If you lack endurance your soul is short. Now I live in New York City, and it is full of people whose souls are short. One of the brothers visited New York recently and he went out to breakfast one morning near Penn Station just at the time the trains came in with the daily commuters. They have about ten escalators that come up from under the bowels of the earth where the trains come in. They all came up at once and it was like ants coming out of an anthill. There were thousands of people coming up from there and he knew that he had to walk the same way they were walking even if he wanted to go the other way. That is New York; the soul is short. People will step over you; they will even drive over you in order to get to their next empty place in the wilderness. That is what happens when we do not have endurance.

I do not think I need to lecture any teacher here about short souls. Every kid's soul is getting so short. Their attention span is just so long. How can we teach anything to people with an attention span that short? On the other hand we admire endurance when we see it whether it is physical, emotional or intellectual. A few weeks ago, there was an amazing African runner who almost ran a marathon in under two hours. He missed it by fourteen seconds. That means fourteen miles an hour he ran for two hours. I am amazed by endurance like that.

We All have Endurance Problems

Some of you have been around for a while. You remember a guy who was a preacher by the name of Angel Martinez? He was a Baptist preacher. I used to be a Baptist, and I would run into this guy sometimes. He travelled all over the place preaching the gospel, and he did a good job. One thing that he had as a sort of claim to fame was that he memorized the whole New Testament. So somebody could just say, Hebrews 11:3 and he would shout out the verse. Or someone would read a verse and not say where it was from, and he would give the book and the verse. He did a little show before he preached the gospel. Of course, he preached the whole gospel without opening the Bible. He was like Bakht Singh. If you ever heard Bakht Singh preach, you probably could not understand it unless you knew the King James Bible because he basically preached the King James Bible. It is amazing the endurance of some people.

I have trouble with endurance. The other day I came home after playing four hours of golf, and my wife said, "We have to go to Lowe's to pick up some stuff. When I go into a store, in about ten minutes, my legs begin to lock up. I get back spasms; I feel dizziness coming on. And my wife says, "How can you be out there golfing for four hours but ten minutes in the store you go all fuzzy?" How about you, what is your endurance like? I think we all have endurance problems.

We have Need of Spiritual Endurance

Of course, we all realize no matter how much natural endurance a person has, and some people are gifted in that way, when we are born into the kingdom of God, we have no spiritual endurance. And that is what the letter of Hebrews is about—spiritual endurance. "You have need of spiritual endurance, that having done the will of God you might receive what is promised." When you look into the Word, you see very soon that the reason for this is that endurance in its spiritual aspect is one of the characteristics of Christ Himself. We are told in II Peter 1 that He has granted us by His great and precious promises to be partakers of His divine nature. Then it gives us a list of things. Add to your faith, character, and to character different things. He comes to one of them, and it is this word endurance. In other words,

endurance comes as the nature of God is worked into our lives by the tremendous working of the Holy Spirit. So when this writer is saying, "You have need of endurance" he is telling us we need to find our way into the Lord in such a way that this exchange of life can be known among us in this matter of endurance.

I will be speaking from Hebrews on this matter of endurance. The next time I will share on discipline unto endurance. The last time I will be sharing will be on faith and endurance.

The Relationship of Endurance and Heaven

I want to begin with the relationship of endurance and heaven. It is an old fashioned word. People do not talk about it much anymore except when they are about to die. Some people sing songs about it, but it is kind of sentimental. However, it turns out that endurance is connected with heaven.

The writer of Hebrews is writing to some people who are going through a very difficult time. He says, "Therefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider Jesus the High Priest and Apostle of your confession." These Hebrew Christians were going through a tough time. They had been through a lot, and they had endured a lot. He said, "Remember the former days when you endured a great conflict of suffering." So they had already been through a lot, and this was no time to give them a little nice devotional on heaven. It was no time to do some speculative theology or give them a Daily Bread kind of word. No, they had been made a public spectacle. They showed sympathy to prisoners, accepted joyfully the seizure of their property. But now that the very foundations of their Jewish religion were about to collapse, they were being tested.

What is your Christian life really based upon? It is in tough times that we realize whether our foundations are built on sand or on the rock. And that is what these Jewish Christians were going through. They were being shaken, even as we are being shaken. I think our country is being shaken in its morals, religion, and family foundation. At least the saints are feeling the shaking effect of such a thing. Even world-wide this refugee crisis is shaking the very foundation of Western civilization.

