

Ministry on Hebrews

Part 10

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[00:00:00] I want to read to you tonight from the epistle to the Hebrews, first of all in chapter 1, verse 1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, speak in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who, 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.

[00:01:02] Chapter 2, verse 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. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, 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. God also bearing them witness forth with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. Chapter 3, verse 7.

[00:02:08] Therefore, as the Holy Ghost said, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Then chapter 12, verse 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for 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, whose voice then shook the earth. But now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, [00:03:04] signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. When someone speaks to us, how we listen and how we respond depends to a large degree on what we think of the person speaking.

I cannot judge for you, you know your own heart. How honestly do you listen when somebody speaks to you? [00:04:07] Oh, I like her. She's my friend.

She always says nice things. I listen to what she says. Him? Troublemaker, bad-tempered, never done a day's work in his life.

I pay no attention to what he says, just a trace of partiality towards the one, just a trace of prejudice against the other. I can only speak for myself however hard I try. How I listen, how I respond depends

very much on what I think of the person speaking.

[00:05:11] How do you listen to God? How do you listen to what he says? What honest intention have you of responding to what God says, knowing it will be true because he is the God of truth? The Lord Jesus spoke a parable once. He spoke many parables, but about one parable that the Lord Jesus gave, one record of the parable quotes the Lord Jesus rightly because no doubt that's what he said.

[00:06:10] The Lord said, take heed what ye hear. Being what we are, knowing how easily we are swayed, knowing that first impressions remain, however hard we try to be fair and assess the worthy, the worthwhileness of things that are said to us, once they've been said, they're in and it's hard to get them out. The Lord said, take heed what you hear. That affects our whole life, you know, if we act upon that. The company we keep, the habits we have, the friends we make, how we spend our time. If we responded to what the Lord [00:07:12] Jesus said, take heed what ye hear, or how that would regulate a lot of the things that we do. But another record of the same parable tells us that the Lord Jesus also said at the same time, not only take heed what ye hear, but take heed how ye hear. Oh, how important it is to listen fairly, to listen honestly, not judging before the things are said what we are going to do. I used to work with a man who had a common saying, at first it sounds funny, but it's not, [00:08:04] and he didn't always act upon it, but many people do. Now, the common saying is this, don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made my mind up. I'm sure you've heard the same. Whether or not we say it, many of us live our lives as though we've made our mind up at the very outset, and nothing is going to shake what we are going to do. Take heed what ye hear, take heed how ye hear, or tonight there's an opportunity for us to hear what God has to say to us about the destiny of our precious, precious souls.

Among the verses I read were these phrases which you would notice. [00:09:07] We've been looking into the epistle to the Hebrews, you know the title of tonight's session, chapter one, God has spoken. Chapter two, spoken by the Lord. Chapter three, the Holy Ghost saith.

Chapter twelve, see that thou refuse not him that speaketh. In the Old Testament, we read of a man who had problems, Job.

A younger man came to him, give him good advice. Oh, it's always easy to give other people advice. I don't want to give you advice, I want to tell you what the word of God says. [00:10:03] My advice to you would be to pay heed to what God says. Elihu said to Job, God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.

In the man, because there's no intention of listening or responding to what God has said.

God has spoken. God, the triune God.

God, interesting for you Bible students. God, the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[00:11:01] Sometimes when God in his word gives us a comprehensive picture of what we need to learn, he speaks of what the Father says, what the Son says, what the Holy Spirit says. And in all important matters of doctrine and in salvation, there are verses of scripture which tell us that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have the same concerted message to tell us. Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. And he was buried and he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures. The birth of Jesus, his perfect life, his wonderful love, his death upon the cross and the

significance of it, [00:12:04] his glorious personal, actual bodily resurrection, his ascension to heaven, his sitting in heaven at the Father's right hand, the certainty of his coming again, the absolute certainty of final judgment, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, all pay tribute to all these things. It's a nicety perhaps that sometimes instead of the Father as such, the Son as such, and the Spirit as such, sometimes the Bible refers to God as such, and the Son and the Spirit, [00:13:01] as in the epistle to the Hebrews, because of the subject matter of the epistle. God has spoken. Oh, how greatly God has spoken to us.

