Let us (Heb.)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] 10 19 to 25 Having therefore, Brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful, that promised. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaken the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exalting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. The next reading is from Hebrews chapter 12, from verse 1 to [00:01:05] verse 3. Hebrews 12, verse 1 to verse 3.

Wherefore, seeing we are all so compassed about with so great a cloud of weaknesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily be set 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, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. And the last reading is from Hebrews chapter 13, verses 9 to 16.

[00:02:04] Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is good, 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. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought unto the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God [00:03:02] continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not. For with such sacrifices God is well pleased. It's a very simple message that I bring to you from the word of God this afternoon on this First Catford Lecture of 1976. But I believe the verses that we have read together do contain the Lord's will for us as God's children awaiting [00:04:06] as we are the coming of our blessed Lord from heaven, knowing that before this year draws to its end we may be in the glory with and like our beloved Lord, but in the meanwhile there is in the Word of God his will for us as his children.

And that is my subject this afternoon. You may already have noticed that there were two little words which occurred seven times in the verses that we have just read together. The two little words let us.

Let us draw near. Let us hold fast.

[00:05:10] Let us consider. Let us lay aside. Let us run. Let us go forth and let us offer.

Seven times those two little words come in the verses that we have read and they come six other times in the epistle. I won't refer to those now but my younger brethren may like to sort them out for themselves. Those words are characteristic of this epistle to the Hebrews. In the Old Testament God's will for the nation of Israel was communicated in the law.

[00:06:09] And there are two little words in the Old Testament in the books of the law from Exodus to Deuteronomy which come more than 750 times. They are in contrast to the words we have read from Hebrews this afternoon. The two little words in the law were thou shalt or thou shalt not. And there were severe sanctions or penalties for disobedience. That was under the law.

But in the New Testament the will of God for us as his children who have been redeemed by [00:07:06] the precious blood of Christ and belong to him is communicated to us in the scriptures in a very different way on the ground of grace. And we have these two little words let us. Each one of course calls for a response from our hearts. But the will of God for us is not now communicated to us on a legal basis but on a gracious basis. In the New Testament the Spirit of God presents to us over and over again almost on every page of the New Testament the adorable person of our blessed Lord and Savior. That we might be occupied with him. We might be absorbed with him. [00:08:11] We might contemplate over and over again his glory and his grace. That our eyes might be fixed upon him. And that as we gaze upon him as he is brought before us in the scriptures by the Spirit of God that the love of our hearts might be drawn out more and more to our beloved Lord and Savior who gave himself for us. And then it is after the presentation of the Lord himself to our hearts. Then it is there is communicated to us in this lovely gracious way the Lord's will [00:09:05] for us. And that he might win from our hearts a full and a glad response to all his will for us.

And I'd like to see not only here in the verses that we have read but in so many other places in the New Testament. That is the way the Spirit of God proceeds to bring before us over and over again the person of our Lord in all his excellence and glory and grace. To win our hearts and then to present to us against that background as it were his will for us. And we might respond fully not on a legal basis but constrained by the love of Christ as our eyes feast upon our blessed Lord [00:10:08] and Savior. Well that is what we have in the epistle to Hebrews. As I've said in many other places as well. But in the epistle to the Hebrews the Lord Jesus is presented to us in a threefold way. First of all in the first chapter and verses 2 to 3 there we have the personal glories of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are sevenfold. He is appointed heir of all things. He is the Creator by whom also God made the worlds. He is the brightness or the outshining, the effulgence [00:11:03] of God's glory and the express image of his person. He is the upholder of all things by the word of his power. He is the one who has made purification for sins. And the sense of the words is he has purification for sins by himself and for himself for his own eternal glory. And lastly he is the one who has seated himself on the right hand of the majesty on high by virtue of his divine right as the Son of God and on the ground of the work that he has accomplished. Then in addition to that [00:12:06] the presentations of the glories of Christ. We have also in this epistle the perfection of his sacrificial work upon the cross when he died for us, when he offered himself without spot to God by that one perfect offering and now he has sat down as the scripture says continuously on the right hand of the throne of God. The perfection of his sacrifice upon the cross who has made propitiation for sins. And then thirdly we have in this same epistle the presentation to us of [00:13:03] the Lord Jesus as our great high priest. We have the character, the