Consider Your Heavenly Calling

The book of Hebrews speak about a shaking that is now happening, and is about to create a greater shaking of things when the Lord prepares to come back. So we see that this has to do with foundations and the need for endurance underneath all of these things. So in tough times the writer is saying, "Consider your heavenly calling." This may seem to us a little bit irrelevant, but evidently this seems to be the Holy Spirit's strategy so often with people who are going through difficult times. We remember John while on the island of Patmos and was going through a difficult

time, and God opened heaven and gave him the encouragement that he needed. And when you look at the list of men and women in Hebrews 11, we realize that God gave them endurance as they walked upon this earth by opening heaven. So we have that one Scripture in our studies: “Moses endured as seeing Him who is unseen” (Hebrews 11:27b). He endured by seeing Him who is unseen. So there was heaven involved in this whole thing.

Jesus Exposed Judaism as a Religion without Heaven

When the Lord Jesus came to earth, He shook up Judaism because He preached the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. He came with the authority from heaven; He spoke gracious words from heaven; He brought healing from heaven, and He prayed, “Thy kingdom come. Seek the kingdom of heaven first.” It shook Judaism to its roots because they were trusting in their religious machinery, their theologies, their different camps and beliefs, their trust in the temple and liturgies, in the sacrifices, and the priesthood. Despite all of that, what Jesus exposed was that they were calling Israel the kingdom of God and it had completely taken heaven out of their lives. Judaism was religion without heaven. Jesus came and said, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is here.” They realized there was some correspondence with heaven that was missing in their religion, and so they repented. Jesus had come with this burden to preach these kind of things.

The Shaking of these Hebrew Christians

The Hebrew Christians were going through a shaking themselves because they believed in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, but now Judaism was being shaken. This was written just before the great destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, the sacrifices, the priesthood, and all of that. Two years before that time as things were beginning to shake, Jerusalem was absolutely chaotic before it was destroyed—chaotic with groups and sects, people killing each other, and the Romans trying to lay siege to the city. It was chaos, and during that shaking, these Jews were being tried by this gospel of the kingdom of heaven. And what the writer said to them frankly was this: “God is shaking you so that you can rediscover the unshakeable foundation of your faith.” When God brings such a shaking, there is a positive purpose to it, and they will discover what is unshakeable when everything that is shaking gets shaken, and what they have left is something real.

In Hebrews there is a prophetic burden to show these people heaven. Ten times heaven is mentioned in the book of Hebrews—“Partakers of a heavenly calling.”

Exhortations in the Last Days

How rich are you in heavenly things? Are your treasures there? Are you intelligent of what goes on in heaven? It seems to be very important here. In the

book of Revelation, as well as in Hebrews, we are talking about exhortations in the last days. In Revelation we hear the last words that Jesus speaks to the church and it is to the church of Laodicea. Basically, what He says to them and I will put it in these kind of words: "Church, church of the last days, you are so poor. You have no more heaven. You say I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and you do not realize you are miserable, wretched, poor, blind and naked."

The Church had gotten Disconnected from Heaven

What happened to the church? It had gotten disconnected from heaven. Our life is to have its mystery, but our whole life is to have a connection with heaven. When we worship and are corresponding with heaven's worship, there is a wonderful sense of life and anointing. When we have a prayer meeting, and we are under the Head and corresponding with heaven, then that prayer meeting is a lively meeting. When the Word of God is preached, and it is connected and has correspondence with the burden from heaven, the heavens open and we are blessed and we are convicted that God is speaking to us. Can you imagine the church without a connection to heaven? Oh, it is so easy. The church of Laodicea had doctrines and worship, but it was all lukewarm smooth and heaven was missing. Jesus came and spoke to the church in the last days, which are the days that I believe we are living in, and He said, "You are so poor, church. You are so poor. You have gotten hold of so much stuff that you do not feel you have any need of heaven; therefore, you are not looking forward to going to heaven. This is heaven for you right now. You have your little mansion, two dogs, and a new car. Why do you have any hope for heaven? Why do you have any desire for heaven?" We could sentimentally say, "Oh, I cannot wait to get to heaven." Do we even know what we are talking about? The church is so poor today. The church of the United States is very poor, and it is poor in direct relationship to how much of heaven they are missing.

Can the church really be under an open heaven? This is the desire of the writer of Hebrews for us to learn these kind of things. So I want to talk about this, and actually it is a simple message. Your endurance is tied to heaven. Let me make three statements about heaven.

1) It is the right of every Christian to walk in victory here on earth because they live by heaven.

2) The more intelligent we are of heaven, the stronger our blessed hope anchors our souls unshakably within the veil where Jesus dwells. The more we know about heaven, the more hope anchors itself to heaven in Jesus.

3) It is this very hope which gives endurance to our faith to do the will of God and receive the promise.

Endurance to do the Will of God

Our theme verse says this: “For you have need of endurance so that when you do the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” There is a present necessity that leads to two future things—the immediate future and the near future. Right now you have need of endurance to do the will of God. That is why you need endurance, to do the will of God. We cannot do the will of God in a shallow way because we cannot get away with it in these last days. You have need of endurance that you can do the will of God and receive the reward of what was promised in the near future.