There's a major hook in the Bible, the epistle to the Romans, which tells us of the wonderful, progressive, cumulative way in which God has spoken. We read the words, didn't we? God has spoken in divers manners, at sundry times, in different ways, suitable to the revelation he was giving of himself at the time. But we learn in that grand treatise on the teaching of the Christian gospel message, the epistle to the Romans, [00:14:02] we learn first of all that God speaks in creation. As the creator God, in his handiwork in the heavens and the earth, he's shown enough of himself to convince an honest man, yes, there is a God with whom we have to do. Let me go back. How honestly do we really listen to what God says?

I have frequently been engaged in conversation with one and another who said, you tell me that God is a savior God. What about all these people that have never read the Bible? What about all these people [00:15:01] about all these people that can't read or write? What about all these people in darkest Africa, in darkest Newcastle, and all these other horrible places where sin is rampant? My answer has always been, and still is, don't you hide behind those that you've never met, that might be in a situation that you aren't in. As far as you are concerned, you know there is a God, you've heard about Jesus, you've had the gospel preached to you, what you've got to determine, God has spoken to you, how are you going to listen to what God has said to you? God has spoken. Not my opinion, the Bible says, God's book says, there's sufficient evidence [00:16:08] in God's handiwork in creation, that an honest pagan who's never heard the Christian gospel, there's sufficient in God's speaking of himself in the creation of the universe, that an honest pagan responding to that will be able to give evidence to God of his honest heart in responding to the measure of revelation given to him. We can't hide behind pagans who've never heard the gospel witness. We aren't all pagans, we aren't always brute idol worshippers, although [00:17:03] Satan is saying to it that we are rapidly getting back to it. Why is there this insistent beat in modern popular music?

Whether it's show business pop, yes, even if it's gospel pop, Satan's insidious rhythmic beat, the jungle beat suitable to the pagan mind, is used to lull people's consciences, or even those who've got beyond the pagan situation, and have become sophisticated gentile nations.

[00:18:03] God says, there's sufficient evidence to the conscience of the thinking man to make him aware that there is a God with whom he has to do. Read again the first two and a half chapters of Romans. God speaks to the conscience, but be warned, when God first speaks to the conscience, and the conscience is tender, the conscience is disturbed. But if we resist, what conscience primes us to realize is the right thing to do, the conscience becomes seared, less and less tender, [00:19:01] until speaking to the conscience is like water off a duck's back, has no effect at all. In the early days of Genesis, God spoke in creation, he spoke to the conscience of man.

Man rejected the speaking of God, and God said, that's the finish, I'm going to have to judge the whole world. He says, of all the people in the world, I can only see one man that's right before God, who stands upright morally and spiritually, his name was Noah. God said, build an ark, build an ark,

and I'll ensure that from this small nucleus of you, Noah, and your family, [00:20:01] I'll start again, but the rest will be wiped out in judgment. In early picture, we cannot trifle with God. A few, that is eight, were saved, but all, as soon as they were delivered, Noah personally, and the members of his family, gave evidence very soon that in themselves, they were no better than anybody else. After the flood, after the deliverance, after they'd been given a new start, they were still sinners by nature and by practice. The time came, when man in his pride said, I know what we'll do, how clever we are, let's build a tower, a pillar, that will reach right up to God, just to show how clever we are. [00:21:11] Let's build ourselves a pillar, a tower, a city on the name. How sad that when the representatives of a declared atheistic nation, managed by the permission of God, to discover ways and means of getting a satellite into space, with men in it, that as the official representatives of that officially pagan nation, the first thing they said was, well, if there's a God in heaven, we cannot see him from where we are. [00:22:05] Oh, how sad that man who's permitted by God to improve his circumstances and his lifestyle, and what he would call the quality of life, even being permitted to do that, that he repudiates the very idea of there being a God. God has spoken. Well, after the Tower of Babel, God said, well, I'll single out a special people. He said, I really demonstrate that man in himself is not good enough to get to heaven, not good enough to answer the claims of God. I would say everybody here has access to a Bible. Refresh your memory, read Isaiah 5 when you get home. God said, I'll make a special people, [00:23:07] a special nation, I'll hedge them about, I'll protect them, I'll give them the best possible culture, the best brains in the world, and he did. And he said, then they can see how they get on. They said, that's fine. Once the nation was brought into being, the nation of Israel, they said, tell us what to do and we will do it. God took them at their word, he gave them the law, and they've been proving ever since that they can't keep it. Now listen, if it's true and it is that the nation of Israel can't please God by their life and conduct because they are still as disobedient to his laws they ever were, bear in mind that they are God's example picked out [00:24:02] of all the nations, creme de la creme, the best nation in the world. The message to them is they're not good enough for God. The message to me, and I'm not a Jew, the message is if they, the best equipped, most encouraged nation in the world, can't please God, nobody else can. God has spoken.

