

UPLook

JUNE 2000

BACK *of the* CLOUDS

*Some murmur when their sky is clear and wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear in their great heaven of blue.
And some with thankful love are filled if but one streak of light,
One ray of God's great mercy, gild the darkness of their night.*

—Richard Chenevix Trench

- **HEBREWS' ADVICE to ELDERS**
- **HELP for the HELPLESS**
- **The HEAVENS in the HEBREWS**

**SPECIAL
REPORT:
*Update on Iowa***

BACK OF THE CLOUDS

The storms down here shouldn't be allowed to block the sunny forecast.

The day dawned wet and raw. I felt as limp as the gray flannel sky. I was leaving for meetings and didn't feel either willing to leave home or prepared to go. And I felt I *deserved* to feel miserable, and to inflict it on those around me. Somehow I said my goodbyes and boarded the plane. The engines roared to life, and the aircraft lifted off the sodden runway into the sullen clouds. The plane lurched and bounced through the turbulent air. For a few moments nothing could be seen out my window but swirling gray. And then it happened.

We broke out into calm blue sky as far as the eye could see. From the upper side, the clouds looked puffy and white. The golden sun shone through the little porthole, onto my upturned face, into my soul. And just as sudden as the change outside, a snatch of a song broke through the inclement weather in my heart:



*Never fear tho' shadows dark around your path may fall;
Do not let your heart be troubled;
From His throne in heaven God is watching over all,
He will ever care for you.*

*Back of the clouds the sun is always shining,
After the storms your skies will all be blue;
God has prepared a rosy-tinted lining,
Back of the clouds it's waiting to shine through.*

*Keep the light of hope eternal dwelling in your heart,
Rest upon the Father's promise,
And you'll find that cares and worry quickly will depart,
Heaven's peace will enter in (C. R. FREEMAN).*

Those rays of sunshine had travelled 93 million miles to reach me and I believed then, as I do now, that they came right from God: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor. 4:6). Sunshine was His idea, and evidently the apostle thought that there was a relationship between sunlight and Sonlight. In each case the shining came directly from His heart.

This issue of *Uplook* features articles on the wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews. It is radiant with the light of heaven. Everywhere the Lord Jesus is seen in His surpassing glories. But there are clouds in the book, too.

The clouds of Gradualism (2:1-3): If we do not give "earnest heed" to what we have "heard," the truths which we ought to hold dear will drift away from us. The word "slip" means "to flow past, to glide by" (VINE'S). Almost imperceptibly the dark clouds of "neglect" (v. 3) block out the light and leave us chilled and uncertain of the way to escape the coming deluge. Let us affirm what was confirmed (v. 3) to us.

The clouds of Agnosticism (3:7-19): "Better to believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts than to believe your doubts and doubt your beliefs." We say we trust in an all-wise, all-powerful, loving God. Do we *act* like that? Martin Luther, who had been "under the weather" spiritually, awoke one day to find his wife dressed in mourning. "Who died?" he asked. "God did," she replied. "Foolishness," retorted Luther. "Why would you say such a thing?" "That's how you're acting," she replied.

"Let us therefore fear"—take God seriously—lest we allow the storms of doubt to sweep our minds rather than calling on the One who in a moment can speak His "Shalom!" and bring immediate calm.

The clouds of Dwarfism (5:11-14): Little sins rob us of great blessing. Only a thin mist blocks out the sun. Inattention to the Word, frittered hours, day-dreaming life away, petty quarrels, and spiritual lethargy keep us from growing strong in the Lord. Cut off from the influence of heaven's light, we grow limp, unable to draw up the deep things of God. "Let us go on to [maturity]" (6:1). "...be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (v. 12).

The clouds of Pessimism (10:32-37): It isn't easy to live under a cloud. The early believers (and many saints today) at first "took joyfully" the spoiling of their goods because they saw beyond the storms and knew that in heaven they had "a better and an enduring substance." But as the clouds lingered they found "reproaches and afflictions" hard to bear, and were tempted to cast away their confidence instead of casting their care on Him. We have the same choice now. Let's live in the Sonshine.

J. B. Nicholson, Jr.

UPLOOK

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Help for the helpless

And just in the nick of time!

One of the most encouraging promises in the book of Hebrews is found in the little statement, “*find grace to help in time of need*” (4:16). The Lord Jesus had taught His disciples in John 15:5 that “*without Me ye can do nothing*” (i.e., not one thing). Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that we are not “*sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*” (2 Cor. 3:5). So in the helplessness of a society trying to function without God or biblical principle in the home, church, or government, we are encouraged with the promise of Hebrews 4:16.

The writer says, “*Let us,*” implying we have a choice to come of our own volition. That is evidenced in our mid-week prayer meetings, isn’t it? When things are going well we rather easily let that meeting slip past our busy schedules, but if disaster strikes, then we’re quick to show up at the prayer meeting.

Secondly, the writer says we are to “*come boldly,*” the term meaning we are to be outspoken, frank, honest, specific. Since God is omniscient, He knows our situation anyway; He’s just waiting for us to admit our need, our helplessness, our dependence in His presence. No need for any cover-ups before Him.

Thirdly, our access is to “*the throne of grace,*” the ultimate resource for the believer. Why is it we turn so quickly to the agencies and counselors of the world’s ungodly systems for our help? We have a “*merciful and faithful high priest,*”

One that is “*able to help*” (Heb. 2:17-18). We have “*boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,*” therefore, “*Let us draw near*”! (Heb. 10:19, 22).


What will we find to meet our need, our helplessness? Mercy and grace! We have already experienced His mercy and grace in salvation. We often sing, “*Mercy there was great, and grace was free...At Calvary.*” But His mercy and grace are our daily provision in this tumult-

the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Just as a spouse is to be alongside for support and encouragement, so is the Saviour, our Heavenly Bridegroom, available to us. The saints in the local fellowship are to be involved, too. It’s the “*bear ye one another’s burdens*” principle mentioned in Galatians 6:2. We were not meant to try to cope with the vicissitudes of life by ourselves. “*He setteth the solitary in families*”—including the local assembly (Ps. 68:6); and we

have the promise of the Saviour Himself, “*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*” (Heb. 13:5).

Acts 27 records the voyage of Paul across the Mediterranean enroute to Rome. He was sailing in a “*tempestuous wind.*” At one point, “*they used helps undergirding the ship*” (v. 17).

It is the same Greek word used in our text in Hebrews 4—ropes or chains for aid or assistance. Christian, that’s the work of the Holy Spirit in each of us. He ties together all the loose ends in our lives enabling us to safely make it to home port in spite of the storm.

Be encouraged today, with the words of the Psalmist who mentions help more than forty times in his writings. “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (46:1). “*Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*” (124:8). 



uous scene as well. “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life*” (Ps. 23:6). Darby renders, “*grace to help*” as “*seasonable help.*” I take that to mean help for every particular situation and circumstance. G. Campbell Morgan states that help is “*in the nick of time.*” It is ours even in times of doubt and unbelief (another rendering of “*time of need*”).

This text is the last mention of help in the Bible. We find help first mentioned in Genesis 2:18, “*And*

National Workers' Conference

Come and share "the care of the churches"

The first NA Workers' & Elders' Conference was held in 1938, organized by Mr. T. B. Gilbert. This conference has been held annually ever since, except during World War II due to travel limitations. Initially it was designed to encourage "full-time" workers, whether stateside or abroad. In the last few decades, the invitation has been opened to elders as well. Many have taken advantage of this invitation especially those who have a passion for conservative NT principles.

Approximately seven years ago, our assembly made a concerted effort to attend our first Workers' & Elders' conference. Our goal was to use this meeting to reflect on the leadership of our local assembly and consider where we should be spiritu-

ally. We received such a great blessing from our first attendance that we have not missed any subsequent conferences. Our assembly has reaped the benefit of this effort.

There certainly was no disappointment with the 1999 conference held in Hamden, CT. The common thread woven through this and other conferences was the emphasis on two key pillars: prayer and the Word of God. The attendees meet for an hour of prayer each morning and later in small groups. The rest of the day is spent in the Word of God with teaching and practical discussions on such things as Sunday School and youth work, conducting weddings and funerals, and spiritual nurturing of family balanced with assembly life. The ladies had time to edify one



another in their own ministries and in encouraging their husbands. Being able to listen to veterans in the faith with their wise perspectives proved stimulating for younger believers. The fellowship and unity of brethren has a profound impact.

Plans for this year's conference in Lawrence, KS, Oct. 10-12, ought to be kept in mind. All are invited—full-time worker or not. Contact:

Donald L. Norbie
(970) 356-0817
dlnorbie@juno.com

CONGRESS 2000

Congress is a gathering of single Christian young people, ages 16 and up (avg. age approx. 21). While the emphasis is on spiritual growth and fellowship, there are other activities.

The schedule runs Friday night, June 23 to Saturday, July 1. Come for the week, a weekend, or a day. Keith Trevolt (KS) will be speaking, DV, on learning from experience. Also classes on: Daily Intake, Reaching Out, Christ's Return, Thinking Biblically, Living Sacrifices. The rate for the full Congress (8 nights): \$190; weekend rate: \$80; daily rate: \$37. The director for this camp is Steve Hulshizer.

Greenwood Hills
7062 Lincoln Way East
Fayetteville, PA 17222
(717) 352-2150

WORD ALIVE WEEK

Saints are invited to a Word Alive Week, July 2-8, 2000 at Faith Bible Camp, Victoria Beach, Manitoba (on Lake Winnipeg, 60 miles north of Winnipeg). The speaker will be Mike Attwood (GA), Lord willing. The theme of the week will be the gospel. The morning sessions will cover the doctrines of salvation, and the evening sessions will be taken up with the Feasts of Jehovah. Workshops will include topics such as: how to prepare and present your personal testimony, how to lead an evangelistic Bible study, and dealing with objections to the gospel.

Contact Ron Hampton at:
874 London St.
Winnipeg, MB R2K 3P7
(204) 669-6026
rhampton@mb.sympatico.ca

CAMP IROQUOINA SCHEDULE

Home Schoolers' Family Camp
June 25-July 1
Boys' Camp July 2-15
Boys' Basketball Camp July 9-15
Soccer Camp July 16-22
Family Camp I July 29-August 5
Girls' Camp August 6-19
Family Camp II August 19-26
Teen Quest August 27-31

John MacPherson
RR 1, Box 1601
Hallstead, PA 18822-9748
Phone (570) 967-2577
Fax (570) 967-2411
Camp_Iroquoina@juno.com

INDIAN FELLOWSHIP CONF.

The 23rd annual conference will be held at the James Madison University campus (Harrisonburg, VA) from July 5-9. Lord willing, the

theme of the conference will be "Spiritual Growth and Maturity" with speakers Lubos Kresina (USA), Tony Martin (Canada) and M. A. Joy (India). There will be workshops on: how to study the Bible and spiritual gifts as well as special programs for the young people. Contact:

Thomas Chacko
6 Maple Circle
Monroe, CT 06468
(203) 261-7806
tomchacko@juno.com

GOSPEL OUTREACH

A gospel outreach is being planned, Lord willing, in Minot, ND from July 20-29. This will involve literature distribution, visitation, gospel meetings, and a booth at the ND State Fair. Your involvement and prayer would be appreciated. For info, call: (701) 837-9858 built_ona_rock@hotmail.com J. Ronald at (306) 242-1506 jr.wronald@sk.sympatico.ca

UPWARD BOUND

Upward Bound is a two-week program Aug. 14-27. The first week will be a time of Bible study at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, with a number of speakers. If your schedule permits, plan a second week and take a canoe trip into the interior of Algonquin Park. Contact:

Sandy McEachern
(519) 638-2928
sandymceachern@hotmail.com
<http://welcome.to/UpwardBound>

FELLOWSHIP FAMILY CAMP

The dates for Fellowship Family Camp are August 13-17 in the Rocky Mountains near Estes Park, CO. Phil Kleyman will be the speaker this year. For info:

Fellowship Family Camp
2605 14th Ave. Court
Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 356-0817

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Rest Haven Home

Early August will bring two opportunities to serve in the kitchen at Rest Haven Home in Grand Rapids, MI. The most important criteria for this service is a cheerful, willing spirit. If you would like more information, please contact Brian Wilson at (616) 363-6819.