So the writer is talking about this wonderful thing of endurance, but when to faith is added hope, it produces a faith with endurance. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1a). There is a connection of hope and faith. All three graces should work together, faith, hope and love. However, the more that hope is an anchor for you, the more that faith has the power to endure as seeing Him who is unseen.

Jesus in Heaven as Our Representative

Actually the writer of Hebrews is not just interested in giving you a tour of heaven per say. He is really interested in a course of giving us a proper intelligent vision of our Man in the glory. The Holy Spirit wants us to know why seeing Jesus in heaven is so important. Is it important for you to see? If we see Jesus in heaven, of course, we will burst out in worship. If the heavens opened right now and we looked up and saw Jesus, everybody would be down on the floor worshipping. We would be thanking the Lord for our salvation and for His great mercy and grace toward us and everything that He is to us. But this writer wants us to look into heaven a little longer because he wants us to see Jesus as the Man in heaven who is your representative. He wants to give you encouragement by understanding that He is up in heaven right now representing you. He is your Advocate; He is there on your behalf. He is the first Man in, and He is standing for all of us together. And if we see this, endurance becomes part of our life.

Occasionally I take trips. Let’s say I take a long, exotic trip to Singapore. After a meeting one of the brothers says to me: “I want to take you somewhere you have never been before.” So he takes me on a plane out to a lush paradise. We land and drive around and I see how beautiful this island is. As we are driving around the strangest thing happened. Down by the seashore by the crystal blue water, seeing the animals and birds and fruits that are so beautiful, I see over the top of a ranch

entrance your name on it. I say, "I know that guy; he lives back in the states." So I go into town and I check with the guy and ask him: "Look, I am just driving around and this is the most beautiful place I have ever been. But I went by and I saw brother so and so's ranch or sister so and so's ranch. How did that happen? He said, "We have a chief justice on the island, and he happens to be a very good lawyer. He is representing your friend here on this island. He takes care of the land, takes care of the property, takes care of the family who have already gone up in heaven; he is taking care of the whole thing. It is on your behalf that he is here. Now if I told you of such a place and your name was on it and there was somebody representing you, would you be interested? You might want to check it out even if it is way out in New Zealand. That might be where you would want to be.

Of course, it is a foolish example to explain something that is beyond explanation. We have a greater treasure than anything we could describe, and it is just above our heads in the heavens. We have everything up there. I was a Christian for several years, and just before I turned forty years old, I lost my oldest son in a car accident. I have to admit that I got saved because I knew I was a sinner. I knew about heaven and I sang songs about heaven, but I did not really care much about heaven until my son was there. It was my first time as a Christian that I really had this notion: I want to go there. I want to see my son. I now had an investment in heaven, so there was something more interesting about heaven. Now if that is the case because I have a son up there, how much more it should be because Jesus is up there.

How much do you care about heaven now that you know He is up there on your behalf representing you? He goes before the Father and advocates for you in your weakness and need and frailty, standing there in all of His strength on your behalf having overcome. Now I do not know if you are interested in that, but I am telling you that the angels and various creatures in heaven are amazed that there is a Man in the glory. They are amazed at it, so I think the writer in a very simple way wants us to be amazed by it.

God Shakes Us so that We will be Unshakeable

Suppose you are going through a shaking time, a very difficult time, and as you are going through, in God's mercy He opens the heavens to you and you see something. Then you say what you see: "It is the Lord who is shaking me!" So many of you are going through difficult times. Sometimes we think it is our fault or their fault or maybe like these wandering Jews in the wilderness we start blaming God or blaming our food like they did. Or it is Moses' fault; that is why I am out here. But what if the heavens opened up and we saw the Lord, and He was saying, "I am

shaking you so that you will be unshakeable.” Now would you be encouraged by that? What if you were some of these Jews and your whole system was collapsing; no more rabbis or scribes, no more sacrifices; the whole thing is going to be done away with, but you see the Lord up there saying, “I am doing this, yet once more I am shaking and everything that is unshakeable will remain.” I would think even in a difficult time we could find comfort in such a time.

