

Notes of Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews

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Introduction

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Introduction

Each of the inspired Epistles has a specific subject of its own. Hebrews unveils the glories of Christ's person and tells out the value of His work. This is God's preservative for His saints against Judaism and worldly religion.

The subject of each of the Gospels is found at the close; of the Epistles, at the beginning. Viewed together, the seven Epistles written by the Apostle Paul to the Gentile Churches, tell the full mind of God as to our blessing and responsibilities. Hebrews follows, shewing our association with Christ in His acceptance up there, and in His rejection down here.

Chapters 1-10, may be headed "Inside the Veil."

Chapters 11-13 "Without the Camp."

The text of the entire Epistle to the Hebrews is in chap. 1:3, "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Chapters 1 and 2 are intensely doctrinal. Christ is first presented alone, in His personal and official glories; next, in full association with His people. He is presented there as the enthroned Sin-purger: His people as the sin-purged, one with Him in acceptance before God.

Chapters 3-4 disclose to us God's rest in Christ, His redemption rest, and how His people share that rest with Him.

Chapters 5-8 unfold the glories of our Great High Priest, and shew how He is engaged for those who are on the way to God, lifting them up and succouring them, and when they fall restoring them.

Chapters 9-10 are occupied with the Perfect Sacrifice, which is the basis of all, and shews that Christ's title to the place He occupies in the presence of God, and our title to be there, are identical.

Chapters 11-12 shew the path of faith as trod by saints of old, and by Jesus, our perfect Exemplar and Leader.

Chapter 13 exhorts to obedience corresponding to the doctrine of this epistle, to separation and association with a rejected Christ without the camp, sharing His reproach.

Chapter 1

This Epistle is dated from that unsullied glory into which Christ has entered. First, He is seen alone, amid the uncreated light of God's throne. There He is speaking to us.

Verse 1—God hath spoken. What a mercy! He has spoken twice. First, unto the fathers in the prophets, “at sundry times and in divers manners,”—a bit to one and a bit to another, piecemeal: to Adam, to Abraham, to David and others. It has pleased Him to put all these bits together, and to reveal them to us. We live in an age which, so far as the world is concerned, is darkness itself, but which, as regards God and His Christ, is as clear as day. From the Cross a stream of light has poured which makes all darkness flee.

“In the last one of these days.” In 1 Peter 1:21 we read of “the last one of these times” (Greek). This is the day in which God has come out in the fullest discovery of His grace and love to guilty man—the time of “the exceeding riches of His grace” (Eph. 2:7), such as He had never shewn before to men, nor will again. “Spoken unto us in Son.” There is no “His”; it simply reads “in Son.” The absence of the article implies that our whole gaze is to be directed to the Person through whom God is thus speaking. The same is expressed in chapter 12:25-26. “If they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven.” God has been, and is now speaking to us, “in Son.” Ever since Christ went up there to speak for us to God, He has been speaking to us in Him, and the whole of the period of His session there

is reckoned as a single “day.” “The last one of these days,” during which God is calling out a people from earth for heaven. Now put that together with what follows in verse 3. What do I see up there? A Man; the very One who has taken up the question of my sin, seated in the uncreated light of God. That sight speaks; it has a voice to me; shall I hear it? Not only has He gone up there as Son of God, but as the One who has put away our sins. He has disposed of the question of sin so completely that He can sit down. Has that sight no voice to me? It has a word to every one. The first word God speaks is peace. From the Cross till the return of the Lord for His saints, God is speaking to us peace by that sight. Christ has settled the whole question of my sin completely and thoroughly. He has done it, and He has “sat down.” Sinner! look up. Do not look down or in, but up to the throne. I cannot tell what joy it has been to my soul, when Satan has sought to harass and upset me, just to look up and see the Sin-purger seated there in the light of God, telling of all my sin put away once and for ever. What a pity that so many of God’s dear children are kept in bondage! But if they do not begin in God’s way, and receive God’s thoughts about His Son, it is not to be wondered at that they are kept in doubt and in darkness. Some will say, “David doubted, and surely we may do the same.” Do you not understand the difference between the saints of the Old Testament and of the New? What the saints of former ages trusted was—He shall do it. What the saints of this present time rest in and rejoice is—He has done it. Five things are here said about the Son.

First: Something about Him in the future.

Verse 2.—“Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things.” God would have us read everything in the light of the Cross. He who is the Heir of all hung on the tree. If the whole universe had been annihilated to put sin away, it would have been as nothing compared with this. He inherits all things, and His people are joint-heirs with Him. What is His, is mine. What was mine—my sins—He took, and called them His (Psalm 69:5, with 2 Cor. 5:21). What was His—“all things” are mine (1 Cor. 3:22). O to think that He who was the Heir of all once hung upon a Cross, with the maledictions of men and demons filling His ears, and with the curse of God upon Him for sin. Do you think He went to that cross, and sank into that grave, for a trifle? Was it all for nothing? “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11). “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despised the shame” (Heb. 12:3). From the Cross and the grave, God has raised Him to the throne, as a result of His obedience, the appointed Heir of all things. “The earth is the Lord’s” (Psa. 24:1), and all things shall yet be put under Him (Heb. 2:8), but He has not yet token possession of His inheritance. For the present the devil is the prince of the world (John 14:30); it lieth in the wicked one (1 John 5:19), but the time of dominion for the appointed Heir will come, and when He reigns His people will reign with Him.

Second: Something is said about Him in the past. “By whom also He made the worlds.” Men of the science speak of “Nature’s works,” and we are prone to think of created things as the work of God; but this as well as other Scriptures shews that creation was the work of the Son. “All things were made by (through) Him, and without Him was not anything made” (John 1:3). If there

are other worlds besides the one on which we live, He made them all. The glory of Creator belongs to Him who hung upon the Cross. Was it any wonder that the sun He made withdrew its light, when its Creator hung between two thieves? Thus as regards the past He is the Creator of all; as regards the future, Heir of all.

Next there is something said about Himself essentially.

Verse 3—“Who being the brightness (or outshining) of His glory.” If God is light, Christ is the effulgence, the shining out of it. There cannot be light without the shining out of it. God is the Sun: Christ is the Sunbeam; if there be a sun there must also be a sunbeam, for both are of the same nature and are indivisible. If there is a Father, there must be a Son in the Godhead. This the Mahomedan and the Unitarian both deny. As the sunbeam passes through the prism and is broken up, yet remains unsullied, so the Son of God was here on earth, the outshining of God, yet bruised upon the Cross, so that His life and His nature might be communicated to us, in order that we might become partakers and reflectors of it. Thus do we become children of God (John 1:12) and of light (Eph. 5:8), reflecting (2 Cor. 4:6) and shedding it forth as light-bearers in this dark and evil world (Phil. 2:15).

Fourth: Another statement of what He is—“The express image of His Person,” or, the exact image of His substance. The idea is, that what God is up there Christ was down here. If the seal is well done, there is a corresponding impression on the wax. That which was manifest in the Son corresponds to what is invisible in God. Christ has the features, if one may so say, the omniscience, the power, the full manifestation of God.

There is not a thought in the mind of God but Christ has told it out. There is nothing in God that Christ has not revealed: all is told out. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," or "told Him out" (John 1:18).

These two taken together are very beautiful. "The outshining of His glory "looks at Him as beginning to come forth; "The exact image of His substance "views Him as having come right down as the sunbeam into the moat. So at both ends we see that He is God. And these two expressions taken together, give a very full view of the Person of Him who undertook our salvation. Surely He is enough. Thus we are called to see Him as Heir of all in the future, as Creator of all in the past, next to His substance up there and down here, and last of all as what He is continually doing for the present, "upholding all things by the word of His power." Were it not for Him, the sun, moon and stars would be nonentities in a moment. It has been argued among scientific men whether things would continue to exist as they are, if the power that created them was withdrawn. The Word of God provides the answer: "By Him all things consist" or "hold together" (Col. 1:17), and all in so perfect order, that astronomers are able to calculate to a day when certain comets will again become visible. And yet the very hands which created and uphold all these were nailed to a cross for me! This miracle of God's abounding grace far exceeds all the miracles of creation. And this very One is my Saviour. Not our Saviour, or the Saviour in a general sense, but mine individually. O how sweet to be able to say—"Thou art mine—my Lord and my God!"

“When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Every word here is full of meaning. This verse is the key to the entire epistle. It directs our gaze to Christ in His new and wondrous character as Sin-purger on the throne of uncreated brightness. “For Himself” is the exact thought of the original here. He, who undertook to put away our sins, has so thoroughly done it, that He is up there without them. He has so purged our sins, that He has gone in and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty, or Magnificence, on high. Four times in this Epistle do we read of Him as being enthroned. Here in chapter 1:3, as the Sin-purger, the One who has once for all grappled with the question of sin, and who has gone up there with a new glory and a new name, to put everything on a redemption footing.