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Melchizedek character and the value of his high priestly service whoever liveth to intercede for us and who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities having in his perfect manhood passed through this world himself. And then it is, then it is after the presentation of the person of Christ to our hearts that we have the communication of God's will for us. And that is what we have in in the verses that we have read. And we have these seven letters. They should make a special appeal to all our hearts for their [00:14:11] appeal is based on the presentation to our hearts of our blessed adorable Lord and Savior. What he has done, the glory of his person, what he's doing for us now as our great high priest on high. And the object of course is that the Spirit of God should fill our gaze with the person of our Lord and Savior and then our hearts are motivated to give a glad and full response in obedience to [00:15:02] all his will. Well let us think of these seven indications of the Lord's will for us. First of all in chapter 10 and verse 22. Let us draw near, that is into the immediate presence of God, into the innermost sanctuary, into the holy of holies, to worship God and to enjoy communion with him. Let us draw near. In the Old Testament there was not liberty to draw near. If you look [00:16:01] for a moment of the 24th of Exodus and the first verse. And the Lord said unto Moses come up unto the Lord thou and Aaron Nathan and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel and worship ye afar off. There was not liberty to draw near. They worshipped at a distance. And when the tabernacle was set up in the holy place, the most holy place, there was the the ark of the covenant and upon it the mercy seat of pure gold overshadowed by the cherubim of glory. That was the design meeting place between God and his people. But the people were unable to draw near. That thick vial hung [00:17:09] between them and the presence of God in the holy of holies. Only once a year and then only the high priest was permitted, and then not without blood, to enter into the holy of holies. But now we have access into the holiest of all, into the immediate presence of God where our Savior is. When Christ died, the vial of the temple was rained to thunder from the top to the bottom, indicating that Christ having made full atonement for sin, now there is no barrier [00:18:01] for the believer in him. And we are exalted to draw near. Let us draw near into the immediate presence of God to enjoy communion with him and to worship him in the inner sanctuary of his presence. But it is for us to respond. Let us draw near in full assurance of faith, full assurance as to the merit and the value of the precious blood of Christ which alone is the ground on which we can come into the presence of God. Full assurance, too, upon the authority of God's Word, the testimony that he has given to us, that having offered one [00:19:05] sacrifice for sins, he has forever sat down or sat down continuously at the right hand of the throne of God. The work is complete. And having, as we read in verse 14 of chapter 10, for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Oh, there we rest, there our faith rests upon the testimony of the Word of God, that we are perfected forever as to our standing before God, our place in Christ, and that we are his sanctified ones, that is, set aside by the precious blood of Christ for himself eternally. Full assurance. Let us draw [00:20:11] near in full assurance of faith. And this drawing near is a communal thing in these verses. It's quite evident from the verses that follow, which we read, that it's not an individual drawing into the presence of God in my own home. Of course, I may do that. Every one of us may do that. But here in these verses, it is the people of God coming together as one in the unity, sharing together the joy of being in the Lord's presence. Let us draw near. That is, [00:21:06] one Christian from Forest Hill and another from Hither Green and another from the hilly fields, all coming together to be in the Lord's presence and to worship him and to commune with him. That is the thought in these verses. The Lord loves to have his own gathered together around himself. And that is why he died. In the twelfth chapter of John, we read his own words, I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. He is the magnet that draws us [00:22:04] into his presence. And then again, those prophetic words of Caiaphas, the high priest, who prophesied that Jesus should die not only for the nation of Israel, but to gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad. That is the desire of the heart of our blessed Lord, that we should be gathered together in his holy presence. And he is, as I have said, the magnet. He is the gathering