The Book of Hebrews Opens with a Look at Heaven

Let’s take a look at heaven. The writer starts out in heaven and ends up in heaven. If you do not like heaven, you probably will not read the book of Hebrews. What is your vision of heaven? I understand the Chinese have a stylized understanding of what heaven is. Growing up as a good Protestant non-Christian I thought heaven was a fluffy cloudy place; there were angels all around and I would sit on a cloud. It was all kind of ethereal up there, but we always prayed: “If I die before I wake I want to go to heaven.” Millennials, what is your view of heaven? Is it Narnia? I think we should see what the Word of God says about heaven. One of the things we see is: there is now a Man in the glory. That makes it very interesting. So at the very beginning of Hebrews in 1:1-2 it is talking about heaven.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

The writer is opening up heaven now because he wants us to see Jesus. “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

What a view you see of heaven! It is Jesus up there, and it is glorious; it is wonderful. It is sort of like the sequel, if I can put it this way, to Matthew 3. When Jesus went into the waters to be baptized, God tore open the heavens; “I have to see this!” He tore it open, and all the angels were looking down through the clouds at Jesus, this Son of Man, this glorious Son of God down there submitting to death, even the death on the cross as He went down into baptism. That is what it meant, and heaven knew that. They looked down through the clouds because they wanted to see: “That is the One; that is the glorious One. Look what He is doing there.” They were amazed!

Now the writer of Hebrews is tearing open heaven and saying: “Look up! See what is up there so that you and I can see our glorious Jesus Christ, the Son of Man in the glory, and see especially what He is up to. There He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high with a double glory right off the bat. He is the greatest

part of heaven. He has the glory that comes from His eternal state as the Son of God. He is sitting there, the Creator of the world, and always has been. He is on an eternal throne as the glorified Son of Man because He came down and died for us. He has moral perfection; He is sinless, and He offered Himself up for us and then was raised up. So He is the Son of God, the Son of Man. Glory, glory, He sits at the right hand of the Majesty. What a picture this is for us to see!

From the beginning of the book of Hebrews right through the whole book we will try to open heaven and see how this affects you; how this touches your life. We see Him inside the veil. We see Him running ahead of us. We see Him outside the camp. Do you see Him? He is in heaven now.

Jesus is Better than the Angels

In order to see Jesus in heaven, the writer realized that to these Hebrew Christians, he had to keep sweeping things out of the way. There were Jewish things that just got in the way of seeing Jesus. So chapters 1 and 2 are good examples because both chapters are all about the fact that Jesus is better than the angels. At the time of Jesus when He walked on earth, the Jews had developed quite an angiology. They worshipped angels. You remember how in Colossians Paul said that these people were worshipping angels. No, you worship Christ alone. But the Jews were starting to worship angels. They were calling on angels in prayer. If you read the Intertestamental literature you will see that they were getting angel crazy. As a matter of fact, they were substituting angels for God. But the whole point of what the Hebrew writer was saying is this: "Look, I want you to see Jesus, but the first thing I have to do is sweep away the angels. He is better than the angels.

In chapter 1 he lists a number of things concerning angels: "Which one of the angels did He ever say, 'Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.'" None. And when He brings the firstborn into the world, he says in 1:6: "Let all the angels worship Him."

In Hebrews 1:8: "What angel did He ever say to, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'?" He said that to Jesus.

Hebrews 1:10: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands." What angel did He ever say something like that? No, no, no, Jesus is so far above the angels; you have to get this clear and go on with Him.

Hebrews 1:13: "To which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet'?" No angel did He ever say that to; that is Jesus, the Son of Man who has been told all these things through the Scriptures.

Then he comes to that last one in Hebrews 2:6-7 where he quotes that beautiful passage in Psalm 8. "What is man, that you remember Him? Or the Son of Man, that You are concerned about Him? You have made Him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned Him with glory and honor." That is what the Scriptures say, but then the writer goes on to say, "We do not see mankind yet in that glorious state, but we do see Jesus who was made lower than the angels, and because of His worthy death on the cross and resurrection He is crowned with glory and honor because by the grace of God He tasted death for every man." There is no angel who ever saved anybody. But here is this Son of God who became a Man and went lower than the angels and is now raised up above the angels and is sitting there at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Do you see Him?

He wants them to realize that Jesus is not just sitting there in a static position. He has finished the work; it is finished, and He has taken His seat on the throne. But if we take that too far we almost get the idea that Jesus said, "I am done with those humans; I saved them, I did My work. Now I am sitting down; you guys take over." But no, what the writer wants us to see is that Jesus, who is now in heaven enthroned, is busy bringing us as sons to glory. He is interceding for us, bringing us to glory.

In chapter 2 He actually joins with us humans in worship. "I will worship the Father in the midst of My people. I am not ashamed to call them My brethren." Isn't that wonderful! Talk about an advocacy. Here He is up in heaven and all the angels are saying, "Great Jesus, Son of Man, glorious Man in the glory." Then they look down at the humans on this earth and say, "Those people? You are going to make them sons of glory? He says, "I am not ashamed to call them My brethren." He is advocating for us.