Second, in chapter 8:1, as the High Priest. Never was there an enthroned high priest before. Yet “We have such an High Priest,” there on God’s throne, to save the saved from being dashed, overwhelmed, fainthearted; to succour and to keep them from being faint-hearted, until He has them all up where He Himself is. Meanwhile He is there to deal with them according to God’s glory and grace, and to bring them safely through.

Third, in chapter 10:12, as the offerer of a Perfect Sacrifice, the effects of which abide continually. The lesson here for us is, that according to the value of the Offering, so is the measure of the Offerer’s acceptance before God. As Abraham stood by his sacrifice (Gen. 15:9-17) and thus received the promise, so the sinner who believes in Christ, and is thus identified with the Perfect Sacrifice, is perfected as to his standing, and is a sanctified man. Alas! that many regard the blood of

Christ as of no more abiding value than the blood of bulls and goats. Do you think the writer of this Epistle, with his eye on that perfect sacrifice accepted by God, could have uttered what thousands of professing believers constantly do as they pray, "From everlasting damnation good Lord deliver us"? That sight forbids the thought of such a prayer.

Then last of all, in chapter 12:2, as the Beginner and Completer of the path of faith, our perfect Exemplar. He began, went on, and ended trusting God, and going onward in His path, right up to the Cross. Did He lose by it? See the end, the recompense of reward. Seated there the voice comes to us, "Follow Me." Obedience, though seemingly unprofitable here, will have its full reward there; faith, though often tried, its joy and crown. The result of gazing upon that enthroned One, is a perfectly purged conscience. To deny this, is to doubt the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Conscience is like a looking-glass. When looking at self, it reveals only sin. When turned to Christ, it is "clean every whit," not a spot or stain upon it, but perfectly purged to reflect His glory. "We all with unveiled face reflecting as in a glass the glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). What a change! How unspeakably grand for the soul to keep looking off and up unto Jesus! That glorious sight is the key to the Epistle. Read it with this in your view, and its seeming difficulties and strong statements will all be solved.

Verse 4, shews that He has not gone up one whit higher than He was before. Essentially He could not (John 6:62), nor could He ask for any higher glory than that which He by inheritance eternally possessed (John 17:5). But in His new character as Son of Man and as Sin-purger on the throne, He has received a new glory, and

God has fixed a new centre, from which He will work till all has been brought under Christ, and established on a redemption footing.

Then follow several citations from the Old Testament about Christ. They are evidently not all to prove the same point. What, then, is their order, and what their combined teaching?

1st—We see Christ in Resurrection (verse 5).

2nd—Christ as Son at the right hand of God (verse 5).

3rd—Christ coming back again (verse 6).

4th—Christ on His millennial throne (verses 8-9).

5th—Christ and His perfection to all eternity (verses 10-12).

“This day,” in verse 5, refers to resurrection, as Acts 13:33 clearly shews. The quotation is from Psalm 2:7, and is here applied to the Lord Jesus. He who was God’s “only begotten Son” is in resurrection His “first begotten,” and thus God addresses Him “My Son” (see also Rom. 13). The quotation is again used in chapter 5:5, to shew that it was in resurrection that Christ was formally invested with the Priesthood. The next quotation, “I will be to Him a Father,” is from 2 Sam. 7, that long and beautiful passage, so full of promise to David, and here applied to Christ as the promised Seed to whom in resurrection “the sure mercies of David” are confirmed. How do these words apply to Christ? They bear two different meanings in both Greek and English. “First, “I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son,” then, “I will be to Him for a Father, and He shall be to Me for a Son.” Both forms of expression are found in 2 Cor. 6:16-18. “I will be their God,” “And will be (for) a

Father unto you.” The one refers to the reality; the other to the manifestation. When God lifted up His Son and set Him on His throne, after earth had rejected Him, He manifested to all that He was His Son. He found Him a home, and set Him on His own right hand, till His enemies shall be made His footstool.

The third quotation, “When He bringeth again the first begotten into the habitable world,” implies force, and contrasts with His former coming in grace, when men ignominiously expelled Him from it. God will bring Him back clothed with Almighty power, so that resistance will be useless. But the statement shews that there will be foes of His in that world still who have the will, if they had the power, to crucify again the Son of God. These His enemies, rejecters of His grace, will sink into a more awful doom than demons, because not only have they sinned, but they have also rejected the Sin-purger. Now the full force of Divine judgment will descend upon them, because they turned their backs on Him to whom, had they but turned their faces, they would have been so completely purged from sin as to welcome the sight of Christ in glory.

“Let all the angels of God worship Him.” In Rev. 5:6-10, we see the Church is the first in Heaven to worship Him; then the angels follow in their smaller measure. But it would seem as if here, in view of all creation, and especially before that motley crew who in all ages have said “We will not have this man to reign over us,” the angelic host render their homage to Him. Thus judgment and worship are His, and in that very world too where He once was cast out and crucified.

Verse 7, is a parenthesis, contrasting angels as servants with the Son. Angels were created to serve, and if they, like the cherubim in Ezekiel, chap. 1, run and return as a flash of fire in their service, with what power and intelligence will the redeemed serve in glory?

Verses 8, 9, view Christ as seated on His own throne, the throne of millennial glory, where as Son of Man He shall reign. Now He is on His Father's throne, for His reigning time is not yet.

"Thy throne, O God." Here God is heard proclaiming with joy the Godhead of the Son, which puny worms of the dust are bold enough to deny. His qualification for rule is here also established by an eternal right. His fitness to hold the sceptre is shewn by His perfect submission and obedience to the will of God, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness," points to His path here below, in a world where darkness rather than light was loved by men, and where lawlessness characterised even religion. The reward for such love and hatred was not on earth, but in resurrection, God has fully vindicated and honoured it.

"Therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness." The allusion is to the anointing of the high priest, when "the precious ointment" was poured upon his head (see Ex. 30:22-30; Psa. 133:2). "Above thy fellows." Here a new and very beautiful truth is introduced. Angels are ministers but not "fellows" to the Son. None but His saints—the many brethren of which He is the first-born—have this honour conferred upon them. They alone share and are "joint-heirs" with Christ. O to think that we who had no claim, nothing but sin, have been called to be "fellows" of the risen Son of

God. On the Cross, hanging between two thieves, God claimed that dying One as His fellow, when He said, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man who is My fellow" (Zech. 13:7); now on the throne, He calls us His fellows. How wonderful are God's ways! For God to call Christ His fellow on the throne would not have been so wonderful, but it was that dying One, scorned and rejected of men, whom He thus addressed "My fellow." And, again, had Christ while on the Cross called us His fellows, it would not have been so wonderful, but there He was alone; now from His glory, He greets those whom He has purged from their sins, and made fit to dwell in that light into which He has gone as His "fellows." As the precious ointment poured upon the head of the high priest ran down to his garments, so the Spirit which our Great High Priest has received, He has bestowed upon His people (see Acts 2:39), for while the Spirit is said to come to us from the Father (John 14:16, 26), He is equally said to come from the Son (John 16:7). And in all this joy and gladness, Christ has the fullest share. While the joy of His redeemed will be "full," His will be "exceeding joy" "when He presents them faultless before the presence of His glory (Jude 24). It was with this "joy set before Him" "that "He endured the Cross, despising the shame" (chap. 12:2). As each wanderer is found and brought back to God, He says, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:10), and when all His redeemed are safely gathered, and His bride complete, He will rejoice over them as "the Bridegroom over the bride." "He will rest in His love and joy over them with singing" (Zeph. 3:17), for the joy of the Blessor must ever exceed the joy of the blessed. O to think of the Man of Sorrows being thus made glad, as

He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. "His fellows "are anointed with the same Spirit, which is to them the "earnest" of what awaits them in glory (2 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:14).

Verses 10-12.—"Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid." His glory as Creator and His perfections to all eternity appear here side by side. He formed creation; He will unmake it and make it again, but He Himself is ever the same. "Thou remainest," or as we have it, in chap. 13:8, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." In Psa. 102:2, 12, from which the citation is made, Christ says as man, "My days are consumed like smoke"—"My days are like a shadow that declineth." Then God answers, "But Thou, O Lord, shall endure for ever, and Thy remembrance to all generations." The old creation is to be set aside in order that a new creation may take its place, and like as the Tabernacle of old rested upon silver sockets—not on the shifting sand of the desert—which silver was the atonement money of the children of Israel; so this new creation will stand on redemption, and be headed up in Christ, and thus provision is made for its continuance and perpetuity. And all this He will do in His character as Sin-purger. From that ground He will never recede, but every act of His in glory and in judgment, will be as the One who has glorified God in the purgation of sin, and "sat down." That seated Sin-purger on the Throne is God's new Centre, from which everything must take its character in glory, grace, and wrath.

