

Spurgeon's Expository Commentary on Hebrews

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Note: These verse by verse expository notes by C H Spurgeon represent a compilation from various writings including his individual expositions on this epistle and thus there is some duplication and occasional statements that will seem to begin in the middle of a sentence. Note also that Spurgeon feels Paul wrote this epistle but most modern expositors do not agree with that interpretation.

Spurgeon opens his comments on this wonderful book writing...

We have now reached that wonderful part of Holy Scripture which is found in the epistle to the Hebrews. Fully to understand it we ought to study closely the Book of Leviticus. Diamonds only will cut diamonds; the Word of God is its own expositor; the New Testament is the key of the old. The epistle opens with the declaration that whatsoever was communicated by the prophets was spoken by God. He spoke whatsoever was uttered by his prophets. The Scriptures are very jealous on this subject; how different from the language of many who seem desirous to exclude God from being the author of his own word!

Hebrews 1

In this chapter our Saviour's glorious person is very plainly set before us, and it is made the ground of our faith, and a reason why we should give the more earnest heed to his words, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Hebrews 1:1, 2.

The best last is ever God's rule. "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." Prophets are a very blessed means of communication, but how much more sure, how much more condescending is it for God to speak to us by his Son!

Ours is the clearest of all revelations. In Jesus we see far more of God than in all the teachings of the prophets.

Hebrews 1:2, 3.

You see, dear friends, how glorious was his original — the "express image" of his Father's person. How lowly did he become to purge away our sins and that by himself, too, using his own body to be the means, by his sufferings, of taking away our guilt. Not by proxy did he serve us, but by himself. Oh, this is wondrous love! And then see the glory which followed after the shame. He has now ascended up on high, and sits down at the right hand of God's great Majesty. Follow him, believer, follow him with the eye of thy faith; let thy soul lovingly track him in his upward march, and as thou seest him, say — "He is my Lord and my God," and know that all that he did and all that he is, he is, and he did for thee.

Hebrews 1:4, 5.

They are servants, but they are not sons, they are created, but they are not begotten. You see what he says to the Son — "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.

Hebrews 1:6-8.

So you perceive that Christ is no created angel. He is sometimes compared to an angel. He is sometimes called the angel of the covenant, but he is not a created angel. He is higher in nature, higher in rank, higher in intellect, and higher in power than they. He is

nothing less than very God of very God. The very man who suffered on Calvary.

**“This is the man, the exalted man,
Whom we unseen adore.”**

Hebrews 1:9.

As man Christ claims all men as his fellows, but as God he counts it no robbery to be thought equal to God. As man he is most truly man, and only superior to man by reason of the purity of his birth and the perfection of his nature, and the exaltation of his manhood by God; as God he is nothing less than God, though he took upon himself the nature of men.

Hebrews 1:10-12.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Since the Messiah is thus described as immutable and eternal he must be divine, and to deny the Godhead of the Saviour is a deadly error. Dr. Owen most comfortingly remarks:—“Whatever our changes may be, inward or outward, yet Christ changing not, our eternal condition is secured, and relief provided against all present troubles and miseries. The immutability and eternity of Christ are the spring of our consolation and security in every condition. Such is the frailty of the nature of man, and such the perishing condition of all created things, that none can ever obtain the least stable consolation but what ariseth from an interest in the omnipotency, sovereignty, and eternity of Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews 2

May the Spirit of God graciously instruct us while we read this chapter! You know that, in the eleventh chapter, the apostle has pictured the ancient worships and their victories. Imagine that you see them mounting in their chariots of fire up to their seats in heaven; behold them going from the mouths of lions, from the deserts, and mountains, and dens and caves of the earth, up to their glorious thrones on high where they recline in ease and honor. The apostle then introduces us to a race-course, in which he represents all these conquerors as sitting upon seats all round the course, watching those who are about to run; and thus he begins:-

Hebrews 2:1.

As if our apostle had said,—Seeing Christ is so excellent in his person, and seeing the gospel has such a glorious author, let us take great care that we esteem his person, revere his authority, reverence his ministry, and believe his message; and let us take heed that our memories be not like leaking vessels, suffering the word at any time to slip or run from us.

That is to say, because Jesus is so great, because the truths which he came to reveal are so infinitely important, “therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; “for, sometimes, we seem to let them slip. We grow old; our mind is dull; our heart is occupied with other matters, and we let these heavenly things leak out, or drift by us, as if we were not concerned in them.

We have heard them; do not let us forget them. Let them not be like the driftwood which goes floating down the stream. Let us make a desperate effort to retain them in our memories; and, above all, to ponder them in our hearts.

It is well to give heed to what you are now hearing, but it is also important to give heed to what you have heard. Oh, how much have we heard, but have forgotten! How much have we heard, which we still remember, but do not practice! Let us therefore listen to the words of the apostle here: “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip;”— as it were, slipping through our fingers, and flowing down the stream of time to be carried away into the ocean of oblivion.

Hebrews 2:2, 3.

See, brethren, the punishment for disobeying the word spoken by angels was death; what, then, must be the penalty of neglecting the great salvation wrought by the Divine Redeemer himself? He who does not give earnest heed to the gospel treats with disdain the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will have to answer for that sin when the King shall sit upon the throne of judgment. Trifle not, therefore, with that salvation which cost Christ so much, and which he himself brings to you with bleeding hands. And, oh! if you have hitherto trifled with it, and let it slip, may you now, be brought to a better mind, lest haply, despising Christ, the “just recompence of reward” should come upon you. And what will that be? I know of no punishment that can be too severe for the man who treats with contempt the Son of God, and tramples on his blood; and every individual who hears the gospel, and yet does not

receive Christ as his Savior, is committing that atrocious crime.

Hebrews 2:3

Let that question ring in our ears, "How shall we escape?" There will be no escape, there can be none if we refuse the Lord Jesus. Do we mean to be lost? Dare we continue to neglect the great salvation?

The apostles and the other followers of our Lord constantly bore witness to his miracles and his resurrection.

Hark: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Not if we resist it, reject it, despise it, oppose it; but if we neglect it. If a man is in business, it is not necessary that he should commit forgery in order to fail; he can fail by simply neglecting his business. If a man is sick, he need not commit suicide by taking poison; he can do it just as surely by neglecting to take proper medicines. So is it in the things of God, neglect is as ruinous as distinct and open opposition: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: " —

They could not trifle with the angels' message without receiving just punishment from God. Much less, then, can we trifle with Christ's gospel. We have not an angelic saviour; but God himself, in the person of his Son, has deigned to be the Mediator of the new covenant. Therefore, let us see to it that we do not trifle with these things.

You see, dear friends, that we need not be great open sinners in order to perish; it is merely a matter of neglect. See how it is put here: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" You need not go to the trouble of despising it, or resisting it, or opposing it; you can be lost readily enough simply by neglecting it. In fact, the great mass of those who perish are those who neglect the great salvation, —

If we neglect that salvation, is there any other way by which we can be rescued from destruction? Is there any other door of escape if we pass that one by? No, there is none.

Luther says, "When I think of what Christ suffered, I am ashamed to call anything that I have endured, suffering for his sake." He carried his heavy cross, but we only carry a sliver or two of it; he drank his cup to the dregs, and we do but sip a drop or two at the very most. "Consider him." Consider how he suffered far more than you can ever suffer, and how he is now crowned with glory and honor; and so you are to be like him, descend like him into the depths of agony, that with him you may rise to the heights of glory.

Hebrews 2:3, 4.

Observe, then, that this gospel comes to us by Christ, and it is confirmed to us by his apostles, and further confirmed by those signs and wonders, and divers miracles, which God sent as the seals of apostolic teaching; so that this spell is not one about which we can raise any question whatever. It comes by a medium which we must not dare to question, it has confirming seals in it which it is blasphemous for us to dispute. Oh, how gladly should we receive it! How tenderly should we treat it? How devoutly grateful should we be for it; and how earnestly should we comply with all its requirements?

This gospel of ours is stamped with the seal of God; he has set his mark upon it, to attest its genuineness and authority. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal that the gospel was no invention of man, but that it was indeed the message of God. Gifts of healing, gifts of tongues, gifts of miracles of divers kinds, were God's solemn declaration to man, "This is the gospel; this is my gospel which I send to you; therefore, refuse it not."

Hebrews 2:4

Those who doubt the truth of the gospel, or who say they do, are often found believing historical statements that are not half as well proved. A man sits down, and reads the book of the Gallic wars, and he believes that Julius Caesar wrote it; yet there is not a half or a tenth so much evidence to prove that he did write it as there is to prove that our Lord Jesus lived, and died, and rose again from the dead. The witness to the truth of these great matters of fact has been borne by God himself with signs, and wonders, and miracles. Honest and true men, apostles and others, have witnessed to them; and they have also been certified by Incarnate Deity, even by the Lord who deigned to speak to us by his Spirit. We cannot, therefore, trifle with this gospel without incurring most serious guilt.

Hebrews 2:5.

God has not made angels to be the preachers of the gospel. Doubtless they derive some happiness from it, if only from the sight of those converted under it; but it is in no sense under the government of angels.

We are the preachers of it,— not the angels; and the great Author and Finisher of our faith is the Man Christ Jesus,— not an angel. We have not now the ministry of angels, but the ministry of men, by whom the Lord of the angels sends his messages to their fellows.

We have no angelic preachers; we sometimes speak of "the seraphic doctor;" but no seraph ever was a preacher of the gospel of the grace of God; that honor has been reserved for a lower order of beings.

Hebrews 2:5-7

Here is a little variation in the subject. First we had the trials which come from the world, these we are to endure looking to Christ for grace to enable us to overcome them. Now we have the trials which come from God, and here nature becomes an assistant to grace. We are reminded that children have to be chastened, and therefore, if we are the children of God we must expect to be chastened by him.

Note in the fifth verse, the two evils of which we are in danger,-either of deepening God's chastenings or else of fainting under them; either of thinking too little or too much of them. HAPPY is the Christian who ever takes the middle course, and never despises the chastenings of the Lord, nor ever faints under them.

Note, in the sixth verse, that we are to expect sharp blows from God's chastening hand. That word "encourageth" is a wrong word: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The scourge was ever a most severe form of punishment. God will not spare his children when they need to be chastened; they shall have some blow as hard as he can well lay them on, that is to say, as hard as such a loving heart as his will permit him to give. They shall have such blows that each one of them shall have to cry out, "I am broken in sunder, my heart is smitten and withered like grass." And this is to be the treatment for every son whom God receives; not for some of them, but for all. "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Hebrews 2:6-8.

God speaks to men by men. He has made them to be the choice and chosen instruments of his wondrous works of grace upon earth. Oh, what a solemn thing it is to be a preacher of the everlasting gospel! It is an office so high that an angel might covet it, but one that is so responsible that even an angel might tremble to undertake it. Brethren, pray for us who preach, not merely to a few, but to many of our fellow-creatures, that we may be the means, in the hand of God, of blessing to our hearers.

Hebrews 2:6-8.

It is so, in a measure, in the natural world. Man is made to be the master of it, and the ox and the horse, with all their strength, must bow their necks to man; and the lion and the tiger, with all their ferocity, must still be cowed in the presence of their master. Yet this is not a perfect kingdom which we see in the natural world. But, in the spiritual world, man is still to be supreme for the present, and therefore Christ becomes, not an angel, but a man. He takes upon him that nature which God intends to be dominant in this world and in that which is to come.

This was the original status of man. God made him to be his vicegerent on earth; and he would still hold that position were it not that, since he has rebelled against his own Sovereign, even the beasts of the field take liberty to be rebellious against him. Man is not now in his original estate, and therefore he rules not now; and we see many men who are very far from being royal beings, for they are mean and grovelling. Yet the glory of man is not all lost, as we shall see.

Hebrews 2:7-8.

It was so with Adam in his measure. Before he fell, through his disobedience, all the animals which God had made were inferior to him, and owned him as their lord and master. It is infinitely more so in that second Adam who has restored to humanity its lost dignity, and, in his own person, has elevated man again to the head of creation: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."

Hebrews 2:8

We see not yet man the master of everything, not even Christ, the model man, the Head of all men. While he was here below, he was not a ruling Lord, but a suffering servant. He said to his disciples, "I am among you as he that serveth." Yet it is in him that the dominion once given to man is to be seen most clearly displayed.

Man does not yet rule the world. Wild beasts defy him. Storms vanquish him. There are a thousand things not at present submissive to his control.

Hebrews 2:9.

We see that by faith. We see Jesus, not merely as God, but as the God-man exalted "far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion."

Here is the representative Man who is supreme over all: "We see Jesus,"

Oh, how glorious it is to realize our position in Christ, and to see how he has lifted us up, not merely to the place from which the first Adam fell, but he has made us stand so securely there that we shall not again descend around the ruins of the Fall! Glory be to his holy name!

Thus lifting man back into the place where he first stood so far as this matter of dominion is concerned.

Hebrews 2:9, 10.

Not that Christ needed to be made perfect in nature, but perfect in his capacity to be the Captain of our salvation, complete in all the offices which he sustains toward his redeemed people. He must be a sufferer that he may be a sympathizer; and hence his sufferings made him perfect.

Is it not wonderful that the Christ, who is the head over all things, could not be perfected for this work of ruling, or for the work of saving, except by sufferings? He stooped to conquer. Not because there was any sin in him, but that he might be a sympathetic Ruler over his people, he must experience sufferings like those of his subjects; and that he might be a mighty Savior, he must be himself compassed with infirmity, that he might "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Brothers and sisters, do you expect to be made perfect without sufferings? It will never be so with you.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone, Leads to the land where sorrow is-unknown.

We shall never be fit for the Heavenly Canaan unless we first pass through the wilderness. There are certain things about us which require this, so thus it must be.

There was, possibly, much of their own temper mixed with their chastisements, they let off their wrath upon us sometimes by the medium of chastisement, but God never chastens his children merely out of anger.

Hebrews 2:10, 11

The Christ and the Christian are one,— the Man Christ Jesus and the men whom he redefined are one. He has so become partaker of our nature that now we are one family, and he is not ashamed to call us brothers. Am I addressing any who are ashamed of Christ, or who are ashamed of God's poor people, and who would not like to be known to be members of a poor church? Ah! how you ought to despise yourselves for having any such pride in your hearts, for Christ is not ashamed to call his people brethren! Oh, what wondrous condescension! He has done this many times in the Psalms, where he speaks of his brethren;

Hebrews 2:11.

He who sets them apart and they who are set apart "are all of one." They are of one nature, and they have one destiny before them.

Does not this bring very sweetly before you the close relationship of Christ to his people? He has espoused their nature, and he owns it by calling them brethren.

One family; one by nature with Christ our glorious Head.

Oh, this blessed condescension of Christ! We are often ashamed of ourselves; alas! we are sometimes so base as to be ashamed of him; but he is never ashamed to call us brethren.

Hebrews 2:12.

The apostle was writing to Hebrews, and therefore he quoted from the books with which they were familiar. He here quotes the 22nd Psalm as the words of the Messiah.

Christ, the center of the celestial chairs, is also the center of all the bands of true singers that are yet here below.

Hebrews 2:13

Thus entering into the very faith of his people.

All of which expressions denote nearness of relationship and likeness of nature, kindly recognised by the great head of the household of God.

There are some passages which we should never have thought related to the Messiah if the New Testament had not told us that they do. Hence I have no doubt that we much more often err in not seeing Christ in the Old Testament than in seeing him there, for there may be many other passages besides those which are supposed to speak of Christ which do speak of him.

This is our Lord Jesus Christ putting his trust in the Father, overcoming by faith, even as we do. Oh, what a marvellous oneness there is here between Christ and his people! Well might the apostle say that “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

Hebrews 2:13,14

We know what it is to be partakers of flesh and blood; we often wish that we did not. It is the flesh that drags us down; it is the flesh that brings us a thousand sorrows. I have a converted soul, but an unconverted body. Christ has healed my soul, but he has left my body still to a large extent in bondage, and therefore it has still to suffer; but the Lord will redeem even that. The redemption of the body is the adoption, and that is to come at the day of the resurrection. But think of Christ, who was a partaker of the Eternal Godhead, condescending to make himself a partaker of flesh and blood; — the Godhead linked with materialism; the Infinite, an infant; the Eternal prepared to die, and actually dying! Oh, wondrous mystery, this union of Deity with humanity in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord!

