



HEBREWS

Within the

Veil

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DEDICATION

To our lovely Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who opened up the way for us to go within the veil into the Holy of Holies with God.

And to my dear wife Audrey, who is now for all times within the veil with her beloved Lord.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the study of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. The theme of our study will be "Within the Veil." Therefore, our ultimate purpose in this study is not simply to understand the message of Hebrews, but to *experience* it. The theme *Within the Veil* is very precious. The veil is related to the tabernacle of Moses, which consisted of three sections—the outer court, the holy place, and then the holy of holies where the glory of God dwelt. A veil separated the holy place from the holy of holies. This veil prevented man from entering into the fullness of God's presence.

In the Old Testament only the high priest could come within the veil—once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Holy Spirit signified by this veil that the way into God's presence was not yet opened. While the Old Testament was still in effect, the way into the holy of holies was not yet revealed. The shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was required to open the way for us to come within the veil into the very presence of God Himself. This is the central theme of Hebrews, and it is also the reason this

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epistle is so sacred. The epistle to the Hebrews shows us how much greater the new covenant is than the old covenant.

Authorship

The first question that is raised when we come to Hebrews is: Who is the author? Hebrews is unlike all the other epistles in that the writer's name does not appear. For this reason speculation has arisen concerning its authorship. Generally speaking, it is assumed that the Apostle Paul was the writer of Hebrews, but this is challenged by some Bible scholars for a number of reasons.

Besides the absence of Paul's usual salutation, it is contended that the style of Hebrews is unlike Paul's other writings. Yet the styles of Revelation and III John differ too, even though both are written by the same author. Laying aside these objections, who else could have written Hebrews but Paul? It is conceded that there is no other author in the New Testament, besides Paul, who could have been capable of writing it.

Let us consider the writers of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, James, Peter, Jude, and Paul. It is commonly agreed that neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke had the ability to write

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Hebrews. As for the Apostle John, the epistle of Hebrews is so unlike John. John is very simple, and he writes from the realm of revelation. But Hebrews is a well thought out work of scholarship drawn from the Old Testament. It could not have been James or Jude. Their epistles differ vastly from Hebrews.

Certainly, Peter was not the writer; for Peter himself acknowledges that Paul's epistles were on a higher spiritual level when he tells us in Second Peter 3:16 that some of Paul's writings were "hard to be understood." If Peter thought Paul's other epistles were difficult to understand, certainly he would not have been capable of writing Hebrews, which is the most complex of all books with the exception of Revelation. Therefore, we must conclude that none of the New Testament writers had the expertise required for writing Hebrews, except Paul.

Going back as early as A.D. 150, Pantaenus of Alexandria, a respected teacher of his time, credited the authorship of Hebrews to Paul. This was only around eighty years after Paul's death. There is also *internal evidence* that favors Paul as the writer. In Hebrews 10:34 the author says, "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds." Therefore, the writer was someone who had been in prison. This

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again points to Paul, because Paul had been in prison and had written a number of inspired epistles while in captivity. The writer, too, was linked to Timothy; for he stated in Hebrews 13:23, “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.” Therefore, the authorship again points to Paul, who was an intimate friend and spiritual father of Timothy.

Paul’s style of delivery to the Hebrews naturally would differ from his other epistles because he was writing to the Jews. In his other epistles he was writing basically to the Gentiles. In those epistles, he always started off with his name—“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Paul would avoid using those words when writing to the Jewish congregation. Instead, he started off with the name of God: “God, who at sundry times...” It would have been unacceptable to the Hebrews if Paul had then included his own name next to God’s.

Therefore, if we take into account the audience being addressed and consider the extraordinary scholarship and knowledge of the Old Testament Jewish law that this epistle provides, we should conclude that it must have been the Apostle Paul who wrote it. Many of the early Church fathers attest to this. No one but Paul could have been capable of penning this masterpiece. He was not only

the teacher of the Gentiles, but also the teacher of the whole Church. Paul, who was so capable of writing the technical epistle to the Romans, without doubt would have had the capacity to write Hebrews also.

AN OVERVIEW OF HEBREWS

Let us now have a brief scan of the outline of Hebrews, always keeping before us Paul's theme of "Within the Veil." The Apostle is seeking to prove in this epistle that the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant. Therefore, in Part One Paul is going to start by presenting the greatness of the *Author* of the new covenant, the Son of God Himself.

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Christ—Superior to the Prophets and Angels

Part One 1:1-14

In 1:1, Paul reminds the Hebrews that God spoke in times past by the prophets, but now He is speaking to us through His Son. Therefore, he declares to the Hebrews seven ways Christ is superior to the prophets (1:1-3). Then in 1:4-14 he shows ten ways Christ is so much greater than the angels.

The First Warning - 2:1-4

In chapter 2:1-14 we have the first of five warnings in Hebrews. Paul urges, “Take heed” to what God is saying. May I say that these warnings are very awesome. They are not addressed to the sinner, but to the saint. Each of these warnings is given to those who could become apostate. Therefore, we can clearly see that Paul did not believe that once saved, a man can never be lost; neither did Christ or the Apostles, nor should we!

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Behold the Man—Jesus

Part Two 2:5-18

This second section of the epistle I have entitled “Behold the Man—Jesus.” This is the condescension of Christ, who became a man in order to suffer death: to bring many sons to glory, to destroy him who had the power of death (that is, the devil), to deliver those who are subjected to bondages and fear, to be a merciful and faithful high priest, to be a reconciliation for sin, and to strengthen us in our temptations.

Christ—Greater than Moses

Part Three 3:1-6

Bearing in mind that the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant, Paul develops the theme that Jesus, the administrator of the new covenant, is so much greater than Moses, the administrator of the old covenant. Moses instituted the old covenant, which separated man from the presence of God by a veil, but Christ brought in the new covenant that took away the veil.

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The Second Warning - 3:7 - 4:13

Part Three is followed quickly by a second warning not to “come short of entering into God’s rest.” This is another point that we have to understand. The Apostle Paul was concerned that the readers of this epistle would fall short of God’s purposes for their lives. Not only did he want his listeners to make it to heaven, he also wanted them to finish their life’s work here on earth. Otherwise, their reward in heaven would be small.

Christ—So Much Greater Than Aaron

Part Four 4:14 - 5:10

Aaron, as you will remember, was the first high priest of the Levitical order. He was the first high priest of the old covenant. The thought presented here is that the Son of God is so much greater than Aaron and all he represents. Aaron’s ministry ceased at death, but Christ’s ministry continues forever.

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The Third Warning - 5:11 - 6:20

The warning given in this section is against slothfulness and apostasy. The Hebrew believers had grown “dull of hearing.” They were satisfied and content with the elementary truths of Christianity. Paul exhorted them to move past the first principles of the faith, and “go on unto perfection.” Instead of bearing herbs (the fruit of the Spirit), they were bringing forth briars and thorns (the works of the flesh). The sad truth is that when believers refuse to go on, they degenerate and lose all their joy.

The Priesthood After Melchisedec’s Order

Part Five 7:1-28

After Christ died, the Levitical priesthood was terminated, and a new priesthood after the order of Melchisedec was instituted.

A New Sanctuary and a New Covenant

Part Six 8:1-13

Obviously, if there is a new covenant and a new priesthood, there must be a new sanctuary too.

The Blood of Christ—Superior to the Blood of Animals

Part Seven 9:1-28

A covenant (or testament) is founded upon the death of the testator. A will cannot come into effect until the one who has written the will has died. Jesus Christ is the Testator of the New Testament. He is the One who willed all of heaven's blessings to His people, but the inheritance did not come into effect until He died. The Old Testament was founded upon blood, upon the death of animals. But the blood of animals cannot be compared to the blood of God Himself. So Paul makes a point that the blood of Christ is far superior to that of animals. Many of the Hebrew believers continued on in their tradition of animal sacrifices, but Paul pointed out to them that by one offering, Christ has forever put away our sins.

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The New and Living Way

Part Eight 10:1-20

The new and living way is through the veil into the holy of holies with God. We must not be content to settle for a relationship with God in the outer court, or the holy place, as many of the Hebrew believers were willing to do. Instead of moving on in their Christian journey, many were dying in the wilderness. They were content to settle on the spiritual plateau to which they had attained and not press on to their destination. That destination is within the veil. Christ has opened up a way for His people to come into the holy of holies, into His full presence, into full rest, and into full maturity.

Life in the Holiest Place

Part Nine 10:21-25

This is the blessed place where we want to abide continually. Here our conscience is totally at peace, and we experience the fullness of God's glory. Full redemption is found within the veil in the holy of holies.

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The Fourth Warning

10:26-39

Very late in the book is a fourth warning. This warning is against willful sinning and drawing back. We might think that if anyone has progressed this far, surely there is no danger of going back. But, regretfully, at any point in the Christian life, one can degenerate and go back to the old ways.

The Testimony of Faith

Part Ten 11:1-40

In chapter eleven we have the famous chapter of faith and the heroes of faith. Because the Hebrew believers held to so many of the old religious rituals, Paul emphasized faith in Christ alone for salvation and perfection.

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The Patience of Hope

Part Eleven 12:1-13

In this section, Paul urges the Hebrews to “lay aside every weight” in order to run toward the mark and to finish the race.

The Fifth Warning - 12:14-29

Paul’s final warning is for believers not to allow their hearts to grow bitter and then reject Jesus. He warns, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh...from heaven.”

Love and Good Works

Part Twelve 13:1-25

In conclusion, we see that love and good works are the fruits of the man or woman who lives in the holy of holies with God.

Part 1

1:1-14 - CHRIST—SO MUCH GREATER THAN THE PROPHETS AND ANGELS

CHRIST—GREATER THAN THE PROPHETS

1:1-3 “God, who at sundry times and in [various] manners spake 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

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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.”

In this epistle the Apostle Paul is seeking to prove that the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant. Therefore, the first thing he is going to do is introduce the *Author* of the new covenant, the Son of God Himself.

“God, who at sundry times and in [various] manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets.” Throughout the Old Testament, the medium through which God spoke to the children of Israel was the prophets. God spoke through the prophets to the fathers. But now Paul continues, God *“hath in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son.”* The point Paul is going to make to the Hebrews in verses 2-3 is that the Son of God is so much greater than all the prophets. Therefore, in order that Christ’s superiority over the prophets may be understood, Paul makes seven great statements about Him.

(1) “He is the Heir of all things”

The first of Paul’s seven great statements of Christ’s superiority is that He is the “heir of all things.” The subject here is inheritance. What is the difference between the inheritance of a prophet and the inheritance of the Son of God? Daniel the prophet was told, “Go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot [of inheritance] at the end of the days” (Dan.12:13). Daniel was shown that his inheritance was a specific place in heaven, but the Son of God is the heir of *all* of heaven. Everything belongs to the Son. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth (Mt. 28:18, Phil. 2:9-11). Christ is the heir of all things. In contrast, the reward of a prophet or a saint of God is to stand in the particular place that God has appointed for him before the foundation of the world.

(2) “By whom also He made the worlds”

The Son of God was the Co-creator of the whole universe. Scripture plainly states that the Father created all things by Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:9, Jn.1:3,10). How can you compare the Creator to a prophet? The prophets simply declared that He made the worlds, but the One who created them is far greater than the prophets who affirmed that He made them. Moses declared God to be the Creator in

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Genesis 1:26. Jeremiah also declared that the Lord is the Maker of heaven and earth (Jer. 32:17). Likewise, the prophets simply pointed to God as the Creator. But the Son of God created everything, including all the angels and the prophets (Col.1:15-18).

(3) “The brightness of His glory”

The Son of God is “the brightness of the Father’s glory.” Christ is the *source* of all light. He is the source of all glory. The only prophet who tasted of and reflected this glory was Moses. Moses had no glory of his own. He was reflecting the glory that Christ had put upon him while he was basking in God’s presence on Mount Sinai. It is very important to see the difference between Moses and Christ in the realm of glory. Moses’ face shone with the glory of God. This glory was placed upon Moses; it did not originate in him (Ex. 34:28-35). God also has promised to the Church of the last days that “His glory shall be seen upon thee” (Isa. 60:1). This is confirmed by Paul in Second Corinthians 3:7-10. The glory of God that Moses experienced shall be manifested in even greater ways in the last day revival.

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Christ is the *source* of all light and glory. The glory does not originate in the prophets or in us. There is a danger in thinking that the power and glory is something that is resident within ourselves. Once when I was in a pastors' conference in New Zealand, there was a prophetic warning given on this very subject. The Spirit warned, "Remember always that you are only the channel; you are not the source." Over the years I have seen people destroyed because they thought the source was in themselves. The source is Jesus Christ alone. Christ *in us* is the source. Therefore, there is a caution for every one of us to walk in humility and always recognize who is our source of power.

(4) "The express image of His person"

Each of the prophets manifested a certain aspect of the nature of God. For example, Moses was renowned for his meekness, and Jeremiah for his compassion. It is sometimes said that Jeremiah had the heart of a woman because it was very, very tender. John the Apostle manifested the love of Christ. Paul demonstrated the attribute of longsuffering (1 Tim.1:16).

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Yet, Christ perfectly displayed the Father in *all* aspects—so much so that Christ could say to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn.14:9). Jesus is a perfect replica of the Father. The word *image* literally means a stamp or impress.

In olden days men would press a seal upon melted wax and the exact image of the seal would come out upon the wax. This is really what “the express image of the Father” means. In every detail Christ is completely similar to the Father. This can be said of no other person.

(5) “All things are upheld by the word of His power”

Paul repeats these same truths in Colossians 1:15-17 where he said, “[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things *consist.*” Let us ponder this word “consist” for a moment.

A friend of mine was lecturing a class of university students on the subject of the creation. He said to the students: “The wood in this desk has enough atomic power to blow this building apart. What do

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you think holds these atoms together?” Scientists have no idea what holds the atoms together, so they call it “the X Factor.”

The *X Factor* is Christ because everything is held together by Him. There is no scientific explanation. When scientists don't know the answer they use “X.” Only Paul was capable of explaining the “X factor.” He said, “Everything is held together by the Word of God.” By Christ all things *consist* or are held together. This is an extraordinary truth.

The power of the prophets was very limited. Moses spoke to the rock and water gushed forth. Elijah spoke to heaven and fire came down. Yet their power does not compare with the power of Christ, who holds the whole universe together by His Word. Joshua literally made the sun stand still at his command. Yet, the decrees of those old prophets had authority only because they were *upheld* by the Word of Christ. The prophets spoke at His behest. When Joshua commanded, “Sun, stand still,” Christ said: “Sun, Joshua has spoken. You stand still.”

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(6) “He purged our sins”

All the prophets had to have their sins purged by God. The whole of Isaiah chapter six draws our attention to this. Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” Then one of the seraphim took a live coal and touched his lips and said, “Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isa. 6:5-7). This was done on the strength of the future sacrifice of Christ. God could purge and forgive sin in the Old Testament because He was looking forward to the sacrifice His Son would make upon the cross. The prophets themselves had to have their own sins purged and paid for by the One who was without sin. The difference between the prophets and Christ is that the prophets needed to be purified, while Christ did the purifying. In this respect, there can be no comparison whatsoever.

(7) “He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High”

None of the prophets were kings (with the exception of Moses and David). Moses, we are told, reigned as a king in Jeshurun (Deut. 33:5). David we know was a king. However, Christ is not only a king, He is the “King of kings and Lord of lords” as John stated in Revelation 19:16. In Psalm 24:8 He

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is called “the King of Glory.” Christ is not only the king over Israel, He is a great King over all the earth (Psa. 47:2). His name is above every other name in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:9-11). His unique position on the right hand of the Father has never been offered to any prophet. Never at any time has the Father said to any of the angels in heaven, “Sit thou at my right hand” (Heb.1:13).

Remembering the theme “within the veil,” Paul is presenting in the first chapter the greatness of the One who has opened the veil, the very Son of God Himself. In verses 1-3 he has opened up and shown how much greater Christ is than the prophets. Then he continues in verses 4-14 to show how much greater Christ is than the angels. Let us now review the seven points Paul makes about Christ being better than the prophets.

Christ is Greater Than the Prophets Because:

1. The Son inherits *all* of heaven; the prophets only inherit a *place* in heaven.
2. The Son made the universe; the prophets only *declared* that He made it.
3. The Son is the very source of glory; the prophets only had *some* of His glory placed on them.

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4. The prophets manifested certain aspects of God's nature; the Son expressed *all* facets. He is the perfect replica of the Father.
5. The prophets spoke creatively; the Son did the creating. Even the atoms are held together by the word of Christ.
6. The prophets needed their sins purged; the Son of God who is sinless purged their sins and ours.
7. The Son's unique position at the right hand of the Father was never offered to a prophet.

CHRIST—GREATER THAN THE ANGELS

(1) "A more excellent name than the angels"

1:4 *"[Being more excellent] than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."* Angels played an important role in the Old Testament, especially in the giving of the law (see Acts 7:53). The Israelites regarded these angels with great awe (Ex. 23:20-23). The interventions of the angelic hosts were interwoven with the history of Israel. But the Son is worthy of far more honor than the angels because He is the One who *controls* history.

The Son of God issued the law, which was often administered by the angels to the prophets. His Name is higher than any other name in heaven or in earth (Phil. 2:9-11, Mt. 28:18). According to the

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Jewish mind, a name revealed one's essential nature and also could express rank or dignity. Christ had a more excellent name than the angels because He was inherently more excellent in every way.

(2) "Thou art my Son" is not said to the angels

1:5 *"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son."* There is a great difference between an angel who is created, and Christ who is the very substance of the Father and came forth from the Father. This unique title "My Son," belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that the angels were called "sons of God" in Job 38:7. The Father has many "sons" by creation or adoption, but He has only one Son. At the River Jordan the Father spoke very clearly, "This is my Beloved Son." In Romans 1:4, Paul said He was "declared to be the Son of God by the Spirit of Holiness [or by the Holy Spirit]."

(3) He is the first and only begotten of the Father

"This day have I begotten thee. And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Christ is the first begotten of the Father. In John 1:18 we are told, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Here we

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have an understanding of the birthing of Christ (if I could say this) in the sense that He came forth from the bosom of the Father. Christ always existed in the bosom of the Father, but there was a time (long before creation) when the Son came forth from the Father. The spirit of prophecy brings this out vividly in Proverbs 8:22-30. Christ Himself testified, “For I proceeded forth and came from God” (Jn. 8:42, 16:28), and “I came out from thee” (Jn.17:8). Angels are created, and so also is man. However, the Son is uniquely the only begotten of the Father. The Son of God is God, and is equal with God (Jn.1:1, 5:18). The Son alone is deity!

(4) “Let all the angels of God worship Him”

1:6 *“And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.”* God commanded all the angels to worship Christ, but Christ never did obeisance to the angels. This in itself is ample proof of Christ’s superiority to the angels. Christ alone is worthy of worship. Angels and men must never be worshipped.

The Apostle Paul warns in Colossians 2:18, “Let no man beguile [or rob] you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.” We must be very clear on this point because in every

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revival there are angelic visitations, and there is a tendency to become overly involved with angelic phenomena instead of the Lord. Today there are some books written on angels which produce an inordinate desire to see angels. If we desire to see anyone, we should desire to see Christ. All attention should be drawn to Christ, not to angels or men. It is one thing if the Lord should choose to send an angel, but our desire must always be toward the Lord and not angelic phenomena. However, let us also see the positive side of the subject of angels.

1:7 *“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.”* The Apostle Paul is quoting from Psalm 104:4. Angels are not deity. They are heavenly messengers with special errands to accomplish. Angels are subordinate to God just as men are. Angels are spirits, and because they are spirits, they have the ability to transform themselves into men. This is brought out in Hebrews 13:2 which states, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” When you see an angel in his spiritual form, he will have hands, but he will also definitely have wings. He will be clothed in white garments. Angels are very radiant, with tremendous strength in their faces. Obviously, no one is going to entertain an angel unawares if a

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being with wings comes up to the doorstep. Angels have the supernatural ability to transform themselves into human beings.

A pastor friend of mine in Scotland lived with two or three elders of the church. One time they were staying in the country in a hilly area. From their cottage they could see a great distance. There were no other houses around. He and the elders were there for a little retreat, studying the Book of Ezekiel. They were finding their study to be somewhat difficult, when suddenly there came a knock at the door. After they charitably invited the visitor in, he asked, "What are you doing?" They replied: "We are studying Ezekiel. Would you like to join us?" And he said, "I certainly would." To their amazement, the guest started to open up and expound all of the relevant chapters in Ezekiel. After a while the visitor said, "It is getting late; I must go now." So the brethren got up together with him and ushered him to the door. They each said good-bye, and closed the door.

Suddenly they said to one another, "We did not even offer him anything to eat or drink; how inhospitable we have been!" It could not have been more than a few seconds before they opened the

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door again, but he had vanished from their sight. The word that came to them was, “Some have entertained angels unawares.”

Scripture also teaches us to *challenge* angelic visitations as Joshua did (Josh. 5:13-15), because sometimes people are visited by fallen angels. Only the false angels will receive worship; the true will not (Rev. 22:8-9). Fallen angels do not major in humility. People who have had encounters with them can tell you all of their names because they are only too willing to volunteer their names and a lot of other “information” too. Therefore, we must be very sure that we do not come in contact with the wrong camp. Mormonism is the result of a fallen angel visiting Joseph Smith. He should have challenged the angel.

(5) “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne O GOD, is forever and ever”

1:8 “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” (cf. Psalm 45:6). Never are the angels entitled “God.” It is only the Son who holds this title. Also it is never suggested that the angels should take the throne of the kingdom (cf. Heb. 2:5).

(6) “God hath anointed thee ... above thy fellows”

1:9 *“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”* Christ is here distinguished from all His brethren, all the prophets, and all the angels. The Father has anointed Him above all His brethren, including the angels. Christ has a love for righteousness and a hatred of iniquity. The problem in the Church is that many people love righteousness, but they do not hate wickedness. This is quite common in the Christian life. Therefore, we would do well to meditate upon this point. Loving righteousness and hating wickedness is the key to joy. This is also the key to having that special anointing. So often when a person has no joy, it is because he does not hate iniquity.

(7) “And, Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens”

1:10 *“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”* Once again, the Son of God is exalted as the Creator of heaven and earth. This aligns with Colossians 1:15-18, but I would like to review verse 16 one more time. “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be

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thrones or dominions, or principalities: all things were created by him, and for him.” It is essential to understand that Jesus Christ is the Co-creator of the universe. This is made vividly clear in Genesis 1:26 where the plurality of God is used. “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” It is not a question of God creating, but of the Father and Son creating the universe together. God created all things by Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:9), by His Word. Certainly Christ is greater than the angels, for He created them.

(8) “*They shall perish, but thou remainest*”

1:11-12 *“They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail.”* Christ existed long before the foundation of the world, and He will ever exist after it waxes old and perishes. He is the I AM who remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb.13:8). No angel could ever lay claim to eternal existence and unchangeable character. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away” (Mk.13:31). The words of Christ cannot pass away because Christ is eternal and He is the Incarnate Word of God.

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John 1:1 states, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” It is very important to link the Word with Christ. He is the Incarnate Word of God. The Word is creative and powerful because it emanates from the WORD OF GOD, the Creator (Rev.19:13). Who is Christ? He is the living Word of God. Therefore, the Word of God is creative.

Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away.” Heaven and earth can pass away because they were created, but the Words of Christ cannot pass away because they came from the eternal Creator. When we speak the true Word of God under the anointing, it is creative. When a rhema word comes from God, it has the ability to create an organ in the body. Therefore, the Word of God spoken under the anointing can bring into existence those things which do not yet exist. The anointed Word of God has tremendous power. It has the ability to produce finances, buildings, and everything else we need.

Scientists who study atomic structure cannot understand how the atoms remain together. There is no scientific explanation. The Scriptures reveal the secret to us. They tell us that the world is held together by the Word of God. God commanded the seas, “Thus far and no further” (Job 38:11). The

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seas cannot flow over the earth because God has set boundaries on the seas, by His Word. The power lies in the Word.

When God speaks to us, we must receive His words with faith. Israel failed to go into their inheritance because what was preached to them was not received with faith (Heb. 4:2). Faith is a strong theme of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews. Joshua and Caleb looked at those giants in Canaan land and said, "If God be for us and shows favor to us, they are nothing." This is the reason David could slay Goliath. The anointing of the Lord was upon him and he said to the giant: "You come to me with a sword and spear and shield, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. How can you possibly stand against me?" This is the reason we must believe and treasure the words that God speaks to us and promises us. We must be sure that the word God promises us is *received* with faith, for it will surely produce what God says if we receive it with faith.

(9) "But to which of the angels saith he at any time, Sit on my right hand"

1:13 *"But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?"* These words were spoken uniquely to God the Son, not to the angels. The position on

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the right hand of the Father is reserved uniquely for the Son of God. Psalm two confirms this whole thought. The Son of God has been appointed the heir of all things. Satan, the fallen archangel, has coveted this lofty position.

In Psalm two we can see the jealousy of Satan working in rage through the deceived peoples of the earth.

Psalm 2:1-12 says: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the

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LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss [or submit to] the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

(10) Angels are “sent to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation”

1:14 *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister [or do service] for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”* What are angels? Angels are spiritual beings. They do not have bodies like we do, but they do have the ability to take on a human form. They are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. Who are the heirs of salvation? They are the redeemed. Therefore, angels are sent to aid and assist each Christian. Every believer has a guardian angel. Angels, therefore, are servants with duties to perform. They are not divine, and certainly they are not equal in rank to the Son. They were created by the Son of God.

When I was in a Bible School summer camp as a young man, I was in charge of a tour to a particular mountain in Derbyshire. Halfway up this mountain there was a path that meandered up to the entrance of a cave. My responsibility was to lead the people up. As we slowly ascended the last part

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of this winding path, I decided to leave the path and take a shortcut up the slope. When you are a leader, the little sheep will follow. Directly behind me was a seventy-year-old lady. She left the path as I had done, and just as she scaled the top of the slope, she slipped.

As I reached to help her, my foot dislodged large boulders and sent them cascading down upon the saints. Instantly my spirit cried out to God for help. Then the Lord opened my eyes and I saw behind every one of these saints an angel helping him. It was a very beautiful scene. Some of these saints were elderly and were having a difficult time, but the angels were so gracious and patient with them. It was so beautiful to watch them. Of course, none of the boulders touched the saints. This experience caused me to understand as never before that the angels are ministering spirits who are sent to help those who are the “heirs of salvation.”

I remember the story of a Methodist minister who earlier in life had been a missionary in China. One time while he and his family were on the Yangtze River, their boat suddenly capsized. He managed to keep it afloat, turned it right side up again, and got his wife and children safely back into the boat again. However, the wife and husband both thought the other one had the baby. When they realized

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that neither one had him, horror and panic seized them. Then they looked around and saw in another part of the river a hand and an arm stretched down, holding up the baby. The missionary swam over to the baby, and as soon as he had a good grasp on him, the hand released its hold and disappeared.

Concerning children, our Lord Jesus said that each one has an angel who continually looks upon the face of the Father in heaven (Mt.18:10). Knowing the things that children can get into, it is a comfort to know that the angels are watching over them. Angels are all ministering spirits. So, when the Lord says we are never alone, we are never alone. When there is one person, there are two. And when there are two persons, there are four. Knowing we have these guardians present and watching us all the time should also promote holiness.

It is a marvel that people do not have more accidents, but there is a reason for this. I have had my eyes opened in some cities and at times I have seen angels at intersections watching over the cars and pedestrians. I believe there is far more angelic ministry than we recognize. Certainly there are angels that govern whole nations too. I really believe there is angelic intervention to save countries

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from going into total chaos and destruction. Sometimes it looks as if certain countries are going to be wiped out, but somehow they survive. I think it is because of angelic intervention. If our eyes were opened we would see many unseen forces and angels. Incidentally, the good angels outnumber the fallen angels two to one. Sometimes people have the impression that we are in the minority and that there is a demon around every corner, but they are outnumbered two to one by the godly. We should have more of an awareness of those on our side than we do of those on the other side. Remember what Elisha said to his servant when they were surrounded by the enemy: “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kgs. 6:16).

Christ is Superior to the Angels Because:

1. He has a more excellent name (rank, dignity) than the angels.
2. “Thou art My Son” was never said to angels but only to the Son.
3. Christ is uniquely the only begotten Son of the Father, and came forth from the bosom of the Father. The angels were created.
4. All the angels are commanded to worship the Son.

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5. The Son is entitled "GOD." Never are the angels termed God, nor are they promised a throne and a kingdom.
6. The Son is anointed above His fellows (above His brethren, the prophets, and the angels).
7. The Son is the Creator. He created all things, including the angels.
8. The Son and His Words endure forever. Christ is "the unchanging One" from age to age. Angels can never make such a claim.
9. No angel was ever promised the unique position of being at God's right hand.
10. Angels are "ministering spirits sent to minister to the heirs of salvation," the redeemed. Therefore, angels are servants, not deity. They are subordinate to God, and they obey His commands.

The First Warning - 2:1-4

Take Heed to What God is Saying

We come now to chapter two and the first of the five warnings in Hebrews. After elaborately expounding on the fact that Christ is so much greater than the prophets and the angels, Paul now issues this solemn warning:

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2:1 *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”* The thought portrayed here of “letting things slip” is that of a ship which has gone adrift from its moorings and becomes shipwrecked through the negligence of the captain. Regretfully, during my lifetime and ministry I have seen so many who have let the boat of their soul slip from the safe moorings of the salvation that is in Christ. The result is that they have become shipwrecked, and it has happened so subtly.

The first danger sign is when a man or woman stops reading and meditating in the Scriptures. Then they let church attendance slide, and little by little, they drift away from the fellowship of the saints. Instead of looking to God for direction, they lean to their own understanding and make decisions by their own judgment. The fruit that follows is disastrous, and they reel from one tragedy to another like a boat without a rudder in a storm. Oh, let us ever remember that clinging to Christ and His truth is our only haven of safety. Therefore, Paul exhorts, “Let us give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard.”

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2:2 *“For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.”* I am alluding again to Acts 7:53, but now I would like to quote from Exodus 23:20-21, where God spoke to Israel in the wilderness and said: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee in to the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.” This is a very solemn thought here. The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression received a just recompense. When the children of Israel disobeyed in the wilderness, phenomenal judgments came upon them. Therefore, the Apostle Paul is reminding us of this, and he continues his warning in verse 3.

2:3 *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”* Here is Paul’s awesome warning—how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? The Apostle Paul’s reasoning is this: We have been given far greater privileges than the believers in the Old Testament period. We have a greater covenant; we have a deeper experience of Christ; we have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as well as

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salvation by grace and water baptism. If the Old Testament believers with lesser experiences did not escape punishment when they disobeyed, how do you think we are going to fare?

2:3b-4 *“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, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”* The Lord Jesus spoke extensively of this wonderful salvation which He Himself purchased to save men to the uttermost, and it was confirmed by all the apostles with mighty signs and wonders. From the day of Pentecost and onwards, God has seen fit to confirm His Word with signs following. A gospel with “signs following” was promised by Christ in Mark chapter 16. One of those signs (among many others) is speaking with other tongues. Today we have the honor and privilege of being baptized in the Holy Ghost and speaking with other tongues.

Numerous privileges have been entrusted to us, and how it behooves us not to let our boat slip away from the moorings of Christ and all of His marvellous truths! We ought to give even more diligence to the light than did those in the Old Testament. Frequent reference is made in the New Testament to

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the wilderness journey when Israel was guided by an angel. That angel did not pardon them; he judged them severely for their disobedience. Therefore, we should realize these things and take them to heart. This is the first of five warnings in Hebrews—“Take heed, pay earnest attention, and give diligence to do what God speaks to us.”

Part 2

2:5-18 - BEHOLD THE MAN—JESUS

2:5 *“For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.”* In Part Two Paul is again comparing the angels with Christ. In making reference to the world to come, the Apostle Paul says that the new heaven and new earth are not subject to the rule of the angels, but to the rule of men, and in particular, the Man Christ Jesus. This “great salvation,” which started on earth, will continue into the world to come.

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2:6 *“But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visited him?”* (cf. Psa. 8:4). The one testifying this was, of course, King David. Psalm 8, written by David just after he had slain Goliath, was possibly the first of David’s psalms. This psalm contrasts the angels with the Son of man and the sons of men. Looking up at the stars and gazing upon the vastness of the universe, a prophetic prayer broke forth from King David’s heart, and he said, “What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” David was a prophet, and therefore many of his prophetic utterances pointed to Christ Himself. Here he is speaking of man, but particularly of the Son of man.

2:7a *“Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.”* (cf. Psa. 8:5). Mankind is made a little lower than the angels. This thought of man being made a little lower than the angels became very vivid to me many years ago when we were ministering to one of the sisters in the church. The elders and I were casting out demons from this woman, and we were down to the last one. The demon wanted to leave, but the woman wanted him to stay. She did not want to let go of her psychic ways. Then I saw a fallen angel walk into the room and enshroud her. The angel spoke through the lips of this woman

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and said, “May I respectfully remind you that man was made a little lower than the angels.” In other words, he wanted to let me know that he was an angel, and I was a man. After the counselling session, the woman left the room and confessed to several people, “I could have been delivered, but I did not want to let go of the spirit.” Because of her obstinate will and open invitation for Satan to keep a stronghold in her life, a fallen angel came to reinforce and strengthen the demon, even though the demon wanted to leave. I am mentioning this story to illustrate the point that man is made (at least in this life) a little lower than the angels.

2:7b *“Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.”* This verse is not only prophetic of Christ the Last Adam, it also goes back to the first Adam, whom God instructed to “have dominion” over all the earth and over all the creatures (Gen.1:26-28). I think this is something we should remember, especially if we are sent to the mission field. On the mission field we have encountered snakes, lions, and other beasts, but I believe that if we maintain our position in Christ we do not have to be afraid of them. The animals fear us because the fear of man is in

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animals. They will back off if we know our position in Christ. Redeemed man should have dominion over all the creatures of the earth.