Verses 13, 14.—"Sit Thou on My right hand." Christ is not yet on His own throne, for this He waits. Yet grace reigns, and God speaks "in Son," but when He who now sits rises up, He will "speak in His wrath" (Psa. 2:5), and

crush those who reject Him beneath His feet as foes. Meanwhile His people are His fellow-heirs, waiting in the consciousness that they are about to inherit salvation, and to them angels are sent forth to minister.

O to think of these angels who shall worship the Son before all creation, when He is brought again into the world, being equally willing now to minister to the heirs of salvation. They care not for human praise; it is enough for them that they are serving God, "hearkening to His Word" and "doing His pleasure" (Psa. 103:21).

And what a host they are: "thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (Daniel 7:10); "an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22), and the people of God only "a little flock" (Luke 12:32). Hundreds of them may hover around a "little one" who belongs to Christ. Thus, what people speak of as "Providence" we learn to be the ministry of angels, who while there are "fellows" of the Son of God, whose willing servants they are, are sent forth to guard and guide them along their pilgrim way.

Chapter 2

The first four verses of this chapter ought to be joined to chapter 1: they specially warn against the neglect of this great salvation, which God has brought so near. So great that the three Persons in the Godhead had all to do with the providing of it (see chap. 9:14, with which compare Luke 15), and here are all seen witnessing to its greatness. God speaks “in Son”— “therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard,” lest, like a ship in motion, when something is brought close to it, we sail past, or drift away neglecting to lay hold of it. That something is God’s salvation, the word of which is now brought nigh. One look to Christ, one step, and that salvation is thine; but disregard it, neglect it, give no earnest heed to it, and to-morrow may find you hardened in sin or in hell.

“Disobedience,” in verse 2, is careless hearing, which may be either through listless indifference on the one hand, or natural piety and worldly religiousness on the other. The danger of the Hebrews was more in the latter than the former, as it is in some who now hear the Word. They, by their own religiousness, neglect God’s great salvation, and invent one of their own.

Verse 3.—“How shall we escape if we neglect?” —it does not say reject, but “neglect,” which is much easier and more common. You do not require to empty your till on the street to become a bankrupt: neglect of your business will bring you there. The question “How shall we escape?” is unanswerable; it shews the certainty of the Christ-neglecter’s judgment, while in chapter 10:29, the greatness of his damnation is seen. Those upon

whom wrath is coming, are regarded by God in the New Testament not merely as sinners, but “as enemies.” In the presence of “so great salvation” there can be no neutrality, no middle ground. You must either accept Him and be “clean every whit,” or be negligent and be damned. What a word of warning for religious people, who, like many of the Hebrews, are mixing law with grace, and thus neglecting that great salvation in which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost each have their part.

Verses 4-5.—These verses stand closely related. Do you ask—how? The little word “for” connects them. To the first messengers of Christ, God bore His witness by miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. These gifts were the powers of the world to come, not in angels, but in men. The miracles wrought by the Lord Jesus, He attributed to “the Spirit of God” (Matthew 12:28), whom He elsewhere speaks of as “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20). The testimony of apostles was confirmed by gifts of healing, tongues and such like, all wrought by the Holy Spirit, who still abides as a witness (see John 15:26). These miraculous gifts were not intended to continue; they served their purpose and passed away, but the Spirit Himself remains as the power for testimony in the believer and in the Church now, and by His power will all the miracles of the coming dispensation be wrought. Here and now, angels minister to the “heirs” of salvation, but in “the habitable world” yet to come, they will be superseded by the risen saints. Thus in Revelation v., we read of elders, living creatures and angels, but when the power is handed over to the Lamb, angels fall back, and the glorified saints are seen nearest to the throne. There they appear as the ministers of God, acting out His will.

Verses 6-9.—Now we learn who is to be the Centre and Ruler of the world to come. It is to be under the dominion of a Man, as God had originally purposed (see Gen. 1:27-30), not the first man but the second—as this passage clearly shews. The quotation here is from Psalm 8, which is thrice quoted in the New Testament, but when the Spirit gives an Old Testament quotation in the New, He always expands and enlarges it. In the Old, a Man is seen ruling on earth, in the New, in heaven also. Everything is to be in subjection to Him—God alone excepted. In 1 Cor. 15:24-29, we learn that His rule is connected with a kingdom, which will be inaugurated by the putting down of all disorder, and the subjection of every foe, while in Ephesians 1:21-23 we learn, that He is Head of His Body, that when He reigns, the Church will be associated with Him, as His “fulness “or completion. But “we see not yet” all things subjected to Him; in the meantime the devil is “the prince of this world,” and has the sway for a little while.

“But we see Jesus crowned.” Very remarkable is the mention of the name of “Jesus “here. Between seven and eight hundred times He is named “Lord Jesus” after His resurrection, under twenty times as “Jesus,” and this is one of them. For every such mention of Him thus, there is a reason. Can we account for it here? It looks back at His path of humiliation. He who took upon Him the form of a servant down here, who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, is now “crowned with glory and honour.” “God hath made Him both Lord and Christ this same Jesus whom ye crucified “(Acts 2:36), and in addressing Him, the Spirit teaches us to call Him “Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 12:3).

“A little lower than the angels,” tells of what He became: essentially He was far above angels. He made them all. He took humiliation in order that He might be able to die, but we must guard ourselves against the error of saying that as man He must die. He took flesh, but not our tainted humanity in which sin has its dwelling. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14), but death had no claim upon Him. He laid down His life; it was not taken from Him. As we hold fast the Deity of Christ, His essential Godhead, so must we grasp His sinless, peerless, taintless humanity.

“That He by the grace of God should taste death for every one.” If it were law, God would be dealing with us; law asks what we are, it deals with what we have done, but grace tells what God is. In grace God is rich, very rich, and we share “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). “Tasted death” is a Hebraism; it was death in all its bitterness, death with the curse attached to it. “For each one”—rather than every man; it refers to the “many sons” (v. 10), the “brethren” (v. 12), the “children” (v. 13). This truth has its two sides: one is that He died for all, the other for “each one.” Atonement was made Godward, and through it grace is flowing to the whole world, but when Redemption is spoken of, it is for a class of men—for each one. How blessed to know that if He died for each one of His own, He will surely take care of each one of them to the end.

Verse 10.—“For it became Him for whom and by whom are all things.” This refers to God. It “became” that Blessed One who fills Infinity and Eternity to act as here described, it became that mighty God to do something great and infinite. When He made all things in the first

creation, He looked and pronounced it “very good.” But He knew that the elements of ruin were there, but out from that ruin God was yet to bring “many sons to glory.” But inasmuch as they had become involved in the common ruin, some one must “bring “them back to Him, and this could only be done by getting down to where they were and suffering for them. Redemption was in His view before creation, and upon redemption the new creation rests, thus it will endure for ever. Of the old creation as it came from His hand, it is said that “it” was good, but in the new, which rests upon Christ, we are to praise Him, for “He is good.”

And the word “captain of their salvation” implies a struggle, for to Him it was a battle, a conquest, and a victory. He was “perfected through sufferings.” Personally He was always perfect, but had He not wept and suffered and shed His blood, He would not have been a perfect Saviour for a sinner like me.

“Bringing many sons unto glory.” In the old creation angels (who were first created) are called “sons of God” (Job 38:7), and Adam is also called the “son of God” (Luke 3:38); both stood on the goodness of the creature, and thus both angels and men have fallen. With the “only begotten Son” (John 3:16) there was no equal; as the “corn of wheat” (John 12:24) He abode alone, but now in resurrection, He is the “Firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29), and as surely as they are God’s sons by grace and new creation now, so surely shall they arrive with Him in glory. Meanwhile He is giving a special training to each, chiselling and fitting each for his place in that glory.

Verse 11.—" He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified." He that separates or sets apart, and they who are separated—separated by redemption into a new creation. There is a parallel word in John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself"—separate Myself in resurrection, from whence He reached us and carried His own over there. There we are already in spirit, soon we shall be in body also. The saint has been and is being sanctified. See also chapter 10:10, where the original gives "hath been sanctified," and in verse 14, "are being sanctified." God's saints are a separated people: they were so in His account before the world began; a few millions of years are as nothing to God. And what was done then in God's account is being done in us from day to day, practically carried out by God breaking us in, and moulding us according to His will. "All of one": the allusion is to the cherubim on the mercy-seat (Exod. 37:7), which were "beaten out of one piece"—of solid gold—not artificially fixed on but beaten out, having the same value, the same nature. Christ is the mercy-seat, as we find in Rom. 3:25, and so sure as the cherubim of old was one piece with the mercy-seat, beaten out of it as the result of much hammering, so are Christ's saints taken out from Him, one with Him in resurrection. There could be no cherubim but for the mercy-seat; no union with Christ apart from death and resurrection. Union in incarnation there was none. The theory that in taking flesh and blood, Christ elevated the race, is a device of the enemy, a deadly error subversive of the faith, for only by redemption and new creation do we become one with Him.