Hebrews 2:14.

By his own death, Christ broke that evil power which brought death into the world with its long trail of woe. He did this, not by his example, not even by his life, but by his death. Therefore let those who speak slightly of his atoning sacrifice see their folly, for it is through death that Christ destroys “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; “ —

As you know to your cost, for perhaps you have aches and pains about you at this very moment. Verily, you are “partakers of flesh and blood.” Perhaps you are suffering from despondency and depression of spirit. If so, that reminds you that, however much you may, in spirit, sometimes soar to heaven, yet you are still “partakers of flesh and blood.”

That, through dying, he might overthrow Satan’s power for all who trust him.

Hebrews 2:15, 16.

Christ’s great mission was not to save angels, but to save men. Therefore he came not in the nature of angels, but in the nature of men.

He so took upon his flesh and blood as to die in our nature, that thus he might slay death, and might set us free from all fear of death. Do you not see that, if the representative Man, Christ Jesus, died, he also rose again, and that so also will all who are in him rise, too? If you are in him, you shall rise again. Therefore, fear not to lie down in your last sleep, for the trumpet shall awaken you, and your bodies shall be moulded afresh like unto his glorious body, and your soul and body together shall dwell in infinite bliss for ever. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Hebrews 2:17, 18

And this is the reason why he suffered, and why he became a man capable of suffering, that he might be able to succor the tempted. It was for this that Christ left heaven, for this he was born of the virgin, for this he lived for this he died, that he might be “able to succor them that are tempted.”

Glory be to his holy name for ever and ever! Amen.

Jesus, who pass'd the angels by,
Assumed our flesh to bleed and die;
And still he makes it his abode;
As man, he fills the throne of God.
Our next of kin, our brother now,
Is he to whom the angels bow;
They join with us to praise his name,
But we the nearest interest claim.

Hebrews 3

Hebrews 3:1.

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” What wonderful titles “Holy brethren,” made brethren in holiness and made holy in our brotherhood,- “partakers of the heavenly calling.” — called of God from among the worlds. Our occupation and our

calling henceforth is to serve the Lord. Well, if you be holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Think much of Him. Remember who it is you follow, with whom you are brethren. If you think little of your Leader you will live but poor lives. Consider him, often think of him, try to copy him. With such a Leader what manner of people ought we to be?

Think of him, think how great he is, think what attention he deserves from all who believe in him.

Oh, that he had more consideration at our hands! Consider him; you cannot know all his excellence, all his value to you, except he is the subject of your constant meditation. Consider him; think of his nature, his offices, his work, his promises, his relation to you: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;" —

Hebrews 3:2

See how our Lord Jesus Christ condescended to be appointed of the Father. In coming as a Mediator, taking upon himself our humanity, he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant," and being found in fashion as a servant, we find that he was faithful; to every jot and tittle, he carried out his charge.

Hebrews 3:2-6.

See the superiority of Christ to Moses; Moses is honored by being called the servant of God, but Jesus is the Son of God, and as Son, Master over his own house.

Moses was but a part of the house after all, a prominent stone in the building, but Christ is the builder, builder of the house, foundation, topstone of it. Think then much of him. Get an high idea of him as faithful unto God in everything. Moses kept the law and was a good example to Israel save in some point of weakness, but Christ perfectly carried out his Father's commission, and he is worthy of more honor than Moses.

Hebrews 3:3

And Moses was but one stone in the house. Though in a certain sense he was a servant in it, yet in another, and, for him, a happier sense, he was only a stone in the house which the Lord Jesus Christ had builded. Let us think of our Lord as the Architect and Builder of his own Church, and let our hearts count him worthy of more glory than Moses; let us give him glory in the highest. However highly a Jew may think of Moses, — and he ought to think highly of him, and so ought we, — yet infinitely higher than Moses must ever rise the incarnate Son of God.

Hebrews 3:4

And Christ is God; and he is the Builder of all things in the spiritual realm, — ay, and in the natural kingdom, too, for "without him was not anything made that was made." So he is to have eternal honor and glory as the one great Master-builder.

Hebrews 3:4, 6

"But Christ as a Son" — far higher degree- "Christ as a son over his own house," of which he is the heir, of which he is even now the sole proprietor- "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." None are truly Christ's but those who persevere in grace. Men may be nominally Christ's, but they are not Christ's house unless they hold fast to the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Temporary Christians are not really Christians.

Hebrews 3:5,6

You see, then, that the apostle had first made a distinction between Christ and Moses on the ground of, the Builder being greater than the house he builds; now, in the second place, he shows Christ's superiority to Moses on the ground that a son in his own house is greater than a servant in the house of his master. How sweetly he introduces the truth that we are the house of Christ! Do we realize that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of us? How clean we ought to be, how holy, how heavenly! How we should seek to rise above earth, and keep ourselves reserved for the Crucified! In this house, no rival should be permitted ever to dwell; but the great Lord should have every chamber of it entirely to himself. Oh, that he may take his rest within our hearts as his holy habitation; and may there be nothing in our church life that shall grieve the Son of God, and cause him even for a moment to be withdrawn from us: "whose house are we, if we hold fast the, confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Perseverance — final perseverance — is the test of election. He whom God. Has chosen holds on and holds out even to the end, while temporary professors make only a fair show in the flesh, but, by-and-by, their faith vanishes away.

Hebrews 3:6

Christ built the house; he laid us together like stones upon the great foundation, Moses is but a caretaker in the house.

Final perseverance is an absolute necessity of a child of God. We do not prove ourselves to be a part of the house if we move about like loose stones.

Hebrews 3:7-8

You are his house, give him rest, do not provoke him. If you belong to him be holy, do not grieve him. If you are his house be not defiled: surely he should dwell in a holy place.

Hebrews 3:9

Oh, children of God, you have some of you been more than forty years now in the Lord's service: do not vex him. You have been long called out of Egypt and brought into the separate place in this wilderness world: be careful to be fit for the Divine indwelling.

Hebrews 3:7-10

Do not provoke your God by your quibbling, or your murmuring, or your idolatry; act not as those unbelievers did who died in the wilderness.

Hebrews 3:10,11

God grant that none of this congregation may be of that mind, who having named the name of Christ and being known as his people, continue to grieve him one way and another, to put him to the test by their doubts to make him angry by their sins. No, God grant we may be of another sort lest he should lift his hand and swear, "They shall not enter into my rest."

Hebrews 3:11, 12.

There was that "evil heart" in the Israelites, is there not a danger that it may be in you also who are partakers of the like nature?

Here the charge is not to the outside world but to those whom he had called "holy brethren." He drops the word "holy" for there are some brethren so called who would not deserve that name, and to them he speaks very pointedly, "Take heed, take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." And how will that be shown? By wandering off, one way or another, away from the living God. If your God is not a living God to you in whom you live and move and have your being, if he does not come into your daily life, but if your religion is a dead and formal thing, then you will soon depart.

Hebrews 3:12, 13

No good ever comes of carelessness. He who never examines himself is sure to be self-deceived.

Watch over each other as well as over yourselves. Take heed lest sin hardens you before you are aware of it; even while you fancy that you have wiped it out by repentance, petrification will remain upon your heart "through the deceitfulness of sin."

Hebrews 3:13.

Sin slyly insinuates itself and by slow degrees prevails, therefore must we carefully guard against it.

If sin came to you openly proclaiming itself as sin, you would fight against it; but it is very cunning and deceitful and it gradually petrifies the heart and especially the heart of those who think that they will never provoke God by their sin. Pride has already begun to work in them; and where pride can work, every other sin finds elbow-room. God save us from the deceitfulness of sins!

If we preach against hypocrisy, hypocrites say, "Admirable! Admirable!" If we deal out threatenings against secret sin, secret sinners feel a little twinge, but forget it all and say, "An excellent discourse." They have hardened their neck against God's Word, have made their brows like flints and their hearts like adamant stones, and now they might just as well stay away from the house of God as not, for their soul has become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And yet would I have them refrain from the means of grace? No, for with God nothing is impossible.

Man loves his own ruin. The cup is so sweet that though he knows it will poison him, yet he must drink it. And the harlot is so fair, that though he understands that her ways lead down to hell, yet like a bullock he follows to the slaughter till the dart goes through his liver. Man is fascinated and bewitched by sin.

Hebrews 3:14.

Continuance in faith is necessary to salvation, and only those who persevere to the end are indeed saved.

You are to hold fast, to hold on, and to hold out to the end; and the grace you need in order to do this is waiting for you if you will but look for it and daily live under the power of it.

Again I say they who do not hold on and hold out are not really partakers of Christ, but we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Those that fly to this doctrine and that, unsettled spirits, wandering stars, mere meteors of the night, these are not Christ's, but we must hold the beginning of our faith steadfast unto the end.

Hebrews 3:14-16

Not all, for there were two faithful ones. See how the Spirit of God gathers up the fragments that remain. If there are but two faithful ones out of two millions, he knows it, and he records it.

Hebrews 3:15, 16.

Want of true faith causes the religion of many to be short-lived. Those who are not sustained by faith soon weary of holiness and provoke the Lord.

All but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness; only Joshua and Caleb were faithful among the faithless found.

There were two; it was a slender remnant that were faithful.

Twice over we are warned of this, to avoid hardness of heart. God save us from ossification of heart, petrification of heart, till we get a heart of love or a heart of stone-may God save us from this.

Hebrews 3:17.

See how the apostle speaks of them; he does not say that their bodies were buried, but that their carcasses fell, in the wilderness Unbelief degrades us into beasts whose carcasses fall beneath the poleaxe of judgment. Oh, that we might all be rid of unbelief, that degrading, desecrating, defiling, destroying thing!

God speaks very lovingly of the bodies of his saints but see how he speaks of the bodies of apostates, "whose carcasses" as if they were no better than so many brute beasts, "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness."

Hebrews 3:18

God has never taken an oath, that I know of, against any class of persons, except unbelievers.

Hebrews 3:18, 19

It was not the sons Anak that kept them out, it was not the waste howling wilderness; it was nothing but their own unbelief.

Sinning and not believing seem to go together. The 17th verse asks the same question as the 18th, but the answer is different. "With them that had sinned" says the 17th verse, "to them that believed not" says the 18th verse. Want of faith brings want of holiness, and when we abide in the faith we abide in obedience.

HEBREWS 4

Hebrews 4:1

Not only dread coming short, but dread the very appearance of it. Oh, that we might now enter into that rest, and so clearly enjoy it that there should not even be a seeming to come short of it.

I left out the "us" because that is inserted by the translators and should not be there. The promise is left to somebody, it does not say to us- "a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Not come short of it but even seem to do so. God keep us from the very shadow of sin, from the very appearance of evil.

"For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." In the old time that gospel which was preached to them was preached to us- "but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." God send us this holy mixture of the hearing and the believing, to our hour's salvation, to his glory. Amen.

Hebrews 4:2.

They were not united to it by faith; consequently, as they did not receive the Word, it was taken away from them.

Hebrews 4:3.

Faith brings us into this rest, even as unbelief shut them out.

they shall enter into my rest: That is God's rest, the rest of a finished work, and into that rest many never enter. The work by which they might live for ever, the finished work by which they might be saved, they refuse, and so they never enter into God's rest.

Hebrews 4:4, 5.

There are many professing Christians who do not understand what it is to rest because the work of salvation is done; they do not even seem to know that the work is done. They understand not that dying word of the Lord Jesus, "It is finished." They think there is something still to be added to his work to make it effectual; but it is not so.

Hebrews 4:6-8.

We read of this in the 95th Psalm, where David was urging those to whom he was writing to hear God's voice, and not be like the unbelievers in the wilderness, so that the rest still remained to be entered upon by somebody. Joshua had not given them rest, or else David would not have spoken of entering into rest.

Hebrews 4:7

"Harden not your hearts." There is no need; they are hard enough already. "Harden not your hearts." There is no excuse, for why should you resist love? "Harden not your hearts." There can be no good in it. A man is the less a man in proportion to his loss of tenderness. "Harden not your hearts." You cannot soften them, but you can harden them. "Harden not your hearts," for this will be your ruin. It is suicide of soul.

Hebrews 4:9, 10.

He says, "It is finished. I am no longer going to do my own works, I have done with them; I now trust the finished work of Christ, and that gives me rest. But as to all that wearied me before, and made life a continual task and toil, it is ended now." God is not a cruel taskmaster to his people; he gives rest to those who trust in him, and some of us have entered into that rest.

Hebrews 4:10

Resting in the finished work of Jesus we feel that our warfare is accomplished. The work we now do is of another kind from our own self-righteous work of former years. Our faith has introduced us into joyful rest.

Hebrews 4:11.

Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives, let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let us go in and take possession of the promised land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 4:12.

This verse may be interpreted with reference to the incarnate Word or to the inspired Word, and they are so closely united and related to one another that we need not attempt to separate them, but see Christ in the Word, and the Word in Christ, and learn that both Christ and the Word do for us all that the apostle here declares.

As you have seen hanging up in the butcher's shop the carcasses of animals cut right down in the center, so the Word of God is "piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow." It opens a man to himself and makes him see himself.

The Word of God is like the sword of Goliath, which had been laid up in the sanctuary, of which David said, "There is none like it, give it me" (1 Sa 21:9). Why did he like it so well? I think he liked it all the better because it had been laid up in the holy place by the priests. But I think he liked it best of all because it had stains of blood on it—the blood of Goliath. I like my own sword because it is covered with blood right up to the hilt—the blood of slaughtered sins and errors and prejudices has made it like the sword of Don Rodrigo, "of a dark and purple tint." The slain of the Lord have been many by the old gospel.

Many and many a time have persons written to me or spoken with me and said, "Did you intend in the sermon to make a personal allusion to me?"

I have said, "Yes, I most certainly did. But I never saw you in my life and never knew anything about your case; only he that sent me commanded me to say this and that, and he knew who would be there to hear it, and he took care to guide my thoughts and words, so as to suit your case exactly, so that there could be no mistake about it."

Hebrews 4:13.

We should earnestly labour to be right, for no deceptions will avail. The Lord's word lays us bare and opens up our secret selves.

Oh, to be clean before the Lord! This we can never be except by faith.

However great a revealer the Word may be, however clear a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, the God who gave the Word is even more so.

Hebrews 4:14.

Shall we desert him now that he has gone into heaven to represent us now that he has fought the fight, and won the victory on our behalf, and gone up to heaven as our Representative? God forbid!

Why should we let it go? Jesus has triumphed, he has entered into the glory on our behalf, the victory on our account rests with him; therefore let us follow him as closely as we can. May he help us, just now, if we are in the least dispirited or cast down, to pluck up courage, and press on our way!

With joy we meditate the grace
Of our High Priest above;
His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love.

Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and his power,
We shall obtain delivering grace
In the distressing hour.

Hebrews 4:15.

How this ought to draw us to the Savior, — that he was made like unto ourselves; that he knows our temptations by a practical experience of them; and though he was without sin, yet the same sins which are put before us by Satan were also set before him.

This does not make Christ less tender, but more so. Any-thing that is sinful hardens, and inasmuch as he was without sin, he was without the hardening influence that sin would bring to bear on a man

Hebrews 4:16

We have a Friend at court; our Bridegroom is on the throne. He who reigns in heaven loves us better than we love ourselves. Come, then, why should we hesitate, wherefore should we delay our approach to his throne of mercy? What is it that we want at this moment? Let us ask for it. If it is a time of need, then we see clearly from this verse that it is a time when we are permitted and encouraged to pray.

HEBREWS 5

Hebrews 5:1.

An angelic priest for men would be out of place. Men need forbearance and sympathy, hence the priests of old were men of like passions with the people. This also is true of our Lord Jesus, who is most certainly and really a human being like the rest of mankind in all things except sin—that stain never defiled his holy nature.