2:8 *“Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.”* God has declared that all things shall be subject to Christ, yet at the moment we see rebellion on every hand. Everything in heaven and earth is not yet in subjection to Christ and under His feet. This is because the Father has set an appointed time for this (Eccl. 3, Rev.11:15, Acts 1:7). It will become a reality at Christ’s second coming.

When the demons saw Christ during His earthly ministry, they cried out in horror, “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (Mt. 8:29b). The demons are very aware that there is a set time for their judgment. Certainly, the devils “believe and tremble” as James says. They know that Christ will have dominion over everything at the time determined by the Father. Satan himself knows that his time is short and that Christ, the heir of all things, will have the ascendancy (Rev.12:12).

Behold the Man—Jesus

2:9 *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* Not only was man made a little lower than the angels, the Man Christ Jesus was also made a little lower than the angels so He could suffer death. Angels cannot die; only man can die. Therefore, Christ had to be made lower than the angels; He had to become a man, for it was only through death that we could be redeemed. It is only through death that a testament can come into effect. Thus Christ the Testator of the New Testament was made a little lower than the angels so He could taste death for every man by the grace of God. Today we see the Lord Jesus Christ crowned with glory and honor and awaiting the time when all of His enemies shall be made His footstool.

2:10 *“For it [was fitting for Him] for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many [mature] sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”* This is the purpose for Christ's becoming a man and dying for man. Christ died not only to save us from hell, but to bring us to glory and to maturity. This is the thought here and it is very important. The purpose and

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desire of a father is for his son to grow up and take his position. There is such joy when a baby boy is born; yet if he never grows, he only brings sorrow to his father.

Many years ago while I was in the Philippines I read a newspaper article about a little boy who remained an infant for nine years. He never grew up and matured. His parents were brokenhearted. The tremendous joy they experienced at the birth of a baby son turned to sorrow because there was no growth year after year. How do you think the Heavenly Father feels when His sons and daughters do not grow? Time after time when I have been invited as a guest speaker in churches and conferences, the ministers who invited me have requested that I not teach anything deep. Many of them said to me: "Please, just give your testimony concerning salvation and the baptism in the Holy Ghost. We do not want to hear anything else."

Many believers are content to remain as babes. God spoke to one famous evangelist, "All your ministry is producing is spiritual infants." Therefore, we should have a holy fear in our hearts regarding this matter, because every leader who prohibits his congregation from reaching the high calling will have to answer to God for this sin. Sin is coming short of God's glory and His purposes

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(Rom. 3:23). Remember, God's ultimate purpose is "to bring many sons to glory," not just to rescue them from hell.

"To make the Captain [Author or Prince] of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. This statement creates many questions. How could Christ be made perfect? Why would He ever need to be made perfect? Was He not already the perfect Son of God? An understanding of the original rendering for "perfect" can help solve these puzzling questions. Perfect comes from the Greek word *teleios*, which means "to be made entirely fit for the task we were sent into the world to do." It is the same word used by Christ when He commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect [teleios], even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48).

Two Natures

Jesus was the Son of God, but He was also the Son of Man. He was 100 percent God and 100 percent man simultaneously. Therefore, He had two natures. As the Son of God it was not possible for Him to sin. However, as the Son of Man, Christ was subject to temptation and to the possibility of

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yielding to temptation. As a human being, Christ needed to suffer in order to be made perfectly fit for His earthly task. He had to become disciplined, trained, equipped, and self-controlled.

Christ is described in Isaiah 49:1-4 as the arrow of God. An arrow basically has two parts—the sharp point and the shaft. The sharp point is representative of the Word of God that seeks to penetrate the hearts of men.

Isaiah 49:2 says of Christ, “He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.” The sharp point represents the divine side of Christ, but the wooden shaft speaks of the human side of Christ. In Bible typology, wood speaks of humanity. His humanity had to be polished because of the lineage His human body descended from. Yes, His spirit was divine. God was His Father; He had come down from heaven. However, His body came from the womb of Mary. His physical body was made of Mary’s human substance. Christ’s *body*, therefore, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Consider what Jesus had to overcome in His earthly line. We call it “the Messianic line,” but think for a moment what was in His earthly lineage. There was a prostitute, Rahab. Judah, another ancestor, had incest with his daughter-in-law. David fell into sin with Bathsheba, and Solomon certainly was not

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a model of holiness. These were all in Mary's lineage and therefore in the human frame of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of Man was tempted in all points as we are, yet He never sinned. Therefore, we are told in Hebrews 5:8 that "He learned [active, special] obedience by the things which he suffered." Let us never forget that Jesus had the lineage of Mary as well as the lineage of the Holy Ghost.

The human side of Christ which came from Mary had to be perfected. He was made perfect (teleios) through suffering so He could fulfill what He was sent into the world to do. For thirty years Jesus was being trained, disciplined, and equipped by His Heavenly Father in order to become the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

2:11 *"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."* In John 17:19 the Lord said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." It is important to understand what the word "sanctify" really means. Sanctification is often confused with holiness. Although both words could be allied to each other, they have separate meanings. Holiness is divine nature. It is the very nature of God. It is virtue of character.

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Sanctification is different; it means “a setting apart for the service of God.” Being set apart for God’s service could take many forms. In Isaiah 13:3 the Babylonians were called God’s “sanctified ones.” The Babylonians were extremely cruel. Certainly, they were not holy people by any means, nor did they belong to God. God had “separated” them for His purpose, and that was to destroy Jerusalem. So let us understand that the thought of sanctification means “to be set apart for the purposes of God.”

Jesus was and is the Holy One of God. When He stated in John 17:19, “I sanctify Myself for their sakes,” it simply means that He was separating Himself for the purposes of God that He might go to the cross. It does not imply here that there was any further impartation of holiness bestowed upon Him since Jesus was already holy.

“For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” There is a special affinity between Christ, who separated Himself for the purposes of God, and believers who do the same. God separates us for His service; we are set apart for the work of God. Therefore, we are to be

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exclusively God's property and at His behest. For this reason, there is a certain camaraderie between the Lord Jesus Christ and us.

This is true in the armed forces. In the military, there is a certain camaraderie because everyone there is set apart for a common purpose. They feel a certain oneness with each other because they are there for the specific purpose of fighting and laying down their lives for their country. A certain brotherhood exists in the armed forces. Likewise, when Christ separates us to do the will of God, there is a certain camaraderie. Therefore, He is not ashamed to call us brethren because we are separated for the same purposes.

2:12 *"Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren."* (cf. Psa. 22:22). Jesus declared His Father's name unto the brethren. God was not intimately known as Father in the Old Testament. It was the Son who revealed Him as such. One of the prerequisites of the Christian life is to know all of the names of God. We should know all His names by experience and not just be able to recite them.

Several keys for Christ's exaltation are found in Psalm 91:14. "Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Jesus set His

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whole desire upon His Father. He also knew all the names of His Father by experience, not only by recitation or memory. Therefore, the Father highly exalted Him. This is also the key to our life. As we set our love upon the Lord our God, He will deliver us; and as we come to know His names by experience (not in theory only), He will set us on high with Himself.

God has many names. One of His names is Jehovah Jireh which means “The Lord our Provider.” We have to know Him as our provider. We need to have that relationship with Him where we know that in every circumstance He is the All Seeing One who knows our needs and will provide for them. However, the only way to know God as Jehovah Jireh is by passing through experiences in which we have great needs, and then seeing Him come on the scene with miraculous provision. Do you know Him as your Provider? When you know Him by experience as your Provider, then you can declare that Name to your brethren. Then it is no longer theory, but life and reality. So it is with all of His other names.

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How can we know Him as Jehovah Rapha (The Lord our Healer) unless we have first experienced physical needs? Men and women with mighty healing ministries have first known great bouts of sickness in their own lives from which they were healed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our devotional life, there is another name of God that we must know by experience and that is Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord our Righteousness). At new birth, every Christian is *counted* righteous, but many will not allow God to *make* them righteous. Wrought out righteousness is granted only to those who hunger and thirst for it (Mt. 5:6).

2:12b *“In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”* This, too, is prophetic of Christ, and it comes from Psalm 22:22. There are times in our worship services when the Lord breaks forth in a spiritual song, worshipping His Father through the congregation. Remember, Christ is in us. There are times when the Lord takes over our vocal cords singing through us to His Heavenly Father. This is the height of praise.

2:13a *“And again, I will put my trust in him.”* Paul is quoting Isaiah 8:17 from the Septuagint (or Greek version of the Old Testament) which prophetically says of Christ, “And I will look for him.” Hebrews

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2:13 reads, “And I will put my trust in him.” Christ said in John 15:9, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.” The Son demonstrated a beautiful, holy dependence upon His Father. There was a recognition and acknowledgment that He could not do anything by Himself. He had to be anointed and energized by the Holy Spirit in order to present Himself as a sacrifice without blemish unto God (Heb. 9:14).

In like manner, God is going to bring us to that place of holy dependence upon Him for every aspect of our spiritual and natural life. Paul said, “I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). It is not even by *our* faith, but by His faith that we live. Jesus had to put all His trust in His Heavenly Father and believe that His Father would bring Him through.

2:13b *“And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me”* (cf. Isa. 8:18). Jesus emphasized this in John 17:12 where He makes reference to those whom His Father had given Him. The Father has given to His Son a seed (cf. Isa. 44:3, 53:10). By the grace of God we are His seed and His children. In the same way, God wants to give us a spiritual seed.

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God the Father wants to give us many spiritual sons and daughters. When we look at the beginning of creation, the first thing God said to Adam was, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen.1:28). The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit (Jn.15:8). The thought of multiplication is taken up again in the life of Abraham. Two of the great promises God made to Abraham were: “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee” (Gen. 22:17). When God is pleased with our life, He not only blesses us, but He also multiplies us with many spiritual children.

We produce like kind. We reproduce exactly what we are in the lives of others. This is the reason it is so important that we allow God to deal with “weeds” and the unyielded areas of our lives so they are not reproduced in the lives of our sons and daughters. Our inheritance is in our spiritual sons and daughters. They are the ones who carry on our vision and message. One of the greatest blessings of God is to have spiritual children.

Paul asks a question in First Thessalonians 2:19; and then he answers his own question in order to make an important point. “What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing?”

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He is saying, “As a minister, what is my hope, my joy, and my crown?” Then he answers his question this way: “Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thes. 2:19-20). What is the joy of a Christian and what is the joy of a minister on the day of reckoning? Our joy is in presenting to the Lord the spiritual sons and daughters we have helped bring to maturity and glory!

The desire of a father is that his children not only grow up to be strong and healthy physically, but that they become mature spiritually and capable of coping with life’s trials. Let me ask you this question: What is God’s desire? God’s desire is to have mature sons and daughters. Therefore, our joy is in presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col.1:28-29). This is the reason we cannot be content to preach *some* of the counsel of God or *part* of the counsel of God. Just speaking on salvation, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost will only develop chubby, little babies. These are only the elementary doctrines of Christ, and this was the spiritual plateau upon which the Hebrew believers had settled (Heb. 5:12-6:3).

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We must bring to manhood those whom God has entrusted to our care. A little child must grow into spiritual manhood. The Apostle John describes a young man as being strong, overcoming the Wicked One and having the Word of God abiding deeply in his heart (1 Jn. 2:14). It is imperative to bring our children to a place where they have personal victory in their lives over all their bondages and over Satan. Then we have to bring them on to spiritual fatherhood.

The desire of fathers, after their sons and daughters have grown up, is to have grandchildren. Spiritually, we desire our sons to grow up and have children of their own. How would we describe spiritual fatherhood? John the Apostle described a father as one who intimately knows God (1 Jn. 2:13-14). Therefore, fatherhood is a very high level of maturity. In summary, our desire should be to bring our infant converts into the knowledge of salvation where they know that their sins are forgiven. Then we should bring them to personal victory over all of their bondages and Satan, and then lead them on to spiritual fatherhood.

2:14-16 *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is,*

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the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For [truly] he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” A very important truth announced here is the fact that Jesus did not become an angel; He became a man. Jesus took upon Himself the seed of Abraham. “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (2:16). Therefore, there was a sacrifice only for mankind. There was no sacrifice made for fallen angels or demons.

This truth was made very clear to us in Germany after World War II. During the 1950's, we had the privilege of ministering nearly every weekend in a number of cities in Germany. When a country has sinned like Germany did under Adolf Hitler, demonic forces rush into that country. Thus they had many spiritual problems after the war. Most people have no idea what Adolf Hitler did to that country and to those people. The requirements he laid down for membership in the storm troopers (or in the elite Nazi guard) were diabolical. He opened up the country to every foul spirit imaginable.

While we were in one of the cities there, a young girl of about twenty-two years of age came to us and said: “Pastors, can you help me? My knowledge of Scripture is not sufficient and I need to know how

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to handle a certain problem.” So we asked her, “What is your problem?” Then she began to tell her story. She said: “Every night spirits come and stand around my bed, and they ask me to show them the way of salvation. I get out my Bible and speak of Jesus dying for our sins. I give them scripture after scripture, but it never seems to satisfy them. I know this might be difficult for you to believe, but this happens to me every night” (cf. Acts 16:16-18).

We replied, “There is one scripture you must give them, and that will stop those spirits from visiting you again.” We presented her with Hebrews 2:16: “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” We said, “The next time the spirits come to you, quote this scripture to them, and tell them on the authority of God’s Word that there is no salvation for Satan, demons, or fallen angels.” There was no sacrifice made for the redemption of fallen angels. Christ became a man and only died to redeem man, not angels. The girl was somewhat taken by surprise, but she agreed to do what we advised. She did so and came back two nights later and said, “This is the first night that I have not been troubled by those evil spirits.”

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These experiences may not be your lot, but sometimes there are situations when people encounter these things, and you have to know how to answer them. There are horrendous doctrines coming from the pit today saying that eventually everyone in hell will be saved. This is called “ultimate reconciliation,” and it is an exaggeration of the love message. Any truth carried to an extreme becomes error. Ultimate reconciliation is a belief that a loving God could never condemn anyone to eternal judgment. The fact of the matter is, man is the one who “judges himself unworthy of everlasting life,” not God (Acts 13:46). God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9, 1 Tim. 2:4). He has paid our debt with His own blood. Anyone who rejects or takes lightly God’s offer of pardon has judged himself unworthy of everlasting life. Paul warns, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). There is no opportunity for repentance after we die and leave this world. The Scriptures make it vividly clear that upon our death all decisions are final and irreversible.

“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (2:15). Another purpose for Christ becoming a man was to deliver the human race from the fear of death and to

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destroy the one who had the power of death, the devil. In the Old Testament the saints were subject all their lives to the fear of death. This is a dreadful bondage. One of the glorious victories gained by Christ for man was His triumph over death, as well as over the fear of death.

Paul declared: “For I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thes. 4:13-14). Christ has given us comfort because of the hope of the resurrection. He has taken away the sting of death and the grave (1 Cor.15:51-57). Concerning death Paul said that “to die is gain” and “to depart and be with Christ is far better” (Phil.1:21, 23).

Now I would like to share with you a scene I witnessed of what happens to the righteous at death. On one occasion there was a French girl named Madeline who was a student at our Bible school in Switzerland. Madeline became very ill. After a time it became apparent that the Lord was calling her home to be with Him. There were a number of ministers gathered around her bedside praying and worshipping. As she was departing, my eyes were opened and I beheld a scene that was

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indescribably beautiful. I saw a path from her bed going right up into heaven, and I saw the Lord Jesus Christ Himself walking down that beautiful shining path. He came right down to Madeline's bed, and gently touched her and she came out of her body clothed in beautiful white garments. There were the two of them standing side by side. She was on His right arm, and they were talking together like the Bridegroom and the Bride as they walked on this path going up into heaven.

A few days later, I had two more visions of Madeline in heaven. In one of the visions I saw her with a group of girls about her own age in heaven. She was in a grassy area and she was walking and singing with this group of girls. She was so very happy. Then I saw her again. This time she was seated and playing a musical instrument, but it was veiled from my eyes so that I could not see the instrument. There was absolutely no sorrow, but perfect love, joy and peace.

2:17-18 *“Wherefore in all things it [was essential for] him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to [help] them that are [being] tempted.”* One of the prerequisites of our spiritual life is to have the nature of God and to

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demonstrate it to others. Our theme in Hebrews, as we have said before, is “Within the Veil.” What is within the veil? Within the veil is the ark of the covenant and upon that ark is the mercy seat. Mercy is the highest revelation of God. When the Lord appeared unto Moses on Sinai, the first word He used to describe Himself was merciful. He declared, “The Lord God merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6). Therefore, the first thing God wants man to know about Himself is the fact that He is merciful.

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to [help] them that are tempted.” Hebrews 5:1-2 goes along with this: “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are [going out of] the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

Christ is called first and foremost, a “merciful high priest.” How is mercy developed in our lives? I believe mercy is developed by being “encompassed with infirmity.” I once had a deacon in my church

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who said, “Why do you emphasize divine healing?” I answered, “Because it is in the atonement and also because there are a lot of sick people who cannot be healed by doctors.” He replied, “We’re only here about seventy years; why bother with healing?” It was an extraordinary thing for him to say, but he was perfectly serious. So the next question I asked was, “Have *you* ever been sick in your life?” “Never a day!” he said. A sick person, however, is very interested in divine healing. This brings up an awesome truth.

In order for Christ to become a merciful high priest, He was encompassed with infirmity. Therefore, there are frailties in our body and weaknesses that we have to endure. Sometimes there are sicknesses we have to suffer, and sometimes there are oppressions that we have to bear in order for mercy to be developed in our lives. Mercy is developed through infirmities. Truthfully, we can only understand another person’s problem if we have gone through the same problem ourselves. Sometimes we do not have complete victory in certain areas of our life until God has used that infirmity to develop mercy in us.

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Mercy and compassion are the highest qualities a minister can possess, but it is only through *temptation* that mercy and compassion can be developed. There is no other way! Christ, as the Son of Man, had to pass through temptation in order to become merciful. Paul further develops this in Hebrews 4:14-15: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Therefore, (especially if we are called to be a pastor or spiritual leader) we will undergo tremendous temptations.

The ultimate qualification of a priest is to be compassionate and merciful. Mercy and compassion come no other way than through temptation, weaknesses, and infirmities. Sometimes God creates us with maladies in our body solely to develop compassion and mercy. I have heard people testify to this time after time throughout the world. People have come to me and said, "I was born with this particular limitation." So often the Lord has told them, "Yes, it is there to develop My compassion,

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mercy, and understanding.” How can you really understand another unless you have gone through that same valley?

Also, we have this point of *faithfulness*. We have a merciful and faithful High Priest. I cannot overemphasize this point of faithfulness. Paul said in Hebrews 3:2 that Christ “was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.” One of the qualifications for being in the ministry is faithfulness. We have to be faithful to the call God has placed upon our lives. Moses was told to build the tabernacle according to the specifications given to him. We cannot build according to someone else’s specifications. We have to find the pattern God has for *our* particular work. It is to no avail to copy someone else’s pattern. It just doesn’t work, for we are responsible for the pattern that God has for *us*. As a pastor, God may require you to do certain things in your church that someone else does not do in his church. We have to be faithful to the pattern that God gives unto us. God requires faithfulness.

We can only be faithful to the pattern if we know the pattern. Therefore, the first thing we have to do is inquire of God what He wants us to do. For Moses, it was to build the tabernacle. The tabernacle had

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to be built to the exact measurements that God showed him on the Mount (Heb. 8:5, Ex. 25:40). Doctrine and truth must be exact too. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” If we are not faithful to true doctrine, then we will produce misshapen children. If we are not faithful to doctrine, and if we are not faithful to the word God gives us, we are going to bind people and produce spiritual sickness and stunted growth. It is an awesome responsibility to teach and preach because our words are creative. If our doctrine is wrong, we produce deformed spiritual children who do not fit into the place God has ordained for them in eternity.

The measurements of Ezekiel’s temple are very precise. God is very particular about dimensions. It is required that we be faithful to the specifications He gives us. We must be faithful to people and to God. In life we will find that those who are faithful to God are faithful to man also.

Part 3

3:1-6 - CHRIST—GREATER THAN MOSES

In Part Three there is a comparison between the Son of God and Moses. Also, the Apostle Paul continues to develop his theme that the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant. Therefore, he contrasts the One who gave the new covenant with the one who gave the old covenant. He is comparing the two authors here. The Son of God, who is the author of the new covenant, is so much greater than Moses, the one who served as the administrator of the old covenant.

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3:1 *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our [confession], Christ Jesus.”* Paul addresses the Hebrew believers as “holy” brethren. How could he call them holy with all the problems they had in their lives? The answer is actually quite simple. They were called holy because they were joined to God who is holy. Holiness is imputed to us instantaneously at our new birth, but then it must become imparted. Holiness must become a reality. Paul tells us in this verse that we are “partakers of the heavenly calling.” Our heavenly calling is explained in many other places of the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament. The heavenly calling makes us fellow-heirs with Christ; and everything that God has promised is contained in that calling. Peter, therefore, exhorts us to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10).

Then we are told to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ.” Paul turns our whole focus upon Jesus Christ as he glorifies Him with these two elaborate titles of “Apostle” and “High Priest.” The office of *apostle* was the highest rank in the New Testament Church. The *high priest* was also the highest office in the priesthood. Only the high priest could come within the veil into the holy of holies.

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3:2 *“Who was faithful to him that appointed him.”* One of the hallmarks of our Lord Jesus Christ is *faithfulness*. He is girded with faithfulness (Isa.11:5). In the book of Revelation Christ is entitled “Faithful and True.” Those nearest to the Lamb in Revelation are, “the called, the chosen, and the faithful” (Rev.17:14). One of the highest attributes given to a believer is *faithfulness*, for so few are found faithful. Abraham was described as “faithful.” Many are *called* of God, but few are *chosen*. There is a tremendous gulf between those who are called and those who are chosen. I have met many in my lifetime who said yes to the call of God; however, they did not allow God to prepare them for that call. I have met others who have pressed into the purposes of God and entered into a ministry, but have proven at a later time not to be faithful to that ministry. Jesus was entirely faithful to His Father who had appointed Him, and so must we be faithful.

“Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.” Paul is bringing out the fact that Moses was faithful to fulfill all of his life’s work, even as Christ fulfilled His course. Each one of us must be faithful to our calling. In Acts 26:19, Paul said he was “not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” First Corinthians 4:1-2 declares us to be the “stewards of the

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mysteries of God.” A steward is a trustee—someone who has been entrusted with the goods of another. As God’s people, we have been entrusted with His truths. Therefore, He requires us to be faithful to the revelation He has given to us. If we are not faithful to the truths God has shown us, we will lose them. He will take them away and give them to others (Mk. 4:24-25, Mt. 21:43).

3:3 *“For this man [Jesus Christ] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, insomuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.”* The subject here is a “house,” and the relationship of Moses and of Christ to this house. First of all, we should consider what house Paul is making reference to here. In 3:6 we are given a key, for it says, “Whose house are we.” In the original language, the word used here for house has special reference to the occupants of the house. Therefore, we are to understand that this house is the Church, not only the “called out ones” of the New Testament, but of the Old Testament as well (Acts 7:38). It is in this house, or among the inhabitants of this house, that both Moses and Christ demonstrated faithfulness.

Paul is now contrasting Moses with the Lord Jesus Christ in their relationship to this house. Moses was only a minister in this house of the redeemed. He was an administrator in the house of God and

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functioned in the role of a servant. A servant certainly is not greater than the builder. The authority of a builder and architect is far greater than the authority of a servant. Christ is not only the Architect and Builder of this house, He is the Owner of and presides over this house. He is the One who said, “I will build my church.”

3:4 *“For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.”* Herein is the great difference between Moses and Christ. Moses was only a created being, but Jesus was the Creator. In chapter one Paul presented the Son of God as the Creator of all things. Moses was only one small part of what Christ made. It is inevitable that the One who built the house is far greater than anyone who ruled in the house.

The Creator of the house stands far above the house and anyone who ruled in the house. Moses was only a ruler in God’s house. He administrated the Old Testament to Israel. He was a deliverer, lawgiver, and intercessor. But who would have the greater honor—Moses, or the One who made Moses? Moses helped to direct the building of the tabernacle, and he issued the old covenant and the law. Yet the authority to administer all of this came directly from the pre-incarnate Christ who

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overshadowed him on Mount Sinai. Moses, therefore, was only a mediator and governor in God's house.

3:5 *“And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.”* As a servant, Moses governed the house of Israel and delivered to them the laws and statutes of God, and he erected the tabernacle. He instituted all of the Levitical ordinances—the offerings, the sacrifices, the feast days, and the priesthood. All of these have spiritual meanings for the Church; therefore, they were for a testimony of things to come.

3:6a *“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we.”* A son cannot be compared to a servant, and this is where Paul makes the contrast. A son inherits everything and owns everything; a servant is simply paid wages. Moses was a faithful servant who helped govern a house (that house being the house of Israel, the redeemed); but Christ *owns* the house, which is made up of the redeemed of all ages. Moses was only an under-shepherd entrusted with the care of God's people, but Christ is the Chief Shepherd of the flock. He is the Head of the Church, and He owns the Church. He is the “heir of all things.”

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3:6b *“Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”* We are “His house,” but remaining in the household of Christ is conditional!

The condition is clearly stated—“If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” The Hebrew readers had been justified by faith and baptized in the Holy Spirit. Certainly they had been placed in the body of Christ. Yet, certain requirements had to be met in order for them to *continue* in this unique relationship with God through Christ. Being a part of God’s household and *remaining* in it is conditional. The warning implies a danger of apostasy on the part of these Hebrew believers, for they had been guilty of heedlessness, neglect, and carelessness.

The Second Warning - 3:7 - 4:13

Do Not Come Short of God’s Rest

Now the Apostle Paul will issue a lengthy second warning. I would like to speak with great emphasis on this second warning because it is so important. This section from chapter 3:7 to chapter 4:13 could be entitled “Do Not Come Short of God’s Rest.” It starts with a direct quotation from the Psalms where the Holy Spirit in King David says, “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” (Read

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Psalm 95:7-11.) The warning not to harden our hearts is so important that Paul repeats it four times. When anything is written in Scripture we should heed it; but when it is repeated four times, then we must realize that it is a warning that must not be neglected. Paul emphasizes “today”; he does not say tomorrow. Isaiah says, “Today is the day of salvation.” *Today* is very important. We are so prone to say *tomorrow*, but tomorrow never comes. Today we must hear His voice and not harden our hearts. It is *today* that we must guard our hearts with all diligence.

In order to illustrate his point of not coming short of God’s rest, Paul uses the scene of Israel’s journey from Egypt to the promised land. This journey is a subject that is referred to frequently in the Word of God. Israel’s journey to the land of promise took forty years, but should only have taken about two years. It is filled with many valuable lessons for us.

3:7-11 *“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if you will hear his voice. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said,*

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They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.”)

In these passages Paul urges the Hebrew readers and believers of all times—“Harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.” In the wilderness the fathers proved (or challenged) God time after time. Repeatedly they charged Him with irresponsibility because of their unpleasant circumstances and delays. Constantly they maligned His character (Deu.1:26-27). As a result, God was so grieved with that generation that He swore unto them in His wrath that they would not enter into Canaan’s land of rest. Therefore, Israel was denied the privilege of reaching their destination and all the blessings that awaited them there. They were forced to wander aimlessly in the wilderness for another thirty-eight years. The Lord’s summation of that generation which came out of Egypt was this: “They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.”

Erring in Heart

The condition of our heart determines whether or not we possess wisdom and understanding. A hardened heart makes a man or woman incapable of receiving this blessed gift of understanding. Israel, as a whole, was void of understanding because of the hardness of their hearts. The children of Israel had been taught the truth of God, yet they constantly strayed from it. We are told that they always erred in their hearts. King Solomon warns, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). We must guard our hearts from becoming hardened. This is a continual *choice*. A stony heart is a heart that hardens itself and rebels. Hardening of the heart prevents the fruit of the Spirit from taking root and developing in our lives. We need to cry out constantly, “Oh God, give me a new heart” (Ezek. 36:26). King David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart” (Psa. 51:10). The Lord could say concerning young David, “I have found me a man after My own heart.” Our continual prayer should be, “Lord, give me a heart like Your heart.”

The heart is like a garden. A garden cannot be left unattended. A piece of ground might be carefully cultivated into a garden of exquisite beauty, but if it is neglected, it will degenerate quickly. If you take

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a two or three week vacation, it will be overgrown with weeds. A garden has to be constantly cultivated and watered; it cannot be abandoned. So it is with the human heart. We have to continually watch our heart. We have to constantly expose it to the sunshine of His presence, because a garden needs sunshine. The Sun of Righteousness must shine upon our garden. Also, we must be constantly pulling out the weeds. Weeds, thorns, and briars represent the works of the flesh. If we do not pull them out they will crowd out and choke the fruits of the Spirit that are flourishing in our garden. These weeds are little germ thoughts we may have read, heard, or thought upon, which we have to nip before they grow. Israel did not watch their garden. Their garden had become like hardened, fallow ground (cf. Jer. 4:3). A hardened heart deprives itself of the gift of understanding (Deut. 29:2-4) and also of God's favor.

If we err in understanding we cannot come into that realm of relationship to which God has so desired to bring us. He longs to bring us into the realm of relationship that a father has with his son. A father wants his son to know his ways and his purposes. This is the cry of God's heart. Moses understood

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the ways of God, but the children of Israel only saw His acts (Psa.103:7). Many people see the works of God, but they do not know the hidden purposes behind what He is doing.

They see God moving in evangelism, in healing the sick, and in the performing of many miracles, but God wants us to know His ways. He wants the understanding of His ways to be implanted deeply in our hearts. Therefore, we need to cry out: “Oh God, teach me Thy ways.” To whom will God reveal His ways? Psalm 25:9 declares, “The meek will he teach his way.” Meekness is “holy acceptance of circumstances.” Meekness is the ability to bear adversity without hardening our heart and becoming angry with God.

It is imperative to understand God’s ways. We should ask: “How would God handle this particular situation?” We cannot rely on principles or past experiences. When in charge of a work, you will often be pressured by those under you to take quick and appropriate action for situations that arise. But you will have to tell them: “Let’s wait until we are sure that we have the mind of God, and we know how God would handle this situation.” Many times we are constrained by a soulish urgency to *do something now!* It is better to wait until we are sure that we have ascertained God’s direction; then we

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can communicate that direction to the situation and the parties involved. So often we think we know how to handle a situation; but, in actuality, we are in need of hearing something fresh from the throne of God.

The Rest of God

3:11 *“So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.”* This is the end result of not knowing God’s ways and continually erring in heart. We need to pause here for a moment, because this subject of “the rest of God” is going to be repeated time and time again in this section of Scripture. What is the rest of God? Rest can be viewed from several aspects which we will now consider.

First of all, it is the seventh day or sabbath, as mentioned in Genesis 2:2. God ordained that we should rest on the sabbath. This is the first interpretation of rest. The second interpretation is from the point of view of Israel’s journey from Egypt to Canaan. Their destination was a geographical location called Canaan, but in particular, Mount Zion in Canaan land. To not reach their destination was to be unsettled, unfulfilled, and short of rest. The third interpretation of God’s rest is a spiritual sabbath. It is a cessation from our works (Isa. 58:13) and a complete trust in God. The spiritual sabbath occurs

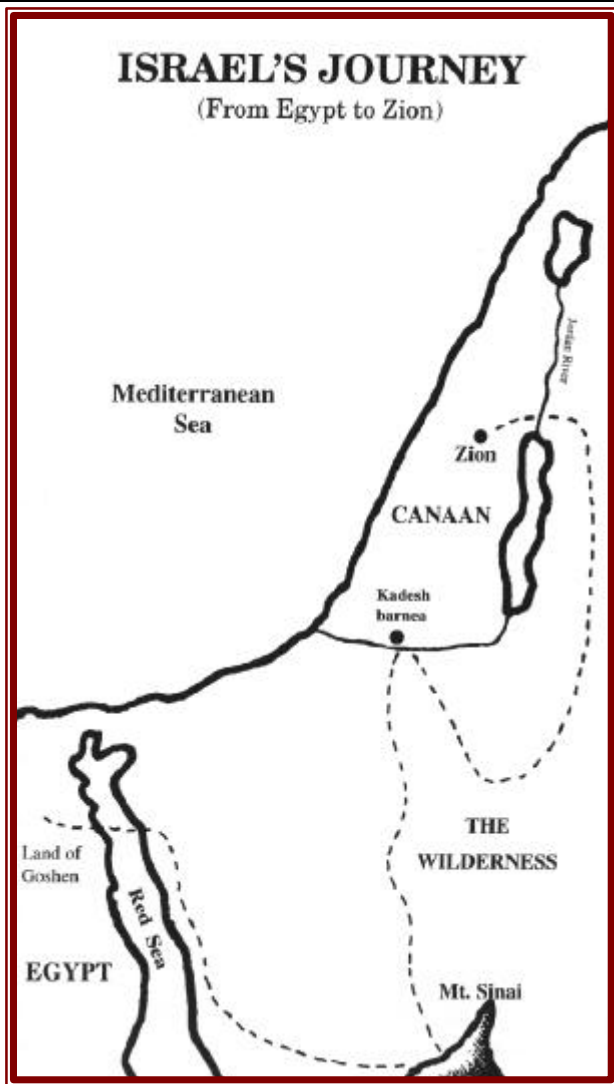
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when our tongue enters into rest, and also our motives and ways. All striving and ambition cease when we have come into our own personal spiritual sabbath.

Marriage is a fourth symbol of rest (Ruth 3:1). Marriage involves being under the headship and protection of another, and not independent and on our own. Isaiah 11:10 promises, “His rest shall be glorious.”