Thus the Holy Ghost would shew us in this beautiful way that our new life is altogether derived from Christ, who

is our mercy-seat, and that our union with Him is through redemption. "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." How could He be? To be ashamed of us, He must needs be ashamed of Himself, for our new life is identical with His own, having actually flowed out from Him in resurrection to us. What a standing, and what a life is ours! "He is not ashamed." How could He? He and His are all of one: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (John 20:17). But while He calls us His brethren, we do not address Him as "our Elder Brother," but as our Lord. The argument as to our identification with Him there, is supported by a threefold appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures— First in verse 12, "Saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren." This is a quotation from Psalm 22:22, and refers to His resurrection, from which period He began to own us as His brethren, and to declare the Father's Name, which He will go on unfolding to all eternity. Verse 13, "And again—I will put My trust in Him." This is from Psalm 18:2, and refers to His ascension. Even there in the glory, He is still relying upon and confiding in His Father for the fulfilment of His heart's desire, to have His people, the purchase of His blood beside Him there. He has paid the full price for us, but He waits the Father's will for the home-bringing of His purchased possession.

"Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me" (Isa. 8:18), looks on to the future, when He will confess our names before His Father, saying, "Here am I and the children: I have got them now." Thus the first of these Scriptures tells how He owned us as His brethren, as soon as ever He had risen from the dead; the second belongs to His present session at God's right hand, and

shews that even now there He loves to trust as He did below, and beckons us to tread the same path, while the third looks onward to the day of the gladness of His heart when He shall present us in that day to His Father and our Father. Thus while the Scriptures quoted in Chapter 1, speak of Christ Himself, shewing how thoroughly He has done the work, He is there alone; but in Chapter 2, He is not alone, but in association with His people, "in the midst of the Church." He is the Blessor: they the blessed. He the Sanctifier: they the sanctified, never to be dissociated from Him—for ever with the Lord.

Verses 14, 15, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood." He took flesh and blood in order that He might become Sacrifice and Priest, to die for us on the Cross, to live for us and serve us in heaven. He was a perfect Man here below: He is a perfect Man at God's right hand above. Two objects are here stated as being in God's view, by means of the death of His Son. (1) "To bring many sons to glory." (2) to "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Notice the order in which these diverse objects are here stated. God begins with His own throne: He will have His many sons in glory, no matter what the difficulties and hindrances down here. There is something so majestic in this beautiful way of God. We would begin low, and work our way upward; but our God does not. He fixes our gaze first on Christ, seated up there, and then tells us that He will surround that throne with His many children, and in consequence of what Christ has done, He will fulfil all His gracious designs for our complete and eternal association with Him there. O what a God is our God! Well may our

hearts praise Him. "That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death." Picture to yourself a castle in which are many captives, the jailer at the door holding the keys. Satan once had these keys: he had authority over the realm of death, and he used it to frighten believers who through fear of death, were in bondage all their lifetime. How Hezekiah shuddered at the approach of death, and wept sore when he was told his end was near! What a contrast was Paul, as he neared the end of his course. "I did mourn as a dove," was the language of Hezekiah (Isa. 38:14). "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:21), said Paul. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown" (2 Tim. 4:8). In Hezekiah's day the devil had the keys, but Christ entered his realm and wrested them from his grasp. In Rev. 1:18, we learn that the keys of death and hades are in His hand. He, the mighty victor, has all authority now: He holds the keys of the unseen, the world of spirits, and so I do not fear death, or dread the power of Satan, although I fear his cunning. Many of God's people are still in bondage, because they do not see the difference between Old Testament times and the present. In Heb. 9:27, we read, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." Sin brought in death, but when Christ our surety died, He annulled it, so that now its power is gone for all His people. They shall never "see death" nor "taste" it (John 8:51-52). To be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). Death is vanquished, through death He slew it. The allusion is to Goliath, whom David slew with his own weapon. Goliath perished with Goliath's own sword (1 Sam. 17:51). The Lord Jesus brought to nought—neutralized—him who once had the power of death. As Samson killed the lion, and

afterwards found honey in its carcase (Judges 14), so out of the strong has come sweetness. Neither death nor the devil can harm believers now, for through Him who vanquished both, they are more than conquerors. O what a triumph and what a victory was Christ's!

Verse 16. "Verily He took not hold on angels, but on the seed of Abraham He taketh hold." Not the seed of Adam, but the seed of Abraham. He grasped an election of grace, not the race of mankind as a whole. Many of Adam's seed remain in the devil's grasp, rejecting the salvation Christ died to bring them. But "if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed" (Gal. 4:29).

Verses 17, 18. "A merciful and faithful High Priest." Merciful to us: faithful to God. He stands up for God in dealing with us, for He is ever faithful to God. God is light, and in all His dealings with us, Christ acts according to that light. He never swerves from the way of God. His first thought is God, not as it is with us often—self. And yet He is "merciful;" He deals with the "ignorant" and succours the "tempted." We are like patients in an hospital, our disease, ignorance of God, making self the centre, His dealings with us are in mercy and faithfulness. He succours the tempted that they may not fall. "He suffered being tempted" Himself, and although He never sinned, or had sin in Him, that only makes His sympathy all the keener. He felt it all the more poignantly because He was ever above it. Sin pained Him far more than it does us. Some can laugh at a drunken man. He never could. The sight of sin and its fruits pained Him, just because He was perfect.

"He suffered being tempted." Suppose a rock could feel the waves dashing over and against it, yet remain

unmoved, so it was with Christ. He felt the power of sin all around and suffered, yet He sinned not.

“Able to succour.” Often in the Gospels do we hear of His willingness to save and keep. “I will give you rest”—“I will in no wise cast out,” but after His resurrection we are specially told of His ability. He is able to save, able to keep, able to succour, able to deliver. O, what a Saviour! What a High Priest! Perfect ability to sympathize: perfect power to succour and to save. Never will He cease to succour and to save as our faithful and merciful High Priest, until He has lifted us right up to God. Such also should be our mode of dealing with one another, for the Church is regarded in Scripture as an hospital and nursery, where there are sick ones to tend, and weak ones to care for, and the servants of Christ are to be faithful and wise as hospital and nursery servants (see Luke 12:42 Greek).

Chapter 3

The first two chapters have been intensely doctrinal. In chapter 1, the enthroned Sin-purger is seen at rest, and His rest in yonder glory is eternal. In chapter 2, His people are seen in association with Him for ever there, and now we come to listen to divine instruction concerning the eternal rest of God, in which His people are to share.

Verse 1.—“Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” In addressing us as “holy brethren,” the allusion is to chapter 2:11, where the sanctified and the Sanctifier are seen to be “all of one”—set apart with Him. Therefore holy “brethren” shews, we stand together on an equality—age, experience, knowledge not being counted here. “Partakers”—sharers of “The heavenly calling,” shews where the call came from, and where we are going. It is a calling the effects of which continue, even as when the Creator’s voice said: “Light be,” so light was, and so it continues until now. That call once heard, becomes mightier and goes on, until we are right up on His bosom in that glory. His word “Come to Me,” calls us with a heavenly calling, and as His session there demonstrates, His acceptance and ours there is complete and identical. What a glorious fact!

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus.” We are here directed to “attentively survey,”—as the word is, that glorious person who combines both these two offices in Himself. An apostle is one who speaks to us from God. An high priest speaks for us to God. In Israel, the two offices were apart: Moses being the apostle or messenger of God to them, and Aaron the

high priest who went to God for them, thus evidencing their imperfection. But by the combination of these two in one person, to whom the Holy Ghost here directs our gaze, we learn that this same Jesus fills the entire space between our souls and the living God. So fully does He fill the entire void, that He can lay His hand equally on the uncreated throne in the heavens, and on the heart of the sinner. He, as the Apostle, speaks peace to our souls; His first word to the hearing ear is "Peace" (Eph. 2:17). As High Priest He sustains us in that peace. As Apostle, He transacts all God's affairs with me. As High Priest, all my affairs with God. As High Priest He is very near to God. As Apostle He is close to me. So the word that He gets from God, He immediately speaks to your soul, and that word is "peace." By attentively surveying this wondrous Person, this glorious "Jesus"—as the Spirit here calls Him (see Greek), we enter God's rest. "Of our confession"—not profession. Confession is of the heart: if there it must come out. Profession is on the surface, often with nothing inwardly to correspond. There are many who profess who do not possess.