Good News Network

Good News Network is looking for a person commended from assemblies with radio training or hands-on experience for on-air work with the network of eleven English stations. A Spanish speaking person is also needed for three Spanish stations. Contact Clarence Barinowski:

3213 Huxley Dr.
Augusta, GA 30909
(800) 926-4669
CTBarinowski@knology.net

School Principal/Administrator

Living Waters Christian Academy in Argyle, Nova Scotia, Canada is seeking a school principal/administrator for the coming school year.

Joseph Churchill
(902) 648-2676
joestrade@klis.com

FELLOWSHIP

Olympia, WA

Christians serving in the Armed Forces stationed in the area of Olympia, WA (near the Air Force base and Fort Lewis), are invited to contact LeRoy Junker for hospitality and fellowship.

505 Mckenzie Rd. SW
Olympia, WA 98512
(360) 867-9696
whitebeard@home.com

COMMENDATIONS/CHANGES

Marcus and Jennifer Reyes

The assembly of believers at Carrollwood Bible Chapel (Tampa,

FL) commends Marcus and Jennifer Reyes to full-time missionary service in Mexico.

Marcus and Jennifer have been in fellowship at Carrollwood for four years. They have been actively involved in the ministry of preaching, teaching, personal evangelism, discipleship, youth and Sunday School work. For the past several years they have had an exercise for service on the foreign field in Bible translation and church planting.

After prayerful consideration and observation of their faithful service in the work of the Lord, the elders and saints have acknowledged and endorsed their exercise.

Frank Burgess

The saints in fellowship at the Marble Hill Bible Chapel (MO) do hereby withdraw, at the request of Mr. Frank Burgess, the commendation of the assembly to the ministry of Camp Horizon, Leesburg, FL. Also withdrawn is his commendation to itinerate ministry.


NEW CORRESPONDENT

Cupertino, CA

Phil Hamilton was recently designated as correspondent for Hillview Bible Chapel in Cupertino, CA.

Philip J. Hamilton
10207 Camberley Court
Cupertino, CA 95014-2632
(408) 973-1876

NEW DIRECTOR

The Board of Evangelistic Horizons Unlimited is pleased to announce the appointment of Steve Slusser as Administrative Director of Camp Horizon. Kitty Slusser will assume the duties of Food Services Manager. The Slussers have been commended to the work by North 56th Street Bible Chapel in Tampa. Over the years, Steve has served at the camp in a number of roles. 

Hebrews: setting the stage

A few key details for students to keep in mind.

The Hebrew epistle is a journey into heaven to view the surpassing glories of the Son of God. The literary style of the book is lucid, logical, smooth, stately, and sublime. The customary introduction and salutation are absent. Like the Bible itself, Hebrews begins with God. It is characterized by frequent exhortations interspersing the arguments, instead of being reserved for the end of the epistle. The great sub-

diation or abandonment of earlier revelation made to Moses, but rather its fulfillment, the substance of which Judaism was but the shadow.

b. To strengthen them in the face of persecution by weaning their hearts from Judaism which, before God, had ended with the rending of the temple veil (Mt. 27:51) and which was soon to end historically with the destruction of Jerusalem.

c. To prevent apostatizing to

of Judaism were set against the *faith* of Christianity to the attempted disparagement of the latter. Doubtless the converts were challenged to present some tangible proofs of the divine origin of Christianity.

To a person who had been taught from childhood to reverence all these visible elements of Judaism, such an argument would be impressive, for Christianity had nothing to offer but an invisible Saviour whose claims were challenged on every hand. The argument would be fortified by terming the Christian Jews apostates from Jehovah, renegades from the law of Moses, and as having forfeited all the blessings of the legal covenant.

To prevent this possible defection, the author sets forth the “*better*” things of Christianity, showing the superiority of Christ to the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and temple sacrifices and service.

2. *Ultimate Purpose:*

The Holy Spirit anticipates and answers in advance the Judaizing tendencies which have crept into the professing Church through the centuries. These tendencies, reaching their climax in Romanism and ritualistic Protestantism, are steadily invading many evangelical movements. Never was this epistle needed more than at present (2 Tim. 3:5).

AUTHORSHIP

Although anonymous, the book has been ascribed to Paul, Timothy, Apollos, Barnabas, Priscilla, Clement and others. God knows the human author, but there is strong

Few books in the Bible so stir the mind to understand the plan of salvation and at the same time stir the heart to delight in the Saviour who “by Himself” accomplished it all.



jects are alluded to and later developed. It is full of Old Testament quotations, illustrations, and imagery.

PURPOSE

1. *Immediate Purpose:*

a. To doctrinally establish the truth of the finality of Christianity, in contrast with the temporary and typical character of Judaism. Christianity is seen not to be a repu-

Judaism. Jewish leaders were probably upholding the objective elements of Levitical worship—the writings of the OT; the covenant of law received through angelic meditation; the achievements of Moses and Joshua; the Aaronic priesthood; the temple with its vessels, service, and animal sacrifice—as indicating the superiority of Judaism over Christianity which was a belief system of pure faith in an unseen Saviour. The *facts*

evidence of Pauline authorship:

1. Peter refers to a letter which Paul had written to Hebrew converts (2 Pet. 3:15-16; cf. 1 Pet. 1:1).

2. It contains "*some things hard to be understood*" especially for Hebrew readers (chs. 9, 10, 12), as well as for others (6:4-9; 10:26-31).

3. It contains Paul's secret mark (13:25; cf. 2 Thess. 3:17-18), which was a protection against spurious letters ascribed to him (2 Thess. 2:2). Contrast the end of Paul's epistles with the end of those by other writers, where the mark is absent.

4. Three epistles expound the truth of Habakkuk 2:4, "*The just shall live by...faith.*" The first two were written by Paul (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11), which fact adds to the probability that he also wrote the third (Heb. 10:38).

5. Paul would have had reasons for keeping the epistle anonymous:

a. To prevent Jewish prejudice against himself causing a reaction against the teaching of the epistle. Many Jews denied Paul's apostleship and accused him of seeking to destroy the Levitical system.

b. His great love for the Jews, his brethren according to the flesh, would cause him to write to those who professed salvation (Rom. 10:1-2), though they might have prejudices against him.

c. He no doubt realized that appeals to the OT Scriptures would be more convincing to Jewish converts than would an appeal to his own apostolic authority.

6. God, knowing the temple was soon to be destroyed and the Jews scattered, may have chosen the eminently qualified Paul while the types were fresh in their minds.

a. He had extensive and accurate knowledge of the OT and of the temple service and ritual (Acts 22:3).


b. His unique conversion suited him to write of the opened heavens and of the exalted and glorified Christ (Acts 26:13-19).

7. The nature of the epistle, which presents Christ as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (3:1), forbids emphasis on human apostleship.

DATE

Probably between 60 and 65 AD. Internal evidence indicates the temple was still standing, necessitating a date earlier than 70 AD when it was destroyed by Titus.

PERSONS ADDRESSED

Primarily Hebrew converts to Christianity are addressed, but it is full of helpful commentary on the OT types and shadows for us today. We would miss a significant portion of divine revelation if we failed to identify ourselves with our Jewish brethren in leaving "*the camp*" and going to our blessed Lord in His rejection until the glory He now bears in heaven is revealed to all the world. "*Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*" (Col. 3:3-4). 

A Brief Outline of Hebrews

INSIDE *the* VEIL (chs. 1-10)

1. The Son of God *superior to Prophets* (1:1-4)
2. The Son of God *superior to Angels* (1:5-14)
3. The Son of Man *superior to Adam* (2:1-18)
4. The Son over the House *superior to Moses* (3:1-19)
5. The Rest-Bringer *superior to Joshua* (4:1-13)
6. The Great High Priest *superior to Aaron*
 - a. *As to His person* (4:14-7:28)
 - b. *As to His work* (8:1-10:25)
 - i. *A better ministry* (8:1-6)
 - ii. *A better covenant* (8:7-13)
 - iii. *A better sanctuary* (9:1-11)
 - iv. *A better sacrifice* (9:12-10:25)

OUTSIDE *the* CAMP (chs. 11-13)

1. Life in Christ *superior to Judaism*
 - a. *As a life of Faith* (11:1-40)
 - b. *As a life of Hope* (12:1-29)
 - c. *As a life of Love* (13:1-17)
2. Conclusion *and* Benediction (13:18-25)

N.B. the warning passages found at 2:1-4; 3:7-19; 5:11-6:20; 10:26-39; 12:25-29

The character of the book

A scholarly but deeply spiritual overview of the epistle to the Hebrews.

The epistle to the Hebrews differs in some important respects from all the other epistles of Paul, so much so that many have questioned whether it be the writing of Paul, of Apollos, of Barnabas, or someone else. Of this my mind has no doubt. I believe that Paul, and no other, was the author, and that it bears the strongest intrinsic traits of his doctrine. The style is different, and so is the manner of handling the truth; but the line of truth, though affected by the object in view, is that which savors of Paul beyond all—not of Peter, or John, or James, or Jude, but of Paul alone.

One good reason why the epistle has a different character is the fact that it goes outside his allotted province. The apostle of the Gentiles, if writing for the instruction of Jews, as here he clearly was, was evidently outside the ordinary function of his apostolic work.

There is another reason why the epistle to the Hebrews diverges sensibly and materially from the rest of the writings of Paul. It is not, strictly speaking, an exercise of apostleship at all, but of the writer (apostle though he were) as a teacher, and here a teacher clearly not of Gentiles, as he says elsewhere, but

of Jews. Now it is plain, if he who was an apostle and preacher and teacher of the Gentiles was led by the Holy Spirit to address the saints that were of the old Jewish fold, there must have been a marked departure from his usual manner of presenting the truth of God.

The book of Hebrews, this blessed result of his acting outside

teacher; and God took care that, although expressly said to be a teacher of Gentiles, his should be the word to teach the Christian Jews too. In fact, we may be assured that he taught them as they never were taught before. He opened the Scriptures as none but Paul could, according to the gospel of the glory of Christ. He taught them the value

of the living oracles that God had given them; for this is the beautiful characteristic here. Indeed the epistle to the Hebrews stands unique. By it the believing Jew was led into a divine application of that which was in the Old Testament—that which they had habitually read in the Law, Psalms and Prophets, from their cradle we



his own ordinary sphere, is the finest and indeed the only specimen of teaching, properly so-called, in the New Testament. It is not a revelation given by prophetic or apostolic authority, and for this reason, I presume, he does not introduce himself at all. It is always a failure when the teacher, as such, is prominent. The teaching (not the teacher) should arrest and instruct.

In writing to the Hebrew believers, the writer puts himself in the background. Besides being apostle of the uncircumcision, he was a

may say, but which they had never seen in such a light before.