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centre and it is his love that draws us into his presence. But here is the exaltation for us. Let us draw near with a true heart in this new [00:23:04] and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And then in the next verse, we have another indication of the Lord's will for us. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised. Or, as it reads in the new translation, let us hold fast the confession of our hope. That is the Lord's will for us. In these days when in so many places the precious truths that God has given to us in his word are very lightly held by many, or some, and in some cases they are given [00:24:08] up altogether. But here is the word of God for us. Let us hold fast all the truth that God has given to us, and the profession, the confession of our faith in these dark and evil days. And we are assured that he is faithful that promised. Yes, all the promises of God are in Christ. Yea, and in him, amen. And on them we rest with full assurance. But we are to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. That is the message of the epistle to [00:25:09] Jude, isn't it? And then again in the second of the Revelation, in verse 25, we have the Lord's message to the separated remnant in the assembly at Thyatira, verse 25 of chapter 2. And prophetically the assembly at Thyatira speaks of the church of God, the whole assembly of God, going on to the Lord's coming. And the Lord's word to that faithful remnant in that assembly was, that which ye have, [00:26:02] hold fast till I come. For we are to cling tenaciously to the precious truths that God has given to us in these days when many are giving them up and departing from them. To give you a simple illustration, those of you who had to do with young children will know how tenaciously a little child can hold on to a dearly prized object, a toy or a doll or some dearly prized objects. And if you've been unwise enough to attempt to take by force from that little child, perhaps only a baby, you will have been amazed at the power and tenacity with which the child [00:27:02] grasps and that with which it does not wish to part. And that is it, dear friends. Let us cling tenaciously, hold fast to all the truth that God has given to us. And then in the next verse, verse 24, let us consider one another. And that includes verse 25. Verse 25 should not be separated from the previous two verses. In fact, verse 23, 24 and 25 is all a single sentence. And there is this communal aspect. Let us consider one another. In two verses in this same epistle, we are asked [00:28:03] to consider our blessed Lord and Saviour. He is always the first object for our consideration. Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. But now we are to go a step further. We are to consider not only our blessed Lord, but those that are his. We are to consider one another. We are to consider those that belong to him, those that are precious in his eyes, because they are the purchase and the redeemed of his precious blood. We are to consider them, not just as individuals, but as those that are precious to Christ. Let us consider one another [00:29:03] to provoke unto love and to good works. Before our conversion, it was ourselves that we considered. Any proposal that was made, the thought in their minds was, how does it affect me? How will it affect me? But now it is, let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, that is, all connected. And that is very important. And I've mentioned three results of assembling ourselves together in the Lord's presence. First of all, it brings joy to the Lord's heart. Every time we gather together in his presence, his heart rejoices because we are precious in his sight and dear [00:30:06] to his heart. It rejoices the Lord's heart. And then, secondly, it encourages one another. We encourage one another when we come together. Let us consider one another and encourage one another by coming together. How encouraging it is to see so many gathered here this afternoon, to hear the Word of God, and to share together the precious heritage which God has given to us in his Word. And then thirdly, when we come together in the Lord's presence, there is a testimony to the world outside every time we come together. When these verses were, when this epistle was written, to assemble together, to worship the Lord, and to pray, [00:31:04] and to read his Word, was to face persecution and the hatred of those that were in authority. Those that assembled themselves together in these days were marked men. And they faced persecution and perhaps imprisonment,

and even death. And that is so in many parts of the world today, alas. Christians assemble together, but they know that by doing so, that their name is written down as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they lay themselves open to heavy interrogation and imprisonment. But nevertheless, they assemble themselves together in response to [00:32:03] the Lord's will for us as we wait for him to come. As we come together, beloved brethren, let us remember those in other parts who assemble together without the liberty that we enjoy in this country. And let us remember them in our prayers. And then just a word about the purposes for which we are to assemble together. First of all, essentially, to be in the Lord's presence. Matthew 18, verse 20. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. That is essentially the purpose for which we come together, to be in the Lord's [00:33:06] presence. When we meet one another, how good it is to grasp the hand of a brother in the Lord. But essentially, we come together to be in the Lord's presence. And then in the 20th of Acts, the verse there which gives us another specific purpose for our gathering together, verse 7. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.

Ah, that is the Lord's will for us. They came together to break bread. That takes our thoughts back to that night in which our Lord was betrayed to be crucified. And when the disciples were [00:34:05] gathered together and the Lord was in the midst and he broke the bread and handed it to them and said, this do in remembrance of me. Well, that is the Lord's will for all that belong to him. That we should come together to break bread and to drink of the cup, the memorial of his precious blood by which we are redeemed in remembrance of him. Oh, there are Christians who never do this. Well, there may be perhaps a young person here, a young believer or an older believer for that matter, who has never responded to the Lord's desire for us that we should break [00:35:01] bread in remembrance of him. Well, this is his desire for us. We should come together if we belong to him to break bread in remembrance of him. There are those who say, well, I'm not worthy to be seated at the Lord's table. Well, none of us are in ourselves. But let us think, dear friends, let us think rather of the worthiness of our Lord and saviour. Is he not worthy who died for us? That we should come gladly and readily, humbly into his presence to respond to that deep desire of his heart, that we should remember him in the way that he has appointed for us? They came together to break bread. And then another purpose in the fourth chapter of Acts, [00:36:08] for which we are to come together, verse 31, And when they had prayed, the place was shaken, where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. They are coming together for prayer. Oh, some say, well, I can pray in my own room at home. Yes, you can, and we do, but it is the Lord's will that we should assemble together for united prayer. And notice the sequence in this verse. First of all, there was prayer, and then there was the power. [00:37:05] The place was shaken where they were gathered together by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, and then the next thing was the preaching. There is the sequence, the divine sequence, prayer, power, and then the preaching of the word. And now let us look at the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, verse 1.