Verses 2-5.—"Who is faithful." The Greek tense is both present and imperfect. He "is faithful." Yes, blessed be God to Him, who "appointed" Him to fill that wondrous place. Moses was a faithful servant—the word means, "a servant intimate with his master"—in all his house. The reference is to the tabernacle of old (Num. 12:7), which was built by Moses, in which he served, and God bore witness to his faithfulness there. But he witnessed to something to come, "a testimony of those things yet to be," of which the tabernacle and its services were but a "shadow" (Col. 2:17). Christ is above Moses. Here, He is contrasted with Him.

Verse 6.—“Christ as a Son over His house; whose house are we” He and He only is “over” the house of God; His alone is the presidency that God acknowledges. He bought every stone of which it is composed with His own blood. He made them into living stones, instinct with His own life. He bought them and builded them together; and now as Son He presides over the house of God, preparing to rest there in His love.

If we hold fast the confidence (or rather “the boldness”), and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Here is the road by which we are to reach the rest. As faith “holds fast,” it gets stronger and stronger, grasping more tightly. In verse 14, the word translated “confidence” is stronger still, and quite a different word from verse 6. It should be translated “substance,” as in chapter 11:1; for by holding fast, we become better acquainted with God, and thus our joy is deepened, and as we thus become better acquainted with God, our confidence in Him is vastly increased. “The hope” here, is the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Verses 7-11.—Here the allusion is changed from the tabernacle to Canaan, and the entrance of some thereinto. Now we are in the wilderness, and here we prove what we are. Do we believe what He has spoken, and thus enter into God’s own rest? These verses are a warning. In that wilderness, how many fell with whom God was displeased. The voice of the Holy Ghost here is to believers. His word “To-day,” implies how relapse, and the heart is shewn to be the seat of the mischief. “They set not their hearts aright” (Psa. 78:8). “In their hearts they turned back to Egypt.” These forty years are like the maximum of Christian life. Alas! that it should be as it often is, a time of “provocation.”

Verse 12-15.—“Take heed,” there is need for great watchfulness, for we are still in the place of danger. “An evil heart of unbelief.” When the heart gets wrong, when it ceases to have Christ as its object, it quickly then departs from the living God, losing confidence in Him. When the heart has Christ as its object, attentively considering Him in the greatness of His Person, filling the entire space between me and God; then my confidence grows and I am pleasing Him. When it is otherwise, I am “provoking” Him by casting a slur upon His Christ and departing from Him.

Verses 16-19.—Here an assertion is made, and two questions are asked. “Some” did provoke. “With whom was He displeased? To whom did He swear?” Out of the whole six hundred thousand, only two entered in. Surely this is a solemn word to professors. What became of the rest? They “believed not”—they were disobedient, unbelieving: the same word as in John 3:36, “disobedient to the Son.” These verses have a very solemn voice to us, and shew how easy it is to miss God’s beautiful and perfect way of entering into rest. They all heard, but only Caleb and Joshua “believed “and entered into the land. Of all the rest it is written— They “despised the pleasant land, they believed not His Word, but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of Jehovah” (Psa. 106:24). O that we may hear the voice in which He speaks to us, and “enter in.”

Chapter 4

Here still the subject of God's rest, and our rest with Him is continued. In the early part of Chapter 3, we see God in His rest—His redemption rest in Christ; hence the reference is to the tabernacle of old. But in the latter part of chapter 3, the subject is the believer entering into God's rest, and the allusion is changed to the wilderness, and the passage of some through it into Canaan.

Verse 1.—The rest here is "His rest." A "promise" shews that we have not come to it yet; and the words "Let us fear," remind us that diligence is needed in obeying the continuous call, as it is possible to be negligent, and thus seem to "come short" of it. This is very solemn. One may be very upright, very moral, yet if not living by faith in a Christ at God's right hand, holding fast his confidence in God, he will come short of that rest.

Verse 2.—"The Gospel," or "A Gospel" was heard by them. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you" (Josh. 1:3); but it was not "mixed with faith:" they did not lay hold—saying, "That's mine." We must appropriate what God presents to us. This is to mix faith with it, to make it and our spirit one, and thus we shall be permeated by the Word of God, and it shall be our support.

Verses 3-8.—The creation rest, and Canaan rest, are contrasted with God's final rest in Christ. Nothing can afford rest save that which is perfect, that of which Christ is the source and centre. And this final rest of God and His people, is as we have seen found in Him. In the tabernacle of old, the shechinah of glory rested upon

the mercy-seat; but it also rested "between the cherubim" (Psa. 80:1). And thus, in that innermost circle of His sanctuary, do we learn that God and His Church both rest upon the same mercy-seat, so that whatever can disturb the rest of the One, will also of the other. And the shechinah-cloud dwelling between the cherubim, shews that God shall have His final rest and home among His people, who rest upon, and are one with Christ in resurrection. They rest through Christ in God, and God in Christ rests in them; and the foundation of all this new creation, is a blood-stained mercy-seat. The centre of it all, an enthroned Christ.

God's creation rest, and His Canaan rest had both been disturbed, for they depended on the goodness of the creature. But this is impossible with His redemption rest, for it depends wholly upon Christ. In creation God looked upon His handiwork, "and behold it was very good" (Gen. 1:24); but redemption is because of what He is. In us there is no goodness as full well He knows, but all has been found in God's Christ, as on the Cross He has told Himself out, Hence, when in the days of Solomon, Jehovah had entered His temple, the type of His final rest in Christ, the priesthood praised the Lord "for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever" (2 Chron. 5:13). And thus, the rest of God, and the blessing of the creature are both eternally secured in Christ; and the unfolding ages will only serve to bring out the perfection of the work upon which it rests.

And here we would notice, that the Holy Ghost throughout these chapters uses a different word entirely in speaking of this rest of God, from that which He had used elsewhere in speaking of our rest. Thus, when in Matthew 11:28, the Lord Jesus invites the "weary "and

“heavy laden “to come unto Him for rest, the word is not only another for that which is here used, but it is one which is in reality a contrast to it, for the word here is literally—“I will give you an uprest.” And again, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and you shall find an uprest to your souls” (v. 29). But throughout these chapters, in which the rest of God is the subject treated by the Spirit, the word He uses is—with one exception to which we shall refer directly—when exactly translated, a downrest. Is this change accidental, or of no account? If otherwise, what would the Holy Ghost have us to learn by the change? Assuredly this: that as the cherubim rested downwards upon the mercy-seat and the cloud also rested there; so the rest which Christ has in yonder glory, and God in Him, is of the character, as it is also the measure of the rest to which we, through Him are called upon to enter. The two rests of Matthew 11, are but negative in their character: in verse 28, rest from sin, and in verse 29, rest from disobedience. But here the rest is positive and abiding, for it is God’s own rest in Christ, which can never be disturbed or broken.

Verse 9-11.—“There remaineth therefore a rest,”—literally a Sabbatism, or a Sabbath-keeping—“for the people of God.” Here we are directed to the end, when God and His people shall finally rest together, with nothing to disturb or come between; when God shall be their portion, and they His for ever, and for aye. Already Christ has entered His rest (verse 10), and by holding fast His confidence, and mixing the word with faith, we who believe are entering that self-same rest also. Need we wonder at the energy of the words in the exhortation given us here: “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”

Verses 12, 13—The objection may be raised,—“You do not know what a poor stumbling, sinning creature you invite to enter this rest.” The answer is, God and His Word know you thoroughly. That Word is “living and active,” scrutinizing and dividing between what is of nature, and what is of grace. Whatever is in me, the Word finds it out; the natural piety, the spurious religion, which is as but honey in God’s sight. Honey however sweet to man’s taste, was not allowed on God’s altar; it would not stand the fire, whereas in the frankincense, the more it is burned, the sweeter an odour it emits. And further, “all things are naked and opened,” literally, bared and bent back,—an allusion to the slaying of the lamb, and the cutting open of its neck with the knife. So that God knows perfectly well what you are, and all that you are, every motive, thought and principle being perfectly open to Him, yet notwithstanding all, He invites you to come near and to attentively consider this great and glorious Apostle and High Priest, who is filling the entire space between you and Him, through whom He is speaking peace to your souls.

Verses 14-16.—“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest.” Here in its due place, is the subject of the priesthood of Christ introduced. As Saviour, He came down here to get at us. Now He has gone up there as High Priest, to lift us up to Him. Here it is said that “we have” Him as ours, and such He will remain until we have been lifted up to the presence of God, wholly—spirit, soul and body.