That mighty, logical, penetrating, richly stored mind! That heart with such affections, large and deep, as scarce ever were concentrated in another bosom! That soul of experience wonderfully varied and profound was the one whom God was now leading in a somewhat unwonted path, no doubt, but in a path which, when taken, at once approves itself by divine wisdom to every heart purified by faith.

For if Peter, as is known, were

pre-eminently the apostle of the circumcision, it was through him that God first of all opened the door of the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles; and if the Apostle Paul, with the concurrence of his brethren, had gone to the Gentiles, nonetheless did the Spirit of God employ Paul to write to the believers of the circumcision the most consummate treatise of the bearing of Christ and Christianity on the law and the prophets, and practically dealing with their wants, dangers, and blessing.

Thus God carefully guarded from the technical drawing of lines of rigid demarcation to which even Christians are prone, the love of settling things in precise routine, the desire that each should have his own place, not only as the proper sphere of his work, but to the exclusion of every other. With admirable wisdom the Lord directs the work and the workmen, but never using one exclusively. The Apostle Paul is here the proof of it on one side, as Peter is on the other.

What is the consequence under the blessed guidance of the Spirit? Though the great teacher of the believers from among the Jews, we have not Paul here but through him God Himself left to address His own in the words, facts, ceremonies, offices, persons so long familiar to the chosen people. Paul does not appear. This could hardly have been by any other arrangement—at any rate not so naturally. *“God,”* says he, *“having in many measures and in many manners spoken in time past to the fathers in the prophets, at the last of these days spoke to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.”* Paul would thus show them the infinite dignity of the Messiah whom they had received. Never would Paul weaken the personal rights or the official place of the Anointed of Jehovah. Contrariwise, he would lead them on to find what they had never yet seen in their Messiah. And, wonderful to say, he founds his proofs, not on new revelations, but on those very words of God which they had read so superficially, the depths of which they had never approached, nor had they so much as suspected. They knew the facts of Christianity; they had yet to discover the linking of all Scripture with Christ’s Person, and work, and glory.

But mark the manner of the writer. He is careful to establish the thread of connection with God’s Word and ways of old; and yet there is not a single epistle which more elaborately, throughout its entire course, sets the believer in present relationship to Christ in heaven. From the very starting point we see Christ, not merely dead and risen, but glorified in heaven. There is no doubt that the writer meant his readers to hold fast the truth that He who suffered all things on earth is the

same Jesus who is now at the right hand of God. But the first place in which we hear of Him is as Son of God on high, according to chapter 1, but we also see Him as Son of man according to chapter 2.

It was there, in fact, that Paul had himself first seen the Lord. Who then was so suitable to introduce Jesus, the rejected Messiah at the right hand of God, as Saul of Tarsus? On the way to Damascus that staunchest of Jews had his eyes first opened by grace to see by the power of the Holy Spirit the glorified Christ.

It is to Christ in heaven then that Paul, writing to the Christian Jews, first directs their attention. But he does it in a manner which shows the singularly delicate tact given him. True affection is prudent for its object when peril is near. In no way are the former messages of God forgotten in the days of their fathers. Nor would one gather from this epistle that its writer labored among the Gentiles, nor even that there was a calling of Gentile believers in the Lord Jesus. The epistle to the Hebrews never speaks of either.

We can understand, therefore, how active-minded men who occupied themselves with the surface—the method, the style, the unusual absence of the writer’s name, and other peculiarities in the phenomena of this epistle—too readily hesitated to attribute it to Paul. They might not attach much general tradition which ascribed it to him. But they ought to have looked more steadily into its depths, and the motives for obvious points of difference, even were it written by Paul.

Granted that there is a striking absence of allusion to the one body here—but there was one nearer and dearer to Paul than even the Church. There was one truth that Paul labored even more to hold up than the one body wherein is neither Jew nor Greek—the glory of Him who is the head of it. Christ Himself was what made the assembly of God precious to him. Christ Himself was infinitely more precious than even the Church which He had loved so well, and for which He gave Himself.

Of Christ, then, he would deliver his last message to his brethren after the flesh (as well as the Spirit). And as he began preaching in the synagogues that He is the Son of God (Acts 9), so here he begins his epistle to the Hebrews. He would lead them on, and this with gentle



but firm and witting hand. He would deepen their knowledge lovingly and wisely. He would not share their unbelief, their love of ease, their value for outward show, their dread of suffering; but he would reserve each folly for the most fitting moment. He would lay a vigorous hand on that which threatened their departure from the faith, but he would smooth lesser difficulties out of their way with a light touch.

But when he gained their ear, and they were enabled to see the lights and perfections of the great High Priest, there is no warning more energetic than this epistle affords against the imminent and remediless danger of those who abandon Christ, whether for religious form or to indulge in sin. All is carried on in the full power of the Spirit of God, but with the nicest consideration of Jewish prejudices, and the most scrupulous care to bring every warrant for his doctrine from their own ancient yet little understood testimonies.

It is evident, however, even from the opening of the epistle, that though he does not slight but uphold, the Old Testament scriptures, yet he will not let the Jews pervert them to dishonor the Lord Jesus. How had God spoken to the fathers? In many measures and in many manners. So had He spoken in the prophets. It was fragmentary and various—not a full and final manifestation of Himself. Mark the skill! He thereby cuts off, by the unquestionable facts of the Old Testament, that over-weening self-complacency of the Jew which would set Moses and Elijah against hearing the Son of God.

Had God spoken to the fathers in the prophets? Unquestionably. Paul, who loved Israel and esteemed their privileges more highly than themselves (Rom. 9), was the last man to deny it. But *how* had God spoken then? Had He formerly brought out the fullness of His mind? Not so. The early communications were but refracted rays, not the light unbroken and complete. Who could deny that such was the character of the Old Testament? Yet so cautiously does he insinuate the obvious character of that which was revealed of old, that at a first reading they might have no more perceived it than most of us. But there it is; and when we begin to prove the divine certainty of every word, we weigh and weigh again its value.

It is then pointed out that there were formerly many portions and modes in God's prophetic communications. This was doubtlessly the way in which His revelations had been gradually given to His people. But for this very reason it was not complete. God was giving piecemeal His various words, "*here a little, and there a little.*" Such was the character of His ways with Israel. They could not bear more till redemption was accom-

plished, after the Son of God Himself was come and His glory fully revealed. Now when promises were given to the fathers, they did not go beyond the earthly glory of Christ; but known to Him were all things from the beginning, yet He did not outrun the course of His dealings with His people. As they manifested themselves in their own weakness and ruin, higher glories began to dawn, and were needed as a support to the people.

Hence invariably you will find these two things correlated. Reduce the glory of Christ, and you equally lower your judgment of the state

of man. If you see the total absolute ruin of the creature, then none but the Son in all His glory is felt to be a sufficient Saviour for such.

Accordingly, while he intimates by this that all was partial, being piecemeal and multiform in the revelations from God to the fathers, he lets them know in the next verse that the same God had in the last of these days

"spoken unto us in His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." If His glory was so great, what must be the word of such a Son? What the fullness of the truth that God was now making known to His people by Him? Who was He—this Messiah—that they attempted to confirm Him as king of the Jews, and so if possible, to aggrandize themselves, establishing themselves as the conquerors of the Romans? He was no one less than the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His substance; the upholder, not of Israel or their land only, but of all things *"by the word of His power."*

But listen: *"When He had by Himself purged our sins"*—was not the whole Jewish system blotted out by such a truth? It is to the exclusion of every other instrument. Help there was not; means there could not be. He Himself undertook and achieved the task alone and, when He had thus done it, *"sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."*

***Though
the great
teacher of
the believers
from among
the Jews, we
have not
Paul here
but through
him God
Himself left
to address
His own.***



The heavens in the Hebrews

A breathtaking journey from the throne to the cross—and back again.

The Epistle to the Hebrews may be read in various lights, yet no one ray interferes with another. In the first two chapters, it opens the heavens to you as they now are. How blessed is the introduction of such a thing to the heart! When you look up, you see the physical heavens above you; but it is only the superficial heavens you see. This epistle introduces the inner heavens to you, not in a physical, but in a moral character. It introduces us to the glories of the Lord Jesus, now accepted in the heavens. We are thus enabled to see the heavens where He sits and what He is about there.

TWO AMAZING VIEWS

When the Lord Jesus was here, as we learn in Matthew 3, the heavens opened to get a sight of Him. There was an object on earth worthy of the attention of the heavens. When He returned to heaven, the heavens had an object they had never known before—a glorified Man. And now it is the role of our epistle to show us the heavens as the place of this glorified Man. And as in Matthew 3 we get the heavens opened to look down at Christ here, so in the Hebrews you get the heavens opened that you may look up at Christ there.

THE HISTORY OF THE HEAVENS

But suppose you ask, Is that all the history of the heavens? Have you gone to the end? Indeed I have not. In chapters 4 and 5 of the Revelation we get the heavens preparing for the judgment of the earth. Then at the close of the volume I find the heavens not only the residence of the glo-

rified Man, but of the glorified Church. What a divine library it is that can present to us such secrets as these!

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

Now we will set ourselves down before chapters 1 and 2. *“When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (1:3). The Lord has been here purging our sins, and He has gone up to occupy the heavens as the Sin Purger.

Suppose I had been to a distant country. My description of it to you might fill you with delight and a desire to visit it. But when the Holy Ghost comes and shows you the heavens, He does more than this—He shows you that your interests are consulted there. Our Representative is seated in the highest place. Is it possible to have a more intimate link with the place? It is a wonder we are not all on the wing to get there as soon as we can! To think that because He came to die a wretched death for us, He is seated there! I defy you to have a richer interest in the heavens than God has given you.

ABOVE THE ANGELS

Now in verse 4 we see that not only as the Purger of our sins, but in the fullness of His Manhood He is there, seated above the angelic hosts. We have seen already what an interest we have in Him as the Purger of our sins. Now the chapter introduces Him to us as the Son of Man above angels. Man has been preferred to angels! Human nature in the person of Christ has been seated above

angelic nature. The whole of chapter 1 is thus occupied in giving you two sights of Christ in heaven. What two secrets they are! The Purger of our sins, and very Man, like ourselves, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

THE PARENTHESIS

I read the first four verses of chapter 2 as a parenthesis. Do you not like these parentheses? The Holy Ghost speaks in language familiar to us. We see friends, when conversing together, turning a little aside to converse about one another. So the apostle speaks here, “I am teaching you wonderful things. Take heed that you let not such things fall on a careless ear.” We must not be mere scholars. If we are disciples of a living Master in the school of God, we shall have our consciences exercised while we are pursuing our lesson. That is what the apostle is doing here. That parenthetical admonition falls on the ear winsomely.

A NEW GLORY

But though a parenthesis, it opens a new glory to us. How the field of Scripture teems with fruit! It is not a thing you have to till diligently and get but little fruit. That parenthesis contains another glory of Christ. He is seated there as an Apostle—my Apostle. What does that mean? He is a preacher to me. God spoke in times past by the prophets; He is speaking to us now by the Son. Christ in the heavens is the Apostle of Christianity. And what is His subject? Salvation. That salvation which, as the Purger of our sins, He



worked out for us; and which, as the Apostle of our profession, He makes known to us. There is more furnishing of the heavens for you.

Then verse 5 returns to the theme of chapter 1. It goes on with the distinctive glories of Christ, as super-eminent, above angels. *“For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come.”* What is *“the world to come”*? It is the millennial age, which we read of in Psalm 8.