The high priest of old was “taken from among men.” Aaron was chosen, and then his son; an angel might have been sent to perform Aaron’s duty, but it was not so. And, glory be to our blessed Lord and Master, he is “One chosen out of the people,” “taken from among men.”

Notice that the high priests were taken from among men, not from among angels. Hence, our Lord Jesus Christ took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” The Jewish high priests were ordained for men; they acted on behalf of men, and they stood in the place of men. So the Lord Jesus Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of his people, that he might offer to God for them two things, — gifts, — that is, such offerings as the Jew made when he presented the fine flour, and oil, and other bloodless oblations which were only intended for thanksgiving. Christ offered thanksgiving unto his Father, and that offering was a sweet savor unto God. But beside those gifts, the priests offered sacrifices, and our Lord Jesus Christ did the same, for he was made a sin-offering for us, though he himself knew no sin.

Hebrews 5:2.

Christ was not compassed with sinful infirmity, but he was compassed with sorrowful infirmity. His were true infirmities or weaknesses; there was no evil about him, but still he had the infirmity of misery, and he had it even to a greater extent than we have. The high priest of old was a man like those for whom he stood as a representative, and our great High Priest is like unto us, though without sin.

The marginal reading is, "Who can reasonably bear with the ignorant," — that is, one who does not lose his temper even when they are very slow to learn what he teaches them. Having taught them nineteen times, and finding that they do not understand or remember the lesson, he is ready to teach them the twentieth time, he is one who will give them line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, because he has compassion on the ignorant.

Then there were other who tried the high priest far more even than the ignorant did, they were those who erred from the right path, those who went out of the way, and who continued to do so even after many warnings and much earnest exhortation. The true priest must have patience with people of this sort.

So all the high priests under the law were. They had to confess their own ignorance, they had to admit their own errings and wanderings, and therefore they could the more readily have patience with others. Our Lord Jesus Christ had neither ignorance nor sin of his own, but he has become so completely one with his people, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that he can have compassion upon us, ignorant and out of the way as we may be. Are you distressed, my brethren and sisters, because you feel your own ignorance? Do you mourn because you have gone astray? You have to come to no angry Christ; you have to approach One who will be very gentle toward you. Come boldly to him, then; confess your folly, and expect the pardon that he is waiting to bestow.

Hebrews 5:3.

That is, the ordinary high priest, chosen from among men ought, —This refers to the typical high priest, but our Lord had no sin of his own; he bore our sin, but in him is no sin.

But our Lord had no sins of his own. Do not, therefore, think that he is less sympathetic with us because he had no sins; far from it. Fellowship in sin does not create true sympathy, for sin is a hardening thing. If there are two men, who are guilty partners in sin, they never really help each other, they have no true heart of kindness, either of them; but when the time of difficulty comes, each man looks to his own interest. The fact that Christ is free from sin, is a circumstance which does not diminish the tenderness of his sympathy with us, but rather increases it.

We know that, being compassed with infirmity and imperfection, the high priests first offered sacrifices on their own account, and then afterwards offered them on behalf of the people. Christ, being pure and holy, needed no sacrifice for himself; but he did offer a complete, and acceptable, and sufficient sacrifice for us.

Hebrews 5:4, 5.

The text is quoted from the second Psalm, and it proves that Christ did not arrogate to himself any position before God. He is God's Son, not merely because he calls himself so, but because the Father says, "Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee." He took not this honor upon himself, but he was "called of God, as was Aaron.

Men could not constitute themselves high priests; for the appointment was made by God alone.

He was no unauthorized priest, self-appointed and unordained. What he does has the Father's decree to back it. "It pleased the Father to bruise him," and "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What solid ground we have for depending upon Jesus, the elect messenger of God, the ordained surety of the everlasting covenant!

Hebrews 5:5,6

Beloved, there is rich comfort for all believers in the fact that Christ is God's appointed and accepted High Priest. God ordained him to do what he has done, and is doing, and will do; and therefore it is impossible but that God should accept him and all his work.

Hebrews 5:6

In the 110th Psalm, —

He does not assume the office on his own account, but it is laid upon him, He comes not in as an amateur, but as an authorized priest of God.

Hebrews 5:7

The cup was not removed, but he was strengthened to drink it. If the Lord does not answer his people one way he does another.

Jesus understands our feelings in prayer even when we cannot express them except by strong crying and tears. Experience has made him the ready interpreter of anguished hearts.

This is to prove his infinite sympathy with his people, and how he was compassed with infirmity. Christ prayed. How near he comes to you and to me by this praying in an agony, even to a bloody sweat, with strong crying, and with weeping! Some of you know what that means, but it did, perhaps, seem to you that Christ could not know how to pray just so; yet he did. In the days of his flesh, he not only offered up prayer, but “prayers and supplications,” — many of them, of different forms, and in different shapes, — and these were accompanied with “strong crying and tears.” Possibly, you have sometimes had a dread of death; so had your Lord, — not a sinful fear of it, but that natural and perfectly innocent, yet very terrible dread which comes to a greater or less extent upon every living creature when in expectation of death. Jesus also comes very near to us because he was not literally heard and answered. He said, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” But the cup did not pass from him. The better part of his prayer won the victory, and that was, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou writ.” You will be heard, too, if that is always the principal clause in your prayers; but you may not be heard by being delivered from the trouble. Even the prayer of faith is not always literally heard. God, sometimes, instead of taking away the sickness or the death, gives us grace that we may profit by the sickness, or that we may triumph in the hour of death. That is better than being literally heard; but even the most believing prayer may not meet with a literal answer. He “was heard in that he feared;” yet he died, and you and I, in praying for ourselves, and praying for our friends, may pray an acceptable prayer, and be heard, yet they may die, or we may die.

Hebrews 5:7, 8

Just as the earthly high priests offered sacrifices for themselves, so Christ, though he needed not to offer sacrifice for himself, did need to pray for himself. You know, beloved, how he gave himself unto prayer upon the cold mountains at midnight, and how Gethsemane’s garden witnessed the bloody sweat falling in clots to the ground.

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without suffering. We may escape the rod if we are not of the family of God, but the true-born child must not, and would not if he might, avoid that chastisement of which all such are partakers.

Hebrews 5:8.

Emphatically, and above us all “a Son,” —

He was always obedient, but he had to learn experimentally what obedience meant, and he could not learn it by the things which he did; he had to learn it “by the things which he suffered;” and I believe that there are some of the most sanctified children of God who have been made so, by his grace, through the things which they have suffered. We may not all suffer alike, we may not all need the same kind of suffering; but I question whether any of us can truly learn obedience except by the things which we suffer.

Hebrews 5:9.

A perfected Saviour presents all believers with a perfect and everlasting salvation. He was always perfect in character, but his sorrowful life below gave him a complete qualification for the office of Saviour, which nothing else could have obtained. Who would not obey a Master who has undergone all kinds of sorrow that he may be able to sympathise with his servants? Who would not possess a salvation won for us by such condescending love.?

But mark, not to one more. No soul that refuses to obey Christ shall have any part or lot in this matter.

“Being made perfect.” “What,” says one, “did Christ need to be made perfect?” Not in his nature, for he was always perfect in both his divine and his human nature; but perfect as a Savior, perfect as a Sympathizer, -above all, according to the connection, perfect as a High Priest. “Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Christ will not save those who refuse to obey him, those who will not believe in him; there must be an obedient faith rendered unto him, or else the virtue of his passion and death cannot come to us.

That is, perfect in his obedience, perfect as a sacrifice, perfect as the Mediator and Substitute for his people, —

Brethren, what a grand expression that is, “eternal salvation”! You know that there are some who preach a temporary salvation; they say that you may be in Christ today and out of Christ tomorrow, that you may be saved by grace at one hour, but damned by sin the next. Ah! but the Bible says no such thing. This may be the gospel according to Arminius, but it is not the gospel according to John, nor according to Paul, nor according to our Lord Jesus Christ. That gospel is, —

**Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from his love can sever**

Christ became the author of “eternal salvation,” and the word “eternal” must mean without end; so that, if we once receive the

salvation which Christ has wrought out, we are saved in time, and shall be saved throughout all eternity. Christ is the Author of this eternal salvation; not our good works, though our faith and our works become the evidences of our having received this eternal salvation.

Hebrews 5:10.

Here the apostle rises to a great height, and then suddenly pauses, remembering how unsuitable men's minds often are for the reception of mysterious truth.

It is a glorious mark of our Lord Jesus that he was "called of God an High Priest." He did not assume this office to himself, but this high honor was laid upon him by God himself.

Then the apostle appeared to be going on to enlarge upon the Melchisedec priesthood, but he stopped. Perhaps he recollected what his Master said to his disciples on one occasion, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now." In a similar fashion Paul writes: —

Hebrews 5:11, 12

Too often we learn and unlearn. Our progress is slow, and we remain babes when we ought to be full grown men in Christ. We draw upon the church's strength when we ought to be contributing to it.

I hope it is not true of any of you, dear friends, but it is true of many Christians that they learn very little to any purpose, and always need to be going over the A B C of the gospel. They never get into the classics, the deep things of God; they are afraid of the doctrine of election, and of the doctrine of the eternal covenant, and of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, for these truths are meant for men of full age, and these poor puny babes have not cut their teeth yet. They want some softer and more childlike food. Well, it is a mercy that they are children of God; it would be better, however, for them to grow so as to become teachers of others: "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; " —

Hebrews 5:12-14

Do not be frightened, you who have lately been brought into the Lord's family. We are not going to feed you with meat yet; we shall be glad enough to serve you with milk for the present. At the same time, let us all be praying the Lord to make us grow, that we may know more, and do more, and be more what the Lord would have us to be. A child is a very beautiful object, an infant is one of the loveliest sights under heaven; but if, after twenty years, your child was still an infant, it would be a dreadful trial to you. We must keep on growing till we come to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. God grant that we may do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

We should desire not only to be saved, and to know the elementary truths, but to be advanced scholars in Christ's school, so as to handle the deeper doctrines, and teach them to others. Good Master, have patience with thy servants, and teach us still!

It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,
And will for ever be,
To muse upon the gracious truth
Of thy humanity.

Oh joy! there sitteth in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!

HEBREWS 6

In the previous chapter, Paul was writing to some who ought to have been teachers, but who needed still to be taught the first principles of the gospel; they were such babes in grace that they needed the milk of the Word, — the very simplest elements of gospel truth, — and not the strong meat of solid doctrine. The apostle, however, desires that the Hebrew believers should understand the sublimer doctrines of the gospel, and so be like men of full age who can eat strong meat. In this chapter he exhorts them to seek to attain to this standard.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the principles — The rudiments, the elementary truths,

Children are to learn their letters in order that they may go on to higher branches of education, and believers are to know the elements of the faith, but are then to advance to the higher attainments, and endeavour to understand the deeper mysteries.

Let us go from the school to the university, let us have done with our first spelling-books, and advance into the higher classics of the kingdom.

Let us make sure that the foundation is laid, but let us not have continually to lay it again. Let us go on believing and repenting, as we have done; but let us not have to begin believing and begin repenting, let us go on to something beyond that stage of experience.

Hebrews 6:2.

Let us take these things for granted, and never dispute about them any more, but go on to still higher matters.

Hebrews 6:3.

We must keep on going forward; there is no such thing in the Christian life as standing still, and we dare not turn back.

Hebrews 6:4-6.

If once the real work of grace fails it cannot be commenced again, the case is hopeless for ever. Hence the absolute necessity for persevering to the end. To draw back totally would be fatal.

Note that Paul does not say, "If they shall fall;" but, "If they shall fall away," — if the religion which they have professed shall cease to have any power over them, — then, it shall be impossible —

I have met with persons of whom I have been told that they have been born again three or four times. After experiencing regeneration, they had fallen from grace altogether, and yet had been renewed again unto repentance. I must confess I have not believed what I have been told, for it is contrary to those many Scriptures which declare that "if these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.

Hebrews 6:6. To renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

If all the processes of grace fail in the case of any professors, what is to be done with them? If the grace of God does not enable them to overcome the world, — if the blood of Christ does not purge them from sin, what more can be done? Upon this supposition, God's utmost has been tried, and has failed. Mark that Paul does not say that all this could ever happen; but that, if it could, the person concerned would be like a piece of ground which brought forth nothing but thorns and briers.

Hebrews 6:7, 8.

If, after having ploughed this ground, and sown it, and after it has been watered by the dew and rain of heaven, no good harvest ever comes of it, every wise man would leave off tilling it. He would say, "My labor is all thrown away on such a plot of ground as this, nothing more can be done with it, for after having done my utmost nothing but weeds is produced, so now it must be left to itself." You see, my dear hearers, if it were possible for the work of grace in your souls to be of no avail, nothing more could be done for you. You have had God's utmost effort expended upon your behalf, and there remains no other method of salvation for you.

I believe that there have been some professors, such as Judas and Simon Magus, who have come very near to this condition, and others who are said, after a certain sort, to have believed, to have received the Holy Spirit in miraculous gifts, and to have been specially enlightened so as to have been able to teach others; but the work of grace did not affect their hearts, it did not renew their natures, it did not transform their spirits, and so it was impossible to renew them to repentance.

When all that is possible is done for a piece of land, and yet it bears no harvest it must be given up. If, after all, the Holy Spirit's work in a man should prove fruitless, he must be given over to destruction, nothing else remains. Will any truly regenerated man ever come into this condition? The apostle answers this question in the next two verses.

Hebrews 6:9.

Harsh as the apostle's words may seem, they are not meant for you who are really believers in Christ, and in whom the Holy Spirit has wrought a complete change of heart and life; Paul is not speaking of such as you.

Hebrews 6:10.

If you have proved by your works that the grace of God is within you, God will not forget you; he will not leave you, he will not cast you away. You know the contrast in the speech between different persons concerning this doctrine. One will wickedly say, "If I am a child of God, I may live as I like." That is damnable doctrine. Another will say, "If I am a child of God, I shall not want to live as I like, but as God likes, and I shall be led by the grace of God into the path of holiness, and through divine grace I shall persevere in that way of holiness right to the end." That is quite another doctrine, and it is the true teaching of the Word of God.

Hebrews 6:11.

Keep it up; be as earnest to-day as you were twenty years ago, when you were baptized and joined the church: "Show the same diligence unto the end." Still, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Those promises we shall inherit most surely, for we shall by grace be enabled to remain faithful until death.

Hebrews 6:12-15.

Wherefore, brethren, you and I also are patiently to endure, to hold on even to the end, and God's sure promise will never fail us.

Hebrews 6:16-18.

It seems a great change in this chapter from the sad tone at the beginning to the joyous note at the end; but, indeed, there is no contradiction between the two. Paul is but giving us two sides of the truth, — both equally true, — the one needful for our warning, the other admirable for our consolation. God will not leave you, my brethren, he has pledged himself by covenant to you, and he has given an oath that his covenant shall stand. Wherefore, be of good courage, and press forward in the divine life, for your work of faith and labor of love are not in vain in the Lord; so let us "lay hold upon the hope set before us:" —

Hebrews 6:19.

Sailors throw their anchors downwards; we throw ours upwards. Their anchor goes within the veil of the waters into the deeps of the sea; ours goes within the veil of glory, into the heights of heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God: "within the veil;"

The most solemn warnings against apostasy, and the declaration that total apostasy would be fatal, are not inconsistent with the great truth of the safety of all true saints. Safe they are, for the covenant promise and oath guarantee their security, their hope is placed where it cannot fail, and in their name Jesus has gone to take possession of heaven. Has he gone as a forerunner of those who may after all perish on the road? God forbid. Where our Head is, there must the members be ere long.

Raise, raise, my soul, thy raptured sight
With sacred wonder and delight;
Jesus, thine own forerunner see
Enter'd beyond the veil for thee.

Loud let the howling tempest yell,
And foaming waves to mountains swell,
No shipwreck can my vessel fear,
Since hope hath fix'd her anchor here.

HEBREWS 9

Hebrews 9:1

That is to say, a material sanctuary, a sanctuary made out of such things as this world contains. Under the old covenant, there were certain outward symbols. Under the new covenant, we have not the symbols, but we have the substance itself. The old law dealt with types and shadows, but the gospel deals with the spiritual realities themselves.