In Hebrews chapter three and four, Paul is looking at rest mainly from the aspect of Israel’s journey. The rest he refers to here involved passing the tests in the wilderness, going across Jordan, subduing many enemies, and finally settling into their inheritance in the land of promise. Rest was in the land of Canaan. Therefore, when God swore to them in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest, He meant they would not enter into the land of promise, into the place He had ordained for them. It meant that the call, promises, and blessings He had planned for their lives would go unfulfilled. The ultimate purposes for which God had brought them out of Egypt would not be entered into. Let us remember that when God brings us out of one place, He purposes to bring us into another place. God told Moses to bring them out [of Egypt] in order to bring them in [to Canaan].

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It is very clear that they should have been brought into the land of rest and ultimately to Mount Zion as we shall see later on in Hebrews. But He said to that generation that they would not enter in. Then Paul gives this warning in verse twelve:

3:12 *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”* Now the Apostle Paul is speaking directly to every one of us. He is addressing New Testament believers: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” Let us pause for a moment here and consider several things that can harden our heart. What can prevent us from entering into God’s promises? Basically in this section there are three distinct sins that we must guard against. The first thing we must be careful of is “an evil heart of unbelief” (v.12). By the grace of God we should seek to be filled with His faith. When God speaks to us we must have a believing heart. Do not harden yourself against the things God has promised you. Hardness of heart and unbelief are married to each other (Mk. 6:52, 8:17, 16:14).

3:13 *“But exhort [or encourage] one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”* The second thing that can harden our hearts is “the

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deceitfulness of sin.” Sin is very deceiving. We might think, “Oh well, I can sin and I will get right back,” but don’t you believe it! Sin is very crippling; its clutches are very hard to break away from. We cannot toy with sin. We cannot think that we can pick it up and then put it down again. No, it binds us with strong cords (Prov. 5:22). Sin hardens the heart! We must be extremely careful because sin affects our mind: it affects our thought life; it affects our disposition; it affects our attitude; and it affects our relationship with other brothers and sisters.

Sin creates a wall between ourselves and God. Sin hardens our heart and our conscience. It causes us to lose our sensitivity to the conviction of God’s Spirit. This is the reason Paul speaks of it as “the deceitfulness of sin.”

The third thing that can harden our hearts is provocation of the Lord. Israel stood up and challenged the Lord ten times in the wilderness (3:8). This is mentioned in Numbers 14:22, where God said to the nation, “You have tempted me now these ten times.” There were ten distinct trials in the wilderness, and they are all very relevant to us. One of the trials was at Marah where the waters were bitter (Ex.15:23-24). Sometimes we are given the impression that everything is going to be all right after we

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have accepted Christ as our Savior. However, this is not true. On some occasions we will also have to drink of waters that are bitter.

What is our attitude going to be when we have bitter experiences? Israel reacted with murmuring and complaining, further strengthening a brazenness in their hearts against the Lord. When we come to our Marah we will be tempted to say, “I didn’t follow You for this, Lord.” The only remedy for bitter experiences is the cross. Moses was commanded to cut down a tree (a symbol of the cross), and after the tree was cast into the bitter waters, the waters became sweet (Ex.15:25). We have to apply the cross to our bitter waters and say: “Lord, I have no rights of my own. I accept what You have brought into my life.” The cross will always cause us to triumph over bitterness. But if we continue to fight and demand our rights, we will go down in defeat and be overtaken with bitterness.

Remember, it was the Spirit of God who led Israel into the wilderness and to each of these ten tests. The devil did not bring them to Marah; the *cloud* brought them there.

These ten tests were educational and not punitive. The Lord desired to enlarge their faith and give them a new victory in each test. He was preparing them for a marvelous inheritance in the glorious

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land of promise. Israel, however, was void of understanding. They continued to miss the point in every test they faced.

Another test involved their appetites (see Num.11:1-6). Complaining is something that is very displeasing to the Lord. Israel constantly complained about their food and their circumstances. Sometimes, we do not have what we *want*, but only what we *need*. If you are called to be a missionary, you will be transplanted from your country and culture into another, and the food is going to be very different. The temptation then is to yearn for the food you so enjoyed back home. Our stomach is one thing we must triumph over. The Word of God says our stomach can be a god. The Apostle Paul spoke of those “whose god was their belly.” We have to learn to accept with thanksgiving what is placed before us. On the mission field we have all kinds of things set before us for which we have to thank God, close our eyes, and swallow fast!

While we are on this subject of appetites, there was another area in which Israel failed—the area of gluttony. When God did provide what they enjoyed, they ate and ate until they had overeaten. Israel faced nine trials and attained a perfect score of zero. Thus, the pattern was established so that when

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they came to their tenth trial at Kadesh-barnea, they failed that test too. It was here at Kadesh-barnea that God swore unto them in His wrath that they would never enter into His rest in Canaan land (read the whole chapter of Numbers 14). Our response in every trial is so important because it is creating patterns in our life—in our mind, in our spirit, in our emotional life, and in our heart.

Therefore, we must create a pattern of victory. We must take heed to ourselves in every trial to cry out to God for grace to overcome. Let us guard our hearts with all diligence and not allow them to become hard and overgrown with the thorns of the fallen nature, and of sin. “Neglect” is a key word to the Hebrew readers, and also to ourselves (Heb. 2:1).

3:14 *“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”* Here is the positive—“we are made partakers of Christ.” This is one of the truths of the Passover. They had to eat the lamb; they had to partake of Christ. We are made partakers of Christ, but this is the condition—“if we hold the beginning of our confidence, stedfast unto the end.” This is a repetition of 3:6b: “Whose house are we *if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

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Paul will say later on in Hebrews chapter 12:1, “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” The whole purpose of a race is to touch the ribbon at the finish line. The whole purpose of a journey is to reach the destination and not to settle down when you are halfway there and say, “I’ve had enough.” We are on a journey and we must hold our confidence steadfast unto the end.

3:15 *“While it is said, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.”* Here again is the repetition of the cry, “Today, if you will hear his voice.” When God says “today,” we must act today, not tomorrow; otherwise our hearts will become hard. When God says, “I want to deal with that thing in your life,” let us respond quickly by saying to Him, “Oh God, deal with it now; I want to be delivered now.” When God warns, “Do not go down that path,” let us quickly reply, “No Lord, I won’t take a step down that path.”

3:16 *“For some, when they had heard, did provoke: Howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.”* The majority of the children of Israel that came out of Egypt provoked the Lord and perished in the wilderness. “Howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.” Not everyone provoked the Lord. There were exceptions, and the notable exceptions were Joshua and Caleb. They had another

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spirit. Their spirit was in tune with the Spirit of God, and therefore they confessed what God was saying. They possessed divine faith because they were intricately joined to the One who is the Author of our faith.

3:17 *“But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?”* A whole generation perished and never entered into Canaan’s land of rest. A whole generation missed the purposes of God, even though they had been baptized in the sea and in the cloud and they had witnessed the glory of the Lord (1 Cor.10:1-12). Those men and women from the age of twenty and upwards perished in the wilderness. All those who were twenty years of age when they left Egypt died in the wilderness, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. Those who were under twenty were preserved, and forty years later entered the land of promise.

3:18 *“And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?”* Unbelief is a terrible, terrible sin. Unbelief is a tremendous insult to God, and unbelief is the result of a hardened heart. It is like saying to God: “Lord, You are not worthy to be trusted. I don’t believe You will do what You have said!” When God speaks to us, our attitude and response must always be:

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“Thank You, Jesus! In the natural it looks impossible; but I believe You are able to do it. I believe this because You have spoken it.” Whatever God has said, cause your heart to sing out—“I believe God!”

3:19 *“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”* At Kadesh-barnea they did not believe God (read Numbers chapters 13-14). God said, “Go in today.” God limited it to one day. “Today, if you will hear his voice.” Twelve men had spied out the land, but ten of them returned with an evil report that inspired fear and unbelief in the congregation. They confessed that the land was wonderful, but ...! *But* is the nature of a goat. A goat butts with its head. But, but, but ...there are giants in the land and we are in their sight as grasshoppers! Through the eyes of faith Joshua and Caleb saw something else, and they declared: “Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not. Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”

The enemy knows that God is with us. We are told by the Apostle James that the demons “believe and tremble.” The enemy believes and trembles. His only hope is that the redeemed will not believe, as was the case with the children of Israel. In actuality, the Israelites were terrified of enemies that were terrified of them.

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Israel did not believe God. God had limited to one day their going into the land. He said, "Today you will go in." Israel said, "Today we will not go in." Then Moses said, "All right, you will wander another thirty-eight years." The next day they repented and tried to go in, but God was not with them and they fled before their enemies. There are times when God limits our decision to one day. That major decision, however, is affected by all our other previous decisions.

4:1 *"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."* In chapter four the Apostle Paul continues his warning of being stalled in the wilderness and not entering into rest. He begins: "Let us therefore fear." The fear mentioned here is not a phobia that would paralyze or hinder us from doing the will of God, but it is a reverential fear. This fear comes from God. The fear of the Lord is an anointing. It is one of the seven spirits of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 11:2-3.

Divine fear is wholesome; it is a fear of coming short of God's purposes for our lives. It keeps us from going off course (Jer. 32:40). Solomon tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord produces wisdom and understanding, and this is precisely what it takes to enter

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into rest. The Israelites on their journey to the land of promise were void of understanding and always erred in their hearts. Thus, we see the necessity of the fear of the Lord. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

God is calling all of us to Mount Zion. Zion is our final and ultimate destination, as it was for Israel on their journey. Zion was not in the wilderness; it was across the Jordan River in Canaan land. It was also the final stronghold to be captured, and it was the place where God later chose to localize His presence. Zion was preferred above all the dwellings of Israel (Psa. 87:2). The Lord said, “This is my rest forever; here will I dwell” (see Psa.132:13-14).

We, too, are being called to God’s rest, and this rest is within the veil. Mount Zion and the holy of holies are equivalent. Both places housed the ark of the covenant. This is the destination God has called us to, but where are we presently situated on our Christian journey? Are we only at the Red Sea (water baptism)? Are we only at Mount Sinai (baptism in the Holy Spirit)? Mount Sinai was in the wilderness. Sinai was not in the land of promise, yet many believers are content to dwell here. God has not called us to Mount Sinai, He has called us to Mount Zion. Are we coming short of the high

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calling of God in Christ Jesus? Are we still in the wilderness—failing the same old tests month after month, and year after year as did the Hebrews?

4:2 *“For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”* Israel of old had the gospel (or good news) preached unto them. Their good news was this—God will bring you into the land of rest. Our good news is that God will bring us within the veil, into a greater rest.

“But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that *heard* it.” The Word of God can be preached under a powerful anointing week after week. Yet, many become “gospel hardened” because they do not receive the word with faith. The word cannot profit a person if it is not *received* with faith. The Word of God is creative, and if it is mixed with faith, then it creates that which God says.

When God speaks to us and says, “I am going to do this and this in your life,” we must agree with Him from our hearts and say, “Amen.” In so doing, we are allowing the powerful creative work of God to come into our being. This action begins setting in motion what God has said He would do. God

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might say to you, "I am calling you to a certain nation." It may seem absolutely impossible at the moment. What are we going to say? How are we going to respond to the message God gives us? God may say, "I will give you a Bible School," or "I will give you a church, or an orphanage." We must receive that word with faith. If we respond negatively by confessing: "This does not add up. How can I afford it? This is impractical, illogical, and physically impossible," then that anointed word will be lost. God's promises will not come to pass if they are not received with faith. Because of this, we would do well to heed Isaiah's warning when he said, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isa. 7:9b).

Another key to having a believing heart is an obedient life. A believing heart is obtained by obeying what God speaks to us *today*. We can see why the Israelites did not have a believing heart. Prior to Kadesh-barnea they had disobeyed the Lord nine times. Disobedience hardens the heart. The man or woman with a believing heart is the one who obeys what God tells him to do *today*. Obedience is a way of life. Every time we make the right choice, our heart softens. With a constant attitude of obedience in our heart, we will find that when God speaks, we can believe. There are no shortcuts to

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a believing heart, nor is believing a “mystical” thing. It is very practical. A believing heart is the result of a walk, a way of life. This is the key. A walk of obedience brings a believing heart.

4:3a *“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said.”* As we maintain a believing heart at each juncture of our walk with the Lord, He will cause us to come into our inheritance and all that He has planned for our lives. We will enter into rest and be established in His divine call. He will bring us within the veil into His very presence, and we will come to know Him in a very intimate way as we continue to obey and believe Him.

Obeying and believing must be a way of life to us. If this way of life is followed, it will ultimately bring us into rest and into glory at Zion’s holy mountain. God has promised us through Isaiah, “He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain” (Isa. 57:13b).

4:3b *“As I have sworn in my wrath, [that] they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”* Israel never came into Canaan’s rest because of a disobedient, hardened, unbelieving heart. “Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Before the foundation of the world, God had determined and planned the journey of the

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children of Israel. In fact, He engineered all of the circumstances. He called for a famine and caused the patriarchs to go down into Egypt. He sent Joseph beforehand to prepare the way for Jacob and his sons to dwell there. God had previously told Abraham that his seed would sojourn in Egypt, but after four hundred years He would bring them out and give them the land of Canaan. God had foreordained all of this. However, He had also foreordained for Israel to go into the promised land, not for them to wander aimlessly in the wilderness and die there. Therefore, Israel went to the grave with unfulfilled prophecies and unfulfilled promises.

We must be very careful when we come to the subject of personal prophecies. God's promises are *conditional*. Prophecies will not come to pass if we do not meet the required conditions or if we are disobedient. Paul made this very clear to the Hebrew readers when he said to them later on in 10:36: "After ye have done the will of God ye [shall] receive the promise." The generation that came out of Egypt never obtained rest in the promised land. God told that rebellious generation, "Ye shall know my breach of promise" (Num.14:34b). God said: "I have changed My mind. I will not give you what I

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promised because you are so evil in My sight.” A basic understanding of Numbers 14:34 will help answer some of our perplexities regarding personal prophecy.

Perhaps you have been in revival meetings where you distinctly remember certain individuals receiving wonderful prophecies. However, today you see some of them far from the course that God had pronounced should be their direction. Our tendency is to think that maybe the prophecy was not right, while truly it may have been very right. The problem lies in the fact that the person has not walked in obedience and has not fulfilled God’s purposes which were ordained for him before the foundation of the world. Certainly it would be meaningless to run around with a whole pile of prophecies saying, “Praise the Lord, this is the type of man I am,” when we are not walking in obedience. We will never become those things which God has declared through prophecy if we are not obedient to Him and do not meet the conditions. Every promise has conditions!

4:4 *“For he spake in a certain place [Genesis 2:2] of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.”* This is the first reference to the seventh day in Scripture. When something is mentioned for the first time in Scripture, it is the key to understanding later events. This

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is called “the law of first mention.” On the seventh day God rested from His works. This is the state of being God has always wanted to bring man unto. He wants to bring us into great quietness of mind and heart where all our struggling, striving and ambition has ceased. Then He can flow through us and perform His mighty works through us.

4:5-6 *“And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.”* This is a very important truth. Some must enter into what God is doing today and fulfill His purposes. The generation that came out of Egypt failed to enter into rest and into God’s purposes because of unbelief, but the following generation made it in. When one generation fails, the call is passed on to the next one. When one generation disobeys, God’s call comes upon the following generation. I have seen this happen in a number of families. God places a divine call upon fathers, but because of laxness and disobedience they have not fulfilled the call. Since the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, I have seen without fail the torch passed to someone else in the succeeding generation, and he goes on to fulfill the call of God.

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That is exactly what happened to the Israelites. After the fathers died in the wilderness, their children went into the land and possessed the inheritance. I have seen this time and time again. When fathers have failed, somehow their sons have managed to excel where their fathers fell short. Would it not be wonderful for the fathers to have excelled too! Ultimately, God will have His way. His purposes will be fulfilled. God promised that His Word would not return unto Him void, but that it would accomplish all for which it was sent. Some must enter into rest and into His purposes, “and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.” However, God’s purposes are never thwarted! Some will enter therein.

4:7-8 *“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, [Psalm 95:7-8] To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus [or Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.”* Joshua is the Hebrew rendering for Jesus, so Paul is actually speaking here of Joshua. “For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he [the Holy Spirit in David] not afterward have spoken of another day.”

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David lived four hundred years after Joshua led Israel into Canaan land, but even in David's time the Israelites had still not entered into full rest. The fortress of Zion was not yet subdued, as well as many other enemies.

The rest of God involved much more than entering into the land of promise. The rest of God involved subjugating *all* the land, including Zion. Joshua *partially* completed the task, but just before his death he had to admonish the children of Israel for being so slack to possess the land (Josh.18:3). The Lord Himself exhorted, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (Josh. 13:1b). It is evident that Israel had not yet entered into the fullness of their inheritance. Judges chapter one plainly reveals that Israel was content to coexist with many of their enemies.

Four hundred years later God spoke again, but this time to David: "Today, after so long a time." He said to David, in effect: "Yes David, I am still speaking about rest. I am going to fulfil what I have promised. I am going to bring My people into full rest and you are the one who is going to do it." Therefore, it was King David (the man after God's own heart) who fought the battles of the Lord and subjugated all the enemies of the Lord. David was the one who captured Mount Zion, the final

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stronghold. He was the one who brought Israel into the fullness of the inheritance that God had promised unto Abraham.

Israel's journey from Egypt, which started four hundred years before, was not complete until they reached Mount Zion. This was the mountain that Moses prophesied about at the Red Sea when he said, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Ex.15:17). This is the mountain of which God said, "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell" (Psa.132:14). Mount Zion was the place of the ark of the covenant. Therefore, it represents coming within the veil into the holy of holies.

God had ordained rest for His people, but just entering Canaan land was not sufficient. Subjugating all the enemies was the requirement. This included gaining the whole inheritance from the River Jordan right up to the great River Euphrates. Joshua did not bring them into full rest, otherwise God would not have spoken of another day in David's time. Now the Apostle Paul is going to apply this to us; for in the spiritual realm, we are on a journey with a destination too.

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4:9-10 *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into [God’s] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”* Whose rest are we entering into? We are entering into God’s rest, not ours. What does it mean to enter into God’s rest? It means that having ceased from our own works, strivings, motives, ideas and ambitions, we enter into God’s peace. This is the message of Zion. For as we enter into His peace and rest, then His Spirit flows through us. Rest is the result of His Spirit controlling us. It is having the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh (not after our own ways), but after the Spirit.

Entering into His rest is a blessed reality; it is very real. As we enter into His rest, the peace of God surrounds our mind and our heart, and we are clothed with peace. When problems show up at our doorstep, somehow we are able to turn them over to God, knowing that He will provide the answer. When we are in the rest of God, we know God has everything under control.

4:11 *“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”* As we have already said, rest is reaching our destination at Zion, and this requires a lot of hard work. Israel was on a journey, but they did not “labor” to reach their destination.

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There were many tests to pass and many battles to be won, but Israel did not fight the good fight of faith. They should have actively sought God for grace in each trial and temptation, but instead they were spiritually passive and lazy.

After the next generation crossed over Jordan into Canaan, there was a necessary circumcision to be performed. Then there were thirty-one kings that had to be slain with the sword. These kings represent ruling lords of the self-life. Unless these lords are faced with the sword, there will be much turmoil and unrest in our lives. Israel was slack to possess the land and deal with their enemies; they did not labor to come to Zion. Instead, they were content to compromise and dwell among their enemies. Let us, therefore, labor to enter into victory and rest, and not stumble in the wilderness because of a feeble faith.

God chastens us in order to give us rest (Psa. 94:12-13). God will judge and destroy every malady and enemy in our life that is depleting us of joy and peace. He is able to deal with every root of anxiety and conflict in our life if we do not rebel against the circumstances He creates for our well-

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being. Israel did not hold steady in the wilderness, but wavered in their faith thereby denying themselves the promised rest in Canaan land.

4:12a *“For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* In order to enter into rest, we need to have a separation in our lives between our soul and our spirit. The soul is our emotions. Many Christians are very soulish, especially Pentecostals. They love the presence of God, singing, dancing, and praising. Their little soul is jumping for joy as long as everything is bubbling—but what do they do when the music stops?

Many years ago I was on the staff of a camp in England. The camp ran for many weeks, and every week I would see new faces. However, there was one exception. There was a lady who came at the beginning of the camp and she stayed until the end. She did not have much money, but the camp director was very gracious and allowed her to stay on. She was the life and soul of the camp. Everybody loved her because she was so joyous. It was so wonderful to be near her.

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Several months after the camp was over I went to visit her. When I saw her I could not believe whom I was looking at, for she was an entirely different person. I asked, “What has happened?” She replied: “I am so unhappy because there is no camp. I am waiting for next year’s camp.” Well, actually the problem was her soul. Her soul loved camp meetings, but when there were no camp meetings her little soul was in the doldrums. Her soul sulked and pouted. This is not a rare or isolated case. Many sisters and brothers are like this.

Let us try to distinguish between our soul and our spirit by using Psalm 43:5 for an illustration. King David found himself surrounded by the hostile forces of an insurrection led against him by his own son, Absalom. As he looked upon his bleak circumstances, he spoke to his soul and said: “Why art thou cast down O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him.” David’s spirit commanded his soul to be still and to hope in God. Believers are often instructed to speak to themselves and to encourage themselves in the Lord (1 Sam. 30:6, Eph. 5:19).

David had permitted the Word of God to separate his spirit from his soul. Looking at the belligerent armies gathering around him, his soul rose up and said: “Look at those twenty thousand soldiers.

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There are forty thousand eyes glaring upon our little band. We are outnumbered! It is hopeless!" David's soul had given up. Sometimes our soul faints, and we feel like we cannot stand the pressure any longer. Perhaps the struggle has been long and the clouds have gathered thick darkness. Our soul feels overwhelmed and is tempted to say: "I am finished. I am rolling over and giving up." It is at this moment that we have to separate our soul from our spirit. Our spirit, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, must take control of our soul. David's spirit took charge of his soul and said: "Soul...why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God."

Our soul often feels disturbed, unsettled, and worries all the time. Our soul sees the mounting bills and frets with anxiety, or sees people over in the corner and assumes they must be talking about us. As a result, we lose all our peace. When the soul is ruling, we are subject to depressions all the time. This is the reason why we need to be spiritual, not soulish. Our spirit must be in command, and not our soul. If our soul is in command, our circumstances will govern our lives. When the sun is shining, the soul rejoices and dances and rises early in the morning. If it is cloudy and dark, the soul wants to curl up and stay in bed. The soul is governed by circumstances. On the other hand, the spirit is

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governed by what God is saying in the midst of our circumstances, and this is where we have to make our choice. We can agree with our soulish feelings or we can agree with God. Agreeing with God is being spiritual. Agreeing with thoughts and feelings is being soulish. Therefore, we must divide soul and spirit.

The more soulish we are, the more our circumstances will govern our spiritual life, as with that dear sister at the camp meeting. When there was no camp meeting, her soul was sulking and ruling her life. She wanted to crawl into a corner. She did not want to see me, or anyone else. Her soul resented those seasons in her life when there was no excitement. Many Christians are like that. They are “camp meeting Christians.” They can shout, dance, and holler when they are in the meeting and when they are feeling good. But when you see them outside of that atmosphere, or in adversity, or surrounded by the world, they hide away and are no longer a shining light for Christ.

Hebrews 4:12 is a very important verse. The Word of God not only divides soul from spirit, it also discerns our thoughts and motives and reveals them to us. Often, we are not aware of our true motives. We need to cry out: “Oh God, show me my motives! Why am I doing this?” God used to

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speak to me and say, “Why did you do that?” His question made this truth so real to me—the *motive* for doing something is just as important as the deed. The thought and intent of the heart is so important to God. The motives and utterings of our heart reveal who we really are in the core of our being. Sometimes, we should stop and listen to what we are thinking.

4:13 *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”* God’s eyes are everywhere. There is absolutely nothing hidden from Him. Job said, “I know that ...no thought can be withholden from thee” (Job 42:2).

Once when I was standing on the street corner of a large city I saw a mighty angel. There were huge blocks of buildings, and for a brief moment God allowed me to see with the eyes of this angel. I could literally look into every office and every room of those buildings simultaneously and see everything that was going on. That was only through the eyes of an angel. Can you imagine, then, what God can see! Everything is open before the eyes of God. We may be able to hide something from men, but everything is open before the eyes of God. Ultimately everything, good or evil, will come to the light.

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We have now completed Paul's second warning which is so very important. Paul has exhorted the Hebrew readers (and everyone of us) not to fall short of God's rest. He urges us to finish our journey and not remain stalled in the wilderness. We must labor to enter into that rest. This involves fighting the good fight of faith and overcoming our negative, soulish emotions and thoughts. It means we cannot allow the garden of our hearts to become hardened and overgrown through neglect or sin. It includes passing many tests and facing other enemies God would pinpoint with His sharp sword.

Let us have a holy fear in our hearts of coming short of the purposes of God which lie beyond the pentecostal experience at Sinai. Let us not be content to camp around the baptism in the Holy Spirit at Sinai, which is in the wilderness. Rather, let us move forward across the River Jordan into the land of promise, ultimately to approach Mount Zion—the fullness of God's rest and glory.

Part 4

4:14 - 5:10 - CHRIST—GREATER THAN AARON

After Paul's lengthy second warning (3:7 - 4:13), he is now coming back to his theme of Christ's superiority. He has established repeatedly that the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant. The prophets under the old covenant brought the Word of God to Israel, yet the Son *is* the

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Word of God whom the prophets represented. Israel of old was guided by angels, but the Son is far above the angels because He created them. The administrator of the old covenant was Moses, yet Moses was only a servant in God's house. In contrast, the Son owns the house and He is the Architect of the house. (The house is the household of faith.)

Also, another important aspect of the old covenant was the priesthood which was headed by Aaron. This brings us to Part Four (chapter 4:14 - 5:10) where Paul is going to speak of a greater priesthood. The priesthood of Christ is superior to the priesthood of Aaron. Therefore, Paul begins with comforting words in verse 14.

4:14 *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast unto our profession.”* It is so important to hold fast to our profession, or to our confession of faith. How do we hold fast unto our confession of faith? We do it by cleaving to the Author and Finisher of our faith, our great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. In the Old Testament the children of Israel were very dependent upon the priests. They went to the priests for counsel; they went to the priests with their sacrifices. The priests were the intermediaries

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between the children of Israel and God, but our Mediator is the Lord Himself, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

4:15 *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* This is a beautiful description of our merciful and faithful High Priest whom we have already mentioned in chapter 2:17-18. It is such a comfort to know that Jesus is very aware of and sensitive to our infirmities and temptations. This is because He was tempted in all points as we are, yet He never sinned.

Much of the Lord’s life and His many temptations are not recorded in the four Gospels. Prior to His three-and-a-half-year ministry, Jesus had learned obedience by the things He suffered. In every point He was tempted as we are. We might say: “I am going through a terrible battle and I feel I have reached my limit. I am facing a great temptation. I don’t know of anyone who has been through a trial like this and could understand it! It is so delicate that I cannot even mention it to others.” But there is someone who can understand. Our merciful and faithful High Priest understands! He has been

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tempted in all points, not in all areas but in all points. He thoroughly understands what we are feeling and thinking.

4:16 *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* Do you see where Jesus Christ is seated? He is seated upon the throne of grace. Why is He seated upon the throne of grace? Because He is filled with grace and truth which He received from His Father in His times of need. An abundance of grace is required in order to reign upon the throne with Christ (Rom. 5:17), and this grace (which is divine enablement) is offered when we are in times of great need. This marvellous substance called grace was poured out by the Father into the Son when He was tempted. Therefore, when we are in trouble we are beckoned to come to Christ’s throne of grace to find grace to help in the time of our need, for this grace is found in Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1). An abundance of trouble actually affords us the opportunity to receive an abundance of grace, provided we do not harden our hearts and cut off the supply of grace (Heb.12:15). Grace, too, is only given to the humble in spirit.

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It is only through grace (divine enablement) that we can triumph. It is only through grace, not through our own efforts, that we can ever rise above a fallen nature. All of the different philosophers have tried by their own strength to conquer evil, but true transformation only comes by grace, and grace alone. If you understand anything about philosophy, you know that it is perverse and filled with the doctrines of demons. Most of the Greek philosophers who are so highly praised today were homosexuals. They never had the victory themselves, yet they taught the masses.

The Greek empire was founded on and rooted in the teachings of Homer. Alexander the Great memorized Homer's teachings by heart. But Alexander the Great became just like his teacher—a homosexual and a glutton, and he died of debauchery. Philosophy, sociology, psychology, and all of the human sciences combined can never rid man of his real problems. Jesus Christ and His life-changing grace alone can deliver us from temptation and vice.

We must sincerely and humbly come before Him and say: "O Lord, please deliver me! O God, show me mercy." You might say, "I have done that and still I have gained no deliverance." Yes, but we must *persist!* You might then ask, "Why doesn't God deliver us immediately?" Well, sometimes He does

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deliver us from certain things immediately, but at other times He does not. In Ezekiel 36:37 God says, "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." This was said in the context of giving Israel a new heart and writing His laws upon their heart (see Ezekiel 36:25-38). He says, "for this I will yet be enquired of." God's delays are not necessarily denials. Delays work out something in our hearts. When a problem is allowed to linger and we have to battle with something, it develops a hatred for that thing so that when God delivers us we will not go back to it. The Apostle Peter warns of "dogs returning to their vomit" (2 Pet. 2:22). This is in reference to a Christian who returns to the corruption from which he was once delivered. God wants to develop within us a holy hatred for the pollutions of this world so that we will not go back into them.

There is nothing God will not deliver us from, provided we have believed Him. Unfortunately, there are ministers whose bondages still remain, and their problems are transparent to many. Why aren't they delivered? They stand up and preach, and yet we know that they have these bondages in their lives. They are filled with jealousy and anger. The reason they have never changed over the years is because they have not found favor with God, and therefore they never enter into His rest. Putting all

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of this aside, beloved, let us consider this: If we will be wholehearted for God, if there will be a complete consecration on our part, then we will enter into God's rest and have complete and total victory.

5:1-2 *“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”* The priest in the Old Testament had to take the animals, gifts, and offerings and present them unto the Lord. The high priest was God's representative, and he was a mediator between the people and God. Therefore, his demeanor had to be one of great gentleness and compassion. Compassion was something the priest had to learn. Paul says he must be someone “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” The priesthood was made up of men who were very human. Elijah, too, was a man “subject to like passions as we are” (Jas. 5:17).

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How does a priest (or minister) come to the place where he can have compassion on the ignorant? How is the man of God enabled to show mercy to those who are in error and going out of the way? The qualities of compassion and mercy are developed only as God passes His ministers through awesome fiery trials. It is in the furnace of affliction that callous hearts are tenderized and narrow minds are expanded. This is how we learn to be mild and gentle with others.

5:3 *“And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.”* Because the priest of the Old Testament was himself encompassed with infirmities, he also had to offer up sacrifices for his own sins. He had personal battles and struggles of his own.

5:4 *“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”* The priesthood (or ministry) is not the same as the office of an elder or a deacon. The office of an elder or a deacon can be *desired* (1 Tim. 3:1), and if a person qualifies he can then be ordained into that position. However, the fivefold ministry is different. This is not something we can desire or take by faith. For example, we cannot say, “I want to be a pastor, or I want to be a prophet.” No, the fivefold

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ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11) are God's sovereign choice. He either places that call on a man, or He does not, but no man can take this honor unto himself. We must be called of God, even as Aaron was.

This verse became very real to us in Switzerland. We had heard of a certain German evangelist who performed many miracles, and who seemingly had great success with a *signs following* ministry. Even so, we knew that his personal life did not measure up to such a ministry. Then we had a letter from this man saying, "I feel God has spoken to me to join myself with you." Another pastor and I, as co-directors of the work in Switzerland, had no witness of the Spirit that this man should be joined to us.

Well, one day the evangelist came to visit us. As he sat down before us at a desk he started telling us (and he was speaking in German) all the reasons he wanted to be joined to us. As he was speaking, God opened my eyes and I saw behind him a demon prince. I knew it was a demon prince because the demon had a crown upon his head. Then God spoke through my lips in German and I quoted this verse: "And no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God."

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This man had desired a ministry that God had not given him. The result was that he had opened himself up to this other spirit so that he was performing miracles through Satan's power. The Holy Spirit in me quoted this verse in German and the demon replied right back to the Holy Ghost through the lips of this evangelist. The demon said, "What the Holy Ghost has said is true." Then the evangelist tried to contradict what the demon prince had just said. It is interesting to realize that those demons have to respond to the Holy Ghost. But I want to reiterate the point I am trying to make here. Please do not grasp for ministry (the fivefold ministry or certain gifts of the Spirit) unless you are sovereignly called of God. The Holy Spirit distributes the gifts of the Spirit according to His own will, not ours (see Heb. 2:4, 1 Cor.12:11).

Do you remember the episode of Korah and his sympathizers? They wanted a ministry that God had not given them. They said to Moses and Aaron: "We are on your level. We are all equal. Who do you think you are, elevating yourselves above the rest of the congregation?" (cf. Num.16:1-3). But Moses and Aaron were *not* just like them at all. Moses and Aaron were the anointed of God. Although Korah was a Levite and had certain duties in God's house, the *priesthood* was given uniquely to Aaron and

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his sons. When Korah's group tried to usurp the priesthood, God was very angry, and He later destroyed them (Num.16:9-10, 32).

King Uzziah also was judged by God for his intrusion into the priesthood (2 Chron. 26:16-23). We may think there are only a few feet between the front pew and the pulpit, but there are more than just a few feet; there is a huge gulf that no man can pass over. We must have a revelation from God that we are called to the priesthood (the fivefold ministry). Otherwise, we dare not touch the priesthood. Each one of us, however, is a member of the body of Christ and every one of us has a special function; but the priesthood is in a different category.