“He has passed through the heavens,” pierced the heavens right through, to a place where sun and moon never shone, the place of intimacy in the very presence of God. There He is distinctly engaged on our behalf. His

eye is directed downward toward us, as we toil through the wilderness, with our eye upwards toward Him, and as He sees us, He sympathizes with us, and succours us for He is "Jesus the Son of God."

"We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He can sympathize with us better and more fully in temptation, than any other, for sin never pressed so sorely, or was so abhorrent to any one, as it was to Him. For, while Aaron could, up to a certain point, feel for those whom he represented as priest—"having compassion in a measure" (as the Greek word in chapter 5:2, implies), there is no measure in the sympathy of Christ. He is able to "sympathize fully" for His struggling, tempted people. "In all points," refers to the matter of the temptation: "like as we are," to the manner of it. "Without sin;" there is no "yet," it spoils the sense. Thus, with the scrutinizing Word with us here, and a Great High Priest for us there, we are invited to draw near with boldness "to the throne of grace." As the mercyseat sprinkled with blood, was in the furthest and highest place in the sanctuary of old, where also was the light of the Divine presence, so now, in the dazzling light of the unsullied glory of God, does the value of the blood of Christ speak for us, and the further in we come, the nearer we approach, the more welcome are we, and the more at home shall we find ourselves. Yet that mercyseat of old was not called a throne, for it only spoke of death, but here upon the throne, we see a living Christ who was the Sacrifice, and now is the High Priest of His people. And to this throne which—unlike the throne of Solomon in his glory, which was a throne of law (2 Chron. 9:17-19)—is a "throne of grace," the tempted, tried and stumbling

believer is invited near. What for? “To receive (or take) mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,” all through the day, and every day, till travelling days are done.

Chapter 5

The subject of the priesthood of Christ, and His formal appointment to it by God, is here continued, with exhortations and admonitions to believers connected therewith.

Verses 1, 2.—Here we learn that the very idea of a priest is one who can “bear gently with the ignorant and the erring.” An angel would not have been fitted to fill the office: he could not have sympathized at all as he never suffered. Hence until the real High Priest became manifest, men were appointed to the priesthood, because they sympathised in measure. And so essential did God deem such sympathy to be, that until the true High Priest came, he allowed one fallen man to act as priest for others. Sometimes they failed, as in the case of Eli. When Hannah in the deep sorrow of her soul prayed in the temple, he said, “Put away the wine from thee.” He did not fully understand or sympathise. Now God has found One who has no infirmity, yet perfect sympathy, a High Priest just suited to us, able to take up the most difficult, most perplexing case, pledged to mercy and tender compassion for us, while yet upholding God’s high standard—“in things pertaining to God.” O to think of the love that found such a Priest for us! Have we ever fully perceived the love of God in that single act? He found a Saviour for us when we were lost and utterly ruined: He found a High Priest for us to succour and lift us up while passing through the wilderness, compassed with infirmity, subject to the assaults of enemies, wicked spirits puffing us up or casting us down, misapplying Scripture, and doing everything to keep us from

enjoying God. O how good of God to find us One who will not leave us, or lose sight of us a moment, but guard and guide us all the way to our eternal home.

Verses 3-5.— Here we learn that Christ has been formally appointed by God to the priesthood. This was on His resurrection day, when God addressed Him in the words— “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.” He was God’s Son before creation, but here God having loosed the bands of death (Acts 2:24), and raised Him up, declares with power that He is His Son, His co-equal (Acts 13:33 with Rom. 1:4). And thus vindicated and honoured He is appointed by God to look after us. He knows exactly what we need, and has put all our interests in His care; they all devolve on Him. Only let us heed Him, follow Him within the vail, implicitly trust and obey Him, and we need fear no evil, for God, our own God, has crowned for us a Priest who will never leave us or lift His eye from us a moment until He has brought us where He is, to that very throne on which He sits.

Verses 7, 8.—“Who in the days of His flesh.” This refers to the time of His sojourn here, in contrast to the present period of His glorification at God’s right hand. He “learned “obedience then, qualifying for His priesthood. And such obedience as He rendered to God, in a wicked world, always doing what pleased Him, involved suffering. There can be no true obedience apart from suffering: to do the will of God, involves the Cross. The moment He voluntarily took the place of a servant (Phil, 2:7), He began to obey, and on He went, until His obedience was perfected. “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross “(verse 8). Step by step, trusting God who was able to save Him “out of death,” He went on learning obedience, suffering, yet

never flinching from the path, able to say as the Cross drew near, "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31). Now He has gone up on high to teach us obedience, and to lead us along the path that He Himself trod. We are here to learn His will, and to do it, and the more prompt we are to do, the more quickly we learn.

Verses 9, 10.—"Being made perfect" refers to His obedience. Essentially He was ever perfect, but He became perfectly fitted for the office of the priesthood by His obedience and suffering. "Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." People dream of a salvation from hell, but do not wish to be saved from disobedience, or self-will; but salvation is to those who "obey the Gospel," and whose lives prove that they have Christ as their Lord. If a man does not obey, I have no right to assume he is a Christian at all.

"Called of God," means, publicly greeted by God. O to think with what joy, with what acclamation He was received in heaven, when, having glorified God and accomplished redemption, He entered there. And that welcome of His to the very throne of the Majesty of the heavens, is the pledge of the welcome of His people there.

Verses 11-14.—From verse 11 to the end of chapter 6, forms a parenthesis, and consists of exhortations, admonitions, and warnings to us. Such pauses are of frequent occurrence in this epistle (see chap. 2:1, 3:12, 10:19, 12:1, 13:13), and shew how intensely practical it is intended to be. The overpowering glory of this Great High Priest, so weighs upon the writer's spirit, that he turns aside to exhort, and to warn those who were "dull

of hearing,” and who, though possessed of Divine life, yet were making little progress toward maturity, and to warn against mere profession, which will end in apostacy.

Verses 12-14.—“For the time ye ought to be teachers,” not “when ye ought” There are few teachers; only those whom God fits and sends, may publicly teach. “Full age,” which is radically the same as “perfection “in chap. 6:1, shews that such maturity is what God expects of us. As we are occupied with Christ in glory, and see our perfect identification with Him there, we are by the Spirit and the Word, if we allow them to have their way in us, borne along—as the word implies— to that adult or full-grown state. To neglect this, and remain satisfied with the mere rudiments of Christian doctrine, is to be a “babe,” unexercised and unskilled in the word of righteousness, and half-hearted in discrimination between good and evil. By increased acquaintance with Christ, we gain an increased hatred of evil, and by reason of use, we become sensitive to righteousness. “Strong meat” is for the perfect, for those who have thus been borne along to maturity. To be mixed up with worldly or Judiaized Christianity, is to remain a babe, and to have no experience so as to be able to discriminate between good and evil.

Chapter 6

The inspired writer now turns to describe some, who, while they had some head knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, had no life. They were contented with the outward form, and evidently had, like many professors of our own day, a certain pleasure in holding and descanting on the externals of a religion, which they had never received the living power of in their souls. Solemn beyond degree is the description here given by the Holy Ghost of such professors and their end. How far it is possible for one to go, and yet stop short of Christ, we here learn.

Verses 1-3. These verses give a glance at Jewish doctrine, while those that follow have in view the fuller revelation of New Testament times. There is considerable difficulty in many minds regarding this chapter, and there has been much controversy as to its meaning. But there need be little difficulty if we distinguish between Judiasm and Christianity. The latter is a living reality; its source is a living Christ, and all connected with it has life and growth. If you are not going on growing, progressing, being “borne along,” as the word implies, unto full growth, then you have no life, no Christ.

Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God.” This is just what a Jew would have done, and what many are doing still. There are foundations many, but God has only one. “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

“Doctrine of baptisms (washings), and laying on of hands,” refer to the Jewish ordinances of purification and sacrifice (see Numbers 8:10, with Heb. 9:10). These were all types, pointing onward to Christ and His perfect work. Now that He, the Great Sacrifice, has been offered, they are no longer needed. His perfect sacrifice gives “a perfect conscience” (chap. 9:9, 10, with 10:2), which these could never do. To go back to the old, preferring Moses to Christ, was setting up what God had abolished, turning from the full light of grace to the dark shadows of the law. God regards this as apostasy, such as only one without life could practice.