That is, a sanctuary belonging to this world, a visible sanctuary. That first covenant was to a large degree a thing of outward rites and ceremonies, which the new covenant is not; that is a covenant of spiritual and unseen realities.

Hebrews 9:2, 3

All this was by divine appointment; the form of the rooms, the style of the furniture, everything was ordained of God; and that not merely for ornament, but for purposes of instruction. As we shall see farther on, the Holy Ghost intended a significance, a teaching, a meaning, about everything in the old tabernacle, whether it was a candlestick, or a table, or the shewbread.

Because it was not his main purpose at that time, and he was writing an important Epistle upon the most vital truths and it would not do to encumber it with too many explanations.

Hebrews 9:4, 5

It would not have been to the point which the apostle had in hand, so he waived the explanation of those things for another time.

Hebrews 9:6-8

It is from this sentence that I am sure that the Holy Ghost had a signification, a meaning, a teaching, for every item of the ancient tabernacle and temple; and we are not spinning fancies out of idle brains when we interpret these types, and learn from them important gospel lessons. "The Holy Ghost this signifying,"-

All these sacrifices and ceremonies, although full of instruction, were not in themselves able to give peace to the conscience of men. The new and better covenant does give rest to the heart by the real and actual taking away of guilt, but this the first covenant could not do. It is astonishing that there should be any who want to go back to the "beggarly elements" of the old Jewish law, and again to have priests, and an elaborate ritual, and I know not what besides. These things were faulty and fell short of what was needed even when God instituted them, for they were never intended to produce perfection, or to give rest to the troubled conscience; so of what use can those ceremonies be which are of man's own invention, and which are not according to the new covenant at all?

Hebrews 9:8

It was necessary that you should take away the sacred tent, the tabernacle, ay, and take away the temple, too, before you could learn the spiritual meaning of them. You must break the shell to get at the kernel. So God had ordained. Hence, there is now no tabernacle, no temple, no holy court, no inner shrine, the holy of holies. The material worship is done away with, in order that we may render the spiritual worship of which the material was but the type.

Hebrews 9:9

Only a figure, and only meant for "the time then present." It was the childhood of the Lord's people; it was a time when, as yet, the light had not fully broken in upon spiritual eyes, so they must be taught by picture-books. They must have a kind of Kindergarten for the little children, that they might learn the elements of the faith by the symbols, types, and representations of a material worship. When we come into the true gospel light, all that is done away with; it was only "a figure for the time then present."

All these rites could only give a fleshly purity, but they could not touch the conscience. If men saw what was meant by the outward type, then the conscience was appeased; but by the outward sign itself the conscience was never comforted, if it was a living and lowly conscience.

Hebrews 9:10

These ordinances were only laid upon the Jews-not upon any other people-and only laid upon them until the better and brighter days of reformation and fuller illumination.

Hebrews 9:11.

But Christ-Oh, how we seem to rise when we begin to get near to Him, away from the high priests of the Jews! "But Christ"-

Hebrews 9:10-12

Christ has entered into the true holy place, — not into that which was curtained with a veil, which was but a type, and which was put away when the veil was rent from the top to the bottom as Jesus died; he has entered into the immediate presence of God, and he has entered there once for all, "having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Hebrews 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.

The Jewish high priests went once a year into the Holy of Holies. Each year as it came round demanded that they should go again. Their work was never done; but "He entered in once," and only once, "into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." I love that expression, "eternal redemption"-a redemption which really does redeem, and redeems forever and ever. If you are redeemed by it, you cannot be lost; if this redemption be yours, it is not for a time, or for a season, but it is "eternal redemption." Oh,

how you ought to rejoice in the one entrance within the veil by our great High Priest who has obtained eternal redemption for us!

Hebrews 9:13-15.

When you come to deal with Christ, you have to do with eternal things. There is nothing temporary about Him, or about His work. It is "eternal redemption" that He has obtained for us, it is an "eternal inheritance" that He has purchased for us.

Do you all feel the power of that blood now ? Oh, what blessing it is to know that the conscience is quite at rest because of the purging wrought by Jesu's blood! It is heaven begun below. We cannot serve God aright until we have been thus cleansed; nay, we dare not stand in that awful presence while the consciousness of sin is upon us; but when Jesus Christ saith to us, "Ye are clean," then, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then have we "access with confidence" unto the Father through him.

It was absolutely needful that guilt should be atoned for, and, therefore, Jesus became a mediator. Nothing short of this could secure the eternal inheritance for those who are called. Take away the atonement and you have robbed our Lord of his greatest reason for being a mediator at all. We love and live upon the truth of his atoning death.

Hebrews 9:16

Or it may be understood that a covenant is not of force till the victim is slain to ratify it with blood. In either sense the death of Jesus was necessary to secure to us the blessings of the gospel

Hebrews 9:15-17

Whether it be a covenant or a testament, death is necessary to make it valid. God's covenants have ever been sanctioned and ratified with blood and the covenant or the testament of eternal grace is ratified with the blood of the Surety and Testator.

Hebrews 9:16, 17.

Or, "Where a covenant is, there must also be the death of him who covenants, or of that by which the covenant is established." Or read it as we have it in our version, for it seems as if it must be so, although we are loathe to give the meaning of "testament" to the word, since its natural meaning is evidently covenant: "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"; or, if you will, while the victim that was to confirm the covenant lived, the covenant was not ratified; it must be slain before it could be thus effective.

Hebrews 9:18

Blood was seen on all sides under the law, it was vital to its teachings. The blood of Jesus is the very life of the gospel; a ministry without the blood of Jesus in it is dead and worthless.

Hebrews 9:18-22.

There is no truth more plain than this in the whole of the Old Testament; and it must have within it a very weighty lesson to our souls. There are some who cannot endure the doctrine of a substitutionary atonement. Let them beware lest they be casting away the very soul and essence of the gospel. It is evident that the sacrifice of Christ was intended to give ease to the conscience, for we read that the blood of bulls and of goats could not do that. I fail to see how any doctrine of atonement except the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ can give ease to the guilty conscience. Christ in my stead suffering the penalty of my sin-that pacifies my conscience, but nothing else does: "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

Under the law, some things were purified by fire or by water, but "almost all things" were "purged with blood;" and there was and still is, no remission of sin "without shedding of blood."

Hebrews 9:18-26

What Aaron could not do by entering into the holy place year after year, Christ has done by entering into heaven once; and there is no more need of a sacrifice for sin, and they are grossly guilty who pretend to offer Christ over again. The great work of redemption is finished; sin is put away, and there is no more remembrance of it. In the sight of God, Christ's one sacrifice hath completed the expiation of sin, glory be to a holy name!

Hebrews 9:22

This solemn truth needs to be well learned and remembered. Nothing can cleanse us but the blood of Jesus. Sacraments, prayers, repentances are all useless as a substitute for faith in the blood.

If the doctrine of the atonement be kicked at, the answer of Christ's minister should be to preach the atonement again and again and again in the plainest terms, and declare with even greater vigor and frequency the glorious substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ in the place of his people. This is the very heart of the gospel, and it should be preached in your hearing every Sabbath day at the least. Leave that out? You have left out the life of the gospel.

Now and then we meet with some squeamish person who says, "I cannot bear the mention of the word blood." Such individuals will be horrified this morning, and it is intended that they should be. Sin is such a horrible thing that God has appointed blood to wash it away, that the very horror which the thought of it causes may give you some notion of the terrible nature of sin as God judges it. It is not without a dreadful blood shedding that your dreadful guilt could by any possibility be cleansed. Sin-bearing and suffering for sin can never be pleasant things; neither should the type which sets it forth be pleasing to the observer. On great days of sacrifice the courts of the tabernacle must have seemed like a shambles, and fitly so, that all might be struck with the deadly nature of sin.

Hebrews 9:23.

These things down below are only the patterns, the models, the symbols of the heavenly things; they could therefore be ceremonially purified with the blood which is the symbol of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

The blood of bulls would suffice to purge the types, but the realities must have a richer sacrifice to cleanse them.

Hebrews 9:23, 24.

He never went within the veil in the Jewish temple; that was but the symbol of the true holy of holies. He has gone "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

He has gone within the veil;-not the veil of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work;" but within the veil that hides "heaven itself" from our eyes, and there he is "in the presence of God for us."

Hebrews 9:23-26.

In every respect, our great High Priest was superior to the high priests under the law; though, in some points, they resembled him, and were types of him.

The high priest brought the blood of the animals that were slain for a sin-offering, and hence he came often. He could not bring his own blood, or he would only have come once, but our Savior has come only once, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself "

Hebrews 9:26

The Levitical priests continually repeated their sacrifice, for it was not effectual when offered only once; but our great High Priest has once for all presented a sacrifice which has made a full atonement for all his people's sins, and there is therefore no need for it to be repeated.

He could not come to put away sin from those who had none or from those who by their own efforts could put that sin away by themselves. It must be, then, for such as you are, who are hopelessly sinful

Once has Jesus offered sacrifice, and only once. All attempts to offer him again, as the priests pretend to do in the mass, are blasphemous, and are an insinuation that the one offering was not sufficient. As for us, let us rest on the once offered atonement, and in humble faith know that we are fully accepted.

Hebrews 9:25-28.

There is no need that He should die again, His one offering has forever perfected all His people. There remains nothing but His final coming for the judgment of the ungodly, and the acquittal of His redeemed.

Hebrews 9:27, 28.

As surely as you live you will die

Notice how the he continues to introduce that important little key-word "once."

He had to suffer because of sin once, but he will never again have to do that; his sacrifice will never need to be repeated, and never can be repeated.

His one offering so fully met all the claims of divine justice on behalf of all his people that there was no need of another offering for sin, and no room for it, so his second coming will be "without a sin offering unto salvation," as the passage may be rendered.

May we be amongst the privileged company that look for him!

Every man's death day is his doomsday, all is settled then. So Jesus, when he died, finished his atoning work, and nothing remains for him but to come a second time, no more to die, to take his great reward.

O Christ, what burdens bow'd thy head!
Our load was laid on thee:
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead,
To bear all ill for me.

Death and the curse were in our cup,
O Christ, 'twas full for thee!
But thou hast drained the last dark drop,
'Tis empty now for me.

Jehovah lifted up his rod,
O Christ, it fell on thee!
Thou wast sore stricken of thy God;
There's not one stroke for me.

For me, Lord Jesus, thou hast died,
And I have died in thee;
Thou'rt risen; my bands are all untied;
And now thou liv'st in me.

Hebrews 9:28.

He shall come to complete the salvation of those for whom his precious sacrifice was offered all those hundreds of years ago.

Christ's second coming will be "without sin," and without a sin offering, too, wholly apart from sin, unto the salvation of all His chosen. May we all be amongst those who are looking for Him! Amen.

HEBREWS 10

Hebrews 10:1

The old ceremonial law of Moses, — This refers to the old ceremonial law, under which the Jews lived so long. They always had to go on, year after year, offering the same kind of sacrifices, because the work of atonement was never done perfectly; men were not cleansed or saved by it, so the process had to be constantly repeated.

A man could go to the Levitical sacrifices twenty years running, and yet be no forwarder. He must go again and again as long as he lived. They were only figures and shadows and types; the real sacrifice is Christ.

Those that were sprinkled with the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices did not feel that their sin was for ever put away. They went back, after the victim had been offered, with a certain measure of rest and relief, but not with that perfect rest which is the accompaniment of the pardon that Jesus gives to those who come unto God through him.

If the sacrifice had really put away sin, surely it would never have needed to be offered again. If one sacrifice had put away the guilt of Israel, there would have been no need to bring another.

Hebrews 10:2

Once forgiven, the sin would not have come back again. If the sacrifice had really cleansed the conscience of the offerer, he would not have had cause to present it again.

Once cleansed from sin, we are cleansed from sin; the great deed is done once for all,

If the worshippers had thus been made perfect; if they had been completely cleansed and accepted through these sacrifices, —

The fact that there was a lamb to be offered every morning and every evening, and that there was a great day of atonement to be

observed every year, proved that there was sin still remaining, which had not been put away, and that the worshippers needed to come again, and again, and yet again, with fresh sacrifices for their fresh sins. The apostle's argument is unanswerable.

There would have been no need to bring another lamb to be offered if the one which was presented had put away sin; there would have been no need of another day of atonement if the sacrifice on the one day had really made atonement for sin.

Hebrews 10:3,4

Your common sense tells you "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Although rivers of such blood should continually be flowing, what efficacy could there be in them to put away the moral stain of guilt and transgression against God?

Their blood was only a picture, an emblem, a type of far more precious blood, — the shadow of the real atonement which was afterwards to be offered.

Hebrews 10:5

That great He, — that Divine He, — our Savior and our God. "when he cometh into the world,"-

That is, the true Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, our Redeemer: "When he cometh into the world," —

By the work of the Holy Ghost within the Virgin Mary, the blessed body of Christ was "prepared" so that he ought be God and man in one person, and so might bring an offering acceptable unto God.

Hebrews 10:5-7

Types were no longer needed when the great Antitype had come. Christ was no longer pre-figured, for he was there in person. He put away the old shadows of the blood of bulls and goats when he brought his own real sacrifice, the true atonement for sin.

That will had not been done, although myriads of sacrifices had been offered. But Christ came really to do that will by offering himself as the one and only acceptable sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:8, 9

The old law is gone, the first sacrifice is no longer presented, for the second is come, the real offering of Christ the Lamb of God.

An end was made of the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, that the real substance might be introduced by Christ. Never imagine, dear friends, that the old Jewish ceremonial law is to drag on its existence, and to be intermingled with the Christian dispensation. Ah, no! As the shadows of the night vanish when the sun arises, as the lamps in yonder street are put out when daylight returns, so was it with all the types and shadows of the ancient law when the great Antitype appeared.

He takes away the type because the great Antitype has come. He abolishes the offering of bullocks, and goats, and lambs, because HE has come whom they all foreshadowed.

Hebrews 10:10

That is, the will of God as done by Christ: "By the which will " — The will which Christ fulfilled in life and in death:

Once, and only once. How (the writer) loves to recall this fact!

Or, "once." It can never be offered again. The presence of offering up the body and the blood of Christ in the mass is sheer profanity. It has been done once, and there is no need of a repetition. To suppose that it could be repeated, is to imply that it was incomplete on the first occasion; but it was not, for by it we are already sanctified.

Only one sacrifice was required. The key-word here is that little word "once." Let it not only sound in your ears, but be written in your hearts. Jesus Christ died once, he brought his sacrifice once, he put away our sins once.

Oh, what a blessed doctrine this is, — that the one offering of Christ has done what the tens of thousands of offerings under the old law never could accomplish! All the work of man is but the spinning of a righteousness which is undone as quickly as it is spun; but Christ has finished the seamless and spotless robe of his righteousness which is to last for ever. By his one sacrifice he has ended all the fruitless labor of the ages; and, now, as many of us as have believed in him have all the benefits of his perfect work.

Hebrews 10:11, 12

Christ stands no longer to minister as a sacrificing priest, he is sitting down on the right hand of God. That is the posture of one whose work is done, and who is taking his rest: "He sat down on the right hand of God;

He would not have sat down if his work had not been done. He would not have ceased from his priestly service of presenting sacrifice if his one offering had not been sufficient. This Man's offering once, once, once, has done all that God demanded, and all that man required.

It was done, wholly done, and done for ever; nothing was to be added to it, and, therefore, Jesus "sat down" in the place of honor and power "on the right hand of God"; —

Hebrews 10:13

We are expecting something better than we have yet seen. "We were saved in hope," We are expecting that which is yet to be revealed; and our covenant Head is expecting, too. This is the age of expectancy. We have not yet come to the fullness of the blessing that is ours in Christ Jesus. The mercy of God is at present; only in the bud; the fully-developed flower has yet to be seen. Christ is expecting; his saints are expecting; the whole creation is expecting.

Or, "set apart." He has fully saved all those for whom he died. His one sacrifice was so effectual that, by it, he has for ever put away the sin of the whole multitude of those that believe in him.