Jesus had to Become Like Man in Order to Save Man

Then it goes on and says, "In order to save them, He had to become flesh and blood." He did not come to save angels. Get those angels out of the way. He came to save men, and He had to become just like us. He had to suffer the temptations that we suffer. He had to go through the sufferings that we go through. That is the only way He could bring us to glory. So He came down to defeat the enemy who was blackmailing all of us with fear and death until Jesus conquered fear and death.

Now that He is alive in heaven, He is very, very busy because most Christians are so weak, so afraid, and need so much help. The writer says, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (2:18). So many of these Jewish Christians were scared to death. They were afraid of losing their lives, they were afraid of falling into that

bondage of the devil again, and Jesus wants to come down and say, “Listen, do not be afraid. Do not worry; I am here on your behalf, look and see. I am right here for you.” In order to encourage so many saints who are so weak and fearful and timid and feel so sinful and unworthy, Jesus came down and said, “I am coming here to help you. That is why I was made like you. I want to be faithful to you.” What a glorious Man!

It’s Okay to be Weak

I am reminded of that wonderful song. “I hear the Savior say, ‘Thy strength indeed is small. Child of weakness, watch and pray. Find in me Thine all in all.’ Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.” If the heavens are open, maybe you hear the Savior say, “I know you are weak; indeed your strength is small. Child of weakness, watch and pray; find in Me your all in all.” Wonderful! This is the Jesus that this writer wants us to see.

I know some Jewish Christians, and most of them are kind of tough. They will strive with all they can, but when their foundations get busted up, it turns out that they are just as weak as the rest. Some people can put on a good bluff, but when things really get tough, I think maybe one of the secrets to endurance is to realize how weak we are. Who do we know in the Bible who probably sang that song? Of course, that song was probably written in the nineteenth century, so the answer is nobody. But this is what is said about the church in Philadelphia—“I know you have little strength, but you have kept the Word of My endurance.” Because they knew they were weak, they held on to Jesus: “We believe you, Lord. We are holding on to that Word.” “And so you have kept the Word of My endurance, I will keep you from the hour of temptation.” Isn’t that wonderful! They could sing that song. They knew their strength was weak, but they knew who to trust.

The writer of Hebrews is trying to diffuse these Jews from trying harder, from praying to angels, and I do not know what else I need to do, and he said, “Look up; there is a Man in the glory whose life is for you.” It is a wonderful thing.

Partakers in a Heavenly Calling

We come to probably the main topic which begins in Hebrews 3 where he says, “Therefore, holy brethren, (we are talking to Christians here) partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”

Are you partakers in a heavenly calling? How earthly is your calling? Does it have a correspondence with heaven? I heard an old man say, “Consider your ways.” And I hear the writer of Hebrews saying, “Consider Jesus.” He wants us to put the brakes on here. “Therefore holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, slow down a minute and consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”

Jesus the Apostle

What I want to say is this: We need to see Jesus who is in heaven on our behalf doing things to bring us to glory. The book of Hebrew is not a salvation book. He is writing this to holy brethren, but this book is all about getting us to glory, getting us to the reward, getting us to maturity, getting us to fullness, and as he puts it, you are now at Mount Zion. Are you? That is where he wants to get us. So chapters 3 and 4 are mostly about Jesus the Apostle. Later on he spends much more time on the High Priest.

The Apostle of the House of God

Hebrews 3:2: “He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in his house.”

The writer wants us to see Jesus now in heaven as the faithful owner of His house whose house we are. This has a bit of the corporate interpretation to it. He wants us to see Him as the Apostle of the house. Didn’t the Apostle of the house of God say, “I will build My church.” Now He is up in heaven. You might think He is unemployed, but no, He’s not. Here He is and He is building His house. It says in verse 2, and I want to change the grammar: “He *is* faithful to Him who called Him. If you look this up in the Greek the past tense gives us the idea of this: Moses was faithful, He was faithful, now you be faithful. That is good but that is not what the writer is going to say. That is not what he is asking us to do at the moment.

The writer is saying, “Jesus is faithful as the Apostle of the house of God, and He can bring it through the wilderness to glory. The story or the lesson here and the Scriptures have to do with the children of Israel going through the wilderness. The application is that our Christian life in these last days is like going through the wilderness. How can we get through into the Promised Land? Do we have a good Apostle?

Moses was Faithful in Getting God’s House to the Jordan

Moses was faithful as an apostle. He got the house of God all the way to the Jordan River, but he could not get it across. That was Moses’ job. He was a servant in God’s house, and he was to steward the tabernacle and get it through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. We think the most important thing is the children of Israel going through the desert and into the Promised Land. But from God’s perspective it is: “Moses, take care of My house. I am dwelling there and I want you to get it from here to there.” That was not an easy thing to do because Moses had to follow the house. We say that Moses was the apostle who brought the children of Israel to the Promised Land. Well actually, Moses was just a servant

of the house because the house was moving by the cloud and the fire. So when the cloud and the fire moved, the house moved, and Moses moved with the house. And he was faithful. He got them through the desert because they never would have made it to the Promised Land except for the fact that Moses was faithful. How faithful were the children? They murmured and complained and wanted to go back to Egypt; they lost their patience, and their souls got short. Even Moses got short, and that is why he got to the Jordan River and then God said, "Bye, bye; we need another apostle."

