

Thoughts on the Hebrew Epistle

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Thoughts on the Hebrew Epistle. The first two chapters give light as to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is especially presented as the antitype of the Ark of the Testimony. In chapter one emphasis is laid upon his deity. There the pure gold shines before us in verse after verse. The second chapter just as clearly speaks of his true humanity, the Shittim wood. In him as the true Ark of the Testimony, God has been fully declared. Thus we read, God has spoken to us in Son. That God might be revealed and man be brought into the [00:01:02] good of this revelation, the Son took manhood and went down into death. By his death he defeated the devil, met the holy claims of God, and secured a company of many sons, his brethren the sanctified ones, the assembly, in the midst of which he has taken his place as leader. He conducts them in his own company into the presence of God, leading their willing-hearted praise. Chapters three to nine open out to us the truth of the priesthood of our Lord and his better sacrifice. He is variously presented as wilderness, sanctuary, and Melchizedek priest. The heavenly calling, better far than any earthly blessing, demands such [00:02:05] an high priest as he is. This calling, with its available helps for the partakers, is here opened out to faith. How the appreciative saint revels in the preciousness of the Word of God and in the priestly grace of our glorified Lord. All is grounded on the imperishable basis of his better sacrifice, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God. Passing into the tenth chapter, we are invited to avail ourselves of the blessed privilege of entering through the veil into the presence of God. Such is the holy boldness and fitness afforded by Christ's death that we find ourselves at home [00:03:01] with God, needing and asking nothing. What a region of satisfied desire to be before him with something to give to him. So would we function as purged worshippers, having freely received, we would freely give, with hearts entranced by Christ, and in the enjoyment of his glory and grace, we would wave him in spirit-formed appreciation before God for the satisfying of his heart. The glories of his work we bring, they glorified we see. His deep affections gladly sing and tell them forth to thee. Chapter 11 illustrates most wonderfully the principle that the just shall live by faith. Here we learn what faith in God [00:04:09] leads the believer to do for God. It has been truly said more than once, faith believes the incredible, sees the invisible, and does the impossible. The first seven verses are basic. The quality of faith is attested. In the case of Abel, we learn that approach to God is on the ground of sacrifice. Faith recognizes that life is forfeited by sin, and so comes to God through the death of another. Enoch demonstrates that the man of faith cannot be at home in a world where sin is dominant. He walked with God. Such a walk could have but one end, glory. [00:05:08] God translated him. Suggestively, he prefigures the translation of the assembly to heaven before the storm of the great tribulation. Noah is a figure of the godly remnant of Israel, not kept from the tribulation, but saved through it. Verses 8 to 20 give seven instances of faith's confession or witness. Verses 23 to 31 give seven instances of faith's conversation or walk. Verses 32 to 34 name seven

who illustrate faith's conflict or warfare. These are followed [00:06:06] by the unnamed women and others. Of all such, the divine testimony is of whom the world was not worthy, and these all obtained a good report through faith. All that we have so briefly viewed in the divine gallery of faith emphasizes that the heavenly calling is better than the earthly calling in which all these worthies had their part. The saints of this day of grace are given precedence over all the Old Testament saints, for they cannot come into their promised portion until we, the many sons, are brought to glory. That grace which, in [00:07:01] chapter 10, leads into the holiest of all and calls into the path of faith so blessedly illustrated in chapter 11, brings us under the discipline of the school of God in chapter 12. If we would know the blessedness of the presence of God, if we would be morally fitted for our place in his testimony now or in the world to come, we shall need his schooling. Growth in the knowledge of God, servability now, fitness for the reigning time, all are promoted by chastisement, the child training of God. How many and blessed are the lessons learned in the testing circumstances of every day as the saint goes through them with the conscious knowledge of being under his hand. A true estimate of self, [00:08:07] practical partaking of the holiness of God, the value of the support of the priestly grace of Christ, these are some of the lessons to be learned in the school of God. A deepened appreciation of the things we are come to is also possible for us. We are not under the law with its bondage and fear. We have come to Mount Zion which speaks of the sovereign choice and love of God. See Psalm 78 verse 68. We are come to the vessel of God's administration, heavenly Jerusalem, the metropolis of the coming universe of bliss and glory. We are come to the gathering of the angels, for unto the angels hath he not put into [00:09:03] subjection the world to come whereof we speak. We are come to the assembly of the firstborn, or the firstborn ones, enregistered in heaven. The firstborn is a designation of rank and dignity. Just as our blessed Lord, us firstborn, takes the chief place in regard to all creation, so his assembly takes the chief place of blessing and glory in relation to all the companies of saints from the different days of God's dealings, each with its own distinctive testimony. And we are come to God, judge of all, for all in the world to come will be subject to him. His will shall be supreme. His administration shall be universally [00:10:05] recognized and acclaimed. And we are now come to him. He is our God. We are come to the spirits of just men, made perfect. The spirits of all the pre-church saints are blessed indeed. They are now in the good of the finished work of Christ. Redemption's work has been done. They know the righteousness of their blessing and attribute it to the death of Christ. Yet still they await the consummation of blessing, perfect as to their spirits. The just men are waiting for that moment when the power of God's salvation shall touch their bodies at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. In [00:11:08] the spirit of that covenant we are blessed now. We have received everlasting mercy from his hands. Those hands that shall dispense worldwide blessing in the dearest kingdom have been stretched out to us and that mercy righteously flows through the blood of sprinkling. Assuredly it speaks better things than that of Abel which cried from the ground for vengeance. The knowledge of all this that we have come to in coming to Christ is well calculated to spur us on to full response to God in the enjoyment of our heavenly calling. The [00:12:04] last chapter of our epistle, chapter 13, teaches us that the features of the heavenly calling have ample scope for manifestation in the practical circumstances of everyday life. One, in the continuance of brotherly love, passing as we are through a cold and hateful world, how comforting it is to experience as we so often do the love of the brethren, may we increasingly contribute to it. Two, in the grace of hospitality, opening our homes for the good of others, the opened heart opens the home. Come into my house. See Acts 16 verse 15.