Hebrews 10:13, 18

Sin itself being no longer imputed to any believer in Christ, there is neither the occasion nor the need for the offering of another sacrifice for sin. Christ's one sacrifice has for ever put away the sins of all who believe in him.

Hebrews 10:14

This glorious message is for you, beloved, if you believe in Christ. By his one sacrifice he has done all that you need; he has perfected you for ever.

Hebrews 10:15

And what more veritable witness can we have? That to which the Holy Ghost bears testimony must never be questioned by us.

Hebrews 10:15-17

Treasure up these golden words: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Oh, what a blessed covenant this is! Christ's death has established a covenant of grace in which there is no flaw, and no possibility of failure, for the one Condition of the covenant has been fulfilled by Christ, and now it stands as a covenant of "shalls" and "wills" on God's part from which he will never run back. It is not, "If they do this, and if they do that, I will do the other;" but it is all "I will." "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

What a wonderful covenant that is; — not that he will bless you if you keep the law, but that you shall be enabled to keep it, and that he will lead you to do so by putting his law, not on tables of stone, where your eye can see it, but on the fleshy tablets of your heart, where your soul shall feel its force and power, so that you shall be obedient to it. Meditate on those glorious words: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Hebrews 10:18

The offering for sin is in order that sin may be put away; and if it be put away, so that God himself will remember it no more, what more is wanted? What more could be desired? Wherefore, let us rest in the one great finished work of Christ, and be perfectly happy. Sin is gone, wrath is over, for those for whom Christ died; they are perfected for ever through his one great sacrifice.

No more offering for sin is needed, for the work of atonement is fully done, and done for ever. As the sin of all who believe in Jesus is put away, what heed is there of any further sacrifice on account of it? The atonement is complete; let us therefore rejoice in it, and praise God for it.

If the sins themselves have gone, and God will remember them no more, no further sacrifice is required for them. What need have ye of cleansing if ye are so clean that God himself sees no sin in you? O glorious purgation by the atoning sacrifice of Christ! Rejoice in it, and praise the Lord for it for ever and ever.

Hebrews 10:19-22.

The place of the Christian is that of the nearest conceivable access God for "the holiest" is "the holy of holies,"-that innermost part of the tabernacle to reach which the high priest had to pass through the outer court, and through the court of the priests, and then through the beautiful veil which concealed the mercy-seat. At the death of Christ, that veil was rent from the top to the bottom, so

now there is nothing to keep us back from the mercy-seat. We, therefore, have boldness and liberty in that way "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" where the high priest himself could only go once in the year, we may go at all times. The veil has not been merely lifted up for a while, and then dropped down again; it is not rolled up ready for future use; it is rent in twain, destroyed. Since Jesus has died, there is no separation now between the believer and his God except by means of such a veil as our base unbelief may please to hang up. The crimson way of Christ's shed blood lies open to all believers therefore, "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,"

The Jew could not personally go up to the mercy-seat; he had to go there through his representative, the high priest, and we have Christ as our "high priest over the house of God," so we come to God through him. The Israelite could not pass through the veil which hid from public gaze the glory of the Shekinah, and Jesus Christ's humanity was a veil which somewhat concealed the glory of his Deity; but the flesh of Christ having been crucified, the veil has been rent, and now we may come right up to the throne of God without trembling; nay, we may come even with holy boldness and familiarity, and speak to God without alarm. Having such a privilege as this, let us not neglect it. It was denied to prophets and kings in the olden time; but now that it is vouchsafed to us, let us avail ourselves of it, and constantly "let us draw near" unto God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

Hebrews 10:19-25

Notice the practical teaching of this great truth. If you have been thus washed, do not defile yourselves again. If, by God's rich mercy, you have been delivered from the transgressions of the past, let gratitude move you to holy living, and endeavor, not only to grow in grace yourselves, but to help others in the same direction, that so the abounding mercy of God may have from us abundant praise. God grant it for his name's sake! Amen.

Hebrews 10:23.

Not only hold it, but hold it fast without wavering. Let us never have a question about it. God grant that we may have an unquestioning, unstaggering faith! To hold fast the profession of our faith, seems enough; but to hold it fast without wavering, is better still; and so we ought to do.

God gives us no cause for wavering, for he never wavers. If he were an unfaithful God, we might naturally be an unbelieving people; but "he is faithful that promised." Therefore, "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

As he is faithful, let us also be faithful, and hold, as with a death grip, the faith which has been revealed to us and wrought within us by the Holy Spirit; ay, and the profession of that faith too, never being ashamed to own that we are followers of the Nazarene. And let us while we are thus faithful ourselves, endeavor to strengthen others.

Hebrews 10:24.

The Greek is, to stir each other up to a paroxysm of love. There is no fear that we shall ever go too far in our love to God; though it should cast us into a state of blessed excitement, yet would it be healthy for us so to live and so to work.

I am afraid there are some who consider one another to provoke in quite a different spirit from this,-who watch to find out a tender spot where a wound will be most felt. They observe the weakness of a brother's constitution, and then play upon it, or make jests about it. All this is evil, so let us avoid it; let us all seek out the good points of our brethren, and consider them, that we may afterwards be the means of guiding them to those peculiar good works for which they are best adapted.

"Provoke unto love and to good works." I do not know how we can do that better than by being very loving and very full of good works ourselves, for then will others be likely to say, "If these people are helped by God's grace to love like this, and to labor like this, why should not we do the same" A good example is often better than a very proper precept.

Hebrews 10:25.

For Christian fellowship is helpful to us, and we are helpful to others by it. A Christian is not meant to be a solitary being. Sheep are gregarious, and so are the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be solitary pilgrims along the road to heaven, but join that glorious host of God's elect who march beneath the guidance of our great Master.

Does not every day bring us nearer to the coming of the Lord? Are there not many signs that these are the last days? Well then, so much the more let us stir each other up to love and to good works.

Yes; there are some who even make a bad use of what ought to be a great blessing, namely, the printing-press, and the printed sermon, by staying at home to read a sermon because, they say, it is better than going out to hear one. Well, dear friend, if I could not hear profitably, I would still make one of the assembly gathered together for the worship of God. It is a bad example for a professing Christian to absent himself from the assembly of the friends of Christ. There was a dear sister, whom many of you knew, who used to attend here with great regularity, although she could not hear a word that was said; but she said it did her good to join

in the hymns, and to know that she was worshipping God with the rest of his people. I wish that some, who stay away for the most frivolous excuses, would think of this verse: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;"-

Hebrews 10:25

It is not the work of the minister alone to exhort, but the brethren, and the sisters, too, should exhort one another, and seek to stir each other up in the faith and fear of God.

Hebrews 10:26, 27.

This is a solemn text, containing a very terrible truth. If, after having been regenerated, and made children of God, we were willfully and deliberately to let the Savior go, and apostatize altogether to the world, there would be no hope for us. What, then, is our hope? Why, that we shall never be permitted to do so, - that the grace of God will keep us so that, although we may fall like Peter, we shall not fall away like Judas, - that, though we may sin, there shall not be that degree of studied willfulness about it that would make it to be the sin unto death, a deliberate act of spiritual suicide. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints derives great glory from this other truth that, if they did not persevere, there is no second means of grace, no other plan of salvation. No man was ever born again twice; no man was ever washed twice in the precious blood of Jesus. The one washing makes us so clean that "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet," for which Jesus provides by daily cleansing; but the one grand atoning act never fails. If it did fail, there would remain "no more sacrifice for sins."

Here the truth taught is that, if a Christian apostatizes, if he renounces his faith, and goes back to the world, it is impossible to reclaim him. A backslider may be restored, but anyone who should wilfully, after receiving the truth, reject it, has rejected the only Savior; he has rejected the only regeneration; and, consequently, he is without the pale of the possibilities of restoration. The question is, "Will any true child of God so apostatize?" That question is answered in this very chapter; but the truth here taught is that, if he does, he goes into a state of absolute hopelessness.

The ever-blessed Soft of God
Went up to Calvary for me,
There paid my debt, there bore my load
In his own body on the tree.

'Tis finish'd all; the veil is rent,
The welcome sure, the access free;
Now, then, we leave our banishment,
O Father, to return to thee.

Hebrews 10:28, 29.

Can there be any sorer punishment than to die without mercy? Yes, there is, for there is eternal punishment: "of how much sorer punishment," —

For apostasy from Christ would amount to all this; and if that were possible, what grace would remain?

Hebrews 10:30.

O professors, take this message home to your hearts! Let every one of us take it home: "The Lord shall judge his people." God's fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem. If a man tries nothing else, he will test his gold; and if no others shall be judged, yet certainly those will be who say that they are the Lord's people. In that dread day, he will separate the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the dross from the gold; his fan will be in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor; he will sit as a refiner of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi; he shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. Woe to those, in that day, who are a defilement to his Church, and an adulteration to the purity of his people!

Hebrews 10:31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

What a terrible verse is that! It is a text that ought to be preached from by those who are always saying that the punishment of the wicked will be less than, according to our minds, the Word of God leads us to expect it to be: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

With what terrible sentences does Paul hedge up the way of the believer! Leave that way, and there is nothing for you but destruction. Reject your Savior, give up your hope in him, and there cannot be another name by which you can be saved, or another glorified by which you can be cleansed from sin.

We are sometimes accused of using language too harsh, too ghastly, too alarming with regard to the world to come, but we shall not soon change our note. We solemnly believe that if we could speak thunderbolts, and our every look were a lightning flash, and if our eyes dropped blood instead of tears, no tones, words, gestures, or similitudes of dread could exaggerate the awful condition of a soul which has refused the gospel and is delivered over to justice

Hebrews 10:32.

The apostle is not expecting that any of them will ever go back to where they were before; he is persuaded that they will persevere even to the end. The very warning that he gives is a powerful preventive against apostasy. Now comes the exhortation: "Call to remembrance the former days." Some of you can "call to remembrance" the time when you joined the church, when you had to run the gauntlet for Christ's sake. Then, in your early Christian life, you feared nothing and nobody so long as you could glorify God. Then, you had great enjoyment, sweet seasons of communion with your Lord: "Call to remembrance the former days."

Hebrews 10:32, 33.

In your early Christian days, you were pointed at, and regarded as quite singular for being servants of Christ; or, possibly, it was not yourselves so much as your pastors, your leaders, your friends who were prominent in the church, at whom the arrows of the adversaries were aimed. They shot at you through them; and, sometimes, that pained you much more than when they distinctly attacked you. Altogether, it was "a great fight of afflictions" that you had to endure.

Hebrews 10:34.

In those early days, the Jewish believers clung as the unbelieving Jews persecuted him, to Paul just as ardently

Hebrews 10:34, 35.

Be like the brave Spartan who would never lose his shield, but would come home either with it or on it. "Cast not away your confidence." You trusted in God in those early days, and nothing seemed to daunt you then. "Cast not away your confidence." Rather, get more to add to it. Let there be no thought of going back, but may there rather be a distinct advance!

You must push on; you have already defied the foe, to turn back is certain destruction, for you have no armor for your back.

Hebrews 10:36.

Our supply of that virtue is often very short; it is an article of which there is very little in the market, and all of us have need of more of it: "Ye have need of patience,"-

There must first be the doing of the will of God, and then the reward will come afterwards. God will not give to his people their full reward yet. Patience, then, brother; patience, sister. Saturday night will come one of these days; your week's work will then be over, and you will be more than repaid for anything you have done for your Lord.

To hold on, to continue to do God's will,-this is the task. To start, and to make a spurt now and then, is easy enough; but to keep on, is trying to every spiritual muscle; and only God can enable you to do so.

Hebrews 10:37, 38.

The drawers back-the mere professors-those who say they have been illuminated, and who have tasted, in a measure, the sweetness of religion, yet who never received Christ in their inmost heart,-these are the people in whom God hath no pleasure.

If there be a drawing back from faith, God can have no pleasure in us; but shall we draw back? That is the question, and here is the answer: —

Hebrews 10:39.

We who have believed in Jesus, we who have sincerely committed ourselves to his care, we who have been born again of the Holy Spirit, we in whom there is the real work of grace which God has pledged to carry on, — "we are not of them who draw back unto perdition:" —

What a blessed truth is this! O Christian, as you see the danger that lies before you if you did prove to be an apostate, bless that sovereign grace which will not suffer you so to do, even as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

What a consoling end this is to the chapter! It ought to comfort every believer in Christ who has been distressed by the earlier verses: "we"-

May that be true of every one of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HEBREWS 11

This is the triumphal arch of faith. Here we find the names of many of the heroes of faith, and a brief record of some of the battles in which they fought and conquered. May you and I possess "like precious faith" at; that of which we have here the story! We cannot enter heaven without it; we cannot fight our way through the world without it.

In this chapter we read of the wonders of faith; but I have never read a chapter setting forth the wonders of unbelief. Unbelief is barren impotent, a mere negation, a dead and accursed thing; but faith bears fruit faith produces good works, faith achieves marvels.

These men, of whom we are now briefly to read, are a company of God's witnesses; and the apostle calls them, in the next chapter, "a cloud of witnesses," who, from their lofty seats above, are watching us who are now running the Christian race.

This is the Arc de Triomphe erected to the memory of the heroes of faith, whose names are here recorded by the apostle's inspired pen, with a brief mention of some of their most memorable actions. If it had not been for their faith, which moved them to accomplish such valiant deeds, we might not have known anything about them.

Hebrews 11:1

It gets a grip of what it hopes for, and holds it in its hand.

We do see by faith. We see by faith what cannot be seen by our eyes; we grasp by faith what cannot be grasped with our hands. A strange mystery is the simple act of faith.

Though the "things" are only "hoped for" and "not seen" at present, the eye of faith can see them, and the hand of faith can grasp them. Faith is more mighty than any of our senses, or than all our senses combined.

Hebrews 11:2

It is noteworthy that they obtained this "good report" by their faith. Doubt gives a man an evil reputation; it is only believers who obtain such a "report" as even the Holy Spirit describes as "good."

All the godly of the olden time had a good report of God and of holy men as the result of their faith.

"The elders"— that is, those who lived in the ancient times — wrought wondrous works by faith, and the "report" of them still encourages others to try to do likewise.

Those of the olden time, who were men of noble character, won that character by their faith.

So it was written, in the olden time, that believers "obtained a good report;" and this second verse shows that they obtained it by their faith. The best part of the report about them is, that they believed their God, and believed all that was revealed to them by his Word and his Spirit.

Hebrews 11:3

There was no pre-existent matter, the world was made by God's word, so that prior to the things which are seen, there existed that which is not seen. We, dear friends, when we are trusting in the unseen God, are going back to first principles, we are getting to that which is the essence and the source of all. The next verse illustrates the worship of faith.

It is only by believing the inspired record that we can obtain a true understanding of the wondrous work of creation. Science and reason are of little or no avail here, but the opening words of divine revelation explain the great mystery: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

They were not evolved out of something else that existed before; evolution is a rank lie against revelation. The worlds were not made, not one of them was made, out of something pre-existent; but they were framed by the Word of God, and the things which are seen were not made of things which are seen.

That is one of the earliest lessons of faith. We do not discover the secrets of Creation by mere reason, or the teachings of science; it is only by revelation that the marvellous story can reach us. Faith accepts the inspired declaration that God made all things, and that

the things that are seen were made out of things that are not seen, so that, after all, the foundation of everything is that which is not seen. The visible is but a dream; the things which are round about us are the transient things that shall all pass away. The things that are not seen are eternal, and shall abide for ever. The things which are seen were made out of the invisible, not out of things which are seen.

Things that we see were not made out of things that we see. They were brought out of the unseen by the word of God; so that, really, the word of God is the foundation of everything that has been formed by him; and, after all, things material—created and seen—are not truly substantial. They are but shadows; the real substance is that which never can be seen, even the ever-blessed God, whose voice—whose word—created the heavens and the earth.

The facts about creation must be the subject of faith. It is true that they can be substantiated, by the argument from design, and in other ways; still, for a wise purpose as I believe, God has not made even that matter of the creation of the universe perfectly clear to human reason, so there is room for the exercise of faith. Men like to have everything laid down according to the rules of mathematical precision, but God desires them to exercise faith; and, therefore, he has not acted according to their wishes.