We have three conditions of the Son of Man here. *“A little lower than the angels;” “crowned with glory and honor;”* and *“set over the works of God’s hands.”* So that the world to come is not put in subjection to angels but to the Son of Man. Now you find that you have an interest in this glorified Man. I was saying that if I went to a distant land and described to you its scenic wonders, you would desire a sight of them. But this epistle shows you that you have a personal interest in these glories. Is there a single point that the Son of man has travelled in which you have not an interest? The apostle traces it here for you. This epistle is opening the distant heavens to your view, and showing you the glories that are Christ’s. As a result you have an immediate, personal interest in those glories.


In verse 10 a new thought comes in: *“to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”* Pause here for a moment. It became the glory of God to give you a perfect Saviour. Do you believe it? What

thoughts rise on the soul when we come to that! Are you in possession of Him, so that you never in a single thought are tempted to look beyond Him? We have an unquestionable, infallible salvation, one that will stand the shock and strain of every coming day.

From verse 11 we further see our interest in the glorified Man. *“Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* Not ashamed! Tell it out that earth and heaven may hear! This glorified Man is a brother of the elect of God. He is not *“ashamed”* because of their dignity. Not merely because of His grace, but because of their personal dignity. He has appointed me a share of His own throne. Is He ashamed of His own doings, of His own adoptings?

Do not get creeping, cold thoughts as you read Scripture. Our thoughts of Christ should be such as to take captive our old man *“to bear us on eagles’ wings.”* *“In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.”* Christ leading the song of the ransomed ones, and not ashamed to be found in their company! *“And again, I will put my trust in Him.”* He did that when He was here, and we do it now. *“And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me.”* There is our interest in the glorified Man.

Then we return to see what He was in humiliation. *“He took not on Him the nature of angels; but he took on Him the seed of Abraham.”* He left the angels where He found them. The angels excelled in strength. They kept their first estate, and He left them there. Man excelled in wickedness, and He came and linked Himself with man.

Then verse 17 introduces us to another glory of Christ in the heavens. We see Him there as our High Priest, ever waiting with reconciliation for sins, and succor for sorrows. The epistle teems with divine glories. It is massive in glory and ponderous in the divine thoughts that press into its short space. He claims us; He loves us; He identifies with us; He stands ready to help us. What more could we ever want than this? 

***The angels
excelled in
strength...
and He left
them there.
Man
excelled in
wickedness
and He
came and
linked
Himself
with man.***

Enter in

Come across the river to the blessing side.



The heart-cry of many well meaning, hard-working believers today might be expressed in the words of the hymn:

*Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view,
Of Jesus in His Word?
What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still,
But they have left an aching void,
This world can never fill.*

This could have been the language of the Hebrews to whom this letter was written long ago. They had begun well and suffered for it (10:32-34). They were like their ancient counterparts who had left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and sung the song of victory as the hosts of Egypt were swallowed up in the water. But then there was the long wilderness journey, and Amalek, and the sad record of disobedience and unbelief. So they wandered 40 years and many “could not enter in because of unbelief” (3:19).

So it was with these Hebrews. They had suffered by “reproaches and afflictions” for their step of faith. They are given a solemn warning by the use of this graphic example—the failure of Israel to enter into the land because of unbelief.

UNBELIEF KEPT THEM OUT

They are warned that it is possible for New Testament believers also to come short of entering into the blessings of their spiritual inheritance, the realm of conflict, conquest, faith, and rest, because of unbelief. With those Hebrews it was

not unbelief in the fact of God. They knew that He was. It was not unbelief in the power of God. He had “made the worlds.” It was unbelief in the measure of the grace of God, that having sinned and failed, their Jewish mindset caused them to look backwards to the old system wherein they had once found solace, the system of oft-repeated sacrifice. They thought, like their forebears, that having failed, they would have to go back and bring another sacrifice. They had never grasped the completeness and acceptability of the finished work of Christ nor the abiding value of His unfinished work on their behalf in heaven.

The Lord is using an OT example, and we in our day may profit by it. There was a covenant promise given to Israel for them to believe:

I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it

you for an heritage: I am the Lord (Ex. 6:6-8).

GOD WANTED THEM IN

This covenant had first been given to the patriarchs (Ex. 6:3); it had been established by His Word (v. 4); and was remembered by the Lord (v. 5). The Lord confirmed it by seven “I will’s” in Exodus 6. They were assured of seven great facts.

They would be relieved and brought up; “I will bring you” (v. 6a). They would be released and brought out; “I will rid you out of their bondage” (v. 6b). They would be redeemed and brought back; “I will redeem you” (v. 6c). They would be recovered and brought near; “I will take you to Me” (v. 7a). They would be related and brought through; “I will be to you a God” (v. 7b). They would be led and brought to the land; “I will bring you in unto the land” (v. 8a). They would be blessed and made rich by an inheritance; “I will give it to you for an heritage” (v. 8b).

All these covenant promises are embraced within the parenthetical arms of the Divine Promiser “I am Jehovah” (vv. 6, 8). For NT believers, theirs is a promise of eternal blessings and a spiritual inheritance, “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). But we need not wait for heaven to taste of its fruits, savor its vic-

tories, and be enriched by its spiritual treasures.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **hath** blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”* (Eph. 1:3).

However, to enter into and enjoy some of the riches of that inheritance here and now, certain facts have to be established in our faith, as it was for Israel in viewing the possibilities of enjoying the blessings of God’s promises to them.

First they had to realize that there actually was a realm of blessing to enjoy. This was no dream, no will-o’-the-wisp, no fleeting hope to fade away like the morning mist. There actually was a wonderful place of blessing to enter (Ex. 3:8).

But they had a problem. While still in Egypt, that realm of blessing seemed so distant, so impossible. But the Lord assured them that He had seen their affliction, He had heard their cry, and He knew their sorrows (Ex. 3:7). There are some sorrows that can never be put into words. They are heard only in groaning spirits that only God can know. So He lifted up their head and told them what He intended for them to enjoy. He was going to bring them to a wonderful land, a land of freedom, fullness, and fruitfulness; but it would also be a land of fighting. The enemy would be in the land (Josh. 3:10).

SOME POWERFUL ENEMIES OPPOSE US

So it is with us. We have a realm of spiritual blessings to enjoy. This has been opened up to us at great cost and by the grace of God. However, there are blessings we may enter only by the appropriation of faith and by diligent endeavor (Heb. 4:2, 11). This strategic spiritual territory must be occupied by wrestling and conquest (Eph. 6:12)—not by the energy of the flesh, but by the provision of God and the enabling power of the Spirit whose voice we are to heed.

After battling with Amalek in the wilderness, perhaps it was a bit of a shock for the children of Israel to discover that there were powerful enemies yet in the land. Paul reminds us of our spiritual conflict today, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly] places”* (Eph. 6:12). Heavenly places is the realm of our blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:6).

Pharaoh was overthrown in a day. Amalek battled with them all through the wilderness journey. Now they were going to face seven powerful enemies in the land. In fact, they did more battling in the Land of Promise than either in Egypt or in the wilderness. But ultimately all those enemies in the land would be conquered and

subdued. And so it will be with us (see Rom. 16:20).

Perhaps it surprises the child of God, that as we pursue our heavenly calling and seek a closer walk in the purposes of God, the way does not become easier nor the conflict lighter. The Lord never promised His disciples it would be easy—only His abiding presence and His yoke, and that is not easy until we take it up.

Those Canaanite enemies were not the only dangers to the Hebrews, however. There were other solemn dangers that could keep them from “entering in”—the same dangers, in fact, that Israel had faced in the wilderness.

1. *Failing to heed the voice of the Spirit* (Heb. 3:7): In OT times, it was mainly the voice of the Father; in the Gospels, the voice of the Son; but from Pentecost till now, it is the voice of the Holy Spirit. There are many spurious voices which claim to be the voice of the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit will never speak contrary to the Holy Scriptures. It is to these sacred truths we must take earnest heed. The lamp of the Word will expose the darkness. And, sharper than any two-edged sword, it will pierce *“even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb. 4:12). This will mean reading God’s Word, heeding God’s Word, and feeding on God’s Word.

2. *Permitting the hardening of the heart to go on unchecked* (Heb 3:8): But how is the heart hardened? *“Through the deceitfulness of sin”* (v. 13). Then we must ask, how does sin deceive? The reference is to Numbers 14, *“the provocation”* and *“the day of temptation”* in the wilderness when Israel tested God to see how far they could go on in sin without His intervention. Sin deceived the people by making them think that the pleasures of sin were better than the provisions of the Lord (Num. 14:2). Sin deceived them by making them assume that God’s pardon always excludes His discipline. But His word to them after the intercession of Moses was, *“I have pardoned...but...”* Having tested God’s patience ten times, He told them that they would not see the land (vv. 20-21). Sin deceived them by making them presume that their sinful behavior only affected themselves, but a sad consequence was that their children would wander with them forty years (v. 33).

3. *Departing from the living God* (Heb. 3:12): The word *“depart”* is not so much “leaving” but “standing off” “holding at a distance” “turning away from” (JND). It is the attitude of the heart being “stand-offish” towards God. In the active voice, it is to cause others to depart. A solemn responsibility indeed.

However, for the Hebrew believers—and all such, all is not lost. There was a 3-fold preservative from such

tragic loss. First, they were to honestly examine the condition of their own hearts (Heb. 3:12). “Take heed” that is “look,” “intensively contemplate.” This was to be a serious, honest searching of their own heart. A superficial glance would not do. This first step in recovery must be to honestly face the facts of our own condition of heart. These Hebrews were not religious pagans, but “brethren” who were “partakers” of Christ (v. 14). The personal act of heart-searching would give them a burden for others, perhaps in the same state of heart as they had been.

Then they were to “exhort” one another on a daily basis. This action is not to be one of destructive criticism nor was it to be carried out with a judgmental attitude. The word “exhort” means to comfort, to fortify. It means to call alongside, to help, to beseech. Such loving, faithful action for others will ensure that their own hearts will first be kept right with God, on a daily basis.

Thirdly, they were to take hold of the “beginning... confidence” or “the beginning of the assurance” (v. 14). This “assurance” is the substructure or “foundation” to which they were to firmly hold. What was that beginning? Surely it was the discovery of the grace of God and the finished work of Christ. They had, as Jews, been depending on a system of oft-repeated sacrifice, law-keeping, and ceremonials. Then the illumination of the glorious gospel banished their darkness and brought them into the light of God’s matchless grace. They were in danger of looking back at the old system which held on to shadows and not the substance.

HOW TO ENTER IN

Having engaged in heart examination, loving exhortation, and by faith, appropriation, they could enter into the joy of their inheritance. A three-fold exercise is now called for in chapter 4. They were to have a fear of coming short of making God’s promise good. Many of the children of Israel could not enter the land because of unbelief (3:19). Now these Hebrews were to have faith in the promise of God, simply taking God at His Word, altogether apart from their feelings and fears. The children of Israel heard the wonderful message, truly a gospel of rest, but they did not believe it (4:2). Joshua had said, “*The Lord your God has given you rest...*” (Josh. 1:13). In the purpose and provision of God it was already theirs, but they failed to appropriate it by faith.

Even Rahab and the people of Jericho knew that and said to the spies, “*The Lord hath given you the land*” (Josh. 2:9). They had heard of the Red Sea and their victories and said, “*As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt*” (v. 11). Jericho was already

theirs 40 years before they entered the land!

IT IS ALL OURS ALREADY

Oh, how much is ours today in Christ, “*He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*” (Rom. 8:32). If we are not entering into these riches we must presume that either they don’t really exist or we just don’t believe it is all for us. Maybe we think it is reserved for those wonderful Christians we know, for the godly and the great servants, but not for “ordinary” Christians like us.