5:5-6 *“So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”* Even Christ did not try to glorify Himself or elevate Himself into the illustrious position of high priest. That office was given to Him by His Father who said unto Him, “Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.” The Father also said to Him in another place, “Thou art a

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priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Psa.110:4). We will speak further on the Melchisedec priesthood when we come to chapter seven.

“Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.” This little phrase is very important. In the Old Testament, a man became a priest by natural birthright. He had to trace his genealogy back to Aaron. The priesthood was claimed by being in the lineage of Aaron. But Jesus Christ was not of the tribe of Levi, nor of the lineage of Aaron. Christ’s lineage came directly from His Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ was made a high priest by the One who declared to Him, “Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.” This is also where we receive our call to the priesthood. We do not become a priest or have a ministry because of a natural genealogy or because our father and grandfather were in the ministry. We receive God’s sovereign call at our new birth.

5:7-9 *“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him [out of] death, and was heard in that he [was godly;] Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* In verses 7-9,

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Paul is changing the subject from Christ's priesthood to the Lord's formative years between the ages of twelve to twenty-eight. In verse 10 he resumes his original theme on the priesthood. This is the reason Paul is sometimes difficult to follow. He starts on one theme, begins another, and then he comes back to his original theme.

Verses 7-9 are not referring to the Lord's sufferings on the cross. They apply to that period when the Father was preparing the Son for His future ministry. There were many hidden trials and sufferings in His life that Scripture sheds little light upon. We only have a glimpse of some of the trials He went through.

“Strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him [out of] death” was not a plea or a desire to be spared from the death of the cross. Jesus said, “For this cause came I unto this hour” (Jn.12:27b). These strong cryings and tears were prior to the commencement of His ministry. They were during His preparatory years. There is an experience which the Word of God terms “the horror of great darkness.” Abraham experienced this! (Gen.15:12-21). When God is about to do something extraordinary in our life, it is preceded by this horror of great darkness. The purpose of this cloud of

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darkness falling upon us is to make us realize how utterly helpless we are. Thus, when our miracle comes we are keenly aware that only God could have brought it to pass.

“Though he were the Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” This is referring to the Lord’s formative years. At the age of twelve, Christ astonished the theologians in the temple. But from that time until the age of thirty when He commenced His ministry, He was hidden. We are told in Isaiah 49:2 that Christ was hidden under the shadow of the Father’s hand. We know very little about Christ from the age of twelve until about the age of thirty when He was introduced to Israel as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. What happened during those years? We understand from Isaiah 49:2 that He was being polished as the shaft of an arrow and then placed into the quiver of God. The fact that He was placed in the quiver means that He was prepared and ready *before* the commencement of His ministry.

Joseph came to the throne at the age of thirty, although he may have been ready two years earlier. Two years before his exaltation from the dungeon to the throne of Egypt, he was interpreting dreams. Yet, God caused him to wait another two years in a dark, obscure dungeon. Then he was called upon

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to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and was elevated to the position of prime minister in Egypt. Joseph is a type of Christ. Perhaps at the age of twenty-eight the Son of God was ready for His ministry, but God's precise time had not yet come, and for two more years He remained in God's quiver.

From the age of twelve to thirty (known as "the silent years"), Jesus was experiencing the Father's discipline in the area of His flesh, in the area of His soul, and in the area of His spirit. The Apostle Paul said this period was filled with "strong crying and tears." Oh, how the Son wept bitterly during those silent years when He was hidden under the shadow of His Father's hand. As a man, Christ learned total dependence upon His Heavenly Father (Jn. 5:30). And, beloved, we are also brought to that place so that we realize our utter dependence upon God.

When I was a young Christian I attended church regularly. Until God gave me a dream, I thought anyone could go to church any time they wanted. In the dream I saw the entrance to a church building and God said: "This is My threshold. It is only by My grace that anyone can cross this threshold." Although the threshold was to an earthly church building, it was dedicated to God and was therefore holy. God made me realize that only those who are given grace can enter into a church. I

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will tell you this, I trembled after that dream. I said, “God, please make me ever thankful for Your grace, and cause me to always realize that I have to depend upon You for everything.”

The Apostle Peter reminds us that we are “kept by the power of God” or by the grace of God. One day when a minister was on a ladder, pruning his apple trees, he said to God, “I will never let go of Your hand.” There are times when God replies quickly, and this time God responded instantly and said, “You are not holding My hand, I am holding your hand.” There is a great difference. When you are crossing a busy highway with a child, who is holding on to whom? Certainly it is the father who holds the hand of the child, and he holds it very tightly. He does not leave it up to the child to hold onto his hand. We are kept by God’s power, yet we must continually look to Him. I never want the experience Hezekiah had when God *left him* to prove him, to see what was in his heart (2 Chron. 32:31b). I want the keeping power of God in my life every moment. Let us ask, “Oh Father, do not ever leave me alone.”

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Let us consider for a moment the thought of “being made perfect.” It is important to understand what

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“perfect” actually means, because in a sense Christ was always perfect. Perfection is relative! It is related to time and growth. When a child is born, he is considered a perfect baby. Even though a child is not a full grown man, still he is reckoned to be perfect for his stage of development. Assuming he maintains a proper rate of growth, he is esteemed “perfect” in every stage of his development. He can be a perfect infant, a perfect child, a perfect teenager, and a perfect adult. Perfection in its fullest meaning is *maturity*. Perfection comes from the Greek word *teleios* which means “to be made entirely fit for the task we are sent into the world to do.”

Christ was made perfect (*teleios*) through sufferings, and He became the “author of eternal salvation.” It was many sufferings that made our Lord perfect and entirely fit for the task He was sent into the world to do. When He came to the River Jordan he was perfectly mature and fit for the task. He was perfected in every area of His life—body, soul, and spirit. In every area He had come to maturity.

5:10-11 *“Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.”* In verse 10 Paul returns to his theme of Melchisedec. Then in verse 11 he pours out his heart to the Hebrew readers. He told them he had

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many deeper truths to share with them concerning Melchisedec, but it was hard for him to do so because they were so dull of hearing. Paul did not mince any of his words.

In verses 12-14, he admonishes them by saying they should have been able teachers after all these years, but they were unclear on the elementary doctrines. He told them they still needed to be nourished with milk instead of strong meat. Milk, of course, is for spiritual infants; strong meat is for adults. Thus, Paul begins his third warning to the Hebrews. However, before we go into the third warning, let us make several notable differences between Aaron's priesthood and Christ's priesthood, which was fashioned after Melchisedec's order.

Differences Between Old and New Testament Priesthoods

1. *Aaron's priesthood came by birthright.* A man could only be a priest if his genealogy went back to Aaron. Christ's priesthood came from the Heavenly Father, not from a physical genealogy. Our priestly call is given to us by the Father at our new birth. Every believer is called to minister unto the Lord and to come within the veil. This was not so in the Aaronic priesthood.

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2. Aaron's ministry ceased at death. When men died during the Old Testament era, their spirits went into the lower parts of the earth into a resting place. When Christ rose from the dead, He "led captivity captive" and opened the way for the departed spirits to go to heaven. Today, when a believer dies he goes immediately to heaven into the presence of the Lord. Therefore, a New Testament priest continues his ministry in heaven after he dies. We are priests *forever*, after the order of Melchisedec. Today, Christ ever lives to make intercession for us.

3. Aaron's priests could not become kings. The priests came from the tribe of Levi and the kings came from the tribe of Judah. The two lines could never cross. The New Testament priesthood of Melchisedec makes it possible to become both a priest and a king. Melchisedec was a priest and a king (Gen.14:18). Christ Himself was not only a priest who opened the veil, He is also King of kings and Lord of lords.

Revelation 5:9-10 makes it abundantly clear that God is forming His people into kings and priests in order to reign on the earth. A priest suffers vicariously to bring others into perfection, but a king rules

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with authority over nations and kingdoms. Such is the superior call of a New Testament priest—to combine the dual call of king and priest. Aaron’s priesthood certainly was inferior in every way.

The Third Warning - 5:11 - 6:20

Beware of Slothfulness and Apostasy

5:11b “*Seeing ye are dull of hearing.*” The Apostle Paul now gives a third warning to his Hebrew friends. This is the third of five warnings. Paul begins in chapter 5:11b, where he tells them very candidly that they are “dull of hearing.” Throughout the Word of God, especially in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and also in the Book of Revelation, there is an emphasis on *hearing*. This does not mean hearing with our natural ear; rather, it is a hearing with our heart. It also has the connotation that when we hear, we must obey what is said. Paul told the Hebrew readers that they were dull of hearing. Hearing is directly affected by the condition of the heart, and in this case, many hearts had grown hard. Therefore, their hearts were not sensitized to understand and comprehend what God was saying to them. Also, Paul was finding it very hard to open up deeper truths to them.

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One thing we must cry out to God for is a hearing heart. There are many things that get by us and do not register in our hearts because we are spiritually dull of hearing. One day a man prayed: “Lord, would You speak a little louder; I can hardly hear You.” God replied, “I am already shouting.” This is not an exaggeration! Our hearts and spiritual ears need to get in tune with the Holy Spirit or we will miss much of what God is trying to say to us. Man should live “by every word that proceedeth (present tense) from the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4).

The Father opened the spiritual ears of the Son of God so that He could “hear as the learned” (Isa. 50:4; cf. Psa. 40:6). This is so important! We do not want to fall into the same snare as did the Hebrews. They had heard so many excellent sermons and were exposed to the finest teachings of the day, yet their lives were not transformed because the message never penetrated their spirits.

5:12-13 *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”*

The Church has always had two principal aspects. It is a center for worship, but also a center for

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teaching. When we study Church history, we find that the Church instituted schools. The Church has always endeavored to teach people to read and write because we are dependent upon instruction from the Bible to take us to heaven and to understand God's ways. Therefore, the Church is an institute for learning.

Each one of us should become an able teacher. (I am not referring here to the fivefold ministry gift of teaching mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.) Whether it be a Sunday school class, our own families, or a group of friends or peers, we should all be able to teach. We should be able to impart to the younger ones those truths which are most surely believed among us (Lk.1:1), and be able to give an account of the hope that is within us.

The Apostle Paul told the Hebrews that they were incapable of teaching others because they were still not clear on the basic doctrines of the faith. They were satisfied with milk. Milk represents the elementary principles of God's Word, and many today are content to dwell on the level of basics. "Strong meat" speaks of the deeper truths of God's Word. Strong meat could choke an infant, but milk is not sufficient to develop an adult. Therefore, Paul tells his Hebrew comrades that "every one that

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useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” Actually, this is quite a sad appraisal of this group of believers. With all of the light that had been presented to them over the years, they had never taken that enlightenment to heart, and they had never grown (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-2).

5:14 *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* When Paul speaks of strong meat here, he is referring to the subject of Melchisedec. He had many things that he wanted to say about Melchisedec, but the Hebrew believers were too immature to hear them.

Then the Apostle Paul mentions the necessity of exercising our spiritual senses in order to discern between good and evil. Discerning good and evil is a topic we should ponder often. Our senses, our conscience, our mind, and our spirit need to be sensitized in order to discern between right and wrong. One of the things that the Lord emphasizes, and it flows throughout the Word of God, is the fact that His people need discernment. Frequently, Christ warns us of deception. He said concerning the last days, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Mt. 24:4).

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Paul especially stresses the importance of discernment for our times because the man of sin is coming (2 Thes. 2:3-12). The last days will be characterized by great deception and delusion which will test the Church. Malachi 3:16-18 shows us how we will be able to discern what is of God and what is error.

A Key to Discernment

“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Mal. 3:18). In Malachi 3:16-18 we see a group of devout believers whose thoughts continually revolve around the Lord and His ways. For them it is a way of life. God takes special notice of saints who meditate upon Him often. This brings His presence! Verse 18 is the result of a mind and heart that frequently meditates upon His name. “Then shall ye... discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

Here is the key—God gives discernment to those who are wholehearted for Him. We will be able to know who is true and who is not true as we feed on the meat of God’s Word and upon Him. Imbibing *strong meat* is essential in order to survive in the last days. Milk is for children, but children are not

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able to discern the true from the false. In these days when deception will heighten to the fullest, we must have strong meat which will produce discernment. Strong meat is not granted to those who are satisfied and content with the elementary basics of the gospel. Meat is only given to those who are wholehearted and hungry for the Lord (cf. Rev. 3:15-19).

6:1 *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”*

When the Apostle Paul says to “leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” he does not mean to do away with them. From the context, we can see that he is referring to the foundation of a building. When you construct a building, you lay the foundation first; then you go on from there. A builder does not continually lay the foundation. He *leaves* the foundation. He does not do away with it, he builds upon it. Nevertheless, let us consider for a moment the *foundations* of this spiritual house.

Foundations of Christianity

6:1b-2 *“Not laying again the foundations of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal*

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judgment.” Here are the foundational truths upon which the Church is built. These are the first principles or basics of Christianity. Our lives must be firmly grounded upon these truths, but then we must advance beyond these foundational principles to the deeper truths. Here again are the elementary doctrines of Christ:

- Repentance from dead works
- Faith toward God
- Water baptism
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- Laying on of hands
- Resurrection of the dead
- Eternal judgment

Repentance is the first foundation. Repentance literally means “to change the mind.” Repentance is a divine act whereby someone walking on a pathway of sin changes his mind, turns around 180

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degrees, and walks in the opposite direction. Repentance is an about-face. It is a total change in direction and attitude. We are commanded to repent from dead works. Dead works are the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21.

Repentance causes one to walk away from sin and then stay as far away from sin as possible. Joseph fled from temptation when he ran from Potiphar's wife. On the other hand, Samson lingered and toyed with sin; as a result, he fell. Some Christians want to live as close to the danger zone as they can.

There is a story in the last century of a certain lady who wanted to hire a coach driver. Thus, she placed an ad in the newspaper. The ad brought three applicants to her home. She lived a good distance from town. The road to the town ran alongside a deep gorge, but the other side was bounded by the mountains.

She asked the first coachmen, "How skillful a coachman are you?" He replied, "I can come within a foot of the edge without the carriage falling into the gorge." She said, "Thank you very much," and went on to the next applicant. She said to him, "Well, how good are you?" "Ma'am," he said, "I can run

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the wheel along the edge of the gorge and not fall in.” She thanked the second man and coming to the third one, asked, “How close can you come?” The third one said: “I don’t see how close I can come. I try to stay as far away from the gorge as I can get.” Then she said in a very definite manner, “You are my new coachman.”

The moral of the story is very evident. We should not see how close we can come to the danger zone without falling, but how far we can remove ourselves from it. This is the thought of laying a foundation of repentance in our lives. Someone who is truly repentant will seek to *avoid* situations and temptations that had once ensnared him; this will be a way of life for him.

Good foundations are extremely important. I was made very aware of this a number of years ago when a group of pastors and I were ministering in Greece. One afternoon we visited a certain park in Athens where we saw various sculptures and monuments of ancient Greece. Then we walked upon a pavement where there were columns on both sides. The guide informed us that these pillars had weathered centuries of time. In fact, they were built before the Lord Jesus came to earth. For well over two thousand years those stately pillars had stood straight and erect. As we continued strolling

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along the pavement, somewhat in awe of these ancient, majestic pillars, we noticed one pillar that had fallen. The tour guide pointed to the fallen pillar and said, “This pillar fell just twenty years ago after standing for over two thousand years.”

We asked the guide, “What was wrong with the pillar?” His reply still amazes me. He said: “There was nothing wrong with the pillar. I will show you the problem.” He brought us around to the bottom of the pillar where we could view the foundation. The foundation had been cracked by a root of grass, and that little root had brought down the pillar. Oh, what a divine lesson that offers us all! We must not allow the roots of the old life to break up our foundation because that will be the downfall of our life and ministry. Regretfully, we have seen in recent years some of the most outstanding ministries fall because of cracked foundations.

Repentance is an elementary principle of Christianity which must be maintained all of our life. The next foundational principle is “faith toward God.” We must seek God for ever increasing faith. Then we have the doctrine of baptisms, the elementary teachings of water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These are basic teachings; they are *not* deeper truths. Sometimes people think when they

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are baptized in the Holy Ghost that they have attained to the height of spirituality. But the truth of the matter is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit simply gives us power to be *launched* into God's purposes. It is power for service. The doctrines of the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment are all elementary truths too. These doctrines are milk, not strong meat. The Apostle Paul urges the Church of all generations to advance beyond these foundational truths and go on to perfection.

6:3 *“And this will we do if God permit.”* Paul is referring back to verse one when he exhorted, “Let us go on to perfection.” Our attitude of heart must be a quest to move past the foundational principles and go on to perfection. However, in verse three Paul balances this thought. Paul tells us that “going on” also depends on something else—God's sovereignty. “This will we do if God permit.” Although our will is involved in going on, so also is God's sovereign grace. The truth is we cannot go on to maturity and spiritual advancement unless He sovereignly imparts to us new grace.

To illustrate this concept of man's will and God's grace, we could think of a pupil and a teacher. Throughout the year the teacher encourages his students to apply themselves in order to pass their

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examinations to go on to the next grade. Yet, at the end of the year it is up to the teacher to determine which pupil goes on. We have to understand the sovereignty of God and man's free will. Paul says, "Press on, press past the elementary doctrines and go on." Yet it is God who determines if we can go on to fresh truth. God is not going to lead us on if we are not clear, and we are not walking in the light of the truth we already have. Therefore, we constantly need to cry out to God for His grace and mercy so that we pass our tests by His enabling grace and go on unto perfection. The call is unto perfection, or Christian maturity.

Awesomeness of Turning Against the Light

6:4-6 *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the [age] to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."*

It is obvious that Paul considered a normal Christian walk to include special experiences of the Holy Spirit—to taste of the powers of the age to come, to have visions of heaven, and much more.

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“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Paul is warning here that we cannot play with God. A man or woman who has been enlightened with the glorious light of the gospel cannot turn against these truths and spurn them without having unspeakable consequences. Paul further affirms this in chapter 10:26 when he says, “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” It is an awesome thing to have marvellous light and then disdain and mock it. It is one thing to be ignorant as Paul was before his conversion (1 Tim.1:13-14); but when we know Christ and then turn against Him, it is far more serious (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Some people cross a line and are unable to come back. Paul told the Hebrews a few verses later (6:9) that he was persuaded better things of them, although he had to warn them in such a stern manner.

6:7-9 *“For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whom it is dressed, receiveth blessings from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”*

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The Apostle Paul is giving an analogy here of our hearts being likened to ground. When God pours out His Spirit it is like rain upon the dry ground. The dressers are His ministers who plant the Word of God and cultivate what is sown in the hearts of men. The Lord and His dressers look for good fruit. Herbs represent the fruits of the Spirit, and this is the kind of fruit God expects from His people. Thorns and briars are a direct result of the fall and they are representative of the works of the flesh.

God had sown choice seeds of His Word in the Hebrew believers. He had watered them abundantly. He looked for herbs, but instead many thorns and briars were coming up in their fallow ground. The Apostle Paul warned that thorns and briars are rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. It is obvious that Paul is applying the analogy to the Hebrews because he ended by saying, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

We must never trifle with the living God. We will always reap what we sow. If we sow the seeds of carnality in our lives, those seeds are going to produce evil fruit, and we will be judged accordingly. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit (which is the fruit of an obedient life) receives a blessing from

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God and is accepted by God. Men and women who bring forth the works of the flesh are cursed and nigh unto being burned. This refers to the lake of fire. There should be no misunderstandings about this whatsoever. This is brought out by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in chapter fifteen of John's Gospel.

Jesus said: "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit he taketh away" (Jn.15:1-2). God "takes away" every branch that does not bear fruit. In John 15:5 He said, "Ye are the branches." If we do not bring forth fruit, we are taken away. There must be no misunderstandings on this matter. Christ is referring to Christians here, not those in the world. "Every branch in me [in Christ] that beareth not fruit he taketh away." If we do not bring forth the fruit that the Lord desires, we shall be rejected and cursed.

The warnings of Paul, the other Apostles, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself were always to believers, not unbelievers. Their epistles were written to the Church. Unbelievers do not read the Scriptures. The Word of God is written to Christians and the warnings apply to them. Remember, Demas was with the Apostle Paul almost to the end, but then he forsook Paul because he loved this

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present world (2 Tim. 4:10). Judas was one of the original twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. He performed miracles, cast out devils, and helped feed the five thousand. Yet he betrayed the Savior at the end. Therefore, we must lay hold of eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12, 19). Eternal life is for those who endure to the end.

Rewards

6:10 *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister.”* Paul seeks to encourage the Hebrew readers because they had been going through many trials. He is reminding them that every good deed is noticed by God and that it will be richly rewarded.

Revelation 14:13 declares, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:25). Our works follow us into eternity. The following story makes this truth very vivid.

I knew a certain lady who had been seriously crippled from birth. Her mother was a godly woman and she had prayed through and received the assurance that God was going to heal her daughter. At one

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stage, her faith was severely put to the test, because at the age of seventeen her daughter started to fail. The neighbors came around to comfort and pray with the mother, but the daughter died soon after.

If you are a Christian, when you die the angel of the Lord descends and you come out of your body. Your spirit stands a short distance from your body for a few minutes until you have the realization that you are dead. Something in your spirit has to assimilate the fact that you are dead. The angel and you turn, then you are taken up to heaven.

This seventeen year old girl died and was taken up to heaven. The angel was instructed to show her many of the splendors of heaven. One of the things that amazed her the most were the rewards that were given to the saints. “Nothing is forgotten,” she said. “A smile and even a handshake are rewarded. For every little thing we do there is a reward. Absolutely nothing is forgotten.” Little things that seem inconsequential to us and small acts of kindness we do out of the goodness of our hearts are remembered by God. Things that we have long forgotten are recorded in God’s book—whether it be a kind word of encouragement, a pat on the back, or tying a child’s shoelace.

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After seeing the magnificence of heaven, she then saw the Lord Himself. He smiled at her with such warmth. He was so kind. After saying a few things to her, His whole countenance changed to one of extreme anger and He said, “Satan, let my child go.” Then He said to her, “I have a work for you to do and you must go back.” Oh, how she pleaded with Him not to send her back. Well, you know what the Lord is like—He just smiled and said, “I want you to go back.” Then the angel and she returned.

As she and the angel neared her bedside, she could see the people standing around talking and saying, “Oh, it’s so sad.” However, she could see her godly mother in the other room still praying—“Lord, You promised. Lord, You promised.” This continued for nearly two hours. Then when the girl came near her body, the angel touched her, and she went back into her body. She came alive and jumped up, completely healed. The resurrection power of God was so great that she walked on the tips of her toes for several weeks afterwards; this was a girl who had never walked before. The newspapers in Tennessee all took photos, and the account of this miracle was very well publicized and documented.

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Coming back for a moment to the main point, we can see from this episode not only the absolute reality of the life to come, but also God's rewards to the faithful. God rewards a Christian for every single act of kindness. The Hebrews needed to be reminded that God had not forgotten their "work and labor of love."

Warnings Against Slothfulness

6:11 *"And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."* Again we are urged to consider the end. Life is a race and we must not give up in the eleventh hour as Demas did (2 Tim. 4:10). We must finish our course and keep the faith. Paul is giving a serious warning here against spiritual sluggishness.

6:12 *"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."* The Christian life demands diligence. If we are going to accomplish anything in life we have to give it our all. The achievers are those who rise up early and go to bed late; they are always working. God rewards hard work. He honors long hours of study and prayer. Young people should take advantage of their youth and use their strength and energy wisely (Ecc.12:1). We must be

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careful how we use our time. As a young man I lost valuable time because I loved soccer. My food, drink, and sleep was soccer. Well, I became good at soccer. But do you know what soccer did for me? It made me a poor man spiritually. Proverbs 21:17 says, “He that loveth pleasure [or sport] shall be a poor man.” Sports, pleasures, and entertainments all leave your soul empty.

We must be careful, even of legitimate things. Hobbies are very nice but they are time consuming. One may say there is no harm in having them, and perhaps that is true, but our time is siphoned away by them. It is all right to exercise to keep our body fit, but we must do everything in moderation. Let us invest our time in those things that last forever. Time cannot be bought, borrowed, or retrieved. Time is a sacred trust. God will ask us how we have used our time. He will give us enough years on this earth to fulfill our course in life, but if we misuse our time, we will be unable to complete His perfect plan for our life.

“But followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” For a moment, let us consider the subject of “inheriting the promises.” It is one thing for God to give us a promise, or to see a promise in God’s Word. Having a promise, however, is not the same as possessing that promise.

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Just because God gives us a promise does not mean that we are going to obtain it. I have had people hold up a piece of paper and say, “God gave me this prophecy,” and they want me to read it. I respond by saying: “What steps have you taken to ensure that the prophecy will come to pass? Have you met the conditions God required of you in the prophecy?”

Perhaps the prophecy said, “You will teach my Word with great authority; but first you must give yourself to much prayer and study of My Word.” If the person refused to stay in the Bible school God chose for him and went to a secular school to study philosophy and psychology, that ministry of anointed teaching certainly would not be fulfilled. Prophecy will *not* come to pass unless we obey what it says. There are conditions virtually to every prophecy. Prophecies are not fulfilled unless we meet the conditions. Remember, our desire is to *inherit* the promises, not just talk about them.

6:13-14 *“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swear by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.”* This was a promise that was reaffirmed to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-17. Beforehand, it had been a promise, but now it was a solemn oath shouted from heaven by God unto Abraham. You will notice in the context

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of Genesis chapter 22 that this oath was given to Abraham after he had withheld nothing from God, not even his dearest possession, Isaac. Sometimes God will test our hearts, and will ask us to offer up our “Isaac” to Him. Yet, He will always give us special grace to do so. If we are willing to sacrifice to God the thing dearest to our hearts, then God will give us His very best. This issue of giving up or not giving up our most treasured possession will determine whether or not we receive God’s highest blessing for our lives.

6:15 *“And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”* The promise Abraham obtained was the birth of Isaac. Isaac, however, was only a small token of all of the other promises to come. Through Isaac all the other promises would be realized, for out of Isaac would come Jesus Christ. Abraham had to have great endurance in order to obtain the promise God gave him. Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety before Isaac was born. When God gives us a promise it sounds so wonderful. It is as though the heavens are opened up and we are lifted up into heavenly places. However, it is one thing to have a promise, but the realization of it is something else. Between the giving of the promise and the realization of that promise there is often a long, hard path.

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6:16-18 *“For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”*

When men make an oath or a solemn declaration, they invoke someone greater than themselves to confirm and witness to the honesty or truth of such a declaration. Because God could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself with an oath to Abraham. This is referring to the time in Genesis 22:16-17 when God spoke out of heaven unto Abraham by an oath that in his seed “all the nations of the earth would be blessed.” God did this by two immutable things—first of all by a promise and then by an oath to Abraham. The “seed” that would bless all the nations is the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). Because we belong to Jesus Christ, we also are descended from Abraham and *heirs* of the promises.

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God wanted the heirs of promise to have such assurance of His promises that He confirmed them with an oath spoken by an audible voice from heaven. All the earth was to be blessed through a promised seed—the Lord Jesus Christ. But what is the ultimate blessing and hope brought unto us through Abraham’s special seed, the Lord Jesus Christ? It is to be taken within the veil where Jesus our forerunner has entered! His ultimate mission was to open the veil and make full redemption possible. Christ has paid our debt of sin, made provision for the healing of our bodies, and given us a thousand other blessings. He has also offered us the possibility of coming within the veil into the very presence of God to be made perfect.

6:19-20 *“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil: Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”* This is the theme of Hebrews—to be brought within the veil.

The ultimate purpose of God is to bring us into the holy of holies, into the very presence of God Himself. This is the glorious hope of the Christian—to come within the veil. This is the anchor of our

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soul. Oh, when we have caught a glimpse of what God has for us, it holds us through all the trials. Above everything else, I want to come within the veil. Is not this your desire also?

In summary, I would like to reiterate what we have said in chapter 6:13-20.

- A special seed was repeatedly promised to Abraham. This seed (Jesus Christ) would descend from Isaac (Gal. 3:16), who would bring blessing to the whole world.
- Abraham and Sarah had no seed. There was a long lapse between the time of the promise and the birth of Isaac. For years they had to patiently endure and wait. Then Isaac was born.
- Later Abraham was put to the test. God asked Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. When Abraham was willing to give his only beloved son, God then reaffirmed His promise and made it an oath. He spoke audibly from heaven, saying: “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed . . . And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

(Gen. 22:16-17).

- In shouting this oath from heaven, God wanted to give added assurance to the *heirs* of the promise that what He had said was immutable and would surely come to pass.

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- When the promised Seed came, His chief mission was to be a sacrifice that would rend the veil. As a forerunner, Christ came within the veil, and He offers that privilege to those who are His. It is within the veil that Christian perfection and full redemption are made possible.

This concludes Paul's third warning to the Church. We must not camp around the elementary truths and settle there. We are called to go on to perfection. We must not be content to be "outer court" saints. By the grace of God, we are urged to move forward into the holy place, and then to go within the veil. This was the vision the Apostle Paul wanted to give the Hebrews. He warned, "Do not neglect the marvelous truths you know; do not be slothful; and do not be dull of hearing."

May God help us to be able to hear and respond to what His Spirit is saying to us today. May heaven say of us as Paul said to the Hebrews, "We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

Part 5

7:1-28 - THE PRIESTHOOD AFTER MELCHISEDEC'S ORDER

Let us consider now the New Testament priesthood which is patterned after the order of Melchisedec. The Apostle Paul has alluded to the Melchisedec priesthood in previous chapters, but now he is going to focus upon this very important truth. Not only is this an important truth, it is also a difficult truth to

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understand. As we have mentioned before, the Apostle Paul is seeking to prove that the new covenant is so much greater than the old covenant. Just as there was a priesthood under the old covenant, there is also a priesthood under the new covenant. However, the New Testament priesthood is fashioned not after Aaron's order, but after the order of Melchisedec. Therefore, Paul is going to introduce us to Melchisedec in chapter 7:1.

7:1 *“For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.”* Historically, Melchisedec was the king of Salem. Salem is the ancient name for Jerusalem. He was also a priest of the most high God. Melchisedec was not only the king of Jerusalem, he was also a priest. This was a departure from the regime of the old covenant. Under the Old Testament, the line of kings came from the tribe of Judah, and the priesthood came from the tribe of Levi. Melchisedec was uniquely different—he was both a king and a priest.

It would be good to pause here for a moment to consider why there was a change from the Levitical priesthood to the Melchisedec priesthood. The Lord's *original* intention for His people after He

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redeemed them from Egyptian bondage was to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. In Exodus chapter 19 Israel was encamped before Mount Sinai. Sinai is analogous to the feast of Pentecost. They camped at Sinai during the time of the feast of Pentecost in the third month. In Exodus 19:6 the Lord said to the children of Israel: “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” It was God’s original plan for Israel to be a nation of kings and priests. This plan was temporarily frustrated because of their rebellion, but God is never frustrated. He would fulfill His plan later on, under another covenant.

When Israel went into rebellion and idolatry at the foot of Mount Sinai, they made for themselves a golden calf. Ironically, Aaron the high priest was the one leading them. When Moses came down from the mountain and saw what they had done, he brought the whole nation to a decision. Crying with a loud voice, he said, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” Only the tribe of Levi responded. The Levites stood with Moses and with God, taking a stand even against their own brethren. At this point God decided to take the priesthood away from Israel as a nation and give it solely to one tribe, the tribe of Levi (cf. Ex. 32; Num. 3:12, 41,45, Deut. 33:8-11).

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Levi so desired the things that pleased God, that he was even willing to use the sword on his own flesh. This is something few are willing to do. Thus God made a covenant with Levi. “My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity” (Mal. 2:5-6). These are the qualifications God requires of His priests.

Levi, and Levi alone, received the priesthood. Only the tribe of Judah had rights to the kingship. Yet in the New Testament, God joined these two offices together. The New Testament makes it possible for every believer to become both a king and a priest, even as Melchisedec. This is taken up again by the Apostle Peter in First Peter 2:9: “Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal* priesthood, an holy nation.” A *royal* priesthood! This is precisely what God had said to Israel in Exodus 19:6 before they disqualified themselves. Today these same promises are offered to the Church.

The book of Revelation is interspersed with the theme of being kings and priests of God (see Rev. 1:6, 5:9-10, 20:6). I would like to quote one scripture in particular: “And hath made us kings and priests

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unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev.1:6). The question arises: How are we going to be formed into kings and priests? Well, we must be rooted and grounded in a priesthood that combines both the kingship and the privilege of the priesthood—the priesthood of Melchisedec.

Paul brings out in Hebrews 7:1 that Melchisedec met Abraham after returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. To fully appreciate this account, we should read Genesis 14:17-20 to find the first mention of Melchisedec. Genesis is a book containing the seeds of all truth. Virtually everything has its origin in Genesis.

“And Melchisedec king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed [Abram], and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And [Abram] gave him tithes of all” (see Gen.14:18-20). Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec. This is going to be developed a little later by the Apostle Paul. Although Melchisedec is only

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mentioned briefly in Genesis chapter 14, and once in Psalm 110:4, he was a profound type of Christ and of the New Testament priesthood that was to come.

7:2 *“To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.”* Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, as also did Levi, who was yet in the loins of Abraham. This is a very important truth that is going to be developed by the Apostle Paul. He then interprets the meaning of Melchisedec’s name: “first being by interpretation, King of righteousness.” Melchisedec means “King of righteousness.” He was a profound type of the Lord Jesus Christ because he was a righteous king.