Oh, but the scripture here says, and I must move on, finally, after all these demonstrations that man is a sinner and cannot save himself, finally, when the demonstration's over, God has spoken in his son.

In his son. The speaking of God has been committed to the son of God because he is God. Wonderful thing. [00:25:11] The creator, sustainer of the universe, came into the world born a baby at Bethlehem. What a wonderful God he is in providing such a wonderful savior as the Lord Jesus Christ. How did Jesus speak when he came into the world? He grew up in the family sphere and scripture says he was a good, proper, obedient child.

Perfect in everything that he did. [00:26:04] When he came to full manhood, able to take office, not stepping outside the limits of the law of the nation into which he was born, taking responsibility at the age of 30, which was the proper age for major responsibility in that nation. How did he speak? Oh, he spoke with compassion. He spoke with love. My mind goes back.

I was brought up in a Sunday school where in its heyday there were 1,100 pupils. That had settled down by the time I was born and taken along as a toddler. It was down to a mere 400.

[00:27:03] Oh, that we had 400 children willing to come together wherever the name of Jesus is presented to the little ones. One of the things I enjoyed before I'd confessed Christ as savior, before I

knew the implications of the gospel, or the Bible tells us, you know, it encourages us to speak to the little ones before they know what's going on. There's a verse in the Bible says it's a good thing that from earliest conscious knowledge that the gospel is ministered, the word of God is read. Nearly everybody here can be thankful that from being very, very small [00:28:03] that we heard that there was someone called Jesus who loved us, who came into the world, came into the world a little baby. He grew up. He's a perfect man. And that one of the things I was going to say when it came to mind was in Sunday school if we behaved ourselves, which on average probably wasn't very often, if we gave the right answer, if we colored in a text to an acceptable standard, we were given copies of a gospel which in those days were a penny. Just a little stroke on the inside cover, just think the thousands, the thousands of thousands of copies of the scriptures that have been given to little ones, perhaps even before they could read. [00:29:05] But I remember as a little boy, smaller than the youngest boy here, but we've all had the opportunity, reading what was given to me by my teacher, a copy of the gospel by John. Oh, I couldn't say anything about it, but I love to read the gospel of John and I remember thinking as a boy, what a wonderful person this is. Jesus, the son of God. Great privilege, but a great responsibility to have a copy of the gospel put into your hand when you're small. Again, God has spoken. What have we done with what God has put into our hands of his precious word? [00:30:02] The nation of Israel were given the word of God in their hands. They are responsible to God for what they've done with it. I'm not responsible for them. I am responsible for that copy of John's gospel put into my hand, probably just as I was starting day school, being impressed with the wonderful things that Jesus, the son of God, said. I was also given a copy of Luke's gospel. My family, for some strange reason, think that I'm a hoarder. They think I should have been a magpie. I've got no idea why they've got that impression. It is true. I've still got that copy of Luke's gospel. I've still got that copy of John's gospel precious to me when I think back [00:31:01] to what they told me about the Lord Jesus Christ. But to all the responsibility, having been let into the secret of what a wonderful person Jesus is, even as a child. How old were you when you were first given a copy of the gospel message? First given a copy of the gospel by Luke, which again and again tells about Jesus having compassion on the multitude, having compassion on an individual, looking upon him and loving him. The sweet words that Jesus said when you get to the climax of that lovely gospel of the perfect man told by Luke. Oh, they had to shake their head. They said, never mind, speak like this man. Never ever was there a man like this. God's emphasis many, many times at the end of the [00:32:07] gospel, chapters 21, 2, 3, and 4. This man, this man, this man, this man. It's reminding us reminding us that this lovely man called Jesus came into the world, was kind, was compassionate, was merciful. He allowed every kind of abuse to be heaped upon him.