The Hebrews, having settled their hearts and exhorted one another, were then to “labor”—be diligent—to enter into the realm of rest (4:11). We are pointed again to the children of Israel. In spite of redemption by blood, deliverance from Pharaoh, miraculous provision day by day, and preservation all the way through, many of them lost their lives on the wrong side of the river and never entered into the Land of Promise.

LET US NOT MISS IT

So the danger was for the Hebrews and for us today, that in spite of Calvary, a finished work, an empty tomb, a glorified Saviour, an ever-living great High Priest ministering for us continually and the voice of the indwelling Holy Spirit, it is possible for many whose souls are saved by grace to waste their days and never enter in to the enjoyment of those “*spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*” The Lord Jesus said, “*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it*” (Mk. 8:35).

The unbelieving may play with their toys, cavort in their neon-lit temples, clutch their tinsel treasures and consume themselves in transient pleasures, forgetting that these so soon will pass away, and they will leave it all behind. The carnal believer, truly saved, but satisfied with the shadows of this world rather than the substance of an eternal inheritance, stands on the wrong side of the river, looking and perhaps occasionally longing, but never entering by faith into all that God has provided in Christ, and at such a cost, for His people to enjoy.

We have a far greater inheritance than Israel ever had. It is “*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation...*” (1 Pet. 1:4). May we heed the voice of the Spirit as He gives His divine invitation of grace in the concluding verse of the chapter: “*come boldly...obtain mercy...find grace!*”



The superiority of faith

This is our link with heaven and every blessing there.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds (lit. ages) were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:1-3).

This great chapter of Hebrews 11 has been variously called “God’s Honor Roll of Old Testament Saints” and “God’s Hall of Fame of Faith.” In Hebrews 10:22-25 believers are exhorted toward faith, hope, and love, while in chapters 11, 12, and 13 these virtues are exemplified. Chapter 11 is an expansion of 10:38-

39. The great danger of these Jewish believers to whom Hebrews was written was the temptation to live by sight, not by faith (see 2 Cor. 5:7). This same great danger faces all true believers today as well.

Referring to Hebrews 11, Herschel H. Hobbs has written,

The author showed how others of God’s people had found faith a source of strength to enable them to fulfill their God-given purpose in their lives. And upon this basis he exhorted his readers to be faithful in their part in God’s plan and purpose.¹

In our study of this brief introduction to this classic chapter, we want to focus on three things regarding faith.

FAITH’S DESCRIPTION (11:1)

The Greek verb for faith in Hebrews (*pisteuo*) is found only in 4:3 and 11:6, but the noun (*pistis*) is used 32 times, 24 of them in chapter 11. It is important to remember that faith in Hebrews 11 is not the faith by which one lays hold of salvation, but “faith by which to live a full and effective life in the will of God.”²

It seems that the writer of the letter is not so much defining faith in his introduction, but describing something of faith’s characteristics and effects. It is the foundation of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. Faith’s foundation is the Word of God. An anonymous writer has rendered the statement of verse 1 as follows: “Faith means we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.” In certain papyri unearthed in Egypt

AND OTHERS

*Blessed is he whose faith is not offended,
When all around his way
The power of God is working out deliverance
For others day by day.*

*Though in some prison drear his own soul languish
Till life itself be spent,
Yet still can trust his Father’s love and purpose,
And rest therein content.*

*Blessed is he who, through long years of suffering,
Cut off from active toil,
Still shares by prayer and praise the work of others,
And thus “divides the spoil.”*

*Blessed art you, O child of God, who suffering,
Yet cannot understand
The reason for your pain, yet gladly leaving
Your life in His blest hand.*

*Yes, blest are those whose faith is “not offended”
By trials unexplained,
By mysteries unsolved, past understanding,
Until the goal is gained.*

—FREDA H. ALLEN

many years ago the Greek word translated “substance” is found in the technical sense of “title deed,” the root idea being that they “stand under” the claim to the property to support its validity.³

It is readily seen throughout Hebrews 11 that faith is active, not passive, virtually all of the illustrations centering on “*things hoped for*” or “*things not seen.*”

Hobbs has helpfully pointed out,

...faith is basic in every area of life. It is the support which stabilizes every element of society. Even scientific research begins with faith that truth not yet known can be discovered. Certainly faith is a vital element in one’s spiritual life. When reason falters faith can lead one on to great achievements. It can bridge the chasm between what is and what can be. The readers of this epistle, then and now, need this title-deed and conviction.⁴

George Mueller said, “Difficulties are food for faith to feed on.” Another has anonymously written:

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, “It shall be done.”*

J. Oswald Sanders stated, “Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.”⁵

FAITH’S DEMONSTRATION (11:2)

“*Elders*” in this verse refers to all the Old Testament faithful who had preceded the readers of Hebrews. The term has the sense of fathers or forefathers who had gone before and had received God’s approval. The balance of the chapter is an illustration of how God has borne witness to them.

W. H. Griffith Thomas asserted that the “*elders*” of verse 2 are the “*cloud of witnesses*” or testifiers in 12:1, some of whom are mentioned in detail in chapter 11 with reference to their faith.⁶

Illustrations are like windows—they let in light. Thus the illustrations of Hebrews 11 instructively flesh out the reality of living faith.

FAITH’S DISCERNMENT (11:3)

The world says, “Seeing is believing.” God says, “Believing is seeing” (see Jn. 11:40). By faith Christians understand that the “*worlds*” were created by God. He spoke and by the word of His power matter and the universe came into existence, and this, by His Son who holds all things together (see Gen. 1:1-3; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). The writer of Hebrews

clearly denies the eternity of matter.


The term “age” or *aion* refers to both the physical creation and the time factor. Of this word Thomas states

It seems to refer to what may be called time—worlds, the idea being that the various ages or dispensations were planned by God with reference to a goal, toward which all are moving. Perhaps, therefore, the verse suggests both Creation and Providence, especially as the word ‘framed’ means adjusted. This verse is thought to give the secret of the faith of the elders (v. 2) who did not judge by appearances but understood that the dispensations were prepared by God, and consequently they believed He would overrule everything for the accomplishment of His purposes.⁷

In defining faith, Warren W. Wiersbe has helpfully stated:

According to the Bible, true faith is obeying God in spite of feelings, circumstances, or consequences. All of the men and women whose names are listed in ‘The Hall of Fame of Faith’ had to deal with their emotions (did you ever walk through a sea?), their circumstances (did you ever fight an army?), and the consequences of their decisions (did you ever say no to a powerful ruler?). They did not deny their feelings; they could not change their circumstances; they could not predict the consequences. But they trusted God, and He saw them through.”⁸

They could not deny their feelings (or) change their circumstances (or) predict the consequences. But they trusted God, and He saw them through.

These three verses, therefore, set the stage for the roll call of the faithful commencing with verse 4 of Hebrews 11. “*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*” (Heb. 11:39-40). 

ENDNOTES

- 1 Herschel H. Hobbs, *Hebrews*, p. 110.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- 3 W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Let Us Go On*, p. 141.
- 4 Hobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
- 5 Warren W. Wiersbe, *Run with the Winners*, p. 14.
- 6 Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
- 7 *Loc. cit.*
- 8 Wiersbe, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

THE GIFT OF FAITH

But is it given only to certain people to believe?

D. L. Moody was once asked if he thought faith was a gift of God. He replied, "Some say that faith is the gift of God. So is the air, but you have to breathe it; so is bread, but you have to eat it; so is water, but you have to drink it. Some are wanting some miraculous kind of feeling. That is not faith. *'Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.'* It is not for me to sit down and wait for faith to come stealing over me...it is for me to take God at His word."

The teaching that faith is a gift of God is a truth stated in Scripture. It is given by the One who gives every good and every perfect gift. Faith is not the only gift which comes from the Father of lights.

The Scriptures also teach that salvation is an unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15). Our daily bread is a gift from God, along with His grace, the Word of God, and the Son of God. These and many others are God's gracious gifts. Indeed, the gift of faith is one of God's most precious gifts for it is by grace through faith that we are saved.

THE SCRIPTURES AND THE GIFT OF FAITH

A number of scriptures speak of faith as a gift of God, such as Romans 12:3, "*As God has dealt to every man a measure of faith,*" and 1 Corinthians 12:8-9, "*For to one is given...faith by the same Spirit.*" These verses when carefully studied reveal that this gift of faith is not a condition for salvation but a requirement for effective Christian living and service. The gift of faith in this sense is the special ability given to members of the Body to accomplish great things for God. George Müeller of Bristol, who established an orphanage which thousands would call home, and Hudson Taylor, who reached the previously unevangelized interior of China with the gospel, show examples of this gift of faith. This may have been one of the gifts that Stephen possessed, for he was "*full of faith.*" This may have been in the apostle's mind when he wrote, "*if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing*" (1 Cor. 13:2). But this gift is not the faith which saves but the gift of faith for service.

The important question is not so much whether faith

is a gift of God; rather, is this gift given in a unique way exclusively to those whom the Bible calls the elect? These teachers appeal to the words of Ephesians 2:8, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*" They are convinced that the gift of God spoken of here is faith, that is, saving faith without which no one can be saved. Their argument runs: since salvation is fully and exclusively of God, saving faith cannot proceed from the natural man; it must be a gift of God. They conclude that faith which flows out of the natural man cannot save, for this faith would be a work, and no one is saved by works.

IS FAITH THE GIFT OF GOD (EPH. 2:8)?

The Greek construction of this verse seems to indicate that faith is not the gift but rather that salvation is the gift of God. New Testament Greek authorities contend that the key to understanding Ephesians 2:8 is to properly identify the antecedent of the pronoun "that" (*tauto*). A general rule of Greek grammar concerning identifying the antecedent is: Pronouns agree with their antecedent in

gender and number. Their case is determined by their use in their own clause. The fact that the demonstrative pronoun "that" is neuter and the words "faith" (*pistis*) and "grace" (*charis*) are feminine in gender must rule out faith as the gift of God. If Paul wanted to say that "faith" was the gift of God, he would have used the feminine form of the word "that" (*haute*).

A number of respected evangelical Greek scholars, commenting on the grammatical structure of this verse, have concluded that salvation and not faith is the gift of God. The word "that" seems to refer back to verses 4-7, to God quickening and raising us up together and in showing His grace toward us. None of this is of works; it is a gift of God. Commentator F. F. Bruce writes, "The fact that the demonstrative pronoun 'that' is neuter in Greek (*tauto*), whereas 'faith' is a feminine noun (*pistis*), combines with other considerations to suggest that it is the whole concept of salvation by grace through faith that is described as the gift of God."¹

W. E. Vine, a respected authority on the Greek New



Testament, concerning the word “gift” writes, “...*Doron*, to give, is used of salvation by grace, as the gift of God in Ephesians 2:8.”²

WHAT IS FAITH?

After considering whether or not faith is the gift which leads to salvation, one naturally asks: What then is faith? The biblical faith which leads to salvation, sometimes called “saving faith,” consists of three primary elements: 1. knowledge of the object of faith; 2. mental assent—what the Bible says about Christ, the object of our faith, is true; and 3. the use of the human will to place dependence in Him alone. It is noteworthy that this definition is accepted by Calvinist teachers. It is striking that this definition of faith includes the exercise of the human will. Both Calvinists and non-Calvinists concede this point. The Calvinist generally will go further in his theology and state that new birth by the Spirit is prior to the exercise of faith.

This is in striking contradiction to the biblical order which posits that faith comes first and then is followed by new birth or salvation. The non-Calvinist believes that man through the Fall, as the Scriptures describe, is “dead,” “lost,” “perishing,” “condemned,” “in darkness.” The Fall includes all of this and more besides. However, the Fall has not brought to pass an inability to believe in Christ unto salvation. For the boundless grace of God and penetrating power of the Word of God and convicting of the Holy Spirit are more than sufficient to enable a man to exercise faith (Jn. 5:25).