“And after that also, King of Salem [or Jerusalem] which is King of peace.” Here we have two of the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who reigns in righteousness. He is the King of Righteousness. His sceptre is the sceptre of righteousness. Melchisedec was also the king of Salem, or the King of Peace. Salem means “peace.” Melchisedec was the king of peace, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. Melchisedec was a remarkable type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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7:3 *“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”* Verse three has been a little difficult for some, but in actuality as we look at it very carefully, I think we will understand it. Paul is speaking of a man who is a king and a priest. Yet he says, “Without father, without mother.” In the original Greek it simply means “father unknown, mother unknown.” Certainly Melchisedec had a father and a mother. The point Paul is trying to make is that Melchisedec was not a king or a priest because of a genealogy. He was not a king by virtue of the fact that his father was a king before him. He was not a priest because his father was a priest before him.

In the Old Testament, the kings of Judah reigned because of their genealogy. They could trace their genealogy back to David and therefore their claims to the throne were based upon birthright. Likewise, the priest had to trace his genealogy back to Aaron. Therefore, their claim to the priesthood was based on genealogy. The New Testament, however, is quite different. The New Testament is not based upon genealogy. When we study the history of the times of Melchisedec, we find that kings ascended to the throne by election, not by genealogy. That is the reason Paul said “without father,

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without mother.” The original Greek says that his father and mother were unknown. Natural genealogy did not enter into this.

Then Paul says “without descent.” This means that his children did not inherit the throne by birthright. The kingship was determined by election. We could use the analogy between the presidency of the United States and the royal family of England. The royal family of England is not elected to the throne, but the heir ascends to the throne by virtue of his genealogy. They can trace their lineage back many years. This particular royal line has lasted over nine hundred years; whereas in the United States the leader is chosen through election, not by genealogy. The president’s children do not automatically inherit the presidency.

“Neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” Melchisedec was not the pre-incarnate Christ as some have suggested. It was not possible for Christ to have had a prior existence as a man here on earth. That would mean that Christ would have been born twice, and died twice. Melchisedec was a man. He was literally an elected king in Jerusalem. When Paul says of Melchisedec that he had “neither

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beginning of days,” he meant that Melchisedec’s priesthood or kingship was not traced back to his genealogy or to his birth.

“*Nor end of life.*” The Apostle Paul is making reference to the fact that Melchisedec’s ministry continued into eternity and did not consummate at death. Melchisedec was made *like unto* the Son of God. In other words, he was an extraordinary *type* of Christ. He was *like* the Son of God, but he was not the Son of God.

Melchisedec “abideth a priest continually.” In the Old Testament the Aaronites had to lay down their priesthood at death. The only exception was Phinehas, who was accorded an everlasting priesthood because he took appropriate action and stopped immorality in the congregation.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace and he shall have it, and his seed after him even the covenant of *an*

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everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel” (Num. 25:10-13).

Phinehas entered into what we have in the New Testament period—an everlasting priesthood. It is a ministry that does not end at death but continues after death into eternity. We are not only called to be priests and kings during this life, but we are also called to rule and reign as kings and priests throughout eternity before the throne of God. This is the Melchisedec ministry and priesthood.

7:4 *“Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”* Although Melchisedec is only mentioned in two or three verses of the Old Testament, we should consider the greatness of this man. He was so great that even Abraham gave him a tenth of all he had. The Levitical priesthood that was still in the loins of Abraham was submitting to Melchisedec and paying tithes to him. Melchisedec was like the Son of God.

7:5-7 *“Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man,*

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however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. (NIV). And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.”

Paul is comparing the two priesthods here—the Levitical priesthood and the Melchisedec priesthood. The Levitical priests collected tithes from fellow Israelites, descendants of Abraham, but Melchisedec collected tithes from Abraham himself, the father of the Israelite nation. And even Levi, who was yet in the loins of Abraham, was paying tithes to Melchisedec. The Apostle Paul brings this out in verses 9-10. Thus, we see the greatness of this man and a priesthood that was far superior to the Levitical priesthood.

“And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” When Melchisedec blessed Abraham, a superior priesthood was blessing an inferior priesthood. For even as Melchisedec was blessing Abraham, he was blessing Levi, a priesthood yet to be born.

7:8 *“In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.”* (NIV). Paul is emphasizing that the Levitical priests had to lay down their

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priesthood after death, whereas Melchisedec's ministry continued after this life. Melchisedec had entered into that place of eternal life which becomes available in the New Testament era.

7:9-10 *“And as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.”* This is a truth that is developed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12-14. Paul causes us to understand here that when Adam sinned, we also sinned, because we were in Adam when he sinned. In Adam we all died, because we were in him and part of him. This thinking is difficult for the western world, but to the eastern world it is very simple indeed. Therefore, we must adjust our thought pattern to the eastern mind and to the Word of God. The Jews can understand this very easily.

When Abraham paid tithes, Levi was in his loins. Therefore, when Abraham paid tithes, all his descendants who were in his loins paid tithes too. When Abraham was submitting to Melchisedec, Levi was submitting to Melchisedec also. Therefore, the Levitical priesthood, in a sense, was being blessed by Melchisedec when Abraham was blessed by him.

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7:11 *“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?”* “If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood.” Paul is trying to make a point here, that our goal is perfection. We must realize that the goal of Christianity is to bring us to perfection. He reasons that if the Old Testament law and priesthood had brought perfection, why should another covenant and priesthood be promised. The reason for a change of order is simple—the old one did not accomplish God’s purposes or bring people unto perfection.

King David prophesied that another priesthood was going to be raised up, and it would be after Melchisedec’s order (Psa.110:4). There would have been no purpose for David to bring out this prophetic utterance if the Levitical priesthood had been effective. The priesthood of the Old Testament was unable to bring God’s people to perfection. Therefore, another priest would arise after Melchisedec’s order, who could bring God’s people to perfection.

7:12-14 *“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at*

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the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.” With the changing of the priesthood, of necessity, there had to be a change of dispensation too. It could not be possible to change the Levitical priesthood without changing all the laws as well. A new priesthood would require new regulations and would have to be managed in another fashion.

It is obvious from verses 13-14 that a new priesthood involved a new covenant. “For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.” The Lord was from the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi. The Old Testament law limited the priest-hood to the tribe of Levi only. Therefore, the law had to be changed when a new priesthood was introduced. A new priest-hood certainly required a new covenant in a new dispensation.

Under the law, there was no legislation issued by Moses allowing other tribes to minister at the altar. That privilege belonged uniquely to the tribe of Levi. Even the kings of Judah could not go to the altar

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to offer up sacrifices. When King Uzziah intruded into the priesthood he was smitten with leprosy for the rest of his life.

7:15 *“And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest.”* All prophecy contained in Scripture has to be fulfilled! The prophetic word from Psalm 110:4 showed very clearly that a new priestly order was coming. “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” It was also very evident from Genesis chapter 14 that Melchisedec combined the dual offices of priest and king. From those two portions of Scripture we can see that the Melchisedec order had to be revived.

7:16 *“Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”* Christ was not made a high priest because of His physical ancestry. Ordinarily, that office descended upon the eldest son after the death of the father. The prophetic creative word of David in Psalm 110:4 was the energizing, spiritual force that brought into being the Melchisedec priesthood, and that word is *forever* (Heb. 5:6). “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” The priesthood of the New Testament is an everlasting priest- hood.

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7:17 *“For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”* Again Paul is making reference to Psalm 110:4. Although Psalm 110:4 is prophetic of the priesthood of Jesus, the other verses of this Psalm focus upon His *kingship*, which flows from His position in Zion. David said in Psalm 110:1-2: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.”

Therefore, the throne of rulership is situated in Zion. Zion speaks of *royalty* combined with the priesthood—the Melchisedec ministry. The Melchisedec ministry is representative of Zion’s authority, perfection, and holiness. Therefore, our goal is to come to Zion. This is a strong theme throughout Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews.

7:18 *“For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.”* Paul is saying that the first covenant and its Levitical ordinances were disannulled and set aside because it was weak and unprofitable. The first covenant could not produce the fruit God wanted. In verse nineteen, to reinforce this argument, he says:

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7:19 *“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”* Here again is the subject of perfection. The law of itself could not make anyone perfect. Paul shows in Romans that the law only reveals sin. It does not give anyone the power to change. The law does not make anything perfect. *“But the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”* This is the key to perfection. This is what God has always wanted. He has always longed for man to be able to come into His presence in an intimate way, to have his heart changed through *relationship*. God has always taken the first step toward man; for in Exodus 25:8 the Lord said, *“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.”* This is the whole purpose of the creation—that a holy God could dwell among His people. An example of this can be seen in the purpose of having a family.

What is the purpose of having children? Children do not ask to be born. Why do parents desire children? It is because there is something missing in their lives and they want the joy of having children. Even after children have grown up and they live far away from home, their parents still long

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to be with them. At Thanksgiving, Christmas time, or on other special occasions, all the children come home because the parents love to be surrounded by their children.

Some people who are unable to have children of their own adopt children to satisfy their need. Well, God is a Father too. He is in the highest of heavens, but His children are here on earth. This is a very dissatisfying situation, especially for a God of love. What does He want to do? He wants to dwell among His children. Therefore, the whole purpose of the tabernacle was to enable sinful children to approach a holy Father.

The problem was this—although the tabernacle of Moses allowed God to dwell among His people, He had to be confined to the holy of holies. There was a *veil* that separated God from His people because of His holiness. There was not a sacrifice great enough to allow His children to come into His presence in an intimate way. Another High Priest after the order of Melchisedec would later come and rend this veil. That High Priest was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The old covenant (and all of its Levitical ordinances) was not satisfying for a holy God, a heavenly Father, and a God of love who longed to express that love. The old covenant could not accomplish

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what He desired. God wanted His people to have access unto Him. Therefore, He brought in “a better hope” by which we are able to draw near unto God. The old covenant was instituted to show the requirements for coming into the holy of holies. Without the law we could never have comprehended or appreciated the sacrifice of Jesus and what He accomplished on the cross. We could not possibly have understood how He opened up the way into the presence of a holy God. Our understanding of all these things comes through the Epistle of Hebrews, as Paul opens up and explains to us the mysteries of the Old Testament.

7:20-21 *“And insomuch as not without an oath he was made priest. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this [priest] with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec).”* Jesus Christ was made a priest by an oath of God. With the Levitical priests there was no oath given by God when they assumed the priesthood. But Christ became a priest by an oath when His Father swore to Him: “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” This oath is actually a promise of a new priesthood under a

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new covenant. Paul keeps repeating Psalm 110:4 because it is an integral part of the New Testament. “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

7:22 *“By so much [or because of the strength of the oath] was Jesus made a surety [or guarantee] of a better [covenant].”* By the Father’s oath that Christ would be made a priest after the order of Melchisedec, He sealed the New Testament. Psalm 110:4 is actually a promise of the new covenant.

7:23-24 *“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.”* There were many priests in the Levitical order in the Old Testament. However, at death they were cut off from the priesthood. They were no longer priests when they died. But Christ is ever alive, and His ministry never ceases or changes.

7:25 *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* This is a magnificent verse. “He is able to save them to the uttermost.” Christ’s redemption is so complete. He has totally provided for every problem in our life, that it is now possible for us to come into Christian perfection.

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This reminds us of the verse in Hannah's song when she said, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. 2:8). My wife and I have seen people literally raised up out of the dunghill to be set among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory. Such is the power of the gospel when men and women totally yield to its workings. In East Africa the Masai tribe lives in parts of Kenya and Tanzania. We visited some of the Masai villages where a man's wealth is determined by the height of his dung hill. All of their houses are made of cow dung, and if you are the honored guest, you are taken into the hut where it is fresh for you. May I say, this was a very enlightening experience.

Some of those Masai warriors who sat on dung hills became converted and filled with the Holy Spirit. They were utterly transformed and lifted up to great heights in God. I am thinking of one man in particular who was one of our Bible school students when we were teaching in East Africa. He was raised up and anointed by God to minister to the Masai tribes in Kenya for a certain period of time. Because of his God-given power and influence, tens of thousands came to hear him preach. No one would attend the political rallies when he was ministering. This forced politicians to schedule their

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rallies around his services. On one occasion when the president was sick, this brother laid his hands on him, and the president was healed.

Instantly this Masai warrior was lifted up by God from the dung hill and he had a tremendous impact upon his whole nation. Surely God is able to save to the uttermost. He can lift someone out of the gutter and cause them to sit with princes upon the throne of glory. Christ purchased a complete salvation. He can save us from every problem that we have in our spirit, soul, and body (cf. 1 Thes. 5:23). God's salvation is a complete salvation. He can give us the victory over every sin.

"Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The Lord Jesus Christ is ever before the throne, making intercession for us; and through His intercession we can experience so great a salvation. That is the whole purpose of a priest. A priest in the Old Testament was a mediator between God and man, and between man and God. Israel approached unto God through the priest, but our mediator is the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

7:26 *"For such an high priest [fitted our need], who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."* Jesus is perfectly adapted to our needs. He is holy,

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harmless, and undefiled, and He enables His people to partake of these same virtues. Christ shared the very nature of His Father's holiness, but Aaron was holy only in the sense that he was consecrated to a certain function. Christ was harmless. He was incapable of injuring anyone. That is a beautiful description of Jesus. Aaron was reckoned innocent only because he was purged of sin through ritual. There is a difference. Christ was the very essence of innocency, whereas Aaron was innocent only by reason of ritualistic purging.

Paul also described Christ as being *undefiled*. He was morally and spiritually flawless. There was no flaw in the Lord Jesus Christ. Aaron was undefiled only because he kept the regulations against defilement. Christ was "separate from sinners" because He never sinned. Aaron was separated because he had to obey the strict rules of Leviticus 21:10-15. Here we see the difference between the two high priests. In Christ we can see the very essence of holiness, harmless, and undefilement. Aaron the high priest possessed these attributes only in a superficial and outward way through ritualism. Herein is the great difference.

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7:27 *“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”* In order for Aaron to fulfill the function of the high priest, he had to offer up sacrifices for his own sins. He could not approach the Lord without those sacrifices. The Levitical sacrifices enabled him to be ritualistically pure. This is very important indeed. When he offered up a sacrifice, that sacrifice made him ceremonially pure, but it did not change him. He was still the same person inside, but because of the sacrifice he was reckoned to be pure. Everyday he had to offer up sacrifices—first, for his own sins, and then for the people’s sins. But the spotless Lamb of God made atonement for all the sins of the world once and for all when He offered up His life upon the cross. He alone was the only perfect sacrifice.

In the Old Testament there was a daily remembrance of sins because those repeated animal sacrifices could never make anyone perfect. Yet Christ, by one sacrifice, has forever put away our sins.

7:28 *“For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, [Psalm 110:4] which was since the law, maketh the Son [high priest], who is consecrated for evermore.”* The

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law said that those who descended from Aaron should inherit the office of the high priest. However, Christ's high priesthood was not based upon the law. It was based upon the word of an oath given through David in Psalm 110:4, nearly 500 years after the law. This has been my emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We must experience these things.

We are not just looking academically at the difference between the Aaronic and the Melchisedec priesthoods; neither are we comparing them solely for the sake of understanding the superiority of Christ's priesthood over Aaron's. Although this is very important, what I am trying to say is this: As Christ was appointed by an oath to be a priest forever, so must these scriptures also be applied to our own hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is the reason it is so important to have a meeting with God. It is so important to have personal promises from God, and to have a God-given understanding of His purposes for our lives.

Part 6

8:1-13 - A NEW SANCTUARY AND A NEW COVENANT

8:1 *“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”* The Apostle Paul says that the main point of everything he has already said is this—our High Priest is sitting upon the throne right now!

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This High Priest is in heaven and He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In his Philippian Epistle Paul states that Christ is seated far above all the principalities and powers and dominions, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow (Phil. 2:10, Eph.1:21).

8:2 *“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”* Jesus is a minister of the true tabernacle. Paul is going to contrast the temple in heaven with the tabernacle of Moses that was built by man.

8:3 *“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.”* The Apostle Paul is saying that the whole purpose of a priest and the priesthood is to offer up sacrifices. Therefore, it was necessary that this man Jesus Christ who is our High Priest should also have something to offer.

8:4-5a *“For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things...”* When Paul wrote to the Hebrews, it is obvious that the temple was still standing and in operation. The priests at that time were still offering up sacrifices according to the law, which served only as an example and

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shadow of heavenly things. The sanctuary on earth was only a shadow or type of the sanctuary in heaven. It is important to understand this word “shadow.” A shadow is only an outline of an object. It is not the exact thing.

“[This is why] Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” Because the tabernacle on earth was a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle, Moses was cautioned to follow every dimension exactly as God had showed him while he was upon Mount Sinai. Moses was given the pattern for heavenly things while he was on the mount for forty days and forty nights. Therefore, the tabernacle and the furniture he built reflect heavenly truths. The tabernacle was instituted to give us an understanding of heavenly truths.

I would like to digress for a moment and look very carefully at this phrase—“See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee.” When we are called upon to do something in the ministry, we cannot try to copy someone else. God has a special and unique pattern for our own lives that is different from that of everyone else. We are required to do everything according to the pattern

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that God wants *us* to reproduce. Therefore, we are obligated to seek God to know exactly how He wants us to carry out our call. I have seen certain ones that are called to be pastors who try to be evangelists. This does not work. I have also seen evangelists who try to be pastors and that does not work either. Basically, an evangelist's main theme is salvation, and he sees the salvation message in every single passage of Scripture.

A church cannot live on a salvation diet for long. We must understand what God has for each of our lives. We must enquire, "Lord, please show me the pattern for the work You have called me to do." My wife and I have had the privilege of helping to establish several Bible schools over the years. We found that God had a different program and curriculum in mind for each school. Therefore, we do not try to duplicate what we have done somewhere else. Rather, we seek to fulfil the vision that God has for each particular place.

8:6 *"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."* Not only is Christ's ministry far superior to the Levitical ministry, He is also the mediator of a new covenant that is far superior to the

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old one. The new covenant was established upon better promises. This is something we need to remember, because so many people try to go back under the old covenant law in their pursuit of holiness. Yet those dear saints in the Old Testament were following a covenant that could never make them perfect. The new covenant was established upon better promises.

8:7 *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.”* If the first covenant had been able to accomplish what God wanted and make people perfect, then there would have been no need whatsoever for a second covenant. Why, then, did God institute the first covenant? The first one was to illustrate the second one. We could not understand all the sacrifices of Christ and what Christ accomplished upon the cross unless we had the old covenant. Also, the old covenant law revealed sin. It revealed our ungodliness and our carnality. The law showed us that our attempt to be holy by its *do’s* and *don’ts* was an impossible task. Holiness is only possible by the grace and power of God.

8:8 *“For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”* God found fault with His people,

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citing the weakness of the old covenant. The old covenant did not accomplish what He desired. In actuality, this is what God was saying about the first covenant. It was unable to change their hearts and make them holy. Thus, even while the old covenant was in effect, God declared to the house of Israel and Judah the coming of a new covenant. This is foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

8:9 *“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.”* Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel declared that God was going to make a new covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:25-27). This new covenant was not going to be like the covenant that He made when He brought them up out of Egypt in the Exodus. They were unable to continue in that covenant because of the weakness of the flesh. God was going to provide a new covenant that could bring redemption into their hearts and minds.

8:10 *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”* This is the new covenant. We need to be very clear concerning the purpose

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of the new covenant. The Lord promised, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." What is the new covenant? The new covenant is an experience with God whereby His laws are written on the fleshly tables of our heart. The laws of God must be in our hearts (in our affections and motives) and in our minds (our thoughts and meditations). This is the work of God's Spirit that is provided by the new covenant.

While dwelling on the glories of the new covenant, our attention must also be turned for a moment to the tabernacle of Moses, for they are intricately related. The tabernacle of Moses consisted of an *outer court* with a tent in the middle. This tent was divided into two sections by a veil. The first part was called the *holy place*. The second part of the tent was called the *holy of holies*.

Resting inside the holy of holies was the ark of the covenant containing the ten commandments. The ten commandments that God desires to write upon the fleshly tables of our heart were kept in the holy of holies. In order for the fullness of the new covenant to be wrought within our being and to have the laws of God written upon the fleshly tables of our heart, we must come within the veil into the holy of holies.

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Without the old covenant we would not understand any of these things, nor would we understand the qualifications for entering into full redemption and perfection. The Apostle Paul refers to the Old Testament as a tutor or schoolmaster (Gal. 3:23-25). The Old Testament was like a schoolmaster to train children until they learned their lessons well and were ready to graduate. The purpose of the Old Testament was to teach mankind the basics of redemption, show them their needs, and then bring them to Christ and the New Covenant. The Old Testament helps us understand the New Testament. We could not understand the New Testament without the Old Testament. This is the beauty of Hebrews. This is the reason Hebrews has been so beloved by millions of God's children throughout the ages. Hebrews shows us the way into God's manifest presence which we all so desperately desire.

8:11 *“And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”* This promise will be fulfilled in the nation of Israel during the Millennial period. In the Church it can be an absolute reality now because we have an anointing that abides and that teaches us (see 1 Jn. 2:27). This verse becomes so real in times of

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revival. “For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” The Holy Spirit within us is our teacher. He reveals Christ and the ways of God to us, through the Word of God.

It is so important to understand the Word of God. Our understanding of God is dependent upon our ability to understand His Word. I have known several people who were unable to read or write until they were converted. Yet, miraculously, God gave them the ability to read when they were eighty years of age. The interesting thing is that they were only able to read the Word of God. They were not able to read the newspaper or anything else. Another lady I knew had the Scriptures opened up to her in a marvelous way through visions. She, too, was unable to read until very late in life. God gives us the ability to read and to know His Word. We have the best Educator of all time—the Holy Spirit. Through the anointing and through the power of the blessed Holy Spirit, we are enabled to understand His Word. God gives His people the ability to know Him, from the least to the greatest.

8:12 *“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”* The mercy of God is also revealed in the tabernacle. The mercy seat was a sheet of gold that overlaid the ark of the covenant and the tables of stone. This was showing that God’s mercy

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covers His law and is over His law. Yet, in order to obtain mercy we have to acknowledge that we have broken His law. We must confess to the Lord: “I have sinned and broken Your law. O Lord, please be merciful to me.”

There must be a confession that we have sinned, before He extends His mercy to us. Proverbs 16:6 says, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged.” We have to acknowledge the truth before we can receive mercy (cf. Prov. 28:13). We must exercise caution when we mention the subject of mercy. We must not forget that it is God’s sole prerogative to show mercy and grace. We must not presume upon God’s goodness. He shows mercy to those who fear Him (Psa.103:11). God does not show grace to the unrepentant. We have to admit that we have broken His law before we receive mercy.

8:13 *“In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”* The first covenant must be called the old covenant because the second one is called the new covenant. Paul describes the old covenant as decaying and ready to vanish away. That statement by Paul was truly prophetic for several reasons. This epistle to the Hebrews was written sometime in the early 60’s A.D. The Jews’ temple was destroyed by the

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Romans in A.D. 70. The Levitical law and all the sacrifices and ordinances ceased after that time. Since then there has been no temple or reinstitution of the sacrifices. They have waxed old and vanished away. They were only the shadow of better things to come.

Thank God that we are living in the days of the new covenant when we have a High Priest who ever lives and who is able to save us to the uttermost. The veil that once separated us from our Father's lovely face has been taken away by the Captain of our salvation. It is now possible to come into the holy of holies and have the laws of God written upon the fleshly tables of our heart. New access to God has been made available so that out of this new relationship of love, we can obey Him from our heart.

God's promise through Ezekiel that He would "cause us to walk in His statutes" can become a reality to us. How wonderful and how victorious is the New Testament life! It was instituted because the old covenant could never bring us to perfection. Coming to perfection and walking in His statutes must ever be our goal.

Part 7

9:1-28 - THE BLOOD OF CHRIST— SUPERIOR TO THE BLOOD OF ANIMALS

9:1-3 *“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and [an earthly] sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first [section] wherein was the candlestick, and the [table of*

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shewbread]; which is called the sanctuary [or the Holy Place]. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all [or the Holy of holies].”

In Hebrews chapter 9, we are brought back to the tabernacle of Moses again. This tabernacle, as we have already seen, was fashioned after the heavenly one. It was one of the seven dwelling places of God in Scripture. These seven dwelling places are:

1. Tabernacle of Moses
2. Tabernacle of David
3. Temple of Solomon
4. Restoration Temple
5. Herod's Temple
6. The Church - made up of living stones
7. Ezekiel's Temple - in the Millennium

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Paul is focusing now on the tabernacle of Moses. Because the tabernacle was a pattern of heavenly things, it would be beneficial to consider the furniture of the tabernacle and its spiritual meanings.

Furniture in the Outer Court

I would like to reiterate that the tabernacle of Moses was surrounded by an outer court which had a fence made of linen. It was 50 cubits wide, 100 cubits long, and 5 cubits high. As you entered through the outer court gate, the first thing you came to was *the altar of burnt offering* where the animals were sacrificed.

The Altar of Burnt Offering: This altar was also known as *the brazen altar*. It was the place where the blood was shed in order to gain God's forgiveness and acceptance. This altar represents our salvation experience. The blood is the first thing we are introduced to when we are saved. Upon the four corners of the altar were *horns*. Horns are a symbol of strength and power. For example, horns are the strength of a bull. Habakkuk says of Christ: "He had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power" (Hab. 3:4). These horns on the altar represent the tremendous power that comes with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is an outer court experience. Christ said in Acts

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1:8 that we would receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon us. In summary, this altar in the outer court represents two things—our salvation by the shedding of blood and the power we receive with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Laver of Brass: Beyond the brazen altar with four horns was a *laver of brass* filled with water. The laver stood before the entrance to the holy place, but it was in the outer court. Although the laver of water represents water baptism, it could also speak of the washing of water by the Word of God (Eph. 5:26-27). This bronze laver was made from the looking glasses or mirrors of the women (Ex. 38:8). When an Israelite looked into the laver, he could see himself. He would then wash. Such is the power of the Word of God. It is like a mirror. We can look into it and see what kind of person we are, and it has the power to totally cleanse us (Ja.1:23-24). All of these pieces of furniture were in the outer court and represent outer court experiences.

Furniture in the Holy Place

We then come to the tabernacle itself, which was actually a tent that was divided into two sections. The first section was called *the sanctuary* or holy place. The second section was the holy of holies

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where the glorious ark of the covenant rested. Inside the holy place there were three important articles of furniture—the candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense. I would like to look briefly with you at the furniture in the holy place.

The Candlestick: As one entered the holy place, situated on the left side was the candlestick, which was made of pure gold. Gold speaks of deity. It had seven lamps, representing the seven spirits of the Lord which are enumerated for us in Isaiah 11:2. Isaiah 11:2 says: “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him [referring to Christ].” The *spirit of the Lord* is represented by the center lamp. Below that are six branches, three on either side of the center shaft. The *spirit of the Lord*, according to Isaiah 61:1, is the anointing to preach. Then on the right side is the spirit of wisdom and on the left side is the spirit of understanding. These are followed by the spirit of counsel and the spirit of might. Finally, at the bottom is the spirit of knowledge and the spirit of the fear of the Lord. These seven spirits are comparable to the seven colors of the rainbow which Ezekiel and the Apostle John saw around the throne (Ezek.1:28; Rev. 4:3-5).

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The candlestick represents seven different anointings that can come upon us. When we are called upon to preach, we need to be anointed with the spirit of the Lord. According to our level of experience, we can feel the anointing of the Holy Spirit covering us and inspiring us as we preach. Although it is good to have notes whenever it is possible, nonetheless, the spirit of the Lord is the necessary agent to inspire us when we deliver God's message.

The spirit of wisdom is another one of the seven spirits of God. It is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:17. The Ephesian church was charismatic, or Pentecostal. They had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Yet in Ephesians 1:17, Paul prayed that these believers would receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to come to know Christ in a very intimate way. These seven spirits are coverings that come *upon* us. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is *within* us.

To whom does God grant wisdom? Daniel 2:21 tells us that God gives wisdom unto the wise. In Mark 4:25 we find the same principle enunciated by the Lord Jesus Christ. "For he that hath, to him shall be given." There is an old adage that says, "The one who has is the one who gets." What does that mean to us spiritually? It means that as we set our heart to seek God for wisdom, meditate often in

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God's Word, and cry out to Him for wisdom as David instructed Solomon, God will begin to establish us in the pathway of wisdom (Prov. 2:1-7; 4:3-9). He will cause us to make the right choices in every situation.

The Lord will not only grant us "wisdom in the inner parts" as David described in Psalm 51:6, He will also anoint us with the spirit of wisdom so that when people come to us with their problems, God will give us divine answers through the spirit of wisdom.

This same principle applies to understanding as well. As we seek God for an understanding heart, He will begin to gird us with the spirit of understanding. Understanding differs from knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is an accumulation of information and facts. Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge correctly, and it causes one to make the right decisions. However, understanding is the insight to know *why* a person makes a decision and *why* he does a certain thing. Understanding also helps us to know God's ways.

The spirit of counsel is the anointing given to those who have a counseling ministry. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is called the *Counsellor* in Isaiah 9:6. There are counseling ministries in the body of

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Christ today. If God places us into the position of counselor, we must cry out to Him for the spirit of counsel in order to show others what they should do in their particular circumstances. Each situation is unique; therefore, we cannot rely on past experiences, or counsel people by principles alone. Also, counseling must stay within the boundaries of the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit and the Word of God are always in perfect agreement. We must never offer counsel that contradicts the written Word of God. This applies to all realms of counseling, including marriage. We cannot counsel someone who is divorced, with his present mate still living, to remarry someone else. That would be contrary to the teachings of the new covenant. As God gives us the ministry of a counselor, we should cry out to Him for the spirit of counsel. That anointing will enable us to tell people what God wants to say to them at any given moment. The counsel God gives will sometimes go against our natural feelings. Therefore, we must put our own feelings aside and allow God to speak through us what He knows is best.

The spirit of might is another one of the seven spirits of God. Might is tremendous strength! We need to live by God's strength. The spirit of might is demonstrated in extraordinary ways—as it was, for

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example, in the life of Samson. Samson took the gates of the city and ran with them for twenty miles up to the hill of Hebron. The spirit of might was manifested in Elijah when he ran before the chariot of Ahab. The Lord Jesus Christ overturned all the tables of the money lenders and chased them out of the temple when the spirit of might came upon Him. To separate the Jews from their money required a tremendous spirit of might.

The spirit of knowledge could be illustrated by what Jesus said to Nathanael: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” Nathanael responded, “How do you know me?” Jesus said, “When you were under the fig tree I saw you” (see John 1:47-50). Jesus was able to look at Nathanael and know everything about him. This was a marvellous manifestation of the spirit of knowledge. The spirit of knowledge can give us the ability to know the past, present, and future.

The spirit of the fear of the Lord is the anointing which brings conviction and revival. In the book of Acts, there was great conviction because the spirit of the fear of the Lord had fallen upon the people. Of course, the fear of the Lord was manifested in various other places in Scripture too. We need to have that anointing because it produces holiness, and it keeps us from straying from God’s path. Not

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only can we sense the anointing when God wants to manifest Himself, we also have, as it were, the candlestick within our heart. We are conscious of the presence of the candlestick within our own being.

I want to emphasize an important point here. One can be anointed by God and yet be very unrighteous and unholy.

We must realize that God can anoint anyone. There are many ministers who are anointed, but could not be termed holy or even righteous. Samson surely falls into that category. Samson did not live a moral, upright life, yet God anointed him. As long as he was separated to God by a Nazarite vow, God kept the anointing upon him. God honored the Nazarite ritual. Under this vow, Samson did not cut his hair. However, as soon as the ritualistic symbol of separation was removed, he lost his power and the anointing. Therefore, let us pray not only to be used of God, but to be approved of God, and to maintain His loving favor.

The Table of Shewbread: The table of shewbread was the next piece of furniture. It was on the right side of the holy place (or sanctuary), opposite the candlestick. The table had bread placed upon it

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which speaks of Christ, who is the Bread of Life. Jesus said, “Unless you eat my flesh...ye have no life in you” (see Jn. 6:48-58). At the last supper He took bread and gave it to His disciples saying, “Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you” (see Mk. 14:22, 1 Cor.11:24). In the holy place at the table of shewbread there is a deeper revelation of the Word of God. In the outer court the Word of God was revealed in the laver of water. It was like a mirror to show us our need, and like water to cleanse us, but here in the holy place it is a deeper experience. The shewbread is representative of the Word being made flesh in us. It is an assimilating of the Word so that Christ is formed within us.

The Altar of Incense: In Hebrews 9:2 Paul does not take time to mention the altar of incense, the third article in the holy place. The altar of incense speaks of prayer, praise and worship. There is a reason Paul may not have mentioned the altar of incense here. Now that the veil is rent, it is suggested in Revelation 8:3 that the altar of incense has been moved from the holy place into the holy of holies—into the literal presence of God. Now it is before the throne of God. Since the veil has been rent, we have new access by prayer, praise, worship, and intercession into the throne room of God.

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Furniture in the Holy of Holies

9:3-5 *“And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak [in detail].”*

This “second veil” was simply called the veil. It separated the holy place from the holy of holies. (The first veil was the entrance into the holy place.) The veil is the key to the new covenant. Through the new covenant, God has opened the way to come within the veil to experience the fullness of His presence and have His laws written upon our hearts and minds. We will have a further look at this in the next chapter. Inside the holy of holies the ark of glory rested, and that is where we desire to abide! In verses four and five Paul lists the articles that were in the holy of holies.

“Which had the golden censer.” The golden censer held incense and was carried by the high priest into the holy of holies when he came within the veil once a year (Lev.16:12).

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There were two main articles in the holy of holies: the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat which had the two cherubim. Inside the ark were the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and two tables of the law.

The Ark of the Covenant

“And the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna.” Manna is also called “angel’s food” in Psalm 78:25. Revelation 2:17 promises that the overcomers will eat of the “hidden manna.” Hidden manna speaks of the concealed truths of God’s Word, the mysteries of God. These truths are found within the veil, and they are only revealed through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” God reveals His hidden manna to those who have pressed into the holy of holies. God opens up to the overcomer the truths in His Word that are disguised by symbols, types, parables, proverbs, and illustrations.