By faith, we know more about the creation of the world than philosophy can ever teach us, It has invented the most remarkable and ridiculous theories of how the worlds were made and men produced. We have the truth here; the worlds were framed by the word of God, not made of things which existed previously, but spoken out of nothing by the voice of the Almighty.

Hebrews 11:4

It was the sacrifice of the believing Abel that was well pleasing in God's sight; and though his brother Cain, out of jealousy and malice, slew him, his good reputation continues even to this day. That is the best way of living which enables a man to go on speaking for God even after he is dead.

He was a better man than Cain, and his offering was a better offering than Cain's was; but at bottom here was the difference between the two brothers, Abel had faith, and Cain had none. It was "by faith" that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" presented.

What wondrous faith this is! Here is a dead man speaking. Here is a man who is slain by his brother; yet the one who is killed receives the approbation of God.

Faith teaches us how to worship God aright. Faith brings the appointed sacrifice, which is therefore accepted.

There is no worshipping God aright, except by faith. The most gorgeous ceremonies are as nothing in his sight; it is the faith of the heart which {me accepts. Next we read of the reward of faith.

Paul begins his list of heroes of faith with Abel; and you will notice that faith works differently in each one of these mighty men. It is the same living principle in all of them; but they are different men, and their faith is seen in very different circumstances. Faith is able to work in all manner of ways; it is good at everything. There is nothing that God calls us to do but faith can enable us to accomplish it. In Abel's case, we see that faith is grand at worshipping. Faith brings a right sacrifice; brings it in the right way; and speaks even after she is dead, for the blood of Abel cried out of the ground. Oh, that all of us might so live that, even out of our graves, there might come a voice speaking for God!

All down the ages, the faith of Abel has continued bearing witness to God. Oh, that we might have Abel's faith, and offer to God the Lamb,—even Christ Jesus,—that we also may be accepted for his sake!

The first of the long line of martyrs triumphed by faith; and if you are to be strong to bear witness for God, you must be made strong by the same power which wrought so effectually in Abel. If, like his, your life is to be a speaking life, — a life which shall speak even out of the grave, — its voice must be the voice of faith.

Hebrews 11:5

Faith has conquered death itself, or else avoided it. There is scarcely anything which faith cannot do, for faith ranks itself on the side of the omnipotent God, and becomes all but omnipotent. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death."

It was by faith, not by works, that this truly gracious man, "was translated that he should not see death." We never read of any unbeliever "that he pleased God," but this is the inspired testimony concerning Enoch.

It is faith that muzzles the mouth of death, and takes away the power of the sepulcher. If any man, who had not been a believer, had been translated as Enoch was, we should have been able to point to a great feat accomplished apart from faith. It has never been so; for this, which was one of the greatest things that was ever done, — to leap from this life into another, and to overleap the grave altogether, — was only achieved "by faith."

Hebrews 11:5, 6

The way to please God, then, is to believe in him, and if there be any possibility of entering heaven without seeing death, faith alone can point the way. You cannot be Enochs unless you please God, and you cannot please God unless you have faith in him.

He cannot come to a God who to his own mind is non-existent; he must believe that he is.

See this reward then; it pleases God, and that is reward enough for anyone of us. Next see faith's safety.

See, here, how faith has learnt the secret art of pleasing God. God is the thrice-holy One; he is a jealous God, and a very little sin greatly provokes him; but faith knows how to please him. I do not wonder that Enoch did not die; it was a less thing to be translated to heaven than it was to please God. To live for three hundred years, in constant communion with God, as he did, to be ever pleasing God, was a mighty triumph for faith. Nay God grant that, during all the years that we live, whether they are few or many, we may so live as always to please him! "But without faith it is impossible to please him."

Mark that this holiest of men, whose walk with God was so close and unbroken that he was permitted to escape the pangs of death, nevertheless did not attain to this high position by his own works, but by faith.

These are the things with which faith always deals; — not with the things that are seen or are apprehensible by the senses or the feelings.

Hebrews 11:6

You must believe that God hears prayer. You must believe that he will punish the guilty, and that he will reward the righteous. Without this sure faith, you cannot come to him.

No one can come to God if he does not believe that there is a God, and that he justly dispenses rewards and punishments.

Some of the Indian tribes use little strips of cloth instead of money. I would not find fault with them if I lived there, but when I come to England, strips of cloth will not suffice. So honesty, sobriety, and such things may be very good among men, and the more you have of them the better. But all these things put together, without faith, do not please God. Virtues without faith are white-washed sins.

Hebrews 11:7

There is an unholy fear which is cast out by perfect love, but there is a holy fear, a filial fear, which dwells most happily with faith, so was it with Noah, who, "by faith,... moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

You see, faith and fear can live in the same heart; and they can work together to build the same ark. Faith and fear are very sweet companions, when the fear is filial fear, a holy dread of disobeying, God. When we are moved with that fear, our faith becomes practical.

Fear and faith may sometimes dwell together. There is a holy, humble fear that perfect love never casts out, but entertains and cherishes; and this is the kind of fear that Noah possessed: "Being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark." Noah was a practical life-saver,— an ark-builder; and so he became the second father of the human race,— a sort of new Adam,— and that simply by his faith. Oh! what is there that is impossible to the man who believes in God? "All things are possible to him that believeth."

See how faith within a man masters all his emotions. Noah, in preparing the ark, was "moved with fear;" but that fear, instead of hampering him, was yoked with his faith, and so was turned to practical account. Oh, for an overcoming faith, which shall hold our entire nature in check, or which shall employ every part of our being for its own high and noble purposes!

So you see that faith has a condemning power towards an ungodly world. You do not need to be constantly telling worldlings that they are doing wrong; let them see clearly the evidence of your faith, for that will bear the strongest conceivable witness against their unbelief and sin, even as Noah, by his faith, "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Noah was the second great father of men as Adam was the first. In the flood, all died except Noah and his family. Faith made him build the great ship on dry land, into which he went, with his wife and family and all manner of living creatures; and when the rest of mankind were destroyed, they outlived the flood.

Faith can outlive a deluge which drowns the whole world. She hath an Ark even when God's wrath sweeps all the rest away. Next we learn the obedience of faith.

Hebrews 11:7, 8

He did not hesitate to leave his family, to leave his property, to leave his country; but he obeyed, “when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance.”

Hebrews 11:8

Faith puts her hand into God's hand, and follows where he leads, with sweet contentment, knowing that, if she cannot see, God can, and he will not lead us wrong. Do you not remember that hymn that our Brother Chamberlain sings so sweetly?

“So on I go — not knowing, I would not if I might; I'd rather walk in the dark with God, than go alone in the light; I'd rather walk by faith with him, than go alone by sight. Where he may lead, I'll follow, My trust in him repose: And every hour in perfect peace I'll sing, 'He knows! he knows!'”

He was self-exiled from his home,— a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Yet, when called of God, it mattered not to him where he was bidden to go; he seemed to say, “Appoint my way, great God. It is for me not to ask the reason why, but to obey thy command.”

That is, surely, the very masterpiece of faith. God bade Abraham go forth from his native land, he believed that God knew where he was to go though he did not himself know; so he left the direction of his wanderings entirely in the Lord's hands, and obeyed, and “went out, not knowing whither he went.” We are not to ask for full knowledge before we will be obedient to the will of the Lord; but we are to obey God in the dark, even as Abraham did.

Though Abraham did not know where he was going, God knew, and that was quite sufficient for the patriarch. As a little child is willing to be led by his parent, so Abraham was willing to be led by God, even though that meant leaving his own country and his own people, and going to the distant land which God intended to give him.

Here you have the expectation of faith. Faith does not live on things seen; she lives on something yet to come. That which is to come she regards as eternal, not like a mere tent in which she dwells here, but a city that hath foundations, fixed and firm. Next we see the strength of faith, that strength seen in the deadness of nature.

Hebrews 11:9

It is one of the great evidences of true faith for her to keep on, to continue, to abide, without any visible signs or tokens of what she knows is hers. The life of faith is wonderful, but so also is the walk of faith. Her walk has much about it that is mysterious; she knows that the land she treads on belongs to her; and yet, in another sense, she cannot claim a solitary foot of it. She knows that she is at home, even as Abraham was in his own land; yet like him, she knows herself to be a sojourner in a strange land, and is quite content to be so.

Hebrews 11:9, 10

There have been many here in this house of prayer who have looked for this city, and they have gone to it. Others of us sit waiting here till our Lord's dear hand shall beckon us, and his voice shall say, “Come up higher.” We are looking for the city. Keep looking, beloved, there is nothing here worth looking for; but look for “a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.”

So that faith made the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother; faith has caused our spiritual barrenness to bring forth abundantly. Oh, that some barren soul here might catch the blessed influences of faith, and begin at once to bear fruit for God!

And he was content to be a pilgrim and wanderer till he should reach that city; he was quite willing to dispense with all present comfort for the sake of that glorious future which God set before the eyes of his faith.

He was only a sojourner in the land of promise, he knew that even the promised land was only a tenting-ground for him and his descendants, but he also knew that he was on his way to a divinely-planned and divinely-built city,—not like the temporary cities of earth, which shall all perish and pass away, but a city with everlasting foundations, a city that will last as long as God himself exists.

Hebrews 11:10

What a depth of meaning there is in those five words, “a city which hath foundation,” — as if all other cities had none! They come, and they go, as if they were molehills raised on the surface of the earth, or little mounds of sand made by the children's wooden spades upon the seashore, which the next tide will wash away. What vast numbers of cities have been destroyed already! We are constantly picking up the relics of them, but there is, blessed be the name of the Lord, “a city which hath foundations,” a city founded on eternal power, and we are on our way to that city, I hope.

Hebrews 11:11

And this holy woman is enrolled among these saintly ones. Her faith was not all it ought to have been; but God saw that it was true

faith, and he loved it, and he wrote the record of it.

Sarah's faith was not like Abraham's, yet it was true faith, and therefore her name appears among faith's worthies.

Hebrews 11:12

This is true, literally, of Abraham's seed according to the flesh. It is also true in a spiritual sense, for he is "the father of all them that believe", and they are a multitude whom no man can number.

"Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead." That "one" was Isaac, for he was given up to die; and, apparently, nothing could save him from death. Yet God did save him, and from him there sprang "so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

Perhaps the reference is to Abraham, who was as good as dead, being so old; or to Isaac, who was as good as dead, for he was laid upon the altar, and was practically "offered up" as a sacrifice unto the Lord. There were many deaths to work against the life of faith; yet life triumphed over death after all.

Hebrews 11:13

What long arms faith has! The promises are afar off, and yet faith embraces them to-night. Embrace the promises, dear friends, and stretch out your hands by faith to hands that have gone before.

That is a rich word, they "embraced them." They were far off, and yet faith brought them so near that they seemed to receive them to their hearts and feel the comfort of them. Here is the confession of faith.

Though the promises could only be seen afar off, faith has such long arms that it embraced them, clung to them as loving relatives cling to one another, and would not let them go. So may we see the promises, and be persuaded that they belong to us, and embrace them as we clasp to our bosom those who are nearest and dearest to us!

"E'en now by faith we join our hands With those that went before; And greet the blood-besprinkled bands On the eternal shore."

"These all"— Paul means Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob, "died in faith."

They "embraced" the promises,— threw their arms round them,— hugged them to their hearts,— embraced them as those who dearly loved them.

That is the epitaph which God has carved over the resting-place of his faithful ones: "These all died in faith." Will this be the record concerning all of us, "These all died in faith"?

They not only were strangers and pilgrims, but they confessed it. Confessed faith is requisite. Oh, you who, like Nicodemus, come to Christ by night, be ashamed that you are ashamed, and come out, and boldly confess what you are!

What a sweet word that is, "embraced them"! First, they were sure the promises were true; they "were persuaded of them." But, next, they laid hold of them, pressed them to their hearts, they "embraced them." And then, further, they practically showed the fruit of their faith by confessing that "they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

The chapter is a very long one so I must condense it, as the writer himself did when he came to the 32nd verse; there was so much to be said that he added, —

Hebrews 11:14

They were strangers and pilgrims here, and they sought a country elsewhere. Every man wants a country; and if we have not one beneath the stars, we seek it somewhere else.

If they were seeking a country, might they not have gone back to their own country, from whence they came out? No; true believers know nothing about going back. We are bound to go forward to the better land that is before us. Almighty grace will not permit the people of God to turn aside, and find their rest anywhere else. We are bound for the kingdom; and, by the grace of God, we shall not rest until we enter it, to go no more out for ever.

But, now, faith has no thought of going back; her face is set like a flint to go towards the heavenly city, forsaking every earthly joy for the sake of the eternal future.

Hebrews 11:14-19

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

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. 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.

Here you have the triumph of faith, one of the greatest victories that was ever achieved by faith, when a man was willing, at God's command, to offer up his son, his only son, his son according to promise, his son in whom all the covenant was to be fulfilled.

Hebrews 11:15

True pilgrims never think of going back; they know that, whatever difficulties and trials lie ahead of them, there are far greater ones in "that country from whence they came out." Bunyan's Christian was quite resolved not to go back to the City of Destruction whatever perils he might have to face on his way to the Celestial City.

Ah, but God's people are not mindful of that country from whence they came out! They have opportunity to return; but they have no wish to return. May God's grace always keep any of you from turning back; for it is to turn back unto perdition! Your faces are heavenward to-day; keep them so. Remember the doom of any that apostatize. It is impossible, "if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." "If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Lord, keep thy servants! Hold us up, and we shall be safe.

Hebrews 11:16

They are not ashamed to be called God's people, and he is not ashamed to be called their God. They are looking for a city, and he has prepared a city for them. Evidently he and they are well agreed. They want a heaven, and he is preparing heaven for them, and preparing them for heaven.

For they are not ashamed to look forward to the future for their chief joy; and God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared that chief joy for them.

Their desire for "a better country" has been implanted within them by God himself, and "he hath prepared for them a city" which will more than satisfy their utmost desires.

Hebrews 11:17-19

This was one of the grandest achievements of faith. It was also a figure or type of God's offering up his well-beloved Son almost on the same spot.

See how faith consecrates natural affection. See also how faith laughs at impossibilities. Abraham expects that God will raise his son from the dead, or do something equally wonderful, so that the promise he had given shall be fulfilled. It was not Abraham's business to keep God's promise for him; it was God's business to do that for himself, and he did it. You remember how Rebekah tried to make God's promise come true for Jacob, and what a mess she made by her plotting and scheming. When we give our attention to keeping God's precepts, and leave him to fulfill his own promises, all will be well. It was Abraham's part to offer up his son; it was God's part to fulfill the promise to his seed according to the covenant which he had made.

The great trouble of Abraham was not his fatherly instinct, hard as it was to overcome that, and to be the slayer of his only son, his great difficulty was ' " How can God's promise be kept ? He has given me r promise that in Isaac shall my seed be called, yet he tells me to offer up my son, how can this be ? " But by faith he did it,

See how Abraham spied out the great doctrine of the resurrection. Though almost driven to desperation, he would not give up his faith in God. He was bidden to believe two apparently opposite things;—first, that in Isaac should his seed be called; and, secondly, that he must offer up Isaac;—but he bridged the two by believing another grand truth, that God was able to raise up Isaac, "even from the dead." Whenever there are two things, revealed to you in Scripture, which you cannot quite reconcile, you may always believe that, between them, there lies something more glorious still, which your dim eyes as yet are scarcely able to perceive.

The doctrine of the resurrection is a precious jewel that Faith weareth as in a ring on her right hand. "God can raise the dead," says Faith, and that is a most comforting truth. O you bereaved ones, wear that ring! O you who fear to die, wear that priceless jewel ! It will be better than any amulet or talisman that the ancients ever wore

However puzzled Abraham may have been by the command to offer up the son in whom his seed was to be called, his plain duty was to obey that command, and to leave the Lord to fulfill his own promise in his own way. Perhaps he had also learned, through his mistake concerning Ishmael, that God's way of fulfilling his promise might not be his way, and that God's way was always best.