And ultimately, he died at Calvary. He wasn't soft. Read the gospels again. No one denounced sin more fiercely than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Son of God. We cannot trifle with God. [00:33:04] There is a God with whom we have to do. The more we are allowed to know of the gentleness and the kindness and the sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more responsible we are to God for everything that he's told us about himself. Going back to Luke's gospel, why is it that there's that beautiful structure about that gospel about the perfect man? Why is it that when the gospel comes to that climax, it's emphasizing that this man is the only savior? The emphasis is put there and underlined by God, the Holy Spirit.

Did you notice how orderly the Bible is? It always is. Hebrews 1 talks about God, [00:34:09] the mighty creator God. But then, ever so gently, we are led from thinking about God to thinking about the Son. In chapter 2, when we read it, telling us, reminding us of things spoken by the Lord, the verses lead on ever so gently, I remembered noticing the words, talking about the signs and wonders and diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. See, God leads us on. He speaks of himself. He leads us on to

the Son. In speaking of the Son, we are led on to thinking about the work [00:35:02] of God, the Holy Spirit. And then in chapter 3, the mighty warnings that are given, the Holy Spirit says, today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. I'm thankful, I'm indebted to the words of the Lord Jesus himself, who told the disciples, and God has preserved the record in what we know as the pages of the gospel, according to John. We have the record of the Lord's words to his own disciples, and he said, the Holy Spirit has a message for the world. And this is it. And he says, the Lord's message And he says, the Lord said, the message is for you to take account of. The message is to you, [00:36:02] because you've got the Holy Spirit indwelling you, because you confess me as your Lord. The Lord said, the message is this, the Holy Spirit, by his very being in the world, indwelling the believers, that very fact carries with it a message of sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come.

And then the Lord expanded it, and because the Lord gave the message, and the Holy Spirit makes it good, and helps Christian believers to understand it, we can tell you about it.

[00:37:06] The world is under sin, dominated by it, which means that men naturally, women naturally, boys and girls, are reluctant to accept the gospel message, because Satan deceives them in so many ways. But the message of the Holy Spirit is that the world is under sin, dominated by sin and Satan. The world is without righteousness, the world's topsy-turvy, as the Bible says, men call evil good, and good evil. The world's under sin, it's without righteousness, and it's going on to judgment. [00:38:04] The final message in the letter here is, what are you going to do about what God has said to you? The mighty God, the loving Jesus, the powerful Holy Spirit, working in your heart. In the days of Noah, of which we spoke, God said, I won't always strive with men, but I'll give him time to take account of the witness. And when you work it out, God allowed the witness of Noah, not only what he said, although it probably included it, the witness of the fact that judgment was coming, and that in order to escape it, Noah, in obedience to God, [00:39:08] in obedience to God, was going to build an ark, which was going to save him and his family, because he went into it as an individual. The members of his family weren't saved because they were his family, they were saved because they did the same as him, and they went in as well. And the Lord shut the door, and they were delivered from the judgment of the flood. The world is going on to judgment. The Holy Spirit's message is clear now, as it ever was. And God's final word on this subject, in this letter, comes to every one of us of whatever age, saying, that ye refuse not him that speaketh. The price has been paid, the love of Jesus has been demonstrated, and that he went to the cross to die for our sins. [00:40:05] His precious, precious blood has been shed, that our sins might be removed once and for all, that we might be made right with God. Believe in your heart, for righteousness' sake. Confess his precious name as Lord, while there is still opportunity. Refuse not him that speaketh.