[00:13:06] Fidelity and holiness are essential there with bowels of kindness. Three, in having a heart for prisoners. Maybe we do not know any personally, but we've all heard in our day of those who've been incarcerated in communist prisons, shut away from fellowship, deprived of every visible reminder of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. How ruthlessly and cruelly have they been oppressed in an

endeavor to break their spirits and to wrest them from the faith. Who knows but what many are now suffering similarly. May we enter feelingly into their circumstances [00:14:02] with real sympathy and lift up our hearts to God in fervent prayer on their behalf. May we have sympathetic concern for those who suffer any adversity. May we feel deeply for such with feelings born of practical experience as being ourselves in the body. That is to say, as being in the responsible condition in which we have the opportunity of learning for ourselves the compassions of God. And so much so that we can extend to our suffering brethren the comfort which we ourselves have received. Surely we are not above nor impervious to the trials of our brethren. If we are, we have never been in the sanctuary. The [00:15:07] priesthood of believers is not named in our epistle, but Christ is named as the high priest of our confession. We are his associates. Invited as we are in chapter 10 to draw near into the holiest of all, it is that we might exercise ourselves in the highest priestly service, the worship of God. Thus in the first 10 chapters of Hebrews we are moving in step by step to be at home in the presence of God as purged worshipers. From thence we are moving out in the power that his presence imparts, fraught with holy sensibilities which we've [00:16:04] acquired in the holiest of all, as we have accompanied with a great priest over the house of God. Thus we move out into the circle of fellowship and into the sphere of testimony. Oh may we know more of the power of communion with that one who, while he is minister of the holy places, feels for his own who are where the pressure is, and so ministers to them as to lift their hearts into his own company above the pressure. How great then is our privilege in exercising true priestly sympathy towards our suffering brethren. The fourth feature gives us [00:17:02] the practical attendant of the heavenly calling in the maintenance of holiness in the marriage bond, and how great the need in this day of increasing moral laxity that the believing husband and wife should comport themselves as before God for his glory. Five, also in living without the love of money, content with this confidence he has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Let us in whatever circumstance abide with him, and we shall certainly be more than conquerors through him that loved us. Then we are exalted, remember your leaders, and so on, [00:18:05] imitate their faith. Do not imitate their methods, but do imitate their faith. What made them useful in their service, what constituted them leaders worth following, was their faith in God, and their unreserved obedience to the Word of God. Consider the issue of their manner of life. They have appointed to Christ. Whoever noticed them turned to Christ, just as did those two disciples who heard John Baptist speak. They followed Jesus. To those who lead, speak the Word of God, and with all your speaking live it. Yours is a privileged [00:19:04] position, but a solemn and responsible one too. To rule is to lead in the way that is right. In this you follow your Lord, for he leads in the way of righteousness. See Psalm 23 and Proverbs 8. To lead in the way is to exemplify in your practical life those things which you enjoin upon your brethren. How sad if stumbled by your example they despise your precept. Rather give them cause to value your doctrine through the appreciation your practical obedience engenders. But leaders come and leaders go. We all have cause to remember such [00:20:03] with thankfulness, and if they have led right, they will have led us into this confidence. Jesus Christ the same, yesterday and today and forever.

They are doctrines of grace, centering in him who is the center of the heavenly calling which established the soul. Here is permanence and stability. Judaism, with its enslaving legality, is a fate. That earthly calling is superseded. We have a fellowship identifying us with the altar where God's claims have all been met, and where he finds his satisfaction and pleasure. It lies outside the corruptions of men. It has Jesus Christ as its gathering center. Let us go forth [00:21:08] therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach. He is outside all that is not of God. He is outside the Jewish order of carnal religion. He suffered without the gate. Our place is outside the camp with him. If it was imperative for those from among the Jews who had trusted Christ to leave the order of things originally constituted of God corrupted by the Jews, where also our Lord was crucified, how much

more so for us to separate from that which God never established, the sects and systems of Christendom. Jesus shed [00:22:08] his blood not only to deliver from judgment, as did the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt, but to set us apart to God for his pleasure and service. We have nothing abiding here. Our hope is in the world to come, whereof we speak. Let us then, with all this light and blessing, be a praising people in every step of our way. Whatever the circumstances, let us offer our spiritual sacrifices to God. May we be a thanksgiving people, doing good to all, and thus give pleasure to our God. Obey them that have the rule over you, or rather obey your leaders. [00:23:01] They, salutary thought, are accountable to God for their stewardship among the saints. Pray. How readily we criticize. How often do we pray. These servants sought the prayers of their brethren, in all their service, with all good conscience. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will. God grant that we may reap the gain of the teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews, and be such as those who heed the injunction, leaving the word of the beginning of the Christ. Let us go on to what belongs to full growth. Amen.