Verses 4-8. These verses treat of Christianity, and of those who profess its doctrines and then go back to Judiasm and the world. It is a solemn word, for there is much, very much of such Judiaized Christian profession in our day. And let it be clearly understood that although these empty professors are said to “fall away,” it is not to be understood that they give up the Christian name, or in every case abandon their profession for open infidelity. On the contrary, many of them may be preachers and clerics, who with fine phrases and honeyed words lead you up to the very verge of heaven, yet in heart and soul are only Christless Judiaizers; shams in the sight of God. Neither of the five expressions here used of this class, nor all of them together, are the equivalent of Divine life. A man may be moved in any or all of these ways, and yet remain destitute of life. And this distinction is not so difficult to perceive when we remember that where there is life there is growth. Not to grow, to go onward, is to go back. If there is no growth, there is no life; you are a professor, a mere doll.

"Enlightened:" many have like Balaam had their eyes opened (Numb, 23:12); they get light, yet deliberately turn their backs upon it, reject it, and scorn it. They do not abandon their profession, but settle down as citizens of the far country, hardened. "Having tasted of the heavenly gift," "Having tasted the good Word of God." The Word comes to some with such power that they shew a transitory emotion, they "taste" it, and like the stony-ground hearers, receive it with joy (Matt. 13:26), yet are without root. "Partakers of the Holy Ghost"—does not refer to being sealed and indwelt by the Holy Ghost (Eph. 1:13; 1 Cor. 6:18), as all true believers are. We read that the very walls of the house within which the apostles prayed, were "shaken" (Acts 4:31) by the Holy Ghost, and yet remained unchanged, so surely can unconverted professors who form part of an assembly of God, be moved and affected by the Spirit of God who has in that assembly His temple, and all the while remain unregenerate and dead. "Powers of the age to come," has reference to the miracles or signs wrought in these times (see chap. 2:4), but not all who were the subjects of these powers were saved. Simon Magus was "amazed at the powers or miracles wrought," yet he became a gall-root (Acts. 8:13, 23), and an apostate. So do many still. The seat of the scorner is largely filled by those who were at one time professors of, or hangers-on to nominal Christianity. Not one of these is said to have been "born again." Had they been genuine believers in Christ, it would have been easy to have said so, but the inspired writer's aim is to describe a peculiar, though by no means uncommon class of men, who profess much, but possess nothing, who go very close to the door of God's kingdom, without passing through it. "And fell away." There is no "if": there is no uncertainty, they

have no life, no living link with a Christ in glory, so sooner or later they must fall away; not perhaps openly, or even professedly, but like dead trees, they are barren.

“Crucify to themselves the Son of God:” an awful thought. Similar is the language used in chapter 10:29, “Trodden under foot the Son of God”—that Son in whom God is now speaking from heaven. These despisers of Him would again have Him on the Cross, as they deem Him and His work unworthy of their confidence, although God has in proof of His satisfaction, seated Him at His own right hand. O the judgment, the awful doom of those who with opened eyes, with the full flood of Gospel light shining upon them, turn their backs on it all, and prefer the Ritualism and legalism of a religion of their own, which shuts out and dishonours Christ. Verily it is “impossible” to renew them again unto repentance for there is no other sacrifice, no other saviour.

This passage has been used to frighten true believers, and to uphold the miserable theory that one who has been born of God may yet perish, which, were this its meaning, would bring it into direct collision with other Scriptures, such as John 5:24, 10:28: Rom. 8:1, 35; but as we have shewn, it describes those empty, though fair professors who from one cause or another, stop short of the real thing, the actual possession of Divine life, and who in the end shew that they have only been bearers of thorns and briars, nigh unto a curse all the time.

Verses 9-12.—Here the writer draws the line between those whom he, addresses, and in whom he had confidence as true believers, and those stranded professors. How did he know? By their work, and the love which they had shewed toward God’s Name, in

ministering to His saints. The mark of those who are begotten of God, is love to those who are begotten of Him (see 1 John 5:2: 4:7), not in words of the tongue, for it costs us nothing to say we love—but in deed and in truth (1 John. 3:18). To serve the saints is to serve Christ. Even a cup of cold water given to one because he belongs to Christ (Mark 9:41), will not be forgotten in that day, whereas the showy deeds and much made of charities of professors, which were done to be seen of men, are an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15: Matt.6:1). But he exhorts them to shew diligence unto the full assurance of hope or “the hope” as it ought to read, for by leaving the article untranslated before the word “hope” here and elsewhere, much of its force is lost to our souls. Thus “we are saved unto the hope” (Rom. 8:24), and “the God of the hope (He who originated this blessed prospect, and gave it to you) fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in the hope through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:12). What is the hope, but the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself. What a power it is intended to have over us, to purify us, to keep us separate from all that He does not approve of (1 John 3:3), and to regulate our walk as a heavenly people who may be away from earth at any moment. And how much there is to move us away from this hope (Col. 1:23), and to cause us to lose the sanctifying and sustaining effect of it! “Full assurance of the Hope.” You cannot have this as a living power in the soul, if you are expecting the world to be converted, or the millennium to begin, or prophecies to be fulfilled before the Lord comes. “Times and seasons” we have not been told about (Acts 1:7), for they are not our proper hope: those who are occupied with them miss the mark and lose the power of the hope.

“Through faith and hope inherit the promises.” There are many promises in Scripture but the Koh-i-noor of them all, the one great promise which comprehends all others within it, is “I will come again,” literally, “I am coming again, to receive you unto Myself” (John 14:3). That is the promise and the hope: the promise on His part, the hope on ours. Its vastness and its nearness may well encourage us to go patiently and diligently on, letting go all here below, for the things which are so soon to be ours above. He may see fit to let us wait a little longer, but disappoint us He cannot.

Verses 13-16.—It has been His way all along, to direct His people to the future, and to give them the fullest guarantees possible that He would not fail them. Thus to Abraham the father of the faithful, He swore by Himself. He would thus draw out his confidence, and allay all suspicion and unbelief. “He obtained the promise.” Not the fulfilment, but as Chap. 11:13 shews, they grasped the word of the promise and were persuaded of it. O what a power “the promise” would have upon us, did we but “hug” it as they did. “They confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Ours is a different promise from theirs, as is also our calling, but the One looked for is the same. The promise to Abraham was Isaac, antitypically Christ. He received an instalment, and so have we: only ours is much greater. He whom we look for to come, has been once here already, and by virtue of His death and resurrection for us, we have received a present salvation, and the earnest or first sip, of what we are soon to enjoy (Eph. 1:14: 2 Cor. 1:22). Already are we one in spirit with the Lord, although He is bodily absent from us. And we are waiting for the Coming One. Ever since man fell, He has been coming.

Even in eternal ages His delights were with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31). After the fall, He was promised as the Coming One (Gen. 3:14). The patriarchs looked for Him; Abraham saw His day (John 8:56). Then at last He came to Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1), but He had not fully reached us till He went to the Cross where He put sin away. Now in resurrection He has set Himself apart, and become the Sanctifier, in order that there He might associate His people with Him, and while there, separate in bodily presence from earth, they are one with Him in spirit there, and from thence they look for Him as the Coming One. Thus the hopes of all cluster round the One Person. Like the many branches of a railway, which all have their terminus in one great Central Station, so do the hopes and expectations of all who are of faith centre in Christ. The patriarchs like Abraham did look for One who was to come. Israel shall yet look for Him as their Messiah and King, and the Church is now looking and waiting for Him as her Divine Bridegroom from heaven. Thus all confess Jesus as their hope.

Verses 17-20.—“Wherein God willing more abundantly”—being more intensely desirous—“to shew unto the heirs of the promise.” Ours is the heavenly promise, and God has made it so full and plain we need not mistake it. He has guaranteed it so firmly, that there is no room to doubt it. Yet how few treat it as if it were immutable and sure! How few are dominated by it! Fifty years ago it was generally evaporated as meaning nothing, spiritualized, and explained away. Now the truth is better known, the personal coming of the Lord Jesus as the hope of the Church is spread abroad. O to “lay hold of the hope,” to take a good grip of the

promise; it will give “strong consolation,” and be a refuge amid the storms of life.