“And Aaron’s rod that budded.” In Numbers chapter 16 certain men tried to usurp the priesthood. God had not given them this office. To settle the controversy, God commanded each tribe of Israel to

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present a rod before the Lord (Num.17:1-8). Aaron's name was written on Levi's rod. When Aaron's rod budded, blossomed, and bore fruit, it showed that God had given the priesthood and spiritual authority uniquely to the family of Aaron. Aaron's rod was then put in the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. This rod was only a dead piece of wood that had come to life. It represents the resurrection power and authority that is found within the veil.

“And the tables of the covenant.” The ark of the covenant also had within it the two tables of stone. Upon these two tablets God had written with His finger the ten commandments. In the new covenant God promised to write His laws on the fleshly tables of our heart (cf. Heb. 8:10, 2 Cor. 3:3). We can actually feel the new covenant at work in our hearts.

The Mercy Seat

The ark of the covenant was covered by a thin sheet of pure gold called the mercy seat. Gold speaks of deity. The fact that the mercy seat was of pure gold means that mercy is the sole prerogative of Almighty God. God says, “I will show mercy unto whom I will show mercy.” In Exodus 25:22 God said to Moses, “I will commune with you from above the mercy seat.” Above the mercy seat was the

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shekinah glory of God. By God's grace, we want to have the literal presence of God within our hearts, and His laws written within our hearts. Paul continues his theme of the tabernacle of Moses in chapter 9:6.

9:6 *“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, [or holy place] accomplishing the service of God.”* The priests were only allowed to go into the holy place where there was the candlestick, altar of incense, and table of shewbread. In other words, those experiences were available during the time of the Old Testament. However, he says in verse seven:

9:7 *“But into the second [or holy of holies] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.”* The candlestick anointings of the holy place were manifested in the Old Testament, but the blessings in the holy of holies were not available. The way had not yet been opened up. There was not a sacrifice great enough to bring a believer into the very presence of God. Leviticus chapter 16 clearly shows that only the high priest was allowed to go into the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. This is a very

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important truth, because the New Testament sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ makes it possible for every believer to go within the veil. Paul will give us a clear-cut explanation of this in chapter ten.

9:8 *“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”* The veil signified that the way into the holy of holies was not yet opened. In the time of the law, while the tabernacle of Moses was still standing, the believers could not enter into the holy of holies. The Holy Spirit showed by that veil that the way into God’s manifest presence was not yet opened. Why did the Holy Spirit permit the high priest to enter in? He typified another High Priest to come who would open the way.

9:9 *“Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.”* The tabernacle of Moses illustrated an important truth to those living in the Age of the Law. Although the high priest entered within the veil with the blood once a year (for his own sins and the sins of the people), the gifts and sacrifices that he offered up were not able to bring them to perfection. Those sacrifices could

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never cleanse the conscience. There was always a sense of guilt. They were always plagued with the remembrance of their past sins.

9:10 *“Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”* The law was imposed upon Israel for around fifteen hundred years. The purpose of the old covenant, as the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:24, was that the law would teach man certain lessons about himself, and bring him to Christ and the new covenant. The law was necessary because it revealed our sinful condition, but the law also revealed the greatness of the sacrifice of Christ and what He accomplished on the cross when He fulfilled all the Levitical sacrifices and offerings.

9:11 *“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, this is to say, not of this building.”* Here we are introduced to the thought of a temple in heaven. We will find mention of the heavenly temple again in the Book of Revelation. Those of you who might have had heavenly experiences know that there is a temple in heaven, and you are permitted to go into the temple.

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Christ is a high priest, but not of the tabernacle of Moses, not of a tabernacle made by hands, not of the temple of Solomon, not of the restoration temple, and not of the temple of Herod. No! He is the high priest of the heavenly temple, the perfect tabernacle which is not made by hands. In other words, this tabernacle is made by God and it is in heaven.

The sacrifice of Christ is infinitely *superior* to the sacrifices offered up in the Old Testament. This is the continuous theme of the Apostle Paul throughout Hebrews. Christ is greater than the prophets, the angels, Moses, and Aaron; and His sacrifice far exceeds the sacrifice of animals.

9:12 *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”* This is a very beautiful truth. Christ did not take the blood of goats and calves to enter into an earthly sanctuary made with hands. It was through His own blood that He entered into a heavenly holy of holies, and by that sacrifice He “obtained eternal redemption for us.” A rent veil on earth signified an opening into a heavenly sanctuary where God’s presence was accessible.

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9:13 *“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.”* Paul is saying that in the Old Testament the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer could cleanse, but the cleansing was only ritualistic cleansing. In other words, God imputed or accounted them clean, even though they were not clean. We must understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. As we have said before, Aaron was ceremonially holy because of the sacrifices he offered up. He was separate from sinners because of his ritualistic obedience to the Levitical laws, but this did not change him inside. The blood of those animals could never deal with the power of sin, nor could it ever cleanse a guilty conscience.

9:14 *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* Christ offered Himself as a spotless lamb by the enablement of the Holy Spirit’s power. Christ was completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit. We also must be totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to present our bodies to God without spot.

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“Purge your conscience from dead works.” A cleansed conscience is something that could not be accomplished in the Old Testament. The blood of bulls and goats did not have the power to purge the conscience, but the gospel message offers something that is very beautiful and priceless. God is able to purge our conscience so completely that we can be delivered from the gnawing in our hearts of past sins.

I knew a pastor who had committed a very grievous sin. After a time the Spirit convicted him, and he was really mortified. Morning after morning he cried out, “Oh God, please forgive me.” After six weeks of crying out to God for forgiveness, he heard an audible voice say to him, “Forgive you for what?” It was very vivid to him. The pastor turned around and said, “Lord, You know for what!” Again the audible voice said: “You asked Me to forgive you. I forgave you, and I have forgotten. Now, you forget too.” Such is the power of the blood of Christ to purge our conscience from dead works (the works of the flesh) to serve the living God.

“To serve the living God.” A cleansed conscience enables us to come into God’s presence, to be at peace within ourselves, to have self-esteem, and then to be productive for God.

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9:15 *“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament.”* A mediator means “a go-between.” It is a person who is between you and someone else. A lawyer is an example of a go-between. The priest in the Old Testament was the mediator between the Israelites and God. The Israelite gave his sacrifice to the priest who then offered it up to God. The priest was the mediator. In the New Testament we also have a mediator—the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one mediator between God and men in the New Testament, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

No New Testament priest is a *mediator*, because in order to be a mediator you have to offer up a sacrifice. There is no sacrifice made by man today that can enable anyone to enter into God’s presence. Only the blood of Christ’s sacrifice can do this. No *priest* can have the mediatory ministry of being the “go-between” for man and God, because he does not offer up a sacrifice.

“That by the means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” It is by the means of Christ’s death that we are redeemed from transgressions. This is the sacrifice that He offered up once and for all. Not only has Christ paid our debt, He also wants to redeem us from the

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transgressions that presently bind us. When Paul says “redemption [from] the transgressions that were under the first testament,” he is referring to the fact that the Old Testament law only revealed sin; it gave no power to be freed from transgressions. The law governed the first testament and only revealed sin.

That “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” Not only did Jesus offer up a sacrifice for the debt of our sins, He also opened up the way into the presence of God. I am not referring to the presence of God on earth only, but the presence of God in heaven. Therefore, by the blood of Jesus, we have the right to *an eternal inheritance*.

9:16-17 *“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”*

When anyone makes a will or testament, it does not come into effect until the testator dies. The Old Testament was founded on the death of animals. The New Testament was founded upon the death of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. God willed many blessings of inheritance to us, but they could not

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come into effect until His Son died. When Christ died, the inheritance was released to us. Paul stresses the importance of death in verse eighteen.

9:18-19 *“Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people.”*

The strength of the Old Testament was in the blood that had been shed by the death of bulls and goats. Without death and the shedding of blood, there could be no testament and no promises. The old covenant was grounded firmly in the death of the animals.

9:20 *“Saying, this is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.”* Moses was saying that it is the blood that seals the testament. When anyone makes a will (or testament) it does not become effective without the death of the testator.

9:21 *“Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.”* Moses had to go into the tabernacle to cleanse it and all the articles therein with the blood of animals.

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Why? Because they had been touched by sinful human hands and therefore they had to be purged. All the articles of the tabernacle had to be purged with blood.

9:22 *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* It is impossible to have forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. The blessings of a testament only come into force by death. In the Old Testament this was accomplished through the blood of bulls and goats. With that in mind, he continues in verse twenty-three.

9:23 *“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”* The pattern of things in heaven had to be purified. That pattern was the tabernacle of Moses. But also the actual things in heaven had to be purified. We might say: “That is remarkable! Why should heaven have to be purified? Why should the temple of heaven have to be purified with blood?”

Well, let us consider what has happened in heaven. There was a rebellion in heaven before the foundation of the world, and that rebellion has tarnished heavenly things.

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9:24 *“For Christ [our high priest] is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”* Paul is talking about the temple in heaven. Christ did not enter into the holy of holies of the tabernacle of Moses or the temple of Herod, but into heaven itself. He entered right into the very presence of His Father in heaven.

9:25 *“Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others.”* The high priest of Aaron’s order entered the holy of holies once a year, by the blood of animals. Each high priest had to go in once a year as long as he lived. In the Old Testament there was a constant repetition of sacrifices, year after year. It required a supreme sacrifice to enter the holy of holies every year. But Christ only made *one* perfect sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself. This is the point Paul wants to bring out here.

9:26 *“For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the [age] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”* Because Christ’s sacrifice was a perfect sacrifice, it only had to be offered up once. The power of His sacrifice puts away sin

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forever. This is so important. The power of the blood puts away our sins. Micah says, “He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19). Our sins are lost forever in the blood of Christ. There might be consequences for sin, of course, but the sin is forgotten forever.

9:27 *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* Paul says this out of the context, and returns to his theme in verse twenty-eight. This is, however, one of the most awesome of all verses in this epistle, for there is no second chance for salvation after death. From our bed of death we are taken by an angel, either to heaven or hell.

Depending upon our life’s experience judgment is then set. In heaven we are placed on the appropriate plain of glory and position that our life’s works have merited. In hell we can be relegated to any of the descending abodes of misery, each one becoming increasingly more horrible and frightening. Beloved, let us live our life honorably before God so that we are not condemned to eternal judgment with the unbelievers and other Christians who are hypocrites.

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9:28 *“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”* Here again is the emphasis of the one sacrifice of Christ. He died once, but the power of that sacrifice “bears the sins of many.” The next time He comes, at His second coming, it will not be to bear sin. He has already accomplished that by one offering. He will bring full salvation to those who are eagerly, constantly and patiently waiting for Him.

This beautiful promise that He will appear a second time can be taken two ways. It can literally mean His second coming, but I believe it can also mean that the Lord can appear to us at times. There is a personal appearance of the Lord to us, and when He appears, He brings full salvation unto us. This ends the beautiful chapter on the blood of Christ, a superior sacrifice that is so much greater than the blood of bulls and of goats.

Part 8

10:1-20 - THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

10:1 *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”* It is important to understand once again that “shadows” are not a perfect image of an object. When there is an object in the sunlight, the shadow that is cast upon the object by the sun only gives

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an outline of it. The Old Testament law with its symbols and types was like that. It was not a perfect image of the things to come. The old covenant only gave a shadow or an idea of what was coming.

The law “can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” The law was unable to make the offerers perfect. Throughout this epistle to the Hebrews, this theme of God’s desire for perfection is expressed time and time again. In fact, the Lord Himself said, “Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). Perfection is the standard. The law could not bring anyone to perfection; therefore, a God of perfection could not be satisfied. The law did not fulfill His requirements. If the Levitical law brought people to perfection, they would have ceased offering sacrifices.

10:2 *“For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.”* There would not have been a continual offering of sacrifices throughout all the generations if those sacrifices had been able to purge their conscience. The Old Testament sacrifices did not have the power to cleanse the conscience.

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10:3 *“But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.”* The fact that the sacrifices had to be repeated on a yearly basis clearly proves that there was a remembrance of sins. Therefore, one sacrifice was not enough; they had to continually offer up new sacrifices. The reason for this is very clear indeed in verse four.

10:4 *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* Bulls and goats are inferior to mortal man, and man cannot be purged with something that is inferior. Therefore, the Apostle Paul directs our attention to a superior sacrifice mentioned by King David in Psalm 40.

10:5-7 *“Wherefore when [Christ] cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”* Paul is making reference to David’s words in Psalm 40. The Lord had revealed to David what His heart really looks for in a man or woman. David replied back to God, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened” (Psa. 40:6).

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God is not interested in animal sacrifices. He wants a man or woman who is listening to Him and responding in obedience with all the members of his body. What does God really want? Well, certainly He does not want the bodies of bulls and goats. No! He wants a human body that is surrendered to Him. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said to His Father: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

The Father had prepared a body for His beloved Son in the womb of Mary (Lk.1:34-38). That is why Christ says, "A body hast thou prepared me." Remember, Christ is our forerunner; He is our example. If a body was prepared for Christ and in that body He offered up a perfect sacrifice, it is quite reasonable to understand why Paul says in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

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The Lord Jesus Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchisedec. The sacrifice in the Melchisedec priesthood is a mortal body. The high priest offered up his body, and so must we because we also are priests after the order of Melchisedec. Christ offered up His body to God by the power of the Eternal Spirit, and He was unspotted and without blemish.

We, too, are a temple of the Holy Spirit, and we must offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Paul said this is our *reasonable* service. This is the normal Christian life. In the new covenant, the sacrifice is the body of Jesus and *the bodies of the believers*.

“In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.” Why did God not have any pleasure in animal sacrifices? I believe the answer is found in Psalm 51:16-17. “For thou desirest not sacrifices; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.” King David had sinned grievously, committing adultery with Bathsheba and then murdering her husband. What was he going to offer for his sin? God said: “I do not want your sacrifices, David. I want some-thing else.” In verse 17 we are told what the Lord requires. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” God delights in the sacrifice of an attitude of true brokenness and

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humility. If we sin, it is not double tithes or committing ourselves to many hours of church service that God desires. No, what God wants is a broken spirit and a contrite heart. In both cases in Psalm 40 and also in Psalm 51, David was foreseeing the New Testament age, and he offered that which was acceptable unto the Lord.

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (10:7). Even in the Old Testament, God made it vividly clear that obedience is better than sacrifice. When King Saul had offered up sacrifices to compensate for his lack of obedience, God refused it. He declared through the prophet Samuel: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). Obedience is something God desires above everything else, and yet so few of His children are truly obedient to Him.

10:8-9 *“Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”* Paul is repeating

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what Christ said when He came down from heaven. Jesus well understood that all of these sacrifices which were offered up daily, monthly at the new moons, and yearly at specific feast days, gave the Father no pleasure. The Lord realized that the thing that gave the Father pleasure was someone who would do His will and obey His voice. This is the reason He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” Christ abolished the first covenant so He could establish the second covenant.

10:10 *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* It is by the will of God and the will of Christ flowing together that “we are sanctified.” We are sanctified (or separated from the world unto God) “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” It is the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ that separates and sanctifies us, whereas in the Old Testament the sacrifice was only ritualistic. It was through the offering, not of many sacrifices, but of one body, that we are sanctified once and for all. It is a complete work.

10:11 *“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”* The temple services were still going on even after the Lord’s crucifixion. In fact, they were going on at the time when the Epistle of Hebrews was written. Paul says in the

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present tense, “Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” Those animal sacrifices could never take away sins because they were not powerful enough. It required God’s own blood (God in the flesh) to deal with the problem of sin. Remember, we were purchased with God’s own blood (see Acts 20:28).

10:12 *“But this man [speaking of Jesus Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”* This is the sacrifice that was accepted. Such was the power of Christ’s sacrifice that it took Him right into heaven itself to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high. How wonderful it is to have a sacrifice that takes the Offerer and those who have faith in that sacrifice into the very presence of God!

10:13 *“From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.”* Christ’s sacrifice not only purges the believer of sins, it also enables God to judge righteously and render due recompense to the enemies of Christ. The Father is able to bring every enemy of Christ under His feet because of Christ’s complete obedience to the will of God. Complete obedience to God’s will closes the mouth of Satan. This truth applies to us as well.

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The Apostle Paul brings out this truth when he says that God will “revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Cor.10:6). Paul is saying that God will render vengeance upon our enemies *after* our obedience is fulfilled. As we allow God to work out total obedience in our hearts, then He will silence and render vengeance upon all our enemies. The sacrifice of Christ supplies the strength we need to have obedience worked out in our lives.

10:14 *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* Oh, what tremendous power was released from that one offering! It is true that the blood of Jesus covers our sins and sets us apart from a perishing world, but Christ’s offering provides far more than just forgiveness. By that one offering, all the Levitical offerings were fulfilled. All of the Levitical offerings were a shadow of the offering Christ would make. There were many Levitical offerings. It required many various Levitical offerings to express what the offering of Christ meant. There are so many needs in man. This is the reason there were many offerings, each one meeting a particular need in our lives.

There was a Passover lamb for salvation. Christ became our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Then there was an offering for Pentecost, representing Christ’s sacrifice which enables us to receive the baptism

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of the Holy Ghost. One of the great promises the Father made to Christ was that He would pour out the Holy Spirit upon the seed of Christ (Isa. 44:3). Jesus obtained this promise by His obedience, fulfilling spiritually the Pentecostal offering in Leviticus chapter 23.

He fulfilled the peace offering, and He gives us His peace. He fulfilled the sin offering in order to provide a means of release from our *nature* of sin. He even carried our griefs and sorrows so that we do not have to be plagued with depression, discouragement, and bereavement (Isa. 53:4). He fulfilled everything in that one offering. All of the blessings of the Word of God have been released to the believer by virtue of this one offering.

10:15-16 *“Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”* This promise of God’s laws being written in our hearts and minds does not happen automatically when we accept Christ as our Savior. When we read this through it might appear that way at first, but the Old Testament helps us to understand that obtaining a new heart requires a process.

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In Ezekiel 36:25-27 we have the promise of the possibility of a new heart. God said He would “cause us to walk in His statutes.” He promises: “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (36:26b-27). This means having His laws written upon the fleshly tables of our heart, as he said in Ezekiel 11:19. In Ezekiel 36:29 He promises to save us from all our uncleanness. But does all of this come automatically? No, it does not! It is preceded by verse 25. We must be washed from all our filthiness. Then there must be a removing of all the idols in our life.

As we read on in chapter 36 of Ezekiel, we understand from verse 37 that it also requires much effort and seeking. “Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” In other words, these blessings are something that we have to seek God for earnestly. First of all, we must experience the privilege of having the eyes of our understanding opened to comprehend what the new covenant is all about. We need our eyes opened to see the glorious victory that is enunciated for us in Ezekiel chapter 36. God promises to “cause us to walk in His

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ways.” This is what we want! We want the overshadowing of His anointing that enables us to walk in His statutes. We want His laws to be written upon the fleshly tables of our heart.

However, God shows us from His Word that this privilege is not given to everyone, although it is offered to everyone. The Israelites of old were limited to the outer court. Some of the priests went into the holy place. The high priest alone went into the holy of holies. There was a division then, even as there is a division today. Spiritually speaking, where have we positioned ourselves today? Are we in the outer court rejoicing only in salvation, water baptism, and perhaps in the baptism of the Holy Ghost? Certainly these are sacred experiences, but beloved, we want to go into the holy place to receive mightier anointings from God. The holy place is where we experience walking in the Spirit. However, there is something more that we want and that is to go within the veil. To go within the veil is to behold His face and to have the laws of God written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. Because this thought of going within the veil is so important, I want to look at it in some detail.

10:17 *“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”* Under the old covenant the blood of animals temporarily covered the sins of the people. But those offerings simply looked ahead to the

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One who would entirely remove the sin and take it away. Because of the sacrifice of Christ, our sins are buried in the sea of forgetfulness (Mic. 7:19). If a Christian happens to fall into sin again, he should seek God until he has gained the assurance that he has been forgiven.

10:18 *“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”* This offering at Calvary was eternal. Not only does it cover our past sins, it also covers the sins that we may commit after we become Christians, provided we maintain a repentant spirit. In that one offering of Christ was the sacrifice for salvation and also for the future sins of the Christian.

10:19-20 *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”* Let us consider what happened when Jesus died. When Jesus was on the cross and cried out, *“It is finished,”* the veil in the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. When Christ was crucified the veil was rent. Therefore, the rent veil speaks of Christ crucified. We want to experience being crucified with Christ and coming within the veil. This is the Roman 6:6 experience. “Knowing this, that our old

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man [was] crucified with him.” This knowing comes from a Greek word which means “knowing by experience.”

“Knowing this, that our old man [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be [rendered inactive].” When I was a pastor many years ago, God was dealing with me and I was crying out to Him to remove the heart of stone. I wanted a heart of flesh. The Lord started to speak to me from Romans 5:21: “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Then Paul asks the rhetorical question in Romans 6:1: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” In other words, is our Christian experience going to be a mountaintop experience one day, only to come crashing down into the valley of defeat the next day? When we start off, we are up one day and down the next. Is this going to be our Christian experience? The Apostle Paul’s voice answers back: “God forbid.”

The sacrifice of Christ provides more than salvation. He does not just forgive us and then leave us with an “up and down” Christian experience. No! His sacrifice provides a complete victory. But how?

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How are we going to come within the veil, and how are we going to get victory over our old man? Our new man (Christ in us) cannot sin. It is our old man or fallen nature that causes us to sin, and he does it so naturally because that is his nature.

Our old nature is sinful; therefore, what does he do? He only knows one thing—sin. Therefore, what is the key to victory? The key is for our old man to be placed upon the cross. In the natural, we cannot crucify ourselves. We can kill ourselves in many other ways, but one way we cannot kill ourselves is by crucifixion. You might get a nail in your feet, and in one hand, but how would you get a nail in the other hand? It is a remarkable thing that in the wisdom of God He chose death by crucifixion to prove to us that we cannot crucify ourselves. Crucifixion is an experience! It is an experience that God alone brings us to.

The way into the experience of Romans 6:6 is portrayed for us in the journey of the children of Israel. After the Israelites passed their tests in the wilderness, God brought them to Jordan. The crossing of Jordan dealt with their Adamic nature and represents the *dead to sin* experience. God will deal with one thing after another in the wilderness. Our response to what God addresses in our lives is very

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important. Each time we respond to God and say, “Oh Lord, I am willing,” we are brought a little closer to our Jordan experience. There was a great transformation after Israel crossed Jordan.

God was preparing me for my Romans 6:6 experience at a certain time in my life many years ago. God kept putting His finger on one thing after another in my heart , saying, “Are you willing to give up this, and this?” Some of the things He mentioned were easy to let go of and seemed quite insignificant. I asked, “Lord, are You interested in that?” He caused me to know that to Him it was very significant. Many of these things were not sins. Then it came to the point where God said, “Now, will you give up your wife?” I replied, “Lord, I am unable to do that.” I realized this would involve something very costly and I just could not release her.

Soon after this I was at a meeting where the Spirit of the Lord put me on the floor and the Lord reasoned with me, saying, “Now, who loves your wife more, you or Me?” I said, “Well, You do, Lord.” He then said: “And who has the power to look after her well being—you or Me?” At that point I could not move off the floor and I acknowledged, “Lord, You have the power.” Then God graciously did a work in my heart at that moment and He said, “Now give me your wife,” and I was able to release my

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wife to the Lord. Abraham had to be willing to offer up his beloved son, Isaac. For me, the Lord wanted me to be willing to offer up my wife to Him. I did not realize at that moment that my willingness to say yes was preparing me for the Romans 6:6 experience. The Lord does not bring us to Jordan (or Romans 6:6) until He is satisfied that we have passed all our tests.

About ten days passed after this episode. One morning when I was in my office, suddenly I felt the Holy Spirit walk into the room as a person would walk in. Then I had a vision of Christ upon the cross. In this vision I was lifted up by the Spirit of the Lord and I hung with Christ on the cross. I was actually in Christ and I understood at that moment that I was crucified with Him.

As I was hanging with Christ upon the cross, I could literally look down and see the people reviling Him. But it had no effect; I was on the cross. After a short time the vision ceased and I came back and was standing in my office. Then from within my being there came a roll of the Spirit. The Spirit started to roll within my being with the words of Galatians 2:2, and from out of my mouth He spoke these words: "I am crucified with Christ."

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This surge of the Holy Spirit with the words of Galatians 2:20 rolled and rolled and rolled from my being. I knew that I was crucified with Christ, and there was a tremendous power that came into my life over the power of sin. There was such a release from the pull of the old nature. Also at that moment I saw the veil in the temple rent from top to bottom. Oh, what a glorious experience it was.

The experience of being crucified with Christ is a very, very real experience. That was my “dead to sin” experience. Now, obviously, you do not need to have an identical experience in order to know that you have been crucified with Christ and have gone within the veil. The reason I had a dramatic experience is because I have to teach these things around the world and someone with an experience is not at the mercy of someone with a theory. Your experience of Romans 6:6 will be different. God may give you a scripture, a revelation, or by some other means let you know that you are dead indeed to sin, that henceforth you should not serve sin.

This is the summary of the new covenant—by a new and living way we can enter within the veil. Let us hunger and thirst for God to bring us within the veil. The experience of passing through the veil causes us to know that we are crucified with Christ. We do not have to try to crucify ourselves; God

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does it. Christ did not put Himself on the cross; the Father put Him on the cross, but Christ was willing.

I would just like to look with you at Philippians 2:13. This verse is a key to our spiritual life and it has meant so much to me over the years. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” In other words, it is God who works in our hearts to make us willing. You might say, “But pastor, there are so many things that I cannot give up.” Friend, just tell the Lord that you do not have the strength to give them up and say: “Lord, please make me willing to let go of these things.” If you do that, God will work in your heart until you can hand them over to an ever loving heavenly Father. Philippians 2:13 will bring us to that “new and living way within the veil,” and it is glorious.

Part 9

10:21-25 - LIFE IN THE HOLIEST PLACE

Not only do we want to come within the veil, we want to dwell there too. Our objective is to live our life within the holy of holies. David cried out in the Psalms, “Who shall *abide* in thy tabernacle? Who shall *dwell* in thy holy hill?” (Psa.15:1). We do not only want to have fruit, but fruit that *abides*. Abiding fruit comes from abiding in His presence. Servants go in and out, and subjects go in and out of the presence of the sovereign, but the children of the sovereign abide in his presence. Therefore, as true

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mature sons and daughters of the living God, our desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord forever; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple.

10:21-22 *“And having an 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.”* Being washed with pure water is also mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 5:26 and in Ezekiel 36:25. The water spoken of here is not ritualistic holy water, or water from the Jordan River in the holy land. The Church is cleansed with the washing of water by the Word (Eph. 5:26).

How are we washed? We are washed by obedience to the *rhema* or quickened word that Christ speaks to us. We have to read and study the Word of God. But above all we have to hear Christ speaking to us through the Word. This is the Word that cleanses us. As we obey the particular word the Lord speaks to us, then our bodies are washed. Our mind is washed, our legs and feet are washed, our eyes and ears are washed, and our heart and inwards are washed. Our whole body needs to be washed with pure water.

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10:23 *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).”*

We must have an abiding experience, and this comes through faith. The Apostle Paul said, “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). It is an abiding faith that will enable us to abide in His presence. People have asked, “Can you turn your back on God after having all these wonderful experiences?” Certainly we can! We can slip back from any experience. Therefore, Paul will soon give us a fourth warning.

10:24 *“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”* Life in the holy of holies involves the nature of love being perfected in our lives, and also good works. Both of these must abound. Love is another word for perfection. In Colossians 3:14 Paul says, “Above all these things put on [love], which is the bond of perfectness.” Love is the bond of perfection.

In the holy of holies the laws of God are written upon the fleshly tables of our heart, and that produces true love. These two tables of the law can be summed up like this: “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Mt. 22:36-40). We should consistently provoke one another to love and good works because, obviously, love *gives*. This

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is the whole essence of love—it gives. Love is manifested in good works. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (Jn. 3:16). Love gives!

10:25 *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* Unfortunately, some who come into the experience of the crucified life, later grow cold in their hearts because of an offense. They start finding fault with their church and other Christians, or they are offended by something that happens in the church. Then they say, “We are not going to church anymore, we are going to worship the Lord at home.” This is very dangerous.

God gave me an illustration when I was in East Africa regarding this matter of being separated from other members of the body of Christ. I saw a pile of wood that was burning and all these pieces of wood kept each other sizzling and on fire. There were several other branches outside of the pile of wood, and as I watched, these pieces of wood went out very quickly; but those amassed in the pile continued to burn brightly.

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The Holy Spirit impressed upon my heart a message that was loud and clear. If we separate ourselves from the Church and from fellowship one with another, we are going to die. Our fire is going to go out. Once we are ignited by the love of Christ, it is kept going by the brethren. The Apostle Paul tells us to “exhort one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Today that “day” is really approaching. We see things in Israel falling into place, and upheavals in Europe to prepare the way for the ten kingdoms and the Antichrist. Great darkness is coming over the earth and we need to be crying out to the Lord for our relationships with our brethren to be strengthened. Thus we are commanded to encourage and exhort one another daily. We will not be able to stand in this hour without the strength of our brethren.

The Fourth Warning - 10:26-39

Perils of Willful Sin and Turning Back

10:26-27 *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”*

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While we look upon God as a merciful God, we must also consider that He is a judge. We have to go back into the law to understand what Paul is saying here. In Exodus 34:6 God appeared unto Moses and said, “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” But in verse seven He said, “Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.”

The Lord God is also a judge, and we must never forget this aspect of His nature. There are a number of classic examples in the Word of God of men who sinned and found no place of repentance.

Saul found no repentance after many years of rejecting the Word of the Lord. Esau sought repentance regarding the loss of his birthright, but he did not find it, even though he cried many bitter tears. Saul, Esau, and Judas all cried, but they were not restored. No mercy was shown to them. Of course, there is always a reason why God shows mercy to some but not to others. Judging from a human point of view, King David committed a greater sin than Saul, but David had a different kind of

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heart. His spirit was broken before the Lord. He was received back and he is going to be the king in the Millennium.

Judas and Peter both denied the Lord, but one denial was premeditated and the other denial was because of fear; and Peter wept bitterly. The first thing the angel said to the women at the tomb was to go and tell the disciples *and Peter* that Christ was risen from the dead (Mk.16:5-7). There was a great difference between Judas and Peter. Their hearts were entirely different. We must be so careful that we do not sin *willfully*. King David was overcome by a fault, but Saul's sin was calculated. He did it to retain the honor of the people. He disobeyed God's commandment to slay all the Amalekites. With Judas, it was a calculated betrayal, while Peter was overcome in his weakness. There is a big difference. The Apostle Jude said in 1:22: "And of some have compassion, making a difference." This is where we have to understand how God's mercy works.

There was a certain pastor who cried out to God one time and said, "Oh God, please give me Your compassion." And immediately God said: "Compassion belongs to Me. I will have compassion upon whom I choose to have compassion." There is all the difference in the world between someone being

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caught up in a weak moment and someone else whose heart is bent on evil. I am not excusing sin, please do not misunderstand me, but we have to make a difference between the two. When there is willful sin, there remains no more sacrifice.

10:28-29 *“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done [insult] to the Spirit of grace?”* Look at these words—“The blood, wherewith he was sanctified.” This could only be referring to a believer. The five warnings in Hebrews are to the believer, not to the world. We must not turn willfully from God and insult the Spirit of grace.

10:30 *“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.”* The Lord will judge, not only the world, but His people! The Apostle Peter said that judgment must first begin at the house of God. Therefore, we need to cry out continually, “Oh God, purify me!” The Lord Jesus Christ Himself declared, “He that committeth sin is the servant of sin, and the servant will not remain in the house forever” (see Jn.

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8:34-35). The man or woman who continues to commit sin will not remain in the house forever. I have seen this throughout my lifetime over and over again. Our churches would be filled if all those who had accepted Christ remained, but many do not. Many do not guard their hearts with all diligence and they turn back, as Peter said, like a dog to its own vomit. They go back to the pollutions of this world, and this applies to some preachers too.

Peter specifically speaks of deliverance ministers who promise freedom to others while they themselves are bound with iniquity. He describes them this way in Second Peter 2:15: “Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray.” These are ministers who were once in the way of righteousness but have gone astray. “These are wells without water, [meaning the Spirit has left them] clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2 Pet. 2:17-19). There are ministers

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who preach unrighteousness, condone wickedness, and allure unstable saints who were once escaped from these things.

Our ministry does not save us. I have known preachers who have preached hell fire and brimstone. They preached hard, but do you know why they were preaching hard? It was to try to save themselves. They thought if they preached righteousness that their preaching would save them. But the Apostle John said, “Beloved, be not deceived, he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous” (1 Jn. 3:7).

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

John Bunyan was introduced in a dream to *the interpreter* in Pilgrim’s Progress. The interpreter showed him a very large cage in which a young man was sitting very morosely, sighing with deep

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sighs. The interpreter beckoned John Bunyan to ask him questions. So John Bunyan asked, "Why are you in this cage?" The young man replied, "I was once a believer who had escaped the lust of the world, and by all accounts of everyone else, was living a very righteous life." One could gather from his testimony that he had been turning others to the Lord in the early years of his Christian experience. But then something happened. He started listening to his former friends and dabbled with sin again. He was overcome and was brought back into bondage. His eternal fate was to sit in that cage and never be released again. This is more than a drama. These things are very real. Let us be not deceived by anyone. These awesome warnings in Hebrews are echoed by all the Apostles and by the Lord Himself.

10:31 *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* These are awesome warnings. Oh, let us cry out to God that we will be preserved by His power, and let us cry out to God that we be washed continually by the blood of Christ. We are washed continually by the blood of Christ only as we walk in the light, in the truth. Then we will have fellowship with the Father and His Son.