FAITH TRULY IS A GRACIOUS GIFT OF GOD

What is the source of faith? The Word of God tells us that, from the divine side, the Scriptures, the Spirit of God, and the grace of God work in concert to produce faith. But there is the human side, which is the exercise of the human will in response to these divine promptings. The Word of God tells us: “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). Concerning the Spirit’s work in new birth we read, “...*except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (Jn. 3:5). Although God enables us to believe through divine promptings, the responsibility to believe is ours. God has done all that is necessary for salvation. Our responsibility is to receive the gift of salvation by faith.


Concerning the inter-working of the divine and human aspects that together produce faith which ultimately leads to regeneration, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost comments, “The Word of God convicts, reproves, enlightens, exhorts, reveals, not only our need but the

Lord Jesus Christ who can meet that need. The instrument that convicts is the Word of God, but it is the Spirit that produces the new birth. The Word of God, energized by the Spirit of God, produces new birth.”³

Another respected author, C. H. Mackintosh, comments, “New birth is not a change of man’s fallen nature, but the imparting of a new divine nature. How is this new nature produced? This is a point of immense importance, inasmuch as it places the Word of God before us as the grand instrument which the Holy Ghost uses in quickening dead souls...All who place their trust in Christ have gotten new life—are regenerate.”⁴

IS FAITH A WORK?

Some argue that unless faith is given irresistibly by God, salvation is a “works salvation.” It is said that this defective salvation is not of God, for it is partly of God and partly of man. Is this view in accordance with Scripture? Does this view stand upon sound logic?

First, the very nature of faith is an admission that man is unable to earn or merit salvation but rests on God alone and His grace. It is an act of the will prompted by the moving of God’s abundant grace. Faith is not the act of *doing* something but of *receiving* something. Does the downtrodden beggar who accepts a handout receive the credit for the gracious deed? The act of receiving God’s unconditional gift of salvation is of no merit to the receiver. All glory goes to the Giver. Faith may rightly be considered a gift of God in the sense that all good things come from God. Faith is of God, who has inscrutably given fallen man the ability to respond to the drawing power of God—through the promptings of the grace of God, the Word and the Spirit working together to form faith in a willing heart. Yet the responsibility to believe is all of man. The charge from God to the lost is: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.*” We are not to pray to receive the gift of faith so we can believe. We are to believe as an act of the human will in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation. 

David Dunlap
David Dunlap

ENDNOTES

1. F. F. Bruce, *Ephesians*, (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1961), p. 51-52
2. W. E. Vine, *Dictionary of N. T. Words*, (Old Tappan: Revell, 1981), p. 146
3. J. D. Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter*, (Westwood: Revell, 1963), p. 131
4. C. H. Mackintosh, *Mackintosh Treasury*, (Neptune: Loizeaux, 1976), p. 618

Isaac and God's Saviour

Five references to the son of Abraham speak of Abraham's other Son.

Have you ever noticed that the name of Isaac is mentioned or alluded to just five times in Hebrews 11? First, we find his name mentioned as one of those pilgrims who sojourned with Abraham *"in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise"* (v. 9).

This mention of Isaac before we have the record of his birth (see v. 11) is suggestive. It may serve to bring to our minds the truth that He of whom Isaac is a type was not only *"with God"* (Jn. 1:2), but was also a Dweller with those of faith before that *"fullness of time"* in which He came as born of the Virgin.

Thus the Lord could say to the Jews, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad"* (Jn. 8:56). He always dwelt with men and women of faith ever since the promise was given that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and he should bruise His heel. In the wilderness, *"They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ"* (1 Cor. 10:4). He was ever a sojourner with His wandering people. *"He spread a light for a covering; and fire to give light in the night"* (Ps. 105:39).

These and many more references in the Word point to Christ as the Eternal One. Whether before or after incarnation it is true, as someone has well said, "God has nothing but Christ for sinners, and nothing but Christ for saints." In this way we may say, as well as in reference to His Person, that His days were from

"everlasting to everlasting." Truly, His beginning of days was not in the manger of Bethlehem. *"The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was... Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were*

not remind us of Galatians 4:4? *"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."*

So, not according to nature, the promised Seed was born, but the power of God brought all to pass when the fullness of time was come. *"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy Seed, which is*



with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:22-23, 30-31). This is none other than our blessed Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate glory, *"The glory that I had with Thee before the world was"* (see Jn. 17:5, 24).

ISAAC'S BIRTH

Next we read: *"Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age"* (v. 11). Does this

Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

Thus we see the second mention of Isaac answers to the coming of our Lord into this world, as one poet has said: A "little baby thing that made a woman cry."

What matchless and amazing grace! It is the bush burning, and it is not consumed. The ground we stand on is holy ground. He *"[became] flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory."*

ON THE ALTAR

We find the next mention of Isaac in verse 17. *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.”* We cannot but think of Calvary as we read the melting story of the father and son going together in happy communion to the mount chosen by God, where we see the extreme act of obedience on Isaac's part, reminding us of our Lord's words in John 10:17, *“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life.”* Here He gave His Father a new cause for loving Him. In obedience to His Father's will He laid down His spotless life, that He might take it again.

When Peter would have hindered Him, saying, *“Pity Yourself, Lord,”* (for that is what Peter's words meant), how quickly the Lord rebukes him, *“Get behind Me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but...of man.”*

The Father and the Son go *“both of them together,”* and Jehovah-Jireh is fulfilled at last. God provides Himself a Lamb for a burnt offering. *“Behold the Lamb of God,”* our blessed (Isaac) Jesus, who hath done all things well.

IN RESURRECTION

“Accounting that God was able to raise him [Isaac] up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure” (v. 19). But not in figure is the resurrection of our glorious Lord. No! *“Thou wilt not leave My soul in hades, neither shalt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption”* (Acts 2:27), was fulfilled to the letter of the word.

Neither Roman seal, nor Roman soldier, nor all the hosts of evil combined, could keep our victorious Lord in the tomb. When the appointed time came:

*Up from the grave He arose,
With the mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign,
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah, Christ arose.*

Yes, indeed, well may poets sing of this. Let us sing also with them:

*Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus, my Saviour;
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus, my Lord.*

Yes, Jesus, my Lord, it was He, *“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it”* (Acts 2:24). God was Master of the situation, and puny man,

“whose breath is in his nostrils,” was set aside, *“for wherein is he to be accounted of?”* *“He is not here, for He is risen; come, see the place where the Lord lay.”*

THE BLESSER

The last time we find Isaac mentioned is in verse 20, *“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”* Thus it is we see the Lord of glory for the last time as He departs into heaven to go back to the Father: *“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen”* (Lk. 24:50-53).

*Lord of life! To death once subject,
Blessed, yet a curse once made;
Of the Father's heart the object,
Yet in depths of anguish laid;
Thee we gaze on, Thee recall,
Bearing here our sorrows all.*

Reader, whoever you are, king or peasant, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, Catholic or Protestant, Hindu or Buddhist, moralist or heathen, infidel or atheist, religious or profane, if ever you are blessed *“concerning things to come”* it is our risen Lord alone who can do that for you. Come to Him, and be blessed with sins forgiven—with eternal life—with a home in that city *“whose Builder and Maker is God.”*

*Oh, what a home! The Son who knows—
He only—all His love;
And brings us as His well-beloved
To that bright rest above,
Dwells in His bosom—knowing all
That in that bosom lies,
And came to earth to make it known,
That we might share His joys.*

So Isaac takes us from the past eternal ages on to those eternal ages yet to come. Come like Jacob, and get your name changed, from Lost to Saved—from a *“child of wrath”* to a child and heir of God. What a blessing the Blesser awaits to impart to you if you only come now, and just as you are.

*Jesus died to set me free,
Jesus died on Calvary;
Not a blessing that I know,
But to Jesus Christ I owe.*



Hebrews' advice to elders

The truth of the Church is not emphasized here, but God's shepherds are.

From reading the book of Hebrews, it is clear that the letter is written to two groups. First, there are the Jews who have left the temple worship, and come into the fullness that is in Christ. But now, some 30 years later, their hearts are fading, and they are wondering if they should have given up the temple worship, the priests and ceremony for the sake of Christ. The second group are those Jews who have been convinced that the temple worship with its system of sacrifices had now been superseded, but they have not yet fully entered into Christ. So where does that leave Gentile Christians some 2000 years later? The answer is, "it leaves us with a rich practical blessing and a storehouse of precious doctrine." In this wonderful blessing are a number of points which can be addressed to local church elders.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Few men today would suggest that they have the strength of leadership which Moses possessed. But unlike the tendency of modern secular leaders to take pride in their position and to abuse their position, Moses exemplified servant leadership in the Old Testament. The author of the Book of Hebrews points out in Hebrews 3:5-6, *"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."*

It goes without saying that local church elders must always remember that they are servants in God's house, not rulers over God's house. If a great leader like Moses could content himself with a position of humble servant leadership, so must the local church elders today.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

In Hebrews 13:7 we read, *"Remember those who led you, who*

taken out of context can lead to extremes, the whole of the Scripture provides balanced teaching on many issues. So it is with Hebrews. The very same chapter that discusses the example of the lives of godly elders also mentions their authority. In Hebrews 13:17 we read, *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy,*



spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith" (NASB). The Hebrews were instructed to think about those who had led them, and to imitate their faith. The most effective means available to local church elders for influencing the flock is not their words of instruction, not their rebuke or discipline, but rather the example of the life they lead.

AUTHORITY

It is wonderful to behold the balance which God has provided us with the Bible. While one verse

and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." While the primary means that elders have of influencing the flock is the godly lives they live, God has provided assembly elders with the authority required to defend the flock from grave danger. While it is possible that some elders may abuse this authority and act in a dictatorial manner, there are also situations where elders would be negligent if they did not use the authority God has provided them with. Elders must give account for how they use their authority, whether they are too quick to use it or too slow.


THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

It is accepted by all that those who are unrepentant of gross immorality should be put out of the assembly. But the Scripture also gives instruction about those who would sow bitterness and discord. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Elders must guard against such individuals. We are thankful for the legal system that protects us in our country. However, we labor under a false understanding if we think elders must act like a detective agency to find evidence that would stand in a court of law before they can take disciplinary action against those who are immoral, bitter or who would spread discord. Elders must investigate carefully to determine facts, but they are entrusted with defending the flock, not building air-tight legal cases to answer litigious critics.

DEFENSE OF DOCTRINE

In Titus 1:9, we read one of the qualities of character

which define an elder; "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (NASB). While this is not one of the lessons for an elder in Hebrews, an examination of Hebrews will show the importance of an elder having this quality of character. With the possible exception of Romans, no book of the Bible is as rich in doctrine as Hebrews. But with such richness come many verses which are difficult to understand, and which false teachers would use to mislead the flock. The doctrines of the Lord's high priestly ministry, eternal Sonship, and the believer's eternal security could all be twisted by a misunderstanding of Hebrews. Diligent elders will strive for an understanding of the deeper things of God.

So we see that a letter written 2000 years ago to a group of Jews has useful application to Christians who seek to shepherd the flock today. What wonderful richness is available to erstwhile poor, miserable Gentiles who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and have been granted the privilege of reading a letter addressed to someone else. 