Joshua Took the Tabernacle into the Promised Land

Hebrews 4 mentions Joshua. Now Joshua got the tabernacle into the Promised Land. Actually God got into the Promised Land, but Joshua did not give Him rest. Why? They stuck the tabernacle in Shiloh, and God's rest is in Zion. "My house is in Zion." Joshua did not get it there, but he and Moses were faithful as servants. The comparison is this. Jesus is the apostle of our confession. Can He get the house of God into the Promised Land? into rest? into glory? If it is left up to us, are we going to make it? This is the house of God; we are the church. Are we going to make it? Oh, we have so much clutter in the way. Everybody is blowing a trumpet and saying, "Let's go this way." We have so many clouds over the thing. But Jesus is the Apostle, and He will get us to glory because He is faithful.

Holding Fast to the Lord in Order to Get into the Promised Land

Now the one thing that we have to do as His house is be confident and boast; that is our part in it. We are involved in this whole thing, but we have to be those who in chapter 3:6 say, "Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of hope firm until the end." What are we boasting in? Is the boast, "I can do it? Let's march into the Promised Land. We can do it." Is our boast in our confidence? Is that what the writer is asking the Jewish Christians to do? No; he is asking them to hold on to your Head, your Apostle; He will get you in. Look up there and see the Apostle; He can do all things well. By His life, your life will get into the Promised Land. We are looking up into heaven; and we are seeing the Apostle work; we are seeing Him building the church. So in this matter of boasting, we have to hold on to the Lord, hold fast to the Lord, if we are going to get into that Promised Land. How do we remain confident according to Hebrews 3?

We are partakers of Christ if we hold fast. Hebrews 3:14: "We have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. So first of all we need to partake of Christ. It is His life that moves the house toward glory. We need to put our whole trust in Jesus as our Apostle that He can get us in."

That is what we boast in, not that we can do it, but He can do it. However, that is not enough.

Harden Not Your Heart

According to the Word of God, we are to get through this wilderness and into Zion. We have to live in the kingdom-time zone which is today. Not only do we hold on to Jesus as the only way we will get into the Promised Land, but we have to be under the word of the cross. "Today if you hear My voice, harden not your hearts." That is what time we are living in. Here is an amazing thing. How many more days do we have until the kingdom comes? Our brother who spoke this morning said, "Jesus is coming back at any time." How many more days are there? There is only one according to the Bible; that is today, and that today may be years, but it is only one day. We have only one day to go and the kingdom is coming in and that is today. Isn't that wonderful? That is the good news. Today we need to hear His voice. He is speaking to us. There is a cloud and fire. He is leading us, go that way. "Today if you hear My voice, harden not your hearts." The children of Israel came up to Kadesh-barnea, but they did not get into the Promised Land. Why? They heard His voice, but they did not believe and they did not go in. What was the voice saying when they got to the border of Kadesh-barnea? God was saying, "Go in; take the land." But they would not believe, and they circled around in the wilderness.

As Christians, we need to believe this word. He mentions two enemies keeping us from getting into the Promised Land. One is a hardened heart by sin. He says in Hebrews 3:12-14: "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." Sin can harden our hearts. I do not know what made the children of Israel decide that they could not go in except maybe they heard there were giants.

The Word of the Cross

The second thing was unbelief. He says in Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?" The word of the cross is how we practically walk through the wilderness and come to Zion. The word of the cross speaks: "You have need of endurance." Do you listen to that? Do you hear that? Here is a word of the cross: "Let Christ be your full possession; enter into the fullness of Christ; go on to maturity. Unbelief says, "No, I am unworthy, I could never make it. No, I am not good enough; I cannot do this." That stands in the way of our getting to glory. Those things have to be swept out of

the way. The apostle comes to us to bring us into rest, and he knows just what to do. He brings the Word to us that divides soul and spirit.

Living in Rest as we Go Through the Wilderness

Hebrews 4:9: “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” Are we living in rest while we are going through the wilderness? If we are living in Today and we hear His voice, and we are holding fast to the Head, we are living in rest even while we are walking through the desert. The word of the cross brings victory to our lives as we go to glory, but we have to listen to the Word. Of course, I do not have to impress upon you how often the book of Hebrews talks about hearing the Word. “Don’t let it slip; don’t let it slide; don’t neglect so great salvation.” If those Jews got into trouble for not hearing a word coming from earth, how much more will we suffer if we do not hear the Word from heaven? It is living under that word of the cross that gets us through the wilderness and into the glory. So in living today, our confidence is: He is faithful.