Hebrews 11:20, 21

It was blundering faith, for Jacob deceived his father, and Isaac himself made mistakes in giving his blessing; yet even his mistakes were all right in God's sight. It was by faith that he blessed both his sons, and therefore I gather that a faith which blunders, if it be faith in God, is an acceptable faith.

The staff which had helped him so often in his early pilgrimage, the staff on which he leaned when he came back from the place of his wrestling, halting on his thigh. He leaned on it as he sat upright on his death-couch, and pronounced the parting blessing. So, you see, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all lived by faith, and did their works by faith, and distributed blessings to their children by faith. Friend, hast thou this faith, or hast thou not? If thou hast it, thou art blessed among men, blessed among women. If thou hast it not, what hope is there for thee either in this life or in eternity?

That staff had been Jacob's companion on many memorable occasions, so it was most fitting that he should lean upon it while blessing his grandsons.

Looking into the future, although he was blind. Poor old man; lying upon his bed, with his eyes so dim that he could not tell one of his sons from another, he could yet look into the future, and bless his sons "concerning things to come." Oh, what sharp eyes faith has, even when the eyes of bodily vision have become dim! We may see far more by faith than we can by sight.

He was old and blind, so that he did not know which of his sons came for the first blessing, yet he could see into the future sufficiently to bless both his sons "concerning things to come." What wondrous power there is in faith even when it is exercised by very imperfect individuals!

Faith can bless other people as well as the believer himself. It not only brings good cheer into a man's own heart, but it enables him to speak words of love and consolation to his children. Dying Jacob pronounces living blessings upon his eons, and upon their sons generation after generation.

You remember 'his discernment, how he crossed his hands willingly that he might lay the right hand upon the younger son. Faith is always giving blessings to others, and she knows which way to give them, for God maketh her wondrous quick of heart and quick of eye.

Hebrews 11:21

Ah, that staff of his! — you know why he used it. I believe he loved it, because it made him remember the brook Jabbok where "he halted upon his thigh." It had long been his companion, for he said, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan;" but it became more than ever necessary to him after he had won that victory, and had also learned his own weakness. And now, as if in memory of the God who had blessed him, he leans upon the top of his staff, and blesses the sons of Joseph.

Grasping that memorable staff with which he "passed over this Jordan,"—that staff on which he leaned so heavily when the wrestling angel made him go limping over Penuel,—that staff which was a memorial of the breaking down which he had suffered when he gained the name of Israel by prevailing with his God,—on that staff he leaned as he "blessed both the sons of Joseph."

Now the chapter goes on with a long list of those who, by faith, wrought wonders.

Hebrews 11:22

A sure proof that he believed they would come out of Egypt, for he would not be buried among the Pharaohs, though a prominent place would have been assigned to him there; but he would have his bones lie with those of his ancestors, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.

He would not have his bones buried away from those of his godly ancestors, for he never forgot that he belonged to the chosen nation.

Verses 11:22,23 illustrate the "courage of faith", vv24,25 "the choice of faith" and verse 26 the judgment of faith, by which she judges wisely, choosing rather to be reproached for Christ than to reign with the world. In vv27,28 Here, again, you have the obedience of faith, taking God's precepts and carrying them out. In verse 29 you have the difference between faith and presumption: faith goes through the sea, presumption is drowned in the sea. In verse 30 are the weapons of faith, the warfare of faith, with nothing but her ram's horn trumpet she encompasses the giant walls of the city, and downs they fall.

Hebrews 11:23.

They were not afraid to brave the consequences of disobeying Pharaoh's command because of their faith.

Hebrews 11:24-26.

Nothing but faith could have brought him to that decision.

Hebrews 11:27-29.

For faith can do what unbelief must not attempt to do, and when unbelief tries to follow in the footsteps of faith, it becomes its own destroyer. You must have -real faith in God, or you cannot go where faith would take you; but with faith you may go through the cloud or through the sea, and find yourself safe on the other side.

In verse 29 you have the difference between faith and presumption: faith goes through the sea, presumption is drowned in the sea.

Hebrews 11:30.

You could not see faith at work on those solid walls. Those huge ramparts and battlements seemed to stand fast and firm, yet they “fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” No battering rams played upon them, but faith can do better work than battering rams or dynamite.

Hebrews 11:31

Here you have faith uniting itself with the people of God: she perished not with them that believed not, for she had come out from among them and allied herself with the people of God by receiving the spies.

Hebrews 11:22-31

What! Has the unchaste Rahab got in here with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph,— the chaste Joseph? Yes. “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” She hid them in her house, although that action would have cost her her life if they had been discovered; and though there was some deception mixed with her faith, which we need not dwell upon now, yet God the Holy Spirit records her faith, and hides her fault.

Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,—

Which is quite as great a thing as subduing kingdoms.

Oh the victories of faith.! When faith takes to working, how mightily she works.

Hebrews 11:32

There are some names, in this chapter, which we should hardly have expected to see there, the characters mentioned having been so disfigured by serious faults, and flaws, and failings; but the distinguishing feature of faith was there in every instance, and especially in the case of Samson.

Perhaps there was no more childlike faith, in any man, than there was in him; who but a man full of faith would have hurled himself upon a thousand men with no weapon in his hand but the jawbone of an ass? There was a wondrous confidence in God in that weak, strong man, which though it does not excuse his faults, yet nevertheless puts him in the ranks of the believers. Happy is the man or woman who believeth in God. There were multitudes of others, beside those whom the apostle named, —

Hebrews 11:32-39

They did not live to see Christ come. They expected him; but, before the time when the writer was writing,— before the actual coming of Christ, they had all passed away: “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:”

Hebrews 11:33

Is that as great an exploit as subduing kingdoms? Yes, that it is; to have, by faith, preserved a holy character, in such a world of temptation as this, is a far grander achievement than to have conquered any number of kingdoms by force of arms.

Hebrews 11:33-35

Which, by being put in this connection, seems to be as blessed a thing as working righteousness.

Is this also a feat of faith? Yes; instead of showing their faith by putting their enemies to flight, they prove it by enduring all manner

of tortures without shrinking.

Do you notice how, every now and then, there is the mention of a feat which seems altogether beyond you; but then there follows one, in which you can be a partaker with these heroes and heroines of faith? It may be that you have never “quenched the violence of fire;” yet, often enough, it has been true of you that, by faith, “out of weakness” you have been “made strong.”

What wondrous faith it was which sustained the saints under the awful tortures to which they were subjected! The story harrows one’s heart even to read it; what must it have been actually to endure?

Hebrews 11:36-39

These worthies lived before Christ came; but, since then, equally noble exploits have been performed by the heroes and heroines of faith. The Christian martyrs have shown the extremity of human endurance when they have been sustained by faith; and the bead-roll of Christian heroes, since their Lord ascended to heaven, is longer and even brighter than that of the faithful ones who came before them in the earlier dispensation.

They passed away before Christ’s day, so they did not see the fulfillment of the promises concerning his coming.

This is the grandest roll of heroes that ever lived, and every one among them was a man or woman of faith. Faith made them so mighty. They were not greater, and in some respects not better than the rest of us, but they believed in God, they were firm in faith, and this became the basis of their conquering character, and thus their names are imperishably recorded here. They did not win the Victoria cross, but they bore the cross for their Lord, and he has honored them with an everlasting crown, which shall never be taken from them.

You have seen the works of faith and the sufferings of faith; now (vv 36,37) you see God’s estimate of faith. He counts the believing man to be far beyond the rest of mankind.

In vv 38, 39 faith lay in the future to them far more than it does to us, for Christ has now come, and we look back to that glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior, but they had altogether to look forward.

Hebrews 11:40

For it never was God’s intention that any part of his church should be able to do without the rest of it, so that those who lived before the time of Christ cannot do without us; neither can we do without them.

Is it not wonderful that we, who bring up the rear of the army of faith, are necessary to its completeness? It cannot be perfect without us. Ay, heaven itself will not be complete without us who are on the road to it. There would be empty seats in the holy orchestra, gaps in the sacred circle; so we who believe must all come there to make them perfect. God help us to hasten on our road, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

They are waiting up yonder for us; the choirs of heaven cannot be completed without you -and me. Heaven’s full complement, the perfect number of the divine family of love, can never be made up till we who have believed go up yonder to join all those who have had like precious faith. By God’s grace, we shall all be there that they with us may be made perfect.

The new dispensation is necessary to complete the old, the New Testament is the complement of the Old Testament, and New Testament saints join hands with Old Testament elders. Let us all be worthy of our high pedigree; and may God grant that, if the saints of these latter days are to perfect the history of the Church of Christ, the end may not be less heroic than the beginning was! A true poem should gather force as it grows, and its waves of thought should roll in with greater power as it nears its climax; so should the mighty poem of faith’s glorious history increase in depth and power as it gets nearer to its grand consummation, that God may be glorified yet more and more, through all his believing children. So may it be! Amen.

There is a something for us, whose lot is cast in these latter days, to bring, which shall complete the circle and choir of the Church of Christ, for they without us could not be made perfect. The Lord grant us grace to be ready for our share in that glorious consummation, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

HEBREWS 12

The apostle, having deserted the heroes of the faith, represents them as witnesses of the great race which Christens in all ages have to run. All through the chapter he keeps up the idea of the great Olympic games, and represents the saints as occupied with spiritual athletics in the presence of God, the angels, and glorified men.

After giving a long list of the heroes of faith, the apostle adds: —

Hebrews 12:1

In those games, those who ran and wrestled wore very little clothing, or often nothing at all. A runner might lose the race through being entangled by his scarf, so he laid aside everything that might hinder or hamper him. Oh, for that blessed consecration to our heavenly calling, by which everything that would hinder us shall be put aside, that we may give ourselves, disentangled, to the great gospel to race!

We can have no doubt about the great truths which we believe, for we are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses. The former chapter gives us the names of many of these glorious bearers of testimony, who all by faith achieved great wonders and so bore witness to the truth of God. Having therefore no room for doubt let us throw our whole strength into our high calling, and run with patience having our eyes always fixed upon him, the beginner and finisher of our faith, who has run the race himself and won the prize, and now sits down on the right hand of the throne of God.

The eyes of onlookers stimulate the runners in a race, therefore since all heaven looks on, let us not flag till the goal is reached.

It was no excitement to run if there were no onlookers. The spur to the racers and wrestlers in the Grecian games was found in the eyes of those who gazed, in the clapping of their hands, in the shouting of their applause, as we as in the prizes that awaited the winners. Behold, my brethren, even our most private acts are looked upon by the millions of eyes of the great cloud of witnesses. Angels tell the news of how we run the great race, and they rejoice when we prosper. Let us "run well" because so many are looking on at us, and just as the Grecian runner stripped himself of his clothes before he started, so "let us lay aside every weight," the weight of sin, the weight of care, the weight of grief, the weight of worldliness, and everything else that might hinder us. Above all, let us beware of that sin which, like a trailing garment, might entangle our feet, and trip us up, for, if we fall, our opponent will certainly win the prize. Look well to that sin to which you are the most liable. We all have some besetting sin; let us especially be on the watch against that. While we keep all the wall with diligence, let us set a double guard at the most vulnerable point.

"And let us run with patience" or "endurance." There is to be a combination of the active and passive in the Christian; he must be able to endure and yet be able still to work. "Let us run with patience, " run when we are out of breath, run when our bones ache, run when the prize seems to be further off than ever, and to be hidden from our eyes, run when the hot sun makes us athirst,-still "let us run with patience the race that is set before us," for it is he that endureth unto the end who shall be saved;- not merely the starter in the race, for there are many who begin, and who begin not in the power of the Spirit of God, and who therefore do not persevere unto the end. By this sign shall the true children of God be known, that they run with endurance unto the end, "looking unto Jesus." As the wife of the Persian nobleman said, when her husband asked her what she thought of Darius, that she had not looked at him, she had no eyes for any man but her husband, so the Christian has no eyes for any but Christ,- "looking unto Jesus,"- keeping his eye always upon him, and so running the Christian race.

Hebrews 12:2

Look to him, look at him, study him, know all you can about him-, meditate upon him, — His race is complete; his wrestling is over; so he sits down with the great Judge of all as the One who has won his crown for ever. Let us look to him.

How frequently you who are coming to Christ look to your-selves. "Oh," say you, "I do not repent enough!" That is looking to yourself. "I do not believe enough!" That is looking to your-self. "I am too unworthy." That is looking to yourself. "I cannot discover," says another, "that I have any righteousness." It is quite right to say that you have not any righteousness, but it is quite wrong to look for any.

What was "the joy that was set before him"? Oh, it's a thought that melts a rock. It makes a heart of iron move. The joy set before Jesus was principally joy of saving you and me!

Let the grandest of all examples nerve us. Think how Jesus ran the race!

It was this joy that made Christ strong to endure in the day of his sorrow and joy must make you also strong to endure unto the end. He had the joy of anticipated victory. It "was set before him," and so he "endured the arose, despising the shame." He ran with a heavy cross on his back, and yet he ran faster than you or I have run: he ran because he had more joy than we have. So, my brethren, let us live in the joy of heaven, let us live in the joy of ultimate victory, and this will enable us to bear all the toils and trials of our present life.

Hebrews 12:3, 4

Jesus is here delightfully called "the author and finisher of our faith." In most of the arts, there is a division of labor, one man begins, and another completes; there is scarcely anything that is completed by one man; but the stupendous work of our salvation was not

only commenced but it was also completed by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Let us look unto him then. This will help us to persevere unto the end because he persevered to the end.

Think how he wrestled, think how he ran; and let your consideration of him nerve you for your struggle, and brace up every muscle of your spirit so that you will be determined that, as he won, so Will you by the divine help of him who is "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

It has not come to that yet with any of you who are now here; you have not shed your blood for Christ yet, for these are not martyr days, so can you be wearied and faint? If you run with the footmen, and they weary you how will you contend with horses? We ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we grow weary in a race that is so easy compared with that of the men and women who laid down their lives for Christ's sake

It has never come to a bloody sweat with you as with him, nor to death upon a cross, as in his case. Shall the disciple be above his master or the servant above his lord?

Our trials are little compared with those of the martyrs of the olden times. Courage, brethren, these are small matters to faint about! Moreover, our chastenings are love tokens from God, let us not be alarmed at them.

Hebrews 12:5-7

Here is a little variation in the subject. First we had the trials which come from the world, these we are to endure looking to Christ for grace to enable us to overcome them. Now we have the trials which come from God, and here nature becomes an assistant to grace. We are reminded that children have to be chastened, and therefore, if we are the children of God we must expect to be chastened by him.

Note in the fifth verse, the two evils of which we are in danger,-either of deepening God's chastenings or else of fainting under them; either of thinking too little or too much of them. HAPPY is the Christian who ever takes the middle course, and never despises the chastenings of the Lord, nor ever faints under them.

Note, in the sixth verse, that we are to expect sharp blows from God's chastening hand. That word "encourageth" is a wrong word: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The scourge was ever a most severe form of punishment. God will not spare his children when they need to be chastened; they shall have some blow as hard as he can well lay them on, that is to say, as hard as such a loving heart as his will permit him to give. They shall have such blows that each one of them shall have to cry out, "I am broken in sunder, my heart is smitten and withered like grass." And this is to be the treatment for every son whom God receives; not for some of them, but for all. "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Hebrews 12:6

We ought to thank God that he will not let us sin without chastisement. If any of you are sinning and find pleasure without penalty in the self-indulgence, do not congratulate yourself on the apparent immunity with which you violate the laws of virtue, for that is the badge of the reprobate. To sin and never smart is the mark of those who will be damned; their smart, like their doom, being in reserve and stored up for sorer judgment

I remember once being very, very ill, and a man who had no godliness but who was full of wicked wit accosted me thus: "You see, 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' "

"Yes," I said, "I am suffering greatly."

"Well," said he with a sneer, "I can do very well without such love, as long as I get off such chastening."