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10:32-34 *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the [confiscation] of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance.”*

The Hebrew Christians were falling away from the Lord. In times of revival the crowds come into the Church, but then there is a time of testing and many fall away. “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, [or after you came to the light and were saved] ye endured a great fight of afflictions.” Paul was telling these Jewish believers to remember the time when they first found Christ as their Savior. Their hearts had been so full of love and zeal for Christ; also, they had great compassion on Paul when he was in prison and in bonds. They were willing to have their goods confiscated and be ostracized from their other Jewish brethren in order to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ and His prisoner, the Apostle Paul. The Hebrews were willing to suffer greatly, knowing

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in their hearts that they would have a better and an enduring substance in heaven. Christ Himself said, "He that giveth a cup of cold water to a prophet, shall have a prophet's reward" (Mt.10:41-42).

10:35 *"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."* We have already mentioned the experience of the young girl who was taken up into heaven in a vision. In heaven she saw that there are rewards even for handshakes, smiles and little acts of kindness. Can you imagine how much greater the rewards would have been for the Hebrew saints because of all their sufferings for Christ! Ironically, although they had suffered enormously for their testimony, they were about ready to give up everything. This is the reason Paul urged them not to cast away their confidence which would bring them tremendous rewards.

10:36 *"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."* Abraham had to wait a long time and he had to do things God's way before he obtained the promises. The greater blessings are not given lightly in the kingdom of God. It is the same way in the natural. A loving father gives his son little things to start with. He waits until his son matures before he gives him precious things. You would never give your little daughter a costly chain of pearls, would

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you? You would give her little imitation pearls. So it is with Christians. God does not give us the costly things until we have been faithful in the smaller, natural matters of life.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” Even when we carry out God’s will, we still need to have the endurance to wait until it is *God’s time* to give us a promise. Proverbs 20:21 says, “An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.” Saul was raised up quickly and given the kingdom, but his end was disastrous. Solomon, too, became king at the age of nineteen, yet his end was very dismal. By contrast, those who come up slower and have paid a price for the ministry usually become very stable and have lasting honor. Moses spent forty years in the wilderness and became one of the candlesticks mentioned in Revelation 11:4. He and Elijah are the two witnesses who stand on the right and the left hand of the Lord. These two men paid a very high price for the ministry, and this involved long periods of delay and barrenness.

10:37-38 *“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”* Paul is preparing the

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way for the next chapter which is the chapter on faith. “Now the just shall live by faith.” This is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4. We live by the grace of God, by the mercy of God, and by the faith of God. Therefore, we need to have a continuous relationship with Christ in order to have the anointing and to be triumphant.

“But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Having attained an experience in Christ, there is always the danger of drawing back. I have known people who have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and afterwards they have compromised that truth. Others who have been used in preaching have turned away from the Lord. Still others who have been used by God to heal the sick and perform miracles have fallen by the wayside. I have known of many who have drawn back and no longer allow the flow of the Holy Spirit because they esteem the honor of men more than the honor that comes from God. They are not willing to endure the reproach that comes with a new experience in God. But then Paul triumphantly declares of himself and those who are with him:

10:39 *“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; [and you can draw back to the place where you are lost] but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”* May God grant us His grace to

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ever be a people who are pressing on and on. Lest anyone thinks he has attained to all that God has, I would like to conclude this section by looking at First Corinthians 2:9. "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Paul is saying that God has much more in store for us than we could possibly imagine. Therefore, there must be a continual pressing on to know the Lord more and more.

Life is a race. As you become older, you have to run harder. In a long distance race, you start off at an easy cadence, but as you near the winning post you have to increase your speed. Therefore, the older you become, the more you have to study and press on into the Lord.

Paul continues in First Corinthians 2:10: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." This verse is stated in the present continuous action. It means that the Holy Spirit is constantly searching out the things of God and revealing them unto us. Daniel 12:4 tells us that in the last days knowledge shall increase. Scientists are constantly searching and seeking, and trying to break through barriers into new realms of learning. If this be true in the natural, and Paul says it is first the natural then the spiritual, surely in these last days God has

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reserved the best revelation until last. He has far more knowledge to impart to His Church than we could ever imagine.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth. He said that the Spirit shall take of the things that belong to Him and reveal them unto us. Therefore, with this promise in mind we should pray: “Oh, blessed Holy Spirit, I am so slow to perceive. Please open up your Word to me.” There is a beautiful prayer in Psalm 119:18 where the psalmist cries: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” Each time we open up the Bible, we should always come reverentially, asking for the aid of the divine Spirit. And as the Lord opens His Word, we will be transformed more and more into a mature son or daughter of the Most High and bring Him much joy.

Part 10

11:1-40 - THE TESTIMONY OF FAITH

11:1-2 *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.”* Faith is a substance; it is something very tangible. The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:8 that faith is not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. Therefore, when God gives us faith we can feel it, and we know we have it in our heart. Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

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Perhaps we could paraphrase this and say that faith is the *assurance* that we are going to receive the things we have hoped for because faith always produces that for which it is given.

God imparts to us from time to time a *specific* faith for specific needs. He does not give us a *blanket* faith that covers everything at once. He gives a specific faith. First of all, He gives us faith for salvation. Then He imparts faith to us to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Faith is also bestowed upon us so that we can know the Lord as the Provider of all of our needs. We will see throughout the testimony of faith in this chapter that the men of old received faith for specific purposes. In actuality, they received faith to accomplish the will of God. Faith is *assurance*; it is the evidence that the things we hope for are going to materialize. It was through this faith—the faith of God—that the elders, patriarchs, prophets, and men of old received a good report.

11:3 *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”* Faith is given so that we might understand creation. Today there are all kinds of theories about evolution, but upon careful, open-minded examination we will find that evolution is scientifically impossible. Even from the DNA theory it is

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nonsense for evolution to even be considered. This whole universe is very well ordered and it operates under the control of a Divine Being. It is through faith that we understand creation; and it is by faith that we understand that there is a Divine Being and a loving God. Through faith we can be men and women of purpose, knowing where we have come from and where we are going.

It is God who gives us this precious commodity called *faith*; faith is one hundred percent divine. However, the Apostle Paul tells us that not all men have faith (2 Thes. 3:2). When people are destitute of faith they fall into grievous errors. In his book entitled "Visions of Heaven and Hell," John Bunyan recounts the story of a time when the Lord took him to hell and he met one of the leading exponents of evolution who lived just prior to his day. John Bunyan asked him, "Art thou this great man who wrote a book on evolution, trying to dispel the notion that there is a God?" The man replied, "On earth I was praised, but in hell I am one of the lowest of creatures." Even the demons mocked him, saying, "How could you possibly believe that theory?"

Regretfully, those who espouse these delusions will have a rude awakening when they pass from this life into hell and eternity. John Bunyan asked a number of others in hell, "Did you really believe your

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atheistic theories?” They acknowledged, “We tried to persuade others, but ourselves we could not persuade.” They could not convince themselves because in mankind there is a conscience that always cries out against such absurdities.

11:4 *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”* We now come to faith that enables us to offer a more excellent sacrifice. This sacrifice was offered by Abel, but in actuality it started with Adam. When Adam sinned, God clothed him with the skins of animals, meaning that it was necessary for blood to be shed for man to be redeemed. Presumably, they were the skins of sheep or lambs, portraying the Lamb of God who would die for the sins of the world. Cain fully understood this. Yet when the two brothers came to offer up a sacrifice to God, Cain offered up the fruits of his own hands, which indeed was an abomination to God.

Abel, on the other hand, offered up some of his flock, and his sacrifice was accepted by God. It is called “a more excellent sacrifice.” God witnessed to this action that he was righteous. Abel’s offering was by faith. He had faith in the blood. Abel came to God on *God’s* terms, but Cain came on *his own*

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terms. It is only by faith, by relationship, that we can know which sacrifices to make, and it is by faith that we are enabled to offer them. Now we come to what we call “translation faith.”

11:5 *“By faith Enoch was translated: and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* Enoch is a type of those who will be translated and will not see death in the last days. Revelation 12:5 speaks of this special group called the manchild. This is a company of devout believers who are caught up to heaven and do not see death. Enoch’s life gives us the qualifications for being in this blessed group. He was a man who walked with God and pleased God. The Lord Jesus said that we should pray to be counted worthy to escape the things that are going to come upon the earth (Lk. 21:36).

Now we come to verse six, which is the counterpart of verse two. In verse two we are told that the elders obtained a good report through faith, but in verse six Paul gives us this warning:

11:6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Faith is the only way to receive God’s approbation; our own works are not sufficient, as we learned from the life of Cain. We must not seek

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to please the Lord by good works, although they are important. It is a life of faith (which takes God at His word) that really pleases His heart.

We also need to realize that the whole purpose of prayer is to *receive*. It is to accomplish something. When we come to the Lord and make our petition to Him, we must believe the words of Christ in Luke 11:9-10. He said that everyone who asks (and keeps on asking) shall receive. Therefore, we must hold on until we receive that for which we ask. God is a rewarder, not of those who seek Him, but of those who *diligently* seek Him. We must persevere in prayer and continue praying until we get the answer.

11:7 *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”* Perhaps this could be called “faith to build an ark.” This was a very remarkable situation because in Noah’s day it had never rained upon the earth. It seems as though there was a mist or dew that watered the earth (Gen. 2:6). Yet Noah had to receive faith from God to believe that there was going to be a universal flood. So often we find that these heroes of faith had to

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believe for things that had never happened before. They were forerunners of what God wants to do in these last days. Enoch received faith to be translated, and Noah built an ark because he believed a worldwide deluge was coming. He prepared an ark which became the preservation of the human race. The ark is symbolic of a place of refuge. Our homes, for example, should be a covert from the tempests. They should be overshadowed with God's presence and covered with the blood of Christ.

I remember the story of a certain lady who had prayed faithfully for her drunken husband. One night as her husband was staggering home, he started to hear the voices of demons saying, "You belong to us; you belong to us; and we are going to get you." As the demons chased him, he began running faster and faster. Spirits, however, can move with great rapidity and they kept up with him until he came to the gate of his garden. Then they said, "We cannot enter here because this house and garden are covered by the blood." This man fumbled his way through the garden into the house and found his wife. Then he fell down on his knees and cried out to God for salvation. His home had been made a haven from the storms of life and from the adversary because of the prayers and godly character of his wife. Let us also make our homes *arks of safety*.

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11:8 *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”* There are several things I would like to say about this remarkable couple named Abraham and Sarah. The first thing is with respect to their call. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees which was a very large city near Babylon, and he was evidently a very prosperous man. Scripture says he “went out not knowing whither he went.” This verse requires a little explanation. In Genesis 11:31 we find that his father Terah went with him.

His father said, “Let us go unto the land of Canaan.” Ur was a great distance from Canaan. To go from Ur all the way to the land of Canaan required a clear word of direction from God. He could not just go anywhere. God had told him specifically to go to the land of Canaan, though he did not tell him exactly where in Canaan. This is the reason Paul says that “he went out not knowing whither he went.”

When God tells us to go out, it is important to ask Him *where!* If we are called to be a missionary, we cannot just say, “I am called to be a missionary.” A missionary has a specific country to which he is

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called, and he also must have a specific locale in that country for his home base. So let us realize that Abraham did have an understanding of the country of his calling.

11:9-10 *“By faith he sojourned [or dwelt] in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* The same promises given to Abraham were passed on to Isaac and Jacob. Abraham was content to move up and down in that land and dwell in tents because his eyes were fixed upon an eternal reward and an eternal city. Abraham must have had a vision of New Jerusalem in heaven.

11:11-12 *“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”* Abraham and Sarah had the same call and the same purpose. It is so important to have a companion with the same call. This is one of the things the Lord stressed to my wife before we ever met. God promised He would give her a companion of like

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precious vision and calling. It is so important to realize that we are not just called to marry a believer. No, we must marry one who has the same vision. If you are a woman, you should be a helpmate to your man. If you have a call to go in one direction and he is called to go in another direction, there will be many frustrations in your life. Therefore, the marriage partner of God's choice for you will be a believer who has the same call, vision, and promises as you do.

Sarah had to believe God to receive divine strength to conceive when she was long past the age of childbearing. The promises made to Abraham depended upon Sarah. God told Abraham that the heir would come forth out of his own loins and inherit the promises. Of course, the promises that God makes to us are realized in our spiritual children too. There is a promise to the barren in Isaiah 54:1,3: "Sing, O barren, ... For thou shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Our inheritance is in our spiritual seed, our spiritual children. Therefore, Sarah was an integral part of the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

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Sarah is one of the seven barren women in the Word of God. These seven women are: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Samson's mother, Elizabeth, and Mary. These women were barren for a time, but they all brought forth a significant manchild. Sarah brought forth Isaac; Rebekah brought forth Jacob; Rachel brought forth Joseph; Hannah brought forth Samuel; Manoah's wife brought forth Samson; and Elizabeth brought forth John the Baptist. Mary, of course, brought forth the Son of God. God leads His children into spiritual barrenness where we are tried and tested. It is in this place of weakness and seeming unfruitfulness that we receive faith to break forth on the right hand and on the left. God will bring forth a spiritual seed from us who will inherit all that He has promised us.

11:13-14 *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."* There is a truth that is very important here, and it is the fact that the Old Testament saints did not enter into the fullness of God's promises. The fulfillment of these promises was reserved for us, as we shall see in verses 39-40.

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King David had a revelation that the Levitical sacrifices and offerings were something God did not require. He had an understanding that the real thing God was after was obedience, not sacrifice. God desired someone who would listen and respond from the heart to His words. He longed for the man or woman in whose heart was His law. David was living in the Old Testament era, but he embraced the New Testament promise of having a new heart. The saints of old “were persuaded of [the promises] and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.”

The country that Abraham was seeking was not just the physical land of Canaan; it was the heavenly country. Therefore, we also should lay hold of the things that are in heaven and be heavenly minded. Colossians 3:1-2 says: “If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” We should seek heavenly things and live in the light of heaven’s glory here upon earth. This is what Abraham and Sarah did.

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11:15 *“And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.”* In this verse we have one of the most awesome warnings in the Word of God. This is a temptation I have seen a number of people succumb to during my life and ministry.

If God sends us as missionaries to a foreign land, we must learn to be content there. If we start comparing that land with our homeland, and we keep wishing and praying that we were back home, we are preparing ourselves for God to open up a door for us to return. Yet in so doing, we are going to forfeit our reward and lose our crown.

Just before I went to the mission field the first time, I heard a young Englishman tell how he had been a missionary to another part of Europe, but then returned to England permanently. He was only in his twenties. He testified that he kept longing to go back home to England while he was on the mission field. He said: “God opened up the way for me to return, but I know that I will never get back to the mission field again. God will not permit me to return.” I will tell you this: that really did something to

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me. I thank God that He allowed me to hear that testimony. It has had a tremendous impact upon my life. I certainly do not want to go back home prematurely and lose my crown.

11:16 *“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”* The city Paul is making reference to here is Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a truth that Paul is going to enunciate in the following chapters.

11:17-19 *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”* We could call this “the trial of our faith.” Our willingness to offer up what is most precious to us determines whether we are going to come into the promises of God. The Lord will test every one of us to see what we love most—the ministry or Him. There comes a time when God requires us to give back the call and ministry He has given to us. This “sacrifice” became a reality to me many years ago in France.

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France was the first country to which I was called. After being stationed there for several years, I went to Switzerland because God had opened the door for me to minister there. When I tried to return to France, I was stopped at the border by an inspector who took my passport and said, "You must come with me." He demanded, "Who are you?" When I replied, "I am a pastor!" his face dropped. Then he said: "Well, what have you done? Your name is posted at every frontier in France, and we have instructions not to let you enter."

The inspector called the local governor about my situation, and he said, "Release him, but he must sign a statement that he will never come into the country again." Naturally, I wondered what had happened, so I made several inquiries. I learned that I had not only been denied entrance into France, but I had also been permanently expelled by the man to whom I had applied for a resident visa.

Shortly after this, I went to a meeting where the Lord started to deal with me about certain things in my life. As I confessed the needs in my life, I felt the waters of the Spirit flowing throughout my being, cleansing me. After this new meeting with God and fresh cleansing, I received a letter from a

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government official in France saying, “A visa is awaiting you.” At the border, I passed through the very same frontier post to go into France and the same inspector happened to be on duty. When he saw me he was about to pounce upon me again, and I just smiled and waved this little letter before him. Unwillingly, he said to me in French, “Oh, pass through, sir.”

I just want to say this—God tested me during that time. I knew the Lord had said, “I have called you to France and I have an inheritance for you in France.” At that time I had to be willing to give it all up and never see France again. God was proving my heart. After I made a new consecration to God, I received the letter saying I could return to the country.

God had stirred up the British Council General to complain about the way the official had treated me, especially since I was a pastor. He told the governor and the governor was furious because this situation could have affected relations between England and France. The governor reproved the man who had expelled me from the country and made him sign a letter that I could come to France and live there as long as I desired. Certainly, God can change the minds of governments. However, God wanted to change my heart first and do a deep work of grace in me so that I put the Lord first in my

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life as Abraham did. I had to be willing to give up my call to France before that call could be resurrected.

Abraham had to offer up his son Isaac. He had to believe that God would resurrect Isaac, because in Isaac were all his promises. There comes a time in our lives when we have to surrender our call to God. At that point, we realize that we cannot continue unless God gives it back.

11:20 *“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”* In this verse we see “the faith of blessing” whereby Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. There is a specific anointing of faith which enables us to lay our hands upon people and bring forth a prophetic word for them concerning what God wants for their lives. The prophetic mantle operates by faith.

11:21 *“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”* This is “the faith of worship.” This worship comes from faith. In this case it was a faith that believed God would bring forth the promises through Joseph and his sons. This faith inspired worship to flow from Jacob.

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11:22 *“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”* This might sound a little strange, but we have “burial faith” in this account of Joseph. I was talking with several ministers one time about how expensive it is to have a funeral here in America. The ministers were saying: “Just a cardboard box is good enough for me, I will be in heaven anyway. Why waste the money?” I was just about to agree with the general consensus of the conversation. Then the Spirit of the Lord spoke very clearly to my heart: “Oh, then why was it so important for Jacob to be buried in his inheritance? And why was it so important for Joseph to be buried in his inheritance if it does not matter where you are buried?” I will just leave that for you to ponder. “Burial faith” is to be buried in the place God has ordained for us.

When the famous missionary to Africa, David Livingstone, died, his body was taken to Westminster Abbey in England and buried there, but his heart was buried in Africa. His heart was buried there because Dr. Livingstone gave his life for Africa and it was the land of his inheritance. He embraced wholeheartedly the land of his adoption and never complained about his environment or homesickness for England. This is the hallmark of a *true* missionary.

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11:23 *“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”* Here is “faith to be hidden.” There are other cases in God’s Word when God hid people to protect them. In Jeremiah 36:26 God hid the prophet. We want to believe God to preserve us in times of difficulty (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:4). There are a number of promises in the Scriptures that we will be hidden by the Lord during times of judgment if our ways please Him. This divine protection comes through faith.

11:24-26 *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”*

In these verses the Apostle Paul presents us with the “faith to choose,” for it says that Moses chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” We need faith at times to make the right choice in life. Many times the right decisions are costly and painful, but by faith we can understand that the *prize* is so much greater than the *price*.

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11:27 *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”* This is “faith to forsake.” Sometimes we need to have faith to forsake our own country, our own land, and even our parents in order to go where God calls us. We must have faith from God to forsake these things. Some people do not have that faith and cannot forsake their loved ones when God tells them to.

11:28 *“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.”* There is also a faith to celebrate the Passover. This is faith for salvation. Salvation faith is seen in Ephesians 2:8: “By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourself: it is the gift of God.” We need to have salvation faith to appropriate the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross and to appropriate His saving grace. Christ died for all mankind, and although many believe that there is a God, they are not born again unless they receive faith to embrace the Savior.

11:29 *“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.”* Then there is faith to pass over the Red Sea. Moses had faith to take the children of

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Israel across the Red Sea. It represents the faith necessary to be water baptized (cf. 1 Cor. 10:2). By faith we go down into the waters of baptism, identifying with the death and resurrection of Christ, and come up with new strength to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5).

Water baptism is a foundational truth (Heb. 6:1-2); without it no one will be able to press on to the deeper truths and experiences of God, such as going within the veil. Water baptism is a very important step of obedience in the Christian life. As Christ was water baptized to fulfill all righteousness, so should we (Mt. 3:15).

11:30 *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”* Jericho was an enemy fortress. Sometimes we need to receive faith from God to see the enemy’s fortresses fall before us. There was a key to subduing Jericho. For six days they had to march around the city, one time each day, and on the seventh day they had to march around the city seven times, making a total of thirteen circuits.

God will also give us a special key for our particular situation that will bring down the enemy forces. Sometimes the key is literally to walk around a building, but other times it could be something else.

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We must hear from God concerning the key for our release. There are no master keys in God's kingdom. Each battle requires a new battle plan. This is the reason we need to have a sensitive heart that can hear the Lord when He speaks to us.

11:31 *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”* In verse thirty-one we have “faith to be preserved in a time of destruction.” Jericho was destroyed, but Rahab the harlot had faith to be preserved. Judgments are coming upon the earth, and we need to enter into this area of faith whereby we receive faith from God to be saved from judgments and destruction (cf. Zeph. 2:1-3).

11:32 *“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.”* In the closing verses of chapter eleven is a list of other heroes of faith. Gideon is called a “mighty man of valor” in Judges 6:12. He is best known for laying a fleece before the Lord by faith. The account of his life is given in Judges chapters six through eight.

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Barak destroyed the evil armies of Sisera as he received direction from Deborah, the prophetess, by faith. Barak's life is recorded in Judges chapters 4-5. Samson appropriated faith to manifest the tremendous strength of God (Judg. 13-16). By faith Jephthah rose above his background of being illegitimate and became a deliverer to his brethren who had rejected him earlier in life. This narrative is seen in Judges chapters 11-12.

David's life is recorded from First Samuel chapter 16 to Second Samuel chapter 24. He is known most for the slaying of Goliath. This required great faith, yet David's faith is seen in a multitude of other ways. Then there is the great prophet Samuel, whose immaculate life and ministry caused a whole nation to yearn for God. Samuel and Moses are linked together as great intercessors (cf. Psa. 99:6, Jer. 15:1).

11:33-34 *“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”* In these verses we

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see the gift of faith that moves mountains. Below in verses 35-38 is a manifestation of the fruit of faith that causes us to endure.

11:35-38 *“Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented [or evil treated]; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”*

Then there follows ten specific intense sufferings that the children of faith endured in verses 35-38. They endured because they received faith and grace from God.

Ten intense sufferings the children of faith endured:

1. *Women received their dead raised to life.* (This means they first had to see their loved ones die.)
2. Others were tortured, refusing to accept deliverance in order to receive a better resurrection.
3. Others endured cruel mockings and scourgings.
4. They experienced bonds and imprisonment.
5. *Some were stoned; some were sawn asunder.* (Isaiah was sawn asunder by King Manasseh.)
6. *They were tempted.* (In temptations there is faith given to us to endure.)
7. Many were slain with the sword.
8. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins.
9. *They were destitute, afflicted, and tormented.* (In the time of the Maccabeans they were persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who is a type of the coming Antichrist who will also persecute the Christians.)
10. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

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These are ten aspects of suffering which the saints in olden times received faith to endure. Therefore, let us take heart and be encouraged that no matter what we may go through, we can be kept by the power of God through faith!

11:39 *“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.”* What was the promise? It was to go within the veil and to come to perfection. It was to enter in to the promises that God had made to the Church Age.

11:40 *“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”* The Old Testament saints were not made perfect (or complete). There remains for us yet a rest to enter into. God has made full provision for a New Testament believer to enter within the veil and come to perfection. Let us thank God for these wonderful testimonies of those who have gone before us and may they be a source of tremendous strength for us in our time of need. Remember, these heroes of faith received faith from God to perform a specific purpose and to do God’s will. Let us now briefly review these mighty acts of faith.

THE ACTS OF FAITH

1. The Sacrifice of Faith (Abel - 11:4)
2. The Walk of Faith (Enoch - 11:5)
3. The Work of Faith (Noah - 11:7)
4. The Obedience of Faith (Abraham - 11:8)
5. The Strength of Faith (Sarah - 11:11)
6. The Trial of Faith (Abraham - 11:17)
7. The Blessing (or mantle) of Faith (Isaac - 11:20)
8. The Worship of Faith (Jacob - 11:21)
9. The Triumph of Faith (Joseph - 11:22)
10. The Decision of Faith (Moses and his parents - 11:23-24)
11. The Source of Faith (11:27)
12. The Endurance of Faith (Moses - 11:27)
13. The Power of Faith (11:28-38)

Part 11

12:1-13 - THE PATIENCE OF HOPE

Chapter Twelve could be divided into two parts. The first part is entitled “The Patience of Hope” in verses 1-13. Afterwards we have Paul’s fifth warning in verses 14-29. Let us have a look at verse one.

12:1 *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is*

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set before us.” We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. A cloud is something that is above the earth, and it speaks of the angelic hosts that are all around us. Those who have had their spiritual eyes opened know that we are surrounded by angels. Every child of God has his own personal angel. The government of this universe is entrusted into the hands of angels. Angels are everywhere. There is a tendency to think that Satan is everywhere too, but he does not have the power to be everywhere at once. However, he does have many fallen angels under his authority.

When Elisha was surrounded by the enemy at the hill of Dothan, he asked the Lord to open the eyes of his worried young servant. Elisha declared, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” When the Lord opened the young man’s eyes, he saw that they were surrounded with horses and chariots of fire (see 2 Kgs. 6:13-17). This is an important truth. We should realize that there are angels everywhere and that they are observing us.

For this reason the Apostle says we should lay aside all these weights and sins to run a race. Anyone who runs a race must divest himself of every possible weight and be clothed very lightly so that he can run unhindered. A lot of things that we do in life are very unnecessary! They are weights and

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burdens we do not need to carry. Therefore, we should prayerfully ask the Lord which things we should lay aside so that we can run the race without hindrance.

Then Paul says, *“and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”* A besetting sin is often a sin which has been passed down from several generations. It is something that we just cannot seem to be able to shake off. But if we will go to the Lord, he will break every chain. We can find deliverance in Christ from the sin that has bothered us for so many years. We should not think that because it is passed down from generation to generation it cannot be broken. It can be broken! We have the possibility of complete deliverance in Christ.

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Basically, a race is run with a certain cadence. A skilled runner does not have bursts and spurts of energy; he paces himself. This is how the mature saint runs the race of life—with a harmonious cadence.

12:2 *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising [or scorning] the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Christ is our supreme role model. Jesus not only started the race, He also finished it. We

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should follow men who have been victorious. We are made in such a way that we need a role model. As in secular life, so it is in the spiritual life. We are encouraged by role models. Make sure you do not try to pattern yourself after the wrong heroes.

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.” Here is the key to victory. How did the Captain of our salvation win the battle? He triumphed because He saw into heavenly places. He beheld the eternal joy that was awaiting Him there. It is very important to have a revelation of eternity and to become heavenly minded. Thoughts of heaven condition our thinking and our actions. I have physically died; I know what it is like to die. The angel of the Lord or the Lord Himself comes for you and you travel with enormous speed to heaven. Just before crossing over the river in heaven, you see your whole life spread out before you in cameos. Then you are shown God’s purpose for your life, and you see whether you fell short or hit God’s mark for your life.

Therefore, we must realize that Jesus had a mark to hit—the cross. He knew what His mark was. But how did He have the strength to succeed? He endured because He had a glimpse of eternity. As He went to the cross and redeemed millions of His followers, He saw the eternal joy that would be His.

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This enabled Christ to despise (or ignore) the shame. Paul said that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will follow (Rom. 8:18). There is such shame to endure in the Christian life. The world pours contempt upon the life of a Christian, as it poured contempt upon the life of Christ. We are often reviled and mocked for the standards we uphold. Regretfully, the mocking does not only come from the world; it also comes from other believers who are not walking uprightly.

After the cross, Christ was “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” How we need to have a glimpse of what is in store for us. I have seen in visions some of the thrones of the overcomers (cf. Rev. 20:4) and oh, it is well worth it all, beloved, to attain unto that which God has for you.

Oh, what eternal joy! Oh, to see His wonderful face, to see that lovely smile and hear those words, “Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Therefore, we should constantly meditate upon Christ as the One who started the race, and who also finished. We have started the race, but the whole purpose of starting a race is to finish it. It is not so important how we start the race, but how we finish.

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12:3 *“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”* There is a fierce battle we face which basically lies in our minds. People argue with us, and some of their arguments are very plausible indeed. They sound so rational, but they are deceptive. I am not speaking of unbelievers. I am referring to some in the Church who are very persuasive in presenting doctrines which cause people to live substandard to Christ’s high calling.

Some argue: “All that matters is that we make it to heaven! Christ has already paid it all and there is nothing more that we can do. We do not have to live a holy life. All these other things are just legalism and bondage.” But all we have to do is read the Book of Hebrews! The whole theme of Hebrews is holiness and perfection and being brought within the veil. Ecclesiastes 11:3 says that where the tree falleth, there it shall lie. Solomon is saying that the spiritual condition of someone at death is how he or she will remain for all eternity. Oh, may we have “an abundant entrance [or rich welcome] into the kingdom of heaven” as Peter says.

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12:4 *“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”* Several times I have been in conferences where other ministers have attacked me from the pulpit. Some opposed me because I said the Antichrist is coming, and they argued that there is no Antichrist. Well, you would have to remove many verses from the Bible to make that point. But you know, listening to them really affects you. It is an evil spirit attacking you through them, and it starts to attack your mind. Your mind comes under a great cloud and you feel great tension.

There are others who say that you receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost when you are born again, but that is not in accordance with the Word of God either. In Acts 19:1-2 Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus, “Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?” That is a scriptural question. Here were believers in Ephesus who had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Others endorse and encourage divorce and remarriage, and these contradictions war against your mind.

This is what happened to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The temptation and conflict in His mind were so great that the blood vessels in his mind broke and great drops of blood streamed down

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His face. The Apostle Paul said we have not yet come to that place where our minds have broken from the pressure of contradiction and striving against sin.

12:5 *“Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.”* Paul is quoting from Proverbs 3:11-12. We have not striven against sin to the point that our mind has collapsed. We are, however, chastened through other situations in life, because God is testing us and trying us. Are we going to take the easy path? Are we going to give up? The rewards in heaven are so great; therefore, the trials and the qualifications must be equally as great. Thus, we have to pass through all the necessary chastening. In verse six Paul tells us who is chastised.

12:6 *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* Chastening and scourging are very strong words! There are times when you think that you are going to break as the Lord chastens and scourges; but consider whom He chastens and scourges—the ones whom He loves. Some Christians preach an unbalanced doctrine of prosperity. They believe that once you have received Christ, everything is going to be all right. You will have no problems and

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no trials whatsoever. And if you do, it is because you are ignorant of God's Word or you are lacking in faith.

One dear soul said that if the Apostle Paul had only known and understood the prosperity doctrine, he would never have suffered. Somehow I doubt that Paul would have embraced this "new enlightenment." Yes, it is possible to have an easier Christian life, but we would have no crown at the end. The Lord does not train half-hearted Christians. He allows them to go their own way, and He does not deal with them. But those whom He loves, He chastens and scourges.

12:7 *"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"* During our training time we have to endure; we must not give up. Even in sports there is tremendous training, with the temptation to give up before coming onto the field to play. Here is the condition to coming into the promises of God: "if you endure chastening." If we keep crying out to our Heavenly Father for grace to endure, then "God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

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12:8 *“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye [illegitimate], and not sons.”* It is very true in our day and generation that there are many illegitimate children. The percentage is awesome. There are multitudes of families that do not have a father as the head of the home. Many have been abandoned and allowed to run around as they please. It is an awful situation, and the fruit in their lives is terrible. But we do not want to be as these undisciplined and neglected children. We want to know our Father and be trained by Him. Paul says we can make ourselves illegitimate by our own doing if we refuse the corrections of our heavenly Father. If a believer constantly refuses correction he will remain unchanged. As a result the Father will say to him, “You do not bear My resemblance; you are not My son.”

12:9 *“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”* So many people reject God's chastenings; and because they reject God's chastenings, they are passed over so that they do not go on in the Christian life. Therefore, we should consider Leviticus 26:40-42 for a moment.

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“And if they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquities: Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob.” I would like to bring out a certain truth here. When we accept God’s dealings which are remedial and unto life, then we become candidates for His blessings.

When God disciplines and chastens us, if we will *accept* the trials He is passing us through, then God will remember His covenant and restore unto us His blessings. He will bring us within the veil. But I have seen some people reject God’s dealings over and over again. They have said: “I will not allow my family to be subject to these conditions. I want a certain standard of living for my family. I will not let my wife or my children go through these difficulties.” Therefore, they squirm their way out of the trials. In so doing they go around God’s purposes and they begin to wander. When we turn a deaf ear to God, divine guidance ceases, and we have chosen to be on our own.

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Oh, how important it is to realize that we have to place everything upon the altar of sacrifice. We have to yield our rights to God. There was a time when my wife and I had to walk the streets in the winter with no money and no food. We could have easily picked up a phone and told our friends and relatives and other Christians of our need, and they would have been horrified. They would have given us everything we needed. Yet, in this particular situation, the Lord said, “Do not do that, because if you do, you are going to remove yourself from My trial.” If you complain and try to change your circumstances, He will say, “You are out; I will no longer deal with you.” We have to accept our God-ordained circumstances. I have seen people refuse discipline, and the result is that they are bypassed.

12:10 *“For they [referring to our natural fathers] verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”* This is the only way we are going to be partakers of God’s holiness—through chastenings and scourging. It is not a pleasant phase of our life; it is very painful. But the blessings that follow are astronomical.