Well, here are further indications of our Lord's will for us that come to us in this lovely, gracious way. We are foreseeing we also are compassed about with so great a crowd of witnesses, that is, the witnesses to the reality and value of faith which are brought [00:38:10] before us in the eleventh chapter. Those stalwarts of faith, they were the pioneers. Their faith triumphed over amazing obstacles. They were persecuted, they were sown asunder, they wandered about in the dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, but their faith triumphed over these amazing obstacles. But that verse goes on, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. We have the encouragement of those that have run in the race of faith before us, [00:39:09] and now it's our turn to run to the glory of

God. And first of all, we are to lay aside every weight, every hindrance, everything that would drag us down, as it were. And I suppose that there are hindrances in all our lives that we have to recognize in the presence of God and in response to the Lord's will to lay them aside, that they might not hinder us in the progress in the path of faith. And then we are to run with patience, or with endurance, it really means. The word patience in the New Testament is nearly always [00:40:01] endurance, not a passive thing, no, but the endurance of the marathon runner, or the Everest climber, that goes on and on in spite of every difficulty, until every obstacle is overcome and the goal is reached. That is the thought. We are to run with endurance. And in the following verses, verse two and three, we have endurance mentioned again. It's the same word, actually, that's translated patience in verse one. In verse two and three, we are reminded of the one that endured the cross, our blessed Lord, and who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. And as we contemplate him, [00:41:01] and what he endured for us, then we derive from him the power and the strength to endure unto the end, looking unto Jesus. And that word looking means two things, looking away from every other object, first of all, and then looking steadfastly upon the blessed person of our Lord Jesus, who trod the whole path of faith without deviating in any detail from the whole will of God, and has entered in to the glory of God as the forerunner of his people. Let us lie aside every weight, and let us run with patience or endurance the race that is set before us. One more indication of our Lord's will in the last chapter, verse 13. [00:42:12] Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.

Our blessed Lord suffered as the rejected one, and as we know he died outside the gate, outside the city wall, and they lifted him up as though he were not fit to remain on this world, on this earth, as the rejected one. And we dear friends who belong to him, we who are redeemed by his precious blood, it is our privilege, yes, it is our privilege to share his shame and reproach here in this world. And that is what we are called to do, [00:43:06] to go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach. And you remember in the 11th of Hebrews we said of Moses that he esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. Yes dear friends, we are to count it a privilege to share our Lord's rejection here in this world, his shame and reproach. There's a connection here I believe with the 33rd chapter of Exodus. I'll just read the verse to you. It was when Aaron had set up the golden calf, [00:44:06] and the children of Israel had worshipped it. And Moses took down the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass that everyone which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation which was without the camp. A similar situation exists today in this world. There is so much in this world, and in professing Christendom too, which is dishonouring to our Lord and the denial of the precious truths of his word. And we are called dear friends to go forth without the camp bearing his reproach. But it is to him we go. We don't go [00:45:06] forth to a system set up by men, to a creed devised by men. No, we go forth outside the camp because that is where our Lord is, the rejected one still in this world. We go forth to him without the camp. Well, our time has gone. I believe these to be the indications of our Lord's will for us in these days immediately preceding his coming again. Soon we shall see him and be like him. And in the meanwhile, let us draw near into his holy presence. Let us hold fast the precious truths he has given to us. Let us consider one another. Let us lay aside [00:46:05] all that is contrary to his holy will. Let us run with endurance the race of faith. And let us go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach. These are the Lord, the indications of the Lord's will for us. And they come to us, as I've said, in this lovely, gracious way. And the Lord does look for a full response from our hearts, a response motivated by his great love for us, who loved us and gave himself for us.

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