“There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (4:13).

That is our Apostle and He is giving us a living Word. And to keep us faithful that Word is working and dividing and separating soul and spirit. There has to be a word that brings our life to the cross. Our flesh cannot inherit what is just beyond the river. There has to be a transformation in our lives, and thank God for the Word of the cross. Do you live under the Word of the cross? Do you believe that you have been crucified with Christ and by His resurrection life you can now live in obedience to Him? This is the Word of the cross that we are to live in as long as it is Today. Tomorrow we will not have to do it anymore; it is only Today. Tomorrow will still be Today unless the Lord comes back.

All of this, of course, lays these people bare. You can imagine these Jewish Christians as the Word comes and reveals themselves. “I cannot hide from God; He knows that I am no good.” But what we discover is that the person who is slicing us up is the High Priest Himself. Now if you are going to be sliced up, do you want to be sliced up by the High Priest or by Joe Blow, the local Levite who has only a big hatchet? I suppose that no one can cut better than the High Priest. He is like the

surgeon in the business. So as we are being cut open, we discover that the High Priest is Jesus. Now look again into heaven because I want you to see that it is your High Priest there.

The High Priest of our Confession

In Hebrews 4:14-16 it says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens," [Have you seen your High Priest pass through the heavens? Have you seen what He is doing up there?] "Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Our Apostle is up in heaven. He is there on our behalf; He is after our interest; He is bringing the Word to us; He is giving us life as He is Head over us, and now we see Him as the High Priest of our confession. If we are to get into the Promised Land, this house has got to be run by the right High Priest. A High Priest is jealous for His house. He has to keep it clean; He has to keep it right; He has to keep it lit; He has to keep it in accordance with godliness. We have a High Priest.

From chapter 4:14 right through 10:19 it is all about the High Priest as an Advocate for us. He has passed through the heavens. So in the terminology of the writer, he laid down his life as a sacrifice on the brazen altar in the outer court which is on earth. But then having done that, look what He did with that offering up in heaven. Now we see Him as the High Priest bringing His blood. This whole section is full of the blood of Jesus. This is the new covenant that He is bringing to us. This High Priest is offering His blood one time for all in perfect atonement, in total forgiveness. But can we see Him up there? For these Hebrew Christians the book of Revelation had not been written yet.

What do we find in the Scriptures about what Jesus is doing now in heaven? We see that He has gone up; He is sitting at the right hand of God that was preached on the day of Pentecost. Paul mentioned some things that he saw in the third heaven and some things we hear that Jesus is doing, but Hebrews shows us a little picture of what He is doing now for us. He is the High Priest now for us. He has passed through the heavens now for us. Why? Because He is connecting us, the house of God down here on earth to heaven, and all we have is a little candlestick. We bear the testimony of the candlestick, but up in the heavens He is building a house not made with man's hands; it is perfect in the heavens. He is the High Priest constructing the whole thing, and He has goes in with an offering that satisfies forever. How wonderful He displays this offering!

The Priesthood According to the Order of Melchizedak

Once again the writer brings it down to the humanity of Jesus and says because He offered this perfect sacrifice up in the heavens, he started a priesthood of a different line according to the order of Melchizedak. These Jewish Christians are going to have to sweep the whole Levitical priesthood, all the sacrifices year by year, and the temple, and they will see Jesus as the Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedak. Having offered His sacrifice, He made it the basis of a better covenant.

What is that covenant? It is a covenant that says, "Your sins I will remember no more." Can you imagine being a guilty Jew and hearing under the new covenant that was ratified in the precious blood of Jesus, I will remember your sins no more. And in the new covenant that Melchizedak the priest has inaugurated, you will know God, you will be His people, He will be Your God, and He will write His laws in your hearts. The Jews wore phylacteries on their heads so that they would never forget the laws. No! This High Priest has written laws in your hearts, and has not only written laws in your heart but is giving you grace to obey those laws He has written in your heart. This is a wonderful High Priest. He has inaugurated a whole new thing. Now that may not impress you too much, because you have never had a priest in the first place, but to the Jews it made all the difference in the world.

So what if the temple collapses? So what if there is no offering of goats and bulls? There is a Priest who offered one time for all, His precious blood, and now we know perfect atonement. He is now perfecting this house up in the holy place, and as He is taking us through the wilderness the picture is a little different now.