I burst into tears, and my very soul boiled over as I cried, "If the Lord were to grind me to powder, I would accept it at his hands, so that I might but have his love. It is you who need to be pitied, for sound as your health may be and merry as you look, you are a poor creature, since you have missed the only thing worth living for." I let fly a volley at him; I could not help it. I felt forced to stand up for my Master.

Hebrews 12:5-7

With doting parents it is not so: often him whom his mother loveth is allowed to do as he pleases and to escape chastening, but this is folly. The love of God is higher and wiser than the partialities of parents. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" it is a token of his favour to us that he takes the trouble to remove our love of sin by sharp and bitter pain.

The apostle's intention is to harden us to any suffering that may come to us in this mortal life. He does so first by showing us that we are like wrestlers and racers, and that we must expect to endure much hardship if we are to win the crown. We are to "endure

hardness.” The crown cannot be won without it. You know what men will do to win an earthly crown; but the heavenly crown is an immortal, unfading one; so how much more may be expected of you in the way of patient endurance in your heart to win it. Then Paul changes the figure, and says, “You are the sons of God, and that is the reason why you are admitted to the arena where these sacred strugglings take place, and as you are the sons of God, you must endure the chastening rod as a part of your training.” Dear brethren in Christ, will not each one of you thankfully accept it, and say, “As this is one of the evidences of my sonship, I will thank God for every cut of the rod, and bless his holy name for every twig of it.”

Hebrews 12:5

Both these states are wrong, either to think nothing of chastisement or else to faint under it; we are not to fall into either evil, but to keep the golden mean between them.

Hebrews 12:6

The Greek word is a strong one, and means, “whom the Lord tenderly loveth —

Everyone does not receive the like measure of chastisement, and he that has the largest share of the love of God will feel the most of his chastising hand. Are you not willing to take that portion, and to be among the Lord’s tenderly loved ones?

Hebrews 12:7

God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without suffering and the Son who was without sin was the “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Hebrews 12:7-10

What a bright light this sheds upon all affliction, that it is for our profit, that it is thereby we are made partakers of the holiness of God. Oh, blessed result from a little smart and bitter.

Hebrews 12:8

If you are without chastisement, you may bear the name of sons, but you are not really so; you are mere professors.

A man may neglect such a child as that, for he is not his legitimate child; and God does not care for professors, who, though they seem to be his children, are not his true sons, so they are pampered, indulged, and spoiled, and left to enjoy themselves while they are here, as the Lord well knows that they will have nothing but sorrow and misery hereafter.

He does not say, “then are ye alone.” He is speaking about those who profess to be the children of God, writing concerning those who claim to be members of the Lord’s family, and he stigmatizes with one of the most dreadful of names those who may escape without chastisement; but, brethren who among us would have the pleasure of carnal ease if with it we are to have the shame of spiritual illegitimacy?

Hebrews 12:9

Should we not give him reverence when we are chastened, instead of murmuring and complaining against him, thus calling him to account at our judgment-seat? Oh, yes let us be in willing subjection to him, and the more willingly subject we are, the less painful will the chastisement be. Our bitterest sorrow will be found at the root of our self-will; and when our self-will is gone, the bitterness of our sorrow will be past.

God is the Father of our spiritual nature, so, if he pleases to chasten us for our profit, shall we not humbly yield ourselves up to him, and let him do with us whatever he wills?

Hebrews 12:10.

Is there no way for us to “be partakers of his holiness” but through chastening? It would seem so from the wording of this verse. The Lord, as our loving Father, makes use of the rod that he may make us to be truly holy.

Hebrews 12:11

How could it be? It would lose the very nature of chastening if there were joy in it.

It would not be chastening if it were a joy to us; it is necessary, in order that it may be chastening, that it should be grievous.

These are truly blessed words: “nevertheless afterward” — Oh, what melodious music there is in those two words to ears and hearts that are divinely taught to appreciate it! “Nevertheless afterward” —

Hebrews 12:11-13

Come, children of God, do not be despondent because of your tribulations. You are in a race, so run even while you are smarting from your chastisements, still run, and keep on running until you win the prize.

While we are smarting, we cannot expect to feel the good result, but afterwards it will be seen. Let us wait and pray.

Look at chastisement then in the divine light, and be comforted, be strengthened, be healed of the infirmity of your weakness, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Let not your service to God Blacken. Lift up to God that which was idly hanging down through despondency. Let not your prayers grow weak through grief, but strengthen the feeble knees.

Hebrews 12:14.

You will not gain holiness by standing still. Nobody ever grew holy without consenting, desiring, and agonizing to be holy. Sin will grow without sowing, but holiness needs cultivation. Follow it; it will not run after you. You must pursue it with determination, with eagerness, with perseverance, as a hunter pursues his prey.

If you occasionally get drunk, or if you now and then let fall an oath, or if in your business you would make twice two into five or three, according as your profit happens to run, do not talk about being a Christian. Christ has nothing to do with you, at least no more to do with you than he had to do with Judas Iscariot. You are very much in the same position. If without holiness, then much more without morality can no man expect to see the face of God with acceptance.

God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will he let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it. It is enough for him to bear with your hypocrisies on earth. Shall he have them flung in his own face in heaven?

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” A man’s god is like himself, and until he become like God we cannot see God; we misunderstand God until we have been trained to imitate him.

The holy God can only be seen by holy eyes. He must make us like himself before we can see him.

Run after it. It will often seem to run away from you, so you must pursue it, and capture it: “Follow peace with all men,” —

Hebrews 12:15.

Seeming to have grace, and yet not really having it

“Lest he should come short of the grace of God, and as it were fall back. Paul is still keeping to his illustration drawn from the wrestling at the Olympic games. Sometimes, the wrestler gave his opponent a back fall, and down he went, and so lost the crown; beware lest such a fall should happen to you in your spiritual wrestling.

Sin is a bitter thing and a defiling thing and unless we look diligently, it will grow in our hearts like the weeds grow in our gardens after a heavy rain, it will spring up before we are aware of it.

Hebrews 12:15-17

It was done and could not be undone. Does it not seem strange that after speaking to us about being God’s sons and favoured with his love, yet even then, in that clear blaze of light, there comes in this caution against fornication and profanity. Ah me! how near a foul spot may be to lily-like whiteness. How Judas may sit side by side with favoured and true-hearted apostles, aye, and may be near the Master, too. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” And, oh, friends, if at any time the pottage should seem very sweet and we should be very hungry, if the world’s gain should be almost necessary to our livelihood, and we are tempted to do an unrighteous thing to get it, let us take care, for Esau could not undo the terrible act of selling his birthright, neither could we if we were permitted to do so. God grant we may be spared from such a dreadful crime!

Hebrews 12:16.

Fornication was far too common in the early church, but it was not thought to be sin by the great mass of the heathen; but, oh, what a defiling sin it is!

Fornication was the special sin of that age: in fact, so common was it that the heathen did not reckon it to be a sin at all. Knowing of the tendency to licentiousness in all around them, Paul specially warned the Hebrew Christians against that horrible evil.

He was thus guilty of spiritual fornication, preferring his meat to his Maker, thinking more of one morsel of meat than of his birthright.

Hebrews 12:17

He could not get his father to change his mind concerning Jacob; on the contrary, he said, "I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed." His many tears availed not, they were not repenting tears, but only selfish ones. He did not repent that he had bartered his birthright for a mess of pottage; he regretted that he had lost the blessing, that was all.

Those who seek the pleasures of the flesh rather than the pleasures of a higher world are here put side by side with Esau. Now Esau sold the right to his future heritage for a present mess of pottage, and many there are who do something very like that,—sell their souls for a little Sunday-trading, or for a little carnal company, a little of that fool's mirth which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. They are willing to damn themselves to all eternity because they cannot bear the jeers and sneers of a ribald world. O brethren, let us not be like them or like Esau!

He never repented of his sin, but only of the consequences of it. He never sought pardon of God, but only sought to inherit the blessing. And there will be many, who have lived for this world, and loved it, who, when they wake up in another world, will begin to seek the blessing, but they will be rejected. This may happen even in this world. If they only seek to die the death of the righteous, and seek not the pardon of their sin, they shall hear the Lord say to them, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

Hebrews 12:18-21

We have not come to that mount of terror, for we are not under the law but under grace; we have come to a very different place from that.

Hebrews 12:22-24.

We are come to that blood, and it is that blood which has made such a change in us. We may rejoice together now, and we ought to do so, if we are all one in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 12:22-27

All that is eternal must, of course, endure for ever. The everlasting covenant, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," the purchase of the Savior's blood, the work of the Holy Spirit,—all these shall stand fast for ever, they can never be shaken." The immutable Word spoken by the mouth of the unchanging God, liveth and abideth for ever!

Hebrews 12:25-29

Not "God out of Christ," as some say, but God in Christ, God anyhow is a consuming fire, and we should each one pray, "Consuming fire, refining fire, go through my heart and purge me of all that can be consumed! Holy Spirit, drive out of me all that can be shaken and removed, that only thine abiding kingdom may remain in me, and thine shall be the praise and the glory for ever! Amen."

Hebrews 12:28,29

The God who gave the law on Sinai has never changed: the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of Moses who overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, and slew Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the multitude of murmurs, idolaters, and fornicators in the wilderness, — "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

I would again remind you of what I have often said concerning the wickedness of putting into this passage words that the Holy Spirit never inspired Paul to write. Many people say, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire:" but Paul wrote nothing of the sort. It is "our God" — and he is not "our God" except as we view him in Christ,—who is "a consuming fire." How greatly we ought to reverence him, and how earnestly we ought to ask of him that the divine fire may burn up everything in us that ought to be consumed, that only that may remain which will first endure the great shaking, and which will afterwards endure the great burning. May the Lord graciously grant to each one of us that grace which shall abide the fire!

HEBREWS 13

This is a practical chapter at the close of this most instructive Epistle.

Hebrews 13:1

The word “continue” implies that the “brotherly love” exists, there are many things which might put an end to it, so see to it that, as far as you are concerned, it continues. Under all provocations, and under all disappointments, “let brotherly love continue.”

It is supposed to be there already; let it continue, not only love of a common kind, such as we are to have to all men, but that special “brotherly love” which Christians bear to one another as members of one family. “Let brotherly love continue.”

Hebrews 13:1. *Let brotherly love continue.*

The word “continue” implies that the “brotherly love” exists, there are many things which might put an end to it, so see to it that, as far as you are concerned, it continues. Under all provocations, and under all disappointments, “let brotherly love continue.”

Hebrews 13:2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Abraham did so, and Lot did so; they thought they were entertaining ordinary strangers, and they washed their feet; and prepared their food but it turned out that they had entertained angels. Some people will never entertain angels unawares, for they never entertain anybody. May we be given to hospitality, for that should be part of the character of saints.

Hebrews 13:2, 3.

And being likely therefore to take your own turn of suffering, and to need the sympathy of your fellow-Christians. Show sympathy to others while they need it, and they will gratefully remember you when you are in bonds or in adversity.

Hebrews 13:2-3. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

And being likely therefore to take your own turn of suffering, and to need the sympathy of your fellow-Christians. Show sympathy to others while they need it, and they will gratefully remember you when you are in bonds or in adversity.

Hebrews 13:4.

And terrible will be their doom when God does judge them. They may think that, because they sin in secret, therefore they shall escape punishment; but it shall not be so. Whether men judge them or not, God will judge them.

Hebrews 13:3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them;

Christian people who have got into trouble through being Christian persons who have been shut up in prison for righteousness' sake; there were many such in Paul's day. Sympathize with them, says the apostle, “as bound with them.”

Hebrews 13:3. And them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

So that, if you are not now in adversity, you may be before long. Therefore, have a fellow feeling for those who are in trouble. If you are not yourself distressed, you are not out of the reach of such a thing; therefore be tender towards your afflicted brethren.

Hebrews 13:4-5. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

There is a fortune for you, that is a pension to fall back upon. You may very well be content to leave your temporal concerns in the hands of God, for he hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Why, if you believe that one promise of God, he will be better to you than ten thousand friends who promise to provide for you! The Provider in heaven is better than any provider on earth. A beautiful motto is that of the old house of Chester, “God's providence is my inheritance.

Hebrews 13:5

You have a grand reserve, therefore. What you have in possession is only a little spending money to use on the road to heaven, but “he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” You may confidently fall back upon the providence of God in all times of straitness and need.

These words are remarkably forcible in the original. You probably have heard that in the Greek there are no less than five negatives. We cannot well translate them into English except in such language as that of the verse we were singing just now:

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,

I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

Hebrews 13:6-8.

It is for your own benefit to remember in your prayers those who preach the Word of God to you, for what can they do without divine assistance and how can you be profited by them unless they are first blessed of God? Remember them, therefore.

Hebrews 13:6-7. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. 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.

It seems that there were special persons, who were leaders in the Church of God, who were to be remembered, and thought upon, and considered. They were set apart for this world: "them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." They were leaders among the saints, and Paul would have the rank and file imitate them in their confident trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation:" —

Hebrews 13:8-9. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.

Do not believe one thing today, and another thing tomorrow; be not carried about, like the thistle-down in the wind. Have a faith of your own, know what you believe, and stand to it firmly.

Hebrews 13:8

He is immutable; he will not change. He is all-wise; he need not change. He is perfect, he cannot change

Hebrews 13:9

Do not put yourself into every man's hand to let him play with you as he pleases. The fish that never nibbles at the bait is not likely to be caught by the hook, and he who will not give heed to "divers and strange doctrines" is not likely to be carried away in the net of heresy.

Some in the apostle's day made religion to consist almost entirely in observing certain rules as to what they ate and what they drank. "Be not so foolish," says Paul, "there is something better than that; seek to have your heart established with grace."

Hebrews 13:9-10. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar,

Yes, true religion cannot exist without an altar, but what kind of altar is it? Is it a material altar? Far from it; but "we have an altar," —

Hebrews 13:10. Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

They have nothing to do with it, for they are still under the old ceremonial law; and those whose religion consists in outward rites and ceremonies can never eat of the spiritual altar whereat spiritual men eat, for they do not understand the scripture, and they still serve the Mosaic tabernacle.

Hebrews 13:10.

Those who cling to the external and ceremonial observances of religion have no right to the privileges which belong to those who come to the spiritual altar; they cannot share that secret.

Hebrews 13:11-13. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Outside the gate, was the place of Christ's atoning death. "Without the camp," is the place where his servants will find themselves most at home.

Hebrews 13:14. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

We cannot stop in the condemned city; we must be outside its walls. Our Lord went out of the city to die, and we must go without the camp to live.

Hebrews 13:11-14

Then, my brother or sister, do not look for a continuing city here. Do not build your nest on any one of the trees of earth, for they are all marked for the axe, and they will all have to come down, and your nest too, if you have built upon them.

Hebrews 13:15.

If you are believers in Christ, you are God's priests, and this is the sacrifice that you are continually to offer, — the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to God's name.

Hebrews 13:15-16. 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. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Christian people should be always doing good. As God is ever doing good, so we can never say we have done all we ought to do and will do no more: "To do good and to communicate," that is, to communicate of your substance, and of your charitable help, "forget not."

Hebrews 13:16.

Give help in money, in comfort, and in instruction, as men require it.

We are to do good to others, to communicate of our own good things to those who need them, and to do this at some sacrifice to ourselves, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Hebrews 13:17-19.

You must have noted how often the apostle asks for the prayers of those to whom he is writing, so we are following a good example when we ask you to pray for us.

The movements of God's servants may be controlled by prayer. You cannot tell how much of blessing will come to your own souls, through the ministry, if you are in the habit of praying about it. The man who comes up to God's house, having prayed for God to bless the preacher, is not likely to go away unprofited.

Hebrew 13:25

Does not that blessing seem to come across the centuries as fresh as if we heard the apostle speak it with his living lips? Oh, to feel it true tonight! "Grace be with you all. Amen."

When my comforts fade and languish,
When bereaved of what was dear,
When the body faint's with anguish,
And my bright hopes disappear:
Jesus only
Can my spirit soothe and cheer.
When in heaven I bow before him,
Trace his love's continued stream,
And in perfect songs adore him,
Where his unveiled glories beam;
Jesus only shall be my eternal theme.