Dispensations of Apology and Repentance

In the July/August 1999 *Uplook*, we printed a half-page piece on page 12 titled "Ultra-dispensationalism: Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth" by H. A. Ironside—or so we thought. But later we discovered that, via the magical process of culling, typesetting, editing, formatting and proofing, a sentence found its way in that H. A. Ironside never said, and that sentence has given some of our readers serious concern.

That offending sentence, at the end of the first paragraph erroneously joined three men, Cornelius Stam, J. C. O'Hair and Charles Baker, to certain dangerous doctrines that have followed some Bullingerites. This was an error on our part and we are deeply sorry for any damage done. After speaking about Dr. E. W. Bullinger's doctrinal positions as being "glaringly opposed to what is generally accepted as orthodox teaching," the article next stated, "This movement has been carried forth in our day by ardent proponents such as Cornelius Stam, J. C. O'Hair and Charles Baker." This statement leaves the reader thinking that Stam, O'Hair and Baker have subscribed to Bullinger's teaching *in toto*. Not true.

In his book, *Dispensationalism*, Charles Ryrie more accurately calls the teaching of Stam, O'Hair and Baker "the moderate type" of Ultra-dispensationalism, and then shows four basic points of difference they have with classical Bullingerism (see pp. 199-200). More important still is the insinuation that J. C. O'Hair, Cornelius Stam and Charles Baker taught foundational heresy which has been associated with the followers of E. W. Bullinger. This we also believe is not true. Stam's group, which publishes the *Berean Searchlight*, and Baker's group, which operates the Grace Bible College, in Grand Rapids, MI, defend the foundational truths of the Christian faith. Their own writings deny Bullinger's doctrine of the "dissolution of the soul" and affirm the eternal punishment of the wicked, the eternal Sonship of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit. Thankfully some friends brought this mistake to our attention. While we have disagreement with other teachings of Stam, O'Hair and Baker, we feel that the broad brush of mischaracterization is a setback to any progress in truthfulness. We regret the offense caused by this statement.

—the Editors

Chapter 13: journey's end

A beloved brother and former editor of Uplook takes us to the finale.

In the first seven chapters of this letter the *person* of the Son of God displaces all else—the Man in the glory of God. In the next three chapters we are introduced to the *place* where He serves as our High Priest—the sanctuary of glory. In the last three chapters it is the *path* that leads to the glory. To enable us to follow Jesus in the outside place, the Lord gives us a sight of Him in the inside place—within the veil.

In chapter 11, God's pilgrims are following one another in the path of *faith*; in chapter 12 there is the *hope* that is set before us; in chapter 13 it is *love* that should characterize brethren in Christ. We have no portion in this world, but we have Christ in glory, and one another down here.

There will be a shaking up of the whole world-system soon (12:27); the bands that bind society already are snapping; the anchor for faith is the unchanging Christ. And the bands of love that unite all the children of peace, find anchorage there.

PILGRIMS IN FAITH'S PATH (VV. 1-6)

"See how these Christians love one another," was the world's comment on the conduct of early believers. They had never seen anything like it; it was the fruit of Christ's resurrection. There had always been natural love, springing from natural relationships. But this was different. Believers in Christ loved each other because they were children of one heavenly Father, members one of another. "Let brotherly love continue." "We be brethren," said Abraham to Lot, and refused to engage in strife with him. Continuing in

"brotherly love," he was able later to deliver "his brother" when he had been taken captive (Gen. 14:14).

The fruit of love is twofold. Our brethren may be strangers to us; love opens a home to them, and heaven's benediction is ours in return (v. 2). We open our hearts to our brethren in distress, bearing the same burden, and having the same care (v. 3).

The enemy of love is lust, and it is against the activities of this evil we are warned (vv. 4-5). As fragrant as love is, lust makes of our heart's garden a wilderness, robbing marriage of its sanctity, the home of its sacredness, and love of its loyalty. The two-fold cravings of impurity (v. 4) and worldliness (v. 5) are offset by another couplet, "contentment" and "confidence." "Content with such things as ye have," not seeking to be richer tomorrow than today, satisfied with God's abundant supply, we echo His word of promise (v. 5) with the reply of faith (v. 6).

FORMER LEADERS IN THE PATH (VV. 7-8)

The ranks of God's pilgrims were thinning. Some who had guided the flock were no longer with them; but the fragrance of Christ that had characterized their ministry, and their footprints, remained where they had marked the way. Their faith could be imitated. The purpose and goal of their life could be summed up in one word—Christ. Imposing monuments have been erected in memory of great men in this world. But nothing could be greater than to have contributed to the glory of Christ—the names of the servants lost in the greater Name of the Master—the


glory of their lives seen only in the golden rays of His unutterable and unalterable glory.

THE UNCHANGING LEADER (V. 8)

We have seen how Christ displaces everything; He also fills every vacancy. For a moment we pause again in the progress of this epistle to gaze on Him. His undimmed glory fills the past, present, and future. The yesterday of the cross, the forever of the provision of Christ at the altar of expiation, causes us today to stand at the golden altar, rendering continual service of thanksgiving. And this self-sacrificial service will be accompanied by subjection (v. 17), for there is order and government in the house of God. The real test of devotedness to Christ will be seen in that love which bows to the guidance of those who watch over our souls, and who seek to maintain godly principles and practices among God's people. Thus there is a threefold giving: our songs, our substance, and our selves.

RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PATH (VV. 18-25)

The Hebrews closes with a threefold desire of the apostle. He asks their prayers for himself; he desires their entire conformity to the will of God; and he urges them to give heed to the word of exhortation.

Invoking blessing on them, Paul casts them on God who has removed every obstacle to peace by raising Christ. He would work in them His will, so that His pleasure might be seen in His people and His glory secured forever. The guarantee? Our risen and glorified Saviour. 

Iowa update

“The harvest is plenteous.” Do we believe Him?

I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” (Mt. 16:18).

Is it possible to start new assemblies today? Can assemblies once in decline be rejuvenated? Can large assemblies continue to grow? Yes! Consider these three examples.

A new assembly named “Believers in Jesus Christ” is thriving along the banks of the Iowa River on the campus of the



University of Iowa. On Sunday morning they meet for worship and teaching in the historic Danforth Chapel. This landmark building is clearly visible from the Student Union building. The occasional campus visitors are surprised to find the site being used by an active church!

How did this happen? In January of 1998 a group of college students led a conscious effort to establish this new assembly through a variety of outreaches. They began their own campus group and started a home Bible study. A professor and several students were saved. One year later the growing group began breaking bread every Sunday.

New believers are being added to their number as a result of aggressive campus evangelism, street

preaching and Bible studies. Throughout the week they can be found preaching in the pedestrian mall, the dorms, and the classrooms. They are not afraid to constructively confront their professors and defend the faith in front of their classmates. Gospel tracts are bought in bulk and distributed at community fairs and festivals. Evangelistic fervor is their trademark.

The assembly is comprised of a good mix of older believers, several young couples, and college students all dedicated to searching the Word daily. These believers would welcome an encouraging visit from any saints passing through or thinking of moving to Iowa City.

A second example of a growing assembly is the Cedar Rapids Bible Chapel, located 40 miles north of Iowa City and bursting at the seams. They are undergoing an amazing turnaround, growing from 4 families in 1986 to the present 27 families. The steady growth in the assembly is attributed to some new conversions but primarily to an influx of families seeking a better way of worship. These saints have found satisfaction in a manner of meeting that follows the scriptural pattern.

A key to the Cedar Rapids revival is fervent prayer and practice of the church principles of Acts 2:42. They find it exciting that the Spirit has melded this diverse group into one local body. Pray with them as they endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The third example of a growing assembly is the



Bethany Bible Chapel (Cedar Falls), formerly the Downing Avenue Gospel Chapel, which is located 50 miles north of Cedar Rapids and is settling into a brand new building. It all began when the Sunday School rooms downstairs overflowed. A house next door was bought and converted to classrooms. The worship meeting became too large for the auditorium and was moved into the attached gym. Through a series of miracles, the property was sold quickly and ground was broken for a new location. With generous gifts of money and labor, this “all hands on deck” construction project was completed in 11 short months.

The 350-person capacity building was dedicated in December 1999. More people are being saved and baptized. With more than 240 in fellowship, this rapidly expanding assembly has several community outreaches, including a neighborhood kids’ club, several active women’s ministries, and a thriving college group from the University of Northern Iowa.

May our hearts be encouraged as we see that the Lord is still starting new works, revitalizing those that are in decline, and expanding those that are growing.



W. T. P. WOLSTON

This medical doctor's greatest concern was for people's souls.

Walter Thomas Prideaux Wolston (1840-1917) was born at Brixham, Devon, in the far south of England, on the Channel, 40 kilometers from Plymouth. He was evidently surrounded and nurtured by godly influences. Around those parts at that time an F. Prideaux and an R. W. Wolston, probably related to Wolston, were active Christians in assembly life.

He had childhood recollections of his father inviting preachers, such as Charles Stanley to stay in their home. He said he had "a pious mother." "It is an inestimable boon for a man to have a praying mother and much, I know; mine prayed for me. But for twenty years I knew nothing of the grace of God, nothing whatever!"

According to his own testimony, he had been "about the most thorough-going young worldlying you could have met." When preaching he would say, "There is not a man in this hall tonight, who was more deeply immersed in the world, in its pleasures, its sin and its enticements, nor a more downright, out-and-out slave of the devil, than the man who speaks to you tonight. Yet in one hour God saved me. Hence, I love to sing—

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand'ring from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."*

While he never went far into the details of his career in sin, he did mention that he had lived for trifles, without a thought about God.

On leaving home, he entered a lawyer's office in his native town, intending to follow the legal profession. After office hours, "There was not a ball or a concert, a regatta or a cricket match, or a worldly entertainment of any kind, within twenty miles of where I was staying, that I was not in, if I could get to it."

On December 4, 1860, he left his country home in Devonshire for London to pursue his legal studies, planning to return home before Christmas to fulfill several

engagements in his Glee Band. The first Sunday after reaching London his roommate suggested, "What do you say we go and hear Richard Weaver. I see in the papers he is going to preach in Surrey Theatre tonight." The coal miner turned preacher was an instant legend whose rousing preaching attracted huge crowds and won thousands to Christ. Henry Pickering heard him and said,

...a greater God-made preacher has not been known in living memory. The moment he began to speak—at least in his palmy days—he sent a power and reality through the hearts of the thousands who thronged to hear him. You felt God was there. The Spirit was working. The bleeding Lamb, of whom he loved to sing, was the center, and eternal issues were at stake.



Wolston could not have listened to a more dissimilar man. Wolston was an educated and cultured man. The preacher was an uneducated brute of a man who had been a feared boxer. His nickname was "Dauntless Dick."

Wolston's conscience took a beating that night. If he before had thought he was a sinner, now he also felt it. From Monday to Saturday, instead of spending the evening ranging the streets in search of the outer parameters of London's excesses, Walter and Tom went home early and prayed together and read from the Bible. The following Sunday evening they went to hear Charles Stanley

preach the gospel from the story of Solomon building the temple. The meeting concluded and Walter turned to his roommate, "What are you going to do?" Tom answered, "I am going home to have it out with God." "Well," Walter said, "you can go home; I shall stay and speak to Charles Stanley." In the vestry he met Charles Stanley, Mrs. Andrew Miller and her son Tom. Mrs. Miller had been watching for Walter.

People were being converted all around, and polite Englishmen kept asking, "Are you a Christian?" and



then, “And would you like to become one?”

After a lengthy conversation, Tom Miller finally brought Walter to James 2:19 and there the light dawned. Walter Wolston entered by the door.