Dwelling in the Holy of Holies

Here we are in the wilderness; our life is still in the shaking, and we still have the problems, so what do we do today? We stand under the Lord and say, "Lord, You are the Apostle; take us through. I live by Your life, not mine. And then we listen to the Word of the cross that strips us and changes us. But what else do we do while we are in the wilderness? He says, "We are going through the wilderness as a house, but I want you to dwell in the holy of holies with Me." He welcomes you into the most peaceful place in the desert. There may be swirling winds out there or enemies surrounding the camp or whatever it might be. There may be prophets on top of the mountain like Balaam trying to curse you, but it makes no difference because the one place that is squeaky clean, beautiful silence, wonderful clear light is the holy of holies. And this High Priest has torn open the veil and said, "Now you can live in the holy of holies. Your life can live in the holy of holies. Of course, you have things to do. This does not mean that you all should quit your jobs and find a

little closet in your house, read your Bible and pray all day long. You can live in the holy of holies and go about your daily work. Isn't it wonderful that He says, "Do you see My precious blood? I want you with boldness and confidence by a new and living way to enter into the holy of holies because I am there. Link up with Me every day of your life."

I was just out in Israel a few months ago, and one night we stayed with the shepherds in a Bedouin tent. It was a cold night, and we heard all kinds of animals out there. We were in this Bedouin's tent, and we felt totally safe. They fed us all kinds of food and took our money. It was a wonderful time. So to go through the wilderness, you are going to have to obey the Lord, follow the cloud and the fire, but you get respite in the holiest place. It is your place; He has opened it up for you—not just go in the outer court. The Jews could not go in; they go to the outer court. They are shaking when they take their animal in and watch it being offered. They may get some of the food back from the animal, but they never could go inside. Now our new Priest says, "Yes, you can go right inside there." If you see what this High Priest is doing up there, He has pitched a tent in the heavens. It is an eternal tent, a better tabernacle, and He wants you to begin to learn about that. There is so much about heaven we have to learn. To see Him going around in His temple not made with man's hands, it must be something to see. The Word of God says, "We can enter into the holiest place with Jesus. Abide with Him, rest in Him as we are going through this wilderness."

Seeing the Man in the Glory

So the writer is sharing these things trying to help them understand. Jesus is our representative in heaven, and that makes a huge difference. If we know that, it gives us endurance which is connected with heaven. He is the Apostle to take us through the wilderness and pitch His tent in Zion. He is the High Priest according to Melchizedek who by a better covenant has brought you into the holy of holies. Do you see Him? Do you see His open heaven? Is there baggage in the way? Are their angels you worship? I think for us the interpretation would be that there may be preachers you are trusting in. I think you should trust in Jesus. Are you trusting in a good church? You may be thinking that you are going to get into the Promised Land because you go to a good church. I would not bet on it. Good churches end up without any connection to heaven if they are not careful. So I would not trust in a good church or your good works or some good doctrines or super grace or sanctification by works or any other such thing. Sweep it all aside. But as we look up to heaven and see Jesus, the Man in the glory, that is how we are going to get

there. There is resurrection power, authority and life poured out for us that will get us from here to glory.

I am assuming that almost everyone here is a holy brethren. Are you headed for glory, to that kingdom? Are you heeding this Apostle and High Priest who is over us? Today, the Lord is speaking, "Look up, see Me, find your endurance to press through." Today is the day. We do not need a book on endurance; we need to trust the Man in the glory.

The three things I said about heaven earlier may mean something more to you now.

1. It is the right of every Christian to walk on this earth in victory because they live by heaven.

2. The more intelligent we are of heaven, the stronger this blessed hope anchors our souls unshakeably within the veil where Jesus dwells.

3. It is this very hope that gives endurance to our faith in having done the will of God to receive that which was promised.

I do not think we can understand this exhortation to endurance if we do not understand that it is talking about being invested in the future. We have a hope, but we have the will of God yet to do, and then we receive that wonderful inheritance from heaven which is promised to us. May the Lord teach us these things and show us Himself in His wonderful humanity there in heaven on our behalf.

Let's pray:

I want to praise and thank You, Lord, that this writer of the book of Hebrews is so full of exhortation, so full of power and the Holy Spirit. And he speaks to us a word of exhortation and opens the heavens for us to see our Man in the glory. We realize that our connection with endurance has to do with our seeing Him as the Man in the glory, as the Apostle of our confession, as the High Priest of our confession. Oh Lord, we pray we could see You more clearly as we are going through this wilderness. We want to put our trust absolutely in You more than we ever have before. Lord, do give us an open heaven. We want to see not only what is going on in the earth, but more importantly what You are doing right now in heaven on our behalf. Do encourage every heart. For those who are weak and fainting, for those who do not feel like they can possibly make it, oh Lord, show them that You are standing there as a representative on their behalf. Oh Lord, we put our trust in You as we take up these matters together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.