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12:11 *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”* The Apostle Paul was an example of longsuffering (cf. 1 Tim.1:16). Yet he also acknowledges that chastening can be very grievous. The Apostle Paul appears so triumphant but we should observe some other scriptures concerning him. He stated, for example, in Second Corinthians 1:8 that he “despaired even of life.” That was not exactly sailing in pleasant waters, was it? “Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Beloved, it is worth it all when we see the reward for all our troubles.

There was a time in my life when I was very sick. I was bedfast for quite a number of weeks. All I could do was lie there and look out of the window, and all I could see was a tremendous tree. It was very strong and when the winds blew against it, the trunk did not budge. The Lord spoke to my heart and said: “If you will endure this time of suffering, I will make you like this tree.” At the time I felt so weak! My dear wife was looking after me and it seemed as though I was never going to get out of that bed! Well, in due time God delivered me from my crucible, but during that time it had worked strength

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in me. These ordeals produce “the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” We have to be exercised in chastenings and scourgings.

So many give up when they are in the ministry. Many people think a minister’s life is an easy one but that is not the truth. When one little boy was asked by a teacher at school what his father did for his work, he said, “Oh, my father doesn’t work; he is a preacher.” But the little boy had no concept of the ministry. If the ministry were just preaching, a pastor’s duty would be completed after preaching three times a week. But it is much more than that. The ministry is enduring the pressures. It is paying the price to be made conformable to Christ and then leading others into the same pathway. It is a twenty-four hour job, I assure you, because even when you sleep, you are being dealt with by God. Therefore, Paul exhorts us in verse twelve, saying:

12:12 *“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.”* There are times when we grow so weary that we question whether we will be able to endure another day. During the long, hard trial of Job, God said to Job, “Gird up your loins and be a man” (see Job 38:3). Yet, God promises to give us sufficient strength for our days.

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12:13 *“And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”* This is such an important truth. Trials are intended to make us better, not bitter. But if we refuse to accept them with the right attitude, they can turn us out of the way or even destroy us. Now Paul starts a fifth warning, although he has already been leading up to this. The fifth warning could be summed up like this: “Beware of sin and rejection of Jesus.” It takes us from verses fourteen to twenty nine.

The Fifth Warning - 12:14-29

Beware of Sin and Rejection of Jesus

12:14 *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* We are commanded to live peaceably with all men, but in order to do so, we must *first* have peace in our own heart. The peace of God must rule our life. We must have that peace. The peace of God is literally an umpire as Colossians 3:15 says: “And let the peace of God rule [or be an umpire] in your hearts.” The peace of God indicates whether or not we are in bounds. It is like an umpire. We have peace with God as long as we are allowing God to straighten us (Rom. 5:1).

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Just as a printer justifies or straightens the right margin of a page, so the Lord is straightening our lives. As long as we are yielding to the work of the Spirit and we are allowing God to conform us to his image, we have the peace of God. But when we refuse what God is saying, we lose our peace and we cease to grow. Peace and contentment are maintained by an obedient life. If we are rejecting what God is saying to our hearts, jealousy, anger, and strife will overrun our lives. And if these evils thrive within, we cannot have peaceable relationships with others, nor can we be holy.

We are made partakers of His holiness as we endure divine chastenings. Therefore, we must follow after (or pursue) holiness in order to become holy. Holiness must not only be *imputed* to us. We must not only be counted or reckoned holy. We must have *imparted* holiness in order to be a partaker of His holiness. This takes time. Holiness is perfected in our lives as we are cleansed from idols and as we continue to reverence the Lord in our time of testing and not grow hard (2 Cor. 7:1).

No man shall see the Lord without holiness. This point is made vividly clear by a remark made by the prophet Balaam in Numbers 24:17. He declared by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "I shall behold him, but not nigh." Balaam was saying that he would see God only from a distance in heaven.

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Heaven is very, very large. One can be in heaven but still not be in the presence of the Lord. There was a little girl from Zaire, about sixteen years of age, to whom God gave several remarkable visions of heaven. In one of the visions she was taken before the throne of God. The Lord spoke to her and said, “Not all Christians shall be able to come to my throne in heaven because of the idols in their hearts.”

Stunned by the revelation, the young girl went about preaching and teaching it everywhere. Her testimony made such an impact that she was invited to an interview on national radio and TV. So often in these talk shows, they have someone else there who has opposing views. So they selected the Cardinal Archbishop of Zaire to be on the air with this young girl. During the interview the commentator said to the Cardinal Archbishop, “Is it all right for Christians to have idols?” He responded: “It is all right to have little ones, not big ones.” So then the commentator turned and asked the girl, “And what do you say?” She affirmed, “Christians must have no idols whatsoever.” The commentator then replied to the girl, “Well, I believe *you* are right because *you* have seen Jesus and the Cardinal has not.”

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12:15 *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”* Verse fifteen is one of the most awesome verses in the Word of God because this verse shows us why some make it and others fail. This verse is the key to whether we triumph or fail. A trial is either going to make us better or bitter, but the choice is ours. The question of life is this—Will we rely on Christ’s life-sustaining grace in our time of trouble, or will we refuse grace, harden our hearts and become bitter? Grace is always available when we are in times of pressure (Heb. 4:16, 2 Cor.12:9) and His grace is always sufficient.

How do we react in a trial? What is our response to adversity? Remember, trials are permitted by God (unless, of course, our trials are self-induced or we get into some predicament through our own folly). Trials are permitted and ordained of God for our promotion. In a trial our attitude can be: “It’s not fair.” We might say, “Lord, please stop. I have had enough.” Or, “I do not have to put up with this. I am quitting.” But if that is our disposition, then hardness comes into our heart and we will become bitter. Many Christians have stumbled and have been offended because they have not relied implicitly on the grace of the Lord in their trial! They have not obtained God’s perspective of the situation, nor

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have they drawn on the grace of God to sustain them in their difficulties. Therefore, they are unable to go through the fire with a sound mind and they lack divine understanding of what is happening.

Those who fail in a trial and become bitter are those who have rejected the available grace of God. They have resisted grace, cherished an offense, and they are intent on infecting others. This is the terrible thing about bitterness. It is a root that springs up in one person who is bitter and he spreads it to many others. Many are defiled through the bitterness of one offended heart. The Word of God never teaches us that we have a right to be offended. Our only right is to take our offense to God and receive an impartation of His grace to sustain us in our injury. An offended heart, if left unchecked, will become exceedingly wicked. When a man or woman becomes offended, it will lead to hatred and betrayal of others (Mt. 24:10). One of the deceptions of offended brothers (Prov.18:19) or sisters is that they believe they have a right to be offended and to spread their offense to others. But this is a total contradiction of the whole tenor of Scripture. Hebrews 12:15 is perhaps one of the most important verses in the Word of God. It shows us how to triumph, and it also shows us why some fail, and why some turn away from the ways of God.

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12:16 *“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”* Esau had no respect for sacred, eternal things. He had no long-range vision. He only lived for present appetites. This is the reason Scripture says he *despised* his birthright (Gen. 25:34). Therefore, God had no respect for Esau.

12:17 *“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”* Esau was one of those people to whom God did not choose to show mercy. His brother Jacob was a deceiver. Jacob had many characteristics that were less than admirable. Why, then, did Jacob make it in the end, but not Esau? Jacob had respect to the recompense. He desperately wanted the blessings of God, but he went about it the wrong way. Therefore, God had to lead him through many hard trials and heartaches to straighten his crooked nature in order to make him worthy of the promises of God. Praise the Lord! Jacob prevailed to be in the lineage of promise. But Esau surrendered the birthright and, although he later “sought it carefully with tears,” it was irretrievable. Sometimes when you cross a line you cannot get back.

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12:18-21 *“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.)”* Now the Apostle Paul changes the subject and comes back to the journey of Israel. He is going to compare two mountains—the mountain of Sinai and the mountain of Zion.

“Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched (a physical mountain) that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.” Here at Mount Sinai the children of Israel could not endure hearing God’s voice. “And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.”

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“So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” That mountain was the physical mountain of Sinai, but spiritually it represents Pentecost. We might think that the Pentecostal blessing is so glorious that we would never have any trials like they had on Mount Sinai. But I am not so sure of that, because when we receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, it opens us up to the spirit world in a whole new dimension. After I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit my eyes were opened and I saw huge demons encircling me. They looked ferocious. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is wonderful, but it opens us up to the spirit world, and we have to walk in great humility. The Apostle Paul tells us that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers in heavenly places. I want to assure you that they are stronger than we are, and we only have dominion over them when we are anointed, walking in humility, and we are moving in the Spirit and have the mind of the Lord.

I remember an incident when an angel walked into my room in London, England. He was a beautiful angel, and I thought for a moment that he was an angel of God, until he turned around and took me by the throat. As I struggled to free myself from him, my hands went right through him and I could do

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nothing. The only thing I was able to do was cry out, “Jesus” in my spirit, and then he left me. I have no illusions; they are stronger than we are, but when we are in Christ and we are moving in Christ, we have the authority over them. I have said all this to say that there can be some terrifying experiences associated with the Pentecostal experience.

Mount Sinai represents the baptism in Holy Spirit. Sinai was *in the wilderness* on Israel's journey. It was not over in the glory land. Sinai was not Israel's final destination, nor is it ours. Rest is across Jordan in the land of promise. After Israel finally graduated from the wilderness and crossed Jordan, there were still numerous other battles to win and enemies to drive out. Eventually they subdued and occupied Mount Zion, the final stronghold in Canaan land. This is where God chose to localize His presence. This was His rest forever.

This is the mountain to which we are called. This is the destination of our spiritual journey. Let us not camp around Mount Sinai and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Let us go on to perfection. Perfection is within the veil. Within the veil is equivalent to Mount Zion, for this is where the ark of glory rested and is the place of all the other blessings.

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Ye are *not* come unto:

Sinai that might be touched
Burned with fire
Blackness
Darkness
Tempest
Sound of the trumpet
The voice of words

But ye are come unto:

Mount Zion
The city of the living God
Heavenly Jerusalem
Innumerable company of angels
General assembly
Church of the firstborn
God the Judge of all
Spirits of just men made perfect
Jesus-mediator of a new covenant
Blood of sprinkling that speaketh
better things than that of Abel

12:22-23 *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the*

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firstborn [ones], which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” This is the mountain we are called to, Mount Zion. This mountain is in New Jerusalem in heaven. Although heaven is very vast, there is a city there and in the city is Mount Zion. The Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, dwells on Mount Zion (Rev.14:1). Also, those who are closest to Him dwell on the holy mountain with Him (cf. Rev.14:1-5). It is here that there is an innumerable company of angels.

David captured the earthly hill of Zion in Jerusalem. After pitching a tent and placing the ark of the covenant on Zion’s hill, He asked, “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?” (cf. Psa. 24:3-5, 15:1-5). The Holy Spirit listed the qualifications necessary for ascending this spiritual plateau, and abiding there. Mount Zion, therefore, is a realm of the Spirit to which we are called. It is also a literal place in heaven.

Mount Zion’s inhabitants are the Lamb Himself and “an innumerable company of angels.” Also it is the dwelling place of the *firstborn ones*. In the original Greek, *firstborn* is plural. Firstborns were given a double portion. It means that those who are worthy to be on Mount Zion with the Lamb are those

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who have not sold their birthrights as did Esau. On this mountain are men and women whose spirits have been made perfect. “And to the spirits of just men made perfect.” How we need to cry out to God that our spirits be made perfect.

12:24 *“And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”* Paul tells us in First Timothy 2:5 that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. His blood “speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Abel was declared righteous by the blood of a lamb that he sacrificed, but thank God, we have a better sacrifice. We have the blood of Christ that can take us within the veil.

12:25 *“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.”* Again there is a warning that when God speaks, we must hear and obey Him. “For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth.” This is referring to the children of Israel in their wilderness journey when the angel spoke to them and they obeyed not, therefore, they were slain. “Much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” We must not turn our back

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upon the Lord, even as Jonah turned his back on the Lord. Mercifully, God so dealt with Jonah that He brought him back to his senses and allowed him to fulfill his ministry. But who would want to go into the belly of a whale to learn that lesson? Not all that refuse the Lord are restored back to Him. Remember Esau.

12:26 *“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.”* We understand from the Book of Revelation that the stars of heaven will fall. “Stars” in that context refer to Satan and his angels who shall fall from heaven in these last days. There will be a great shaking in heaven and earth.

12:27 *“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”* I want to say this, there is going to be a great shaking amongst the nations and we are beginning to see it now. There is going to be a great shaking everywhere. There is going to be “a falling away,” as Paul says, of law and order, and we are beginning to see this now (2 Thes. 2:3). That which is of man shall fail. Only that which is of God shall remain. Therefore it is imperative to warn those who do not preach holiness.

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People might seem to get away with things now, but when God starts shaking, the shaking comes into the Church too. Churches everywhere will be shaken and shaken and shaken, and only the true ones shall remain.

12:28 *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”* The kingdom of God is eternal. It cannot be shaken or moved. Therefore, we should invest all of our time and resources in those things which last forever.

“Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” This is what we have tried to stress in this book. We must press into God and come boldly to the throne of grace that we might receive grace from God in the time of our need. Grace is substance. It is life-sustaining. It is imparted to those who are humble in spirit. Grace is the only thing that changes us and keeps us. Grace is also enablement. It is only by God's enabling that we can serve Him acceptably and with godly fear.

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12:29 *“For our God is a consuming fire.”* According to First Corinthians 3:13, all of our works have to be tried by fire. Some years ago a friend of ours had a vision of heaven. In the vision there was a line in heaven and everyone in this line was holding great piles of works in his hands. These represented the works that they had accomplished on earth. As our friend looked on in this vision, he saw an evangelist come with great confidence carrying a whole pile of works to the angel at the entrance. The angel smiled graciously, took those works, and put them into the fire. Amazingly, all that came out of the fire was a very small heap. That was all the evangelist had left. Most of his life’s works had been reduced to ashes. After the evangelist, he saw a dear old lady come before the angel. Her works were not nearly as big as those of the evangelist but when the angel took those works and put them into the fire, they came out intact. The little lady actually had more lasting fruit to take into eternity than the evangelist.

This is the reason we have to be so careful that all our works are wrought of gold, silver, and precious stones. These represent divine works that withstand the fire. However, if our works are made of wood, hay and stubble, they will all be burned up. Many people spend their time working for Jesus,

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but so often they are doing it their way, not God's way, and it is wood, hay and stubble. Let us cry unto Him that everything we do in life will be born of God, not of ourselves, and that it may abide forever.

Part 12

13:1-25 - LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

13:1 *“Let brotherly love continue.”* *Continue* is a key word here. I would like to dwell on the word “continue” for a moment. So often there is a tendency to think that we have reached our destination and that we no longer have to press on. For this very reason we need to have an ongoing vision. Proverbs 29:18 says that “without a [progressive] vision the people perish [or dwell carelessly].” There must never be in our hearts the feeling that we have arrived (cf. Rev. 3:17). When this happens, we

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have come to a certain milestone along God's path for our lives, but we are unaware that there are still many more miles to travel.

I like to adopt Paul's thought in Philippians 3:14 of pressing toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. What is the mark and the prize of the high calling that we are pressing toward? It is to have a better resurrection and to be as close to Christ as possible in eternity. The Apostle Paul, the teacher of the Church, declared in Philippians 3:11, "If by any means I might attain unto the [out] resurrection [from among] the dead." He is speaking of the first resurrection here. Not every Christian is counted worthy to be in this resurrection before the Millennium (cf. Rev. 20:4-6). Then he continues in verse 12: "Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Paul had already been a Christian for twenty-eight years, but he was still reaching out for something.

Another significant feature of Philippians 3:10-14 is this—Paul penned this just six years prior to his martyrdom. His last words in Second Timothy 4:6-7 were: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the

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faith.” This was written only weeks before his martyrdom. Six years prior to his martyrdom, he had not yet attained. He had not *completely* fulfilled God’s purposes for his life. If that were so with the Apostle Paul, I am sure it is true of us. We have to press on to the very end. We must *continue* on in order to win the prize and obtain all that God has for us. (See John 8:31-32.)

13:2 *“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”* I know of many people who have experienced ministry from strangers, only to later realize that those strangers were actually angels. I remember an incident in New Zealand when a certain pastor friend of ours had an angelic visitation during one of his church services.

As the people were coming into the midweek service, the pastor noticed a stranger walking in. Immediately in his spirit he perceived this was an angel of God. He thought the best thing to do was to allow the service to go on as usual and just see what would happen. The pastor waited until the saints had finished giving their testimonies. Then he said to the visitor, “Sir, would you like to give your testimony?” The angel stood up and said: “I praise my Lord. The Lord is in this place and the

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Lord will fill this place.” And then he sat down. The pastor’s heart was overjoyed. He could hardly wait until the end of the service because he wanted to ask the angel a number of important questions.

The end of the service came, and as graciously as a pastor can, he made his way quickly through the congregation until he came to this man. He had in his mind certain questions he wanted to ask. But when he faced that man who smiled so kindly at him, those questions were removed from his mind. He was unable to verbalize them and realized at that point that God was in complete control. He later explained: “When the angel did not want to answer certain questions, I was unable to ask them. They went out of my mind.”

The angel was asked by a group of fellows in the church where he was going. He simply replied, “Up north.” They said, “Oh, we live north; we will take you.” He answered, “No thank you, I am on my way to India.” The interesting thing is that from there you would have to go south to get to the airport to go to India. The men were a little puzzled by this remark. Then they invited him to spend the night at their house. The stranger thanked them very much and got into the car, much to the chagrin of the pastor who had hoped to have more time with this heavenly messenger.

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The angel went to the house where these young fellows were rooming together. When they offered him a bed, he said, "No thank you, I will stay outside under the trees which my Lord has made." These men just happened to wake up at about four o'clock and they looked out of the window to see if their guest was still there. There he was, kneeling and worshipping, fully aware that they were watching him from the window. He looked back at them, waved, and disappeared. It was not until then that the men realized whom they had been entertaining. The actual theme of Hebrews 13:2 is hospitality. We just do not know who we are going to host as our guest.

13:3 *"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."* When members of the congregation suffer, we should cry out to God fervently for them as though we were in their situation. In certain countries where there is persecution and members of the congregation are taken prisoner, we should intercede for them and pray that they be will released. Paul himself had been bound and in prison.

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Now Paul touches a variety of subjects as one would naturally do at the end of a letter. This may have been his last opportunity of communicating with these Jewish brethren, and he wanted to mention a number of things that were very important. He starts with the importance of marital purity.

13:4 “[Let] marriage [be] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” God instituted marriage, and it is honourable in His sight. For this very reason, He is going to judge everyone who breaks the sacred marriage covenant with adulterous relationships and deals treacherously in divorce.

13:5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things that ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Here is an area of our life that we have to guard very carefully. First Timothy 6:10 warns, “For the love of money is [a] root of [every] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Obviously, God permits His people to be wealthy in some instances. Abraham was extremely wealthy. So also were Job, David, and others. God gave some of the kings great wealth. Capital is a

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necessity in God's kingdom in order to distribute to the needs of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Money itself is not the danger. The *love* of money is the danger. Money becomes an idol when it becomes our goal.

Money is not the real issue. There are many poor people who might have a tremendous lust for money. Yet to a multimillionaire, money may not be an issue at all. He may only want to be a conduit for God to flow through to meet the needs of others. Let us remember that it is not the amount of money, but the attachment to money that is the danger. God will test us in all these areas. Paul said that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). Let us be content in whatsoever situation we find ourselves (Phil. 4:11-12). This is the theme of Hebrews 13: 5.

13:6 *"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."* Here again is the thought that the Lord is in control. The enemy can only go so far and no further, as in Job's trial. God permits men to do certain things, but we will not fear what men may do to us because we are never alone. God has everything under control, and He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. He is always with us.

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13:7 *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [or manner of life].”* Because it is God who puts leaders in His Church, their positions must be honored. This truth is not only mentioned in verse seven, but it is also spoken of in verses seventeen and twenty-four (cf. 1 Thes. 5:12-13). Flowing throughout the New Testament is the thought of order and government in the Church. Certainly there was leadership in the Jewish synagogues. In fact, there was a chief ruler in the synagogue. This carries over into the Church. There must be in every congregation one head, and that is the pastor. There cannot be a plurality of leadership. Under the pastor there are the elders, and then the deacons.

We are commanded here by Paul to “remember those which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” When I was young, we held in high esteem those who were elders. There was a sense of reverence because we could see the fruits of their godly life. I remember the younger generation saying, “We wish we were sixty.” They thought by that age they were safe and would never backslide. In the

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Church today there is such instability. Young people are looking for stability. This is the reason they hold with admiration, as we did when we were young, those who are older. We used to think of those who were older than us, "Oh, they have made it; they are all right." It is good to look at the solid elders in our church. Elders, those that have rule over you, are usually older people. They have been molded in the way of righteousness by a long life of right decisions. Churches should look for the older people to be elders because there is a certain sense that they have made it. They are an example and message to the younger ones that it is possible to succeed in the Christian life.

13:8 *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."* Christ is our model of stability. He is the unchanging One, and that is the way we must be also. As we were yesterday, so we should be today and so we should be tomorrow, except that we are maturing. The beauty of staying on God's path is that with every step we take, we are still on the path and we are nearer to the goal. This is the wonderful thing about Jesus Christ: He is always consistent and reliable. In verse nine we can see one of the reasons people err. It is because they are always changing their doctrines. They go from one tangent to another.

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13:9 *“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”* Our heart, our life, and our emotions are established with grace, not by abstaining from certain kinds of food. Abstaining from certain foods does not change our nature. Having a meeting with God and receiving an impartation of His grace is what changes us. In the New Testament Church, many were troubled with meats and food.

How can we discern true doctrine from the false? We discern by studying the true. Bank tellers are trained to study a true bill so that they will be able to discern the false. In the days of silver dollars, the chief teller was instructed to teach the younger ones to lift the silver dollar and let it drop over and over until the ring of a silver dollar was firmly embedded into their minds. Then they could soon pick out the false. I would tell you this: we have to be firmly rooted in the truth of God’s Word. If a doctrine is true, it can be seen from Genesis to Revelation. Doctrine, after all, is truth. Truth does not vary in God’s Word.

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Paul consistently warned his converts against error. He said in Ephesians 4:14, “Be no more children, tossed to and fro, by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” *Children* are the ones who are tossed to and fro, not those who are mature. Those who are young men in Christ and have overcome the wicked one are not tossed about. It is the immature who are swayed by false doctrines. Regretfully, an immature Christian can be of any age.

God warned a few years ago in the United States that a certain false doctrine was going to come into the Church. Those who heard the warning heeded it and were waiting. Someone asked, “How shall we know if it is right or wrong?” Well, there are several ways to determine whether it is right or wrong. It will be seen from Genesis to Revelation to be error. But another way to judge doctrine is this—just wait and see who gravitates toward it. It is the same ones every time, the unstable, who embrace erroneous teachings.

Many years ago, there was a dispute in a certain Bible college over a doctrine that was quite erroneous. When I quoted a verse that disproved this teaching, one of the proponents of that doctrine

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said to me, "Please do not quote that verse; it upsets my doctrine." I thought to myself: If one verse can stumble your doctrine, there must be something very wrong with the doctrine. When a doctrine is true, no scripture should be able to contradict it. Paul tells us to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thes. 5:21). Therefore, test your beliefs. The disciples in Berea were termed "honorable" because they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether or not a teaching was valid (Acts 17:11).

13:10 *"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."* At the time Paul was writing to the Hebrews, the temple of Herod was still standing. The temple sacrifices were still continuing in his day. Over all, Jerusalem had rejected Christ and the new covenant. Therefore, they were unworthy to partake of all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places which were made available by Christ.

13:11 *"For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp."* The temple rituals of the Law continued until A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed by the Roman invasion. Paul is now drawing another analogy from the Old

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Testament. The carcasses of the animals that were sacrificed at the altar for sin were then carried outside of the camp. So also, Jesus suffered outside of the camp.

13:12 *“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”* In other words, Jesus was crucified just outside the gates of Jerusalem, not far from where the carcasses of the sacrifices were cast out. This is an important truth. If we are going to follow Jesus, there is going to be a time in our life when we will also be put outside the camp. And what is the camp? The camp is the Church! Many times believers have faced this after they have received the baptism in the Holy Ghost. Their churches that did not believe in that experience have put them out of their fellowship. I have known many pastors who have been thrown out of their denomination because of this. Yet, if we are going to follow Jesus, there will be a time in our life when we have to suffer without the camp. In so doing, we are following in the footsteps of the Master and we will have His glory.

13:13 *“Let us go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”* Truth carries with it reproach! When we receive new truth, we are also going to have reproach. We may either reject the

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new truth to keep our friends, or we may choose to be put without the camp by other believers. So many when faced with this dilemma would rather compromise and be a secret disciple like Nicodemus, staying inside the camp. The Apostle Paul made it very clear where he stood. He said, "Let us go therefore *unto him* without the camp bearing his reproach." This is where Christ is, outside the camp.

I had a situation like this in my life as a young Christian. I was in a church where there were crowds of young people, and we were all on fire for God. Many were finding Christ as their Savior. Each Sunday night we had a young people's service after the regular service. The regular service started at six, and we hoped it would be over by seven so that we could go out in the streets and bring the people in. Luke 14:23 says to compel them to come in, and we would literally encircle other young people on the streets and move them into church for the eight o'clock service. Many were saved and they would then help us witness to others.

However, there came a time when I had to make a choice, because this church would not accept the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Some who had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost compromised in

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order to stay in the church, but the gifts of the Spirit were not manifested there. I had been baptized with the Holy Ghost, and I realized that God was calling me to go on with Him. It was very difficult, but I had to leave that church that I loved so much and go to a Pentecostal church where there were hardly any young people. If I had not made that decision, I would not have gone on with God. So let us receive grace from God to go on with Jesus, bearing His reproach.

13:14 *“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”* The “continuing city” Paul is making reference to here is New Jerusalem in heaven. This is the reason we should set our affections on things above, not on the things of the earth (Col. 3:2). We should invest only in those things which last forever, and lay up for ourselves “treasures in heaven” (Mt. 6:19-21). Let us build in the invisible and not become too attached to even the legitimate things of this life.

13:15 *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”* The Apostle Peter states that we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). The spiritual sacrifices we offer are of far greater

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value in God's sight than the slaying of animals. One of those sacrifices is the sacrifice of praise. Praise becomes a "sacrifice" when we are weary or under pressure, yet those very sacrifices bring a release from our burdens. Songs of praise are a spiritual sacrifice. Singing the song of the Lord, breaking forth into other tongues, and making melody in our hearts are spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God. The giving of thanks keeps our spiritual wells unblocked as we accept by grace the difficulties that come into our life. Praise and thankfulness go together.

13:16 *"But to do good and to communicate [or share with others] forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."* Here are other sacrifices God desires—to do good and to be abundant in good works. To "communicate" means to share with others. One of the greatest sacrifices we can make is to feed and clothe the poor, and to care for those in need. These are practical sacrifices, and God reminds us not to forget them.

13:17 *"Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."* We are now told to "obey" those who have the rule over us. In verse seven it said "remember"

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them that have the rule over us. It is very important to obey and cooperate with our leaders because they are responsible for our souls. Thus, there is a time in our life when we have to be subject to those in authority over us. Perhaps the time will come when you are a pastor or overseer, and you will reap what you have sown with regards to submission. If we have been compliant to our leaders, then God will give us people who are obedient to us. On the other hand, if we have always resisted and resented authority, we may end up shepherding a little band of rebels.

13:18 *“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.”* Here we see the humility of the Apostle Paul. Humility could be defined as “dependence.” He said, “We trust we have a good conscience.” Paul always had a continuous looking to the Lord to make sure that his conscience was clean before Him. He did not trust in his own heart. He totally depended on God for light in order to know his heart (cf. 1 Cor. 4:3-5). He wanted to know how the Lord saw him. He wanted a conscience void of offense toward God and man in everything (Acts 24:16). We must be very careful that everything we do is right before God and man because that is pleasing in God’s sight. We must be scrupulously honest.

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13:19 *“But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.”* The Apostle Paul had been in prison and he wanted to be restored to the church. Therefore, he is asking them to please pray earnestly for him, that he might be able to return to them.

13:20-21 *“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, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* God has many titles. One of them is Jehovah Shalom—the Lord our peace. He is the God of Peace. *“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.”* We should understand that perfection is linked to knowing God as the God of peace.

This verse is not an isolated scripture. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Thus, the peace of God is linked with sanctification and

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perfection. Therefore, in reality, there is no sanctification, no real holiness, and no true perfection unless we are governed by the God of peace.

Paul said in Philippians 4:6, “Be careful [or anxious] for nothing.” We cannot attain unto perfection if we are carrying a lot of cares and if we are worrying all the time. Hysteria, alarmism, criticism, fretting, and anger are the fruit of anxiety. But peace is the key to sanctification, holiness and perfection. Why is this true? It is true because peace accepts all things, and peace rules over all things.

We can see this when we look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the storm was raging on the Sea of Galilee, what did He say? He did not say, “By the might of God I command you to be still.” No, He simply said, “Peace, be still.” Peace calms the enemy and the passions of our soul, and peace brings into subjection all of our desires. Therefore, we understand that the road to holiness, although it is through suffering and chastisement and scourging, is also through *peace*.

Also in Hebrews 12:14 you will observe that peace and holiness are linked. Paul says, “Follow peace with all men and holiness.” Peace and holiness are linked in Hebrews 12:14, First Thessalonians 5:23, and again in Hebrews 13:20. “The God of peace make you perfect.” Therefore, we need to

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enter into the experience of Philippians 4:6-8 as the gateway into perfection and holiness. It is the gateway of peace.

What is your picture of peace? A great artist was once asked to paint a portrayal of peace upon a canvas. Those who had commissioned him thought that he was going to paint a beautiful landscape with the sun shining and the flowers growing and perhaps children playing. Instead he chose something quite different. He painted a tremendous storm with the winds howling, the rain coming down, and the trees being bent over by the storm. Then in the center he had on the branch a little sparrow chirping away happily. That was his impression of peace. That, in reality, is true peace. For when the storm is all around you, you will have holy contentment in your heart, you will have rest in your mind and spirit, and you will have a song in your heart.

13:22 *“And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”* If this is a small letter, I do not know what his long letters would have been like, but anyway, he put a lot into a very small space, didn't he? Hebrews is a very beautiful book. It shows us the way into the holy of holies, within the veil. It shows us the key to holiness. It shows us the way to

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victory. But also there are those five awesome warnings in Hebrews. These are warnings we must heed, because as the Apostle Paul also says in First Corinthians 10:12, “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” There should always be in our hearts that thought, “Oh God, but for Thy grace and mercy I am not going to make it.” We are kept by the power of God.

Therefore, to whom does God give grace to be kept? He gives grace to the humble. We want to ask God to clothe us with the spirit of humility so that we always have His favor and presence. Hosea 13:1 is quite an awesome scripture: “When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.” Ephraim was the chief tribe of Northern Israel, but was at this time very backslidden. When Ephraim spoke trembling, with contrition and the fear of the Lord, God exalted him.

Ephraim was exalted to be the most fruitful of all the tribes at one point, “but when he offended in Baal,” when he allowed idolatry to come into his heart and he no longer kept his heart with all diligence, he died. The same was true in the life of King Saul. The Lord exalted him when he was little in his own eyes, but rejected him when he became haughty and proud, and when he exalted himself.

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Regretfully, there will be many backsliders in hell. As I mentioned earlier, many years ago I was pastoring a church on the west coast of the United States. A deacon's wife there had a dream in which she was caught up into heaven. She was very astonished when she saw who was in heaven and who had not made it. Several of her acquaintances did not make it to heaven. She shared her testimony in church. Oh, how careful we must be to make it.

I will never forget the death of a certain woman in this same church. I had just come to the church and was about to become the new pastor there. When I arrived at the church, this woman was already in the hospital and I was asked to visit her. She was already on her death bed. She had been harshly criticizing my wife and me, and what we stood for. This woman was always there to add her voice of criticism. Yet she had been the Sunday school superintendent for so many years. The one and only time I met her, actually, was on her death bed, because I had been asked to visit her. While I was there in her room I tried to pray for her, but there was a wall, and I could not get through. Then the Spirit showed me the people who were the wall. Other members in the congregation were actually opposing my praying for her. I just had to leave it like that.

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Well, she died a few hours later and that night her spirit came to me. I realized, of course, that she did not make it to heaven. I inquired of the Lord and asked, “Why did her spirit visit me, Lord?” He said: “When a person dies and they see someone who has light in them, they are like moths attracted to the light. Yet, they cannot partake of that light.” So perhaps after saying all this we should dwell on verse twenty-two and “suffer the word of exhortation.”

13:23 *“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.”* Here again it is evident that it is Paul who is writing this epistle because Paul and Timothy were like father and son.

13:24 *“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”* Paul made it very clear that those who had the office of elder and deacon received something very special. Paul stated in First Timothy 3:13, “For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Elders and deacons who have done their duty well purchase for themselves a good degree, meaning an *eternal* position. Therefore, when we take responsibilities in the church, we are purchasing for

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ourselves a good degree and also great boldness because with each office there is a certain anointing, a certain mantle. Then Paul says, “They of Italy salute you,” showing clearly that Paul was writing from Italy.

13:25 “*Grace be with you all. Amen.*” Grace is certainly what we want and need. In closing I would like to direct our attention to the subject of grace in Romans 5:17b. “They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” Grace is the only thing that changes us, keeps us, and enables us.

There is a strong emphasis on grace in Paul’s letter to the Hebrews. Therefore, we need to open our hearts and to live in such a manner that we will receive not only the grace of God, but “*the abundance of grace*” and His gift of righteousness so that we shall reign in this life and also in the life to come. Thank you, and God bless you, and may this Epistle truly become everything the Holy Spirit intended it to be to His people in every generation.