Recognizing that “a promise made is a debt unpaid,” and that every Christian should honorably pay his debts, he wrote a letter to the conductor of the Glee Band, letting him know that since leaving home he had been converted to Christ. The Lord had put a new song into his mouth, and while he was willing to fulfill his legitimate engagements, he could now only sing about the Saviour who had done so much for him. Needless to say, he was relieved of his obligations.

Thereafter he took up the study of medicine. In 1864, sensing the Lord’s call to Scotland, Wolston left behind lucrative possibilities in London and went to Edinburgh. He was appointed House Surgeon to the Old Infirmary after he had established a large private practice there. Dr. Wolston was a combination of professional ability, spiritual depth and personal warmth, “universally acknowledged to be a skillful and kindly Christian doctor.” He always found time amid his busy practice to tell the old, old story. He also rented halls and theaters for gospel preaching. Few professional men in Scotland were privileged to present the gospel to so many. He had a drawing influence with young men, and frequently lectured Edinburgh University students on spiritual subjects.

In 1872 he began to edit *God’s Glad Tidings*. The cover called it a “Monthly Magazine—Purely Gospel, for Free and General Circulation.” It was twenty to thirty pages long and had no graphics. Some of the anonymous contributors were really Wolston’s wife who would just leave one curious initial at the end of the article, such as the gospel appeal, *Boast Not Thyself of Tomorrow* by “X.” She was his match in evangelistic zeal. They both veiled references to themselves in their articles, but we gather

“I will never meet you in hell, and Moses will never meet you there. If his voice could be heard from heaven tonight it would say, “Young man, you had better follow my pathway. People thought me a fool [for leaving Egypt’s treasures] but see where I am now; I am in glory with Christ.”

—*Young Men of Scripture*, p. 78

by reading closely that many of the conversion stories in the magazine are from their own way of life witnessing. Of course, as a medical doctor, especially in those days before sophisticated pain management, the medical doctor witnessed genuine soul trouble at the bedside of suf-

fering and sometimes terminal patients. Wolston enjoyed great freedom to deal with souls. Their magazine, later retitled *The Gospel Messenger*, continued for forty-five years (the year of Wolston’s death), and many of Wolston’s gospel exhortations first appeared there.

An interesting encounter with the evangelist Donald Ross occurred sometime between 1874 and 1879. Ross had personally trained under Duncan Matheson the evangelist during the revival times of 1859-60, and in turn Ross had trained a corps of men in pioneer evangelism along the northwestern coast of Scotland. When Ross pulled out of the Free Church of Scotland he was vilified, the worst treatment coming from the unconverted Presbyterian ministers. Ross wondered where he should next go. “We were being much exercised about what was to be done. We had heard of ‘Brethren,’ but only as bad, bad people, and we resolved to have nothing to do with them. Our information, however, came from the parsons.”

This was a deeply trying time to Ross. He had a large family to support and many new converts looking for direction. Donald’s son, C. W. Ross, writes,

During this time of isolation he was approached by the Exclusive Brethren, who sought to win him to what they regarded as the Lord’s way. He was invited to take tea in the house of one of them, and there met two of their leaders. The question was gone over quite fully, and, although, as he stated to the writer often since that time, the temptation was very great in the circumstances to cast in his lot with them, his difficulties were many, and nothing they could say removed them. It was the very same question with them as he was then contending with others about, the right on the part of any body of believers, great or small, to determine the lawfulness or otherwise of assemblies of the Lord’s people. He had encountered the ‘Exclusive’ system soon after leaving the Free Church, and was not enamored of it then. And, although in this time of trial he was perhaps more disposed to listen to what they had to say than before or since, yet his mind ever rejected their pretension to be able to draw a circle in Christendom, inside of which only were meetings that could be recognized, and outside of which nothing was to be owned in the way of assemblies of the Lord’s people. And we may add, when this pretension was adopted by others he was just as decided in rejecting it.

We have heard that W. T. P. Wolston was one of those men who met with Ross. Interestingly, between the years 1902 and 1908 Wolston himself would find the shoe on the other foot when the influences of F. E. Raven would

send packing many evangelically-minded men.

Wolston cannot be termed a controversialist. Most of his writing is on evangelistic and devotional themes. He dearly loved to present the gospel. Regardless of the subject matter of his discourses to Christians, he would unswervingly finish by preaching God's salvation.

Walter's brother Christopher injected himself into several controversies. Christopher was also a medical doctor. He is mentioned visiting John Darby shortly before Darby's death. The doctor asked the old man if he had any special thoughts as he viewed his death. Darby replied, "There are three things which I have dwelt much upon: God is my Father, and I am His gift to His Son; Christ is my righteousness; and Christ is my object in life, and my joy for eternity."

It is sometimes said that the so-called Exclusive Brethren are strong on Bible teaching but weak on evangelism, but this was not so in Wolston's day and in many branches of that movement it is not true today. Although keeping a low profile and shunning ostentation, men like Andrew Miller, Charles Stanley, George Cutting, C. H. Mackintosh and W. T. P. Wolston were all men who shone in the gospel. Paul spoke of a fellow traveler with Titus, "the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches" (2 Cor. 8:18). Stanley, Cutting, and Wolston would have all fit that description.

It appears that Wolston tried to stay clear of several church controversies that arose after John Darby's passing in 1882. In the fall of 1896, he stood by a grave in Cheltenham Cemetery and read Genesis 25:8-10 and Hebrews 8:10. The body being lowered into the ground belonged to Charles Henry Mackintosh. He must have wondered, as the true men of spiritual stature among them either died, or were being pushed out.

Finally, church problems between 1902 and 1908 caused WTPW to write a paper called "Hear the Right." He was an impassioned man who eschewed hypocrisy.

He gave up his medical practice in 1909, and thereupon answered invitations to visit Australia and New Zealand. He later visited Norway.

During the second visit to Norway in February, 1915, he had a stroke, and was brought home paralyzed to Weston-super-Mare. He lay helpless for two years. His wife testified that the helpless man was "happy in the Saviour's love." Those who nursed him never heard him once murmur. A few weeks before the end he had another stroke and passed into a coma. On March, 1917, at the age of seventy-six, the good doctor made his appointment with the great Physician, who forgives all our iniquities and heals all our diseases.

Years previously, Wolston had declared,

I truly confess, beloved friends, that the day when I say 'good-bye' to the earth, I shall say, from the bottom of my heart, 'Thank God.' If the Lord came tonight, we should break out, as we left the earth behind, into that noble pæan, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'...I would not be anything but a Christian for ten thousand worlds; and if you are not one, it is high time you became one."

BOOKS BY WOLSTON:

- Another Comforter*: Thirteen Lectures on the Operations of the Holy Spirit
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The Church, What is It?: Ten Lectures on the Church of the New Testament
Young Men of Scripture: Nine Addresses to Young Men

We understand that W. T. P. Wolston also compiled a hymnbook which was reprinted at least seven times. A total of more than 88,000 copies were published by 1933. These hymns are included in the hymns database on the Truth for Today's Bereans CD-ROM.

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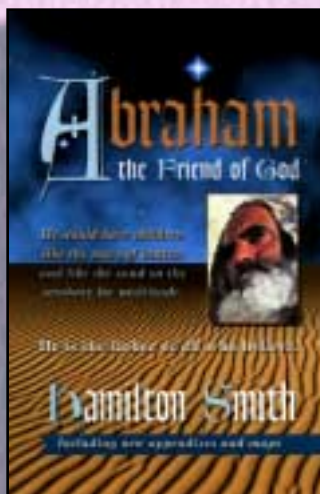
- W. T. P. Wolston, *How I Found the Lord: the Conversion of W. T. P. Wolston*, Gospel Tract Publications, Glasgow
 Napoleon Noel, *The History of the Brethren*, Chapter Two, London
 Harry Ironside, *A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement*, Loizeaux Bros., Neptune, NJ



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HOT OFF THE PRESS!

ABRAHAM, *The Friend of God* by Hamilton Smith



It would hardly be possible to overestimate the importance of a knowledge of God's dealings with Abraham and his seed for a proper understanding of the Bible. To him the Lord gave this sweeping promise, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). From Galatians 3:16, we learn that that seed was Christ, and in Him alone all the blessings of the New Covenant shall be realized.

The significance of this subject can be assessed by the fact that only a few chapters describe the creation of the worlds, while the rest of the Old Testament is dedicated to God's dealings with this one man and his family.

Abraham is also one of the most interesting characters of Bible history. There are few people mentioned so frequently in the Scriptures. He also has the distinction of being called "the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:23). To prepare Abraham for the place God had purposed for him, the God of glory appeared to him (Acts 7:2) and gave him wonderful visions—visions of the Lord Jesus (Jn. 8:56) and visions of a heavenly city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

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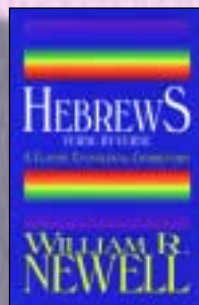
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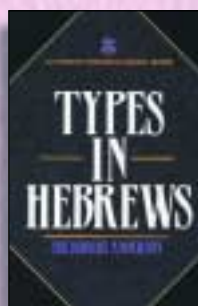


For the serious reader this is a must-have book. Let the sluggish thinker beware. Critical points are dealt with convincingly. While Greek students will note only occasional allusions to the original languages, Kelly's knowledge of the texts is a strong undercurrent in his writing. Like most sound commentators, Kelly treats the warning passages as warnings against apostasy. Hardcover. 304 pp.

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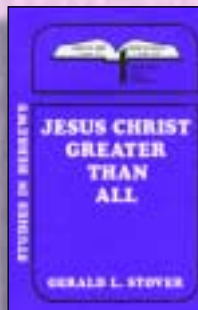
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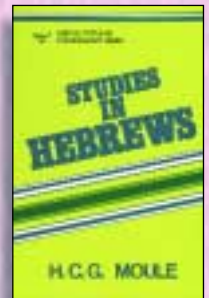


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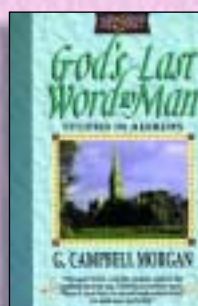
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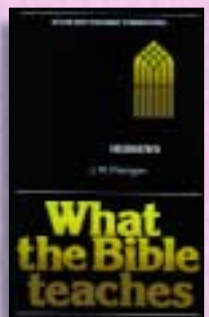
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The Missing Stanza

“For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:3).

In August of 1875, E. H. Bickersteth was staying with his family in a house at Harrowgate, facing the Stray. One Sunday morning he heard Canon Gibbon preach from the text, *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee”* (Isa. 26:3). In his message, he alluded to the beauty of the phrase *“perfect peace”* as rendering the repeated word, *“peace, peace”* in the original Hebrew.

That afternoon Bickersteth went to visit a dying relative, and found him, though a believer, troubled in mind. Sitting by his bed, E. H. Bickersteth took a sheet of paper and there composed the following beautiful hymn which he then read to the dying man:

*Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.*

*Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.*

*Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus’ bosom naught but calm is found.*

*Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they.*

*Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.*

*Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.*

*It is enough; earth’s struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to heaven’s perfect peace.*

Later, Bickersteth’s sister noted that no stanza dealt with the trial of physical suffering. *“That is soon remedied,”* he replied, writing on the back of an envelope:

*Peace, perfect peace, ’mid suffering’s sharpest throes,
The sympathy of Jesus breathes repose.*

And it certainly does (see Heb. 4:15-16)!

—from GREAT HYMNS AND THEIR STORIES by W. J. SHEPPARD