Verses 19, 20.—“Which hope we have as an anchor, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the vail.” Here two figures are blended together—an anchor and a temple. There is the figure of a temple, and within its vail, which hides its glory, Christ has gone. There, as we are told in Col. 3:3, He is “hid in God,” gone into that uncreated light, that effulgent glory, where no eye can see Him. He has entered there “for us,” as our Forerunner, and a forerunner’s work is to announce the speedy approach of those that come after him. He has passed through the heavens right upward and onward to the goal, which He has reached saying, “Father, Thy children are coming.” Yes, blessed be His Name, the many sons He is thus bringing to that same glory (chap. 2:10), who are coming unto God through Him (chap. 7:25), shall all as surely reach it as He has! The second figure is that of men in a boat tossing on the deep. One has plunged into the sea, carrying an anchor which He has fixed to a rock, and they are being drawn by the cable that runs between. Christ our Forerunner has left the ship, and carried the anchor, fixing it to the throne of God. Thither we are being drawn by the Holy Ghost who is in us, who has come down from that glorified Christ to draw us up to where He is. The one end of the cable is in the ship—“which hope we have:” the other is yonder where Christ is, and as the cable dips beneath the water and runs to where the anchor is cast, so our hope is said to enter “within the vail,” by which as we grasp or hold fast, we are drawn upward, the Holy Spirit fostering and increasing the desire within the heart of the Bride for the Bridegroom’s coming (Rev. 22:17), and He, like Isaac

who came out to meet Rebekah as she was escorted through the wilderness by the faithful servant, will come forth to meet us (1 Thess. 4:14), and to lead us into that glory with exceeding joy. Hence the power of that hope drawing us up and in there, will also operate in drawing us out (see Matt. 25:6), from the world and from association with empty religious professors who have no life and no love for Him.

Chapter 7

The Holy Ghost having in the previous chapters presented to us Christ as the sin-purger at the right hand of God, next our association with Him there, and then proceeded to direct our attention to Him as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, the One who fills the entire space between God and our souls, now fixes our gaze upon the royal majesty of that priesthood of His, so that our confidence in Him may be perfect and joyful.

Verses 1-3.—“For this Melchisedec, King of Salem, and priest of God Most High.” We have already seen that Christ is crowned with a priestly mitre rather than a royal diadem (see chapter 2:9, where the words “crowned with glory and honour,” are taken from the Septuagint version of Exodus 28:2—“garments of glory and beauty”—which speak of Aaron’s robes in precisely the same language). He is not yet on His own throne, subjugating His foes, but on His Father’s throne, espousing the cause of those who are His friends—His people still upon the earth. And because He is there a King-Priest, so they who are even now associated with Him in that glory, are made kings and priests unto God. The glory of the crown that He wears is not yet displayed in crushing His earthly foes, but in heavenly blessing to His own. Where He is now in that glory, there are no enemies to crush. God has crowned Him, giving Him every mark of approbation which it is possible for Him to bestow. Not so much for Himself as for our sakes these marks are given, for while He needed them not to assure Him of the Divine favour, we

required to have everything possible to assure and encourage us. Thus, while one aspect of His royal priesthood is yet future—the inferior aspect of it in putting down all rule and subjecting all under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25)—the present aspect of it is in the heavens as our intercessor. The prevalency of His intercession must be apparent if we consider how great and glorious our High Priest is, crowned in the highest heavens, His sacrifice and His priesthood are inestimably valuable because of the dignity of His Person. For us, His heavenly people, He is Saviour, Priest, and Bridegroom: for Israel, His earthly people, He is Prophet, Priest, and King. As Saviour He came down, and at the Cross fully reached us: now as High Priest, He is applying to us His work as Saviour in lifting us up, and when this is accomplished, He will appear as the Bridegroom.

As Prophet He came to Israel, but He was rejected, and His message was not heard. As Priest He will yet appear, bringing forth blessing to Israel after the judgment of their foes, as Melchisedec of old did to Abraham their ancestor, after the slaughter of the Kings (Gen. 14:18-20); and then as their King-Priest, a Priest upon His throne, He will rule over them (Zech. 6:13). “Priest of God Most High.” This is a millennial title of God (see Psalm, 88:18), and refers to the time when He will be known in all the earth, and when, under the benign sway of Christ, the earth will be blessed. But judgment must first sweep the scene.

“King of Righteousness, after that King of Peace.” In Him these two converge and kiss each other. “The work of righteousness shall be peace” (Isa. 32:17); and as that grand word in Cor. 5:21, tells us—“He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made

the righteousness of God in Him." At the Cross God's righteousness was declared, and peace was made (Col. 1:20). Now He in righteousness is justifying the believing sinner and giving him peace (Rom. 5:1). And how solid and sure that peace must be, when it has such a foundation, the work of the Cross. Now as the Royal Priest He lives, my righteousness and my peace. Can aught disturb Him there? No more can they rob me of my peace, for as sure as He lives, it is there in Him.

Melchisedec appeared suddenly upon the scene, as if he had swept swiftly down from heaven, obscure in his greatness, nothing is told us of his parentage, nothing of his after life. This is so unusual in Genesis where genealogies are so fully traced, that some have questioned whether Melchisedec was a person or not. But the silence of Scripture has its significance, and this reserve is, we are expressly told, in order that he might be "made like unto the Son of God," the uncreated Son of the eternal God "without beginning of days or end of life." O what a Priest is ours! The great unchangeable I AM, with whom there is no past or future, but one eternal now. The bread and wine brought forth by this typical king-priest, were to minister strength and joy to the pilgrim-warrior after his sore conflict. Such has been God's way with His people, making them to sing, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies: my cup is a brimmer" (Psa. 23:4); though, alas! not a few, like Israel of old, prefer to be put under law, with the same hapless consequences.

Verses 4-10.—"Consider how great this man was." The aim of the whole of this passage is, to show the superiority of Christ, and the honour God has heaped upon Him in that glory into which He has welcomed

Him. As a Saviour, God has put upon Him infinite character; as High Priest, infinite honour. In proportion as is His dignity and honour there, so is the place and the blessing of those whom He represents. He ever must be the Blessor, they the blessed.

Verses 11-17.—Perfection was not found in the law, and nothing save perfection would satisfy God. The law perfected nothing. But Christ is the minister of perfection: everything that He touches He perfects. His work is perfect, hence we get in this epistle so much about perfection, especially a perfect conscience, in which we can even now draw nigh to God. As the result of His work as Saviour, His people are already perfectly at home in His presence in spirit, and when His ministry as our Great High Priest is crowned by His coming as the Bridegroom, we shall be perfectly like Him. The old law has also been superseded. It was the witness of imperfection, and pointed on in its shadows to good things to come. As Moses and Aaron failed to conduct the literal Israel into Cannan, so the law and the priesthood connected with it, failed to give rest, or lead those for whom they were established into blessing. But Christ has done it. Thus the old has passed away; Christ has superseded it, and He Himself fills the whole gap, and He remains the same for ever.

Verses 13-17.—“After the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another Priest.” Of this Psa. 110 had witnessed, and it was of Him—“our Lord” that the prophet spake. The Aaronic priesthood and the carnal commandment under which such priests were ordained, passed away together. Yet such is the perversity of some, that while they believe in another Priest, they yet cling to the old law, as a “rule of life.” But the ten

commandments were not a rule of life, but of death, to all who were under them. The Christian has life in Christ, and the rule of that life is Christ, who left an example that we should follow in His steps.

Verses 18, 19.—The conclusion of the whole, therefore is, that there has been a disannulling of the commandment going before, because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law perfected nothing) but is made the bringing in of a better hope, by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Verses 20-24.—There was no oath in the appointment of the Levitical priesthood, but concerning Christ, “the Lord swore and will not repent—thou art a priest for ever.” Jesus is the first and last of His order. Successor He has none, hence all that He is, all that He has secured for us, and all that He has promised to give us, are ours eternally. Before Him in the ancient order “there were many priests”—in number some eighty-four in all, averaging about eighteen years in office each—but of this Priest it is said He “abideth for ever,” His Priesthood is unchangeable and untransmissible. What confidence this gives our souls! What a precious Saviour! What an ever-living Priest is ours! And as nothing can change His love, or avert it from us, so nothing can possibly mar His work or deprive us of our blessing.

Verses 25-28.—“Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost.” This is not the saving of sinners—for His priesthood is not for the world—but the saving of His own—“those who are on the way to God.” Completely, to the uttermost point of time, right on to the very end, as well as from the uttermost edge of hell, to the very

throne of God, “seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” To the very edge of this dispensation, even in these dark and perilous times (2 Tim. 3:1), in which the craft and power of Satan to deceive and beguile God’s people is very strong, how blessed to know that there is One everliving, all powerful, and always on the alert to befriend and save us, all along the way. And then fittingly the section closes, with an enumeration of the personal perfections of this Great High Priest of ours, who officially is “made higher than the heavens.” “Such a High Priest became us,” for since ours is a heavenly calling, none but a perfect and heavenly priest could bring us there. And as He is in Himself personally perfect, and offered up a perfect sacrifice for us, so He by the oath, hath been perfected evermore. Surely all that can be done to tell out the worthiness and greatness of our Priest is here done, so that we may gaze upon Him with admiring, adoring confidence, and have His Person continually filling our faith’s vision, and His love unintermittantly flooding our hearts.

Chapter 8

“Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum”: the summary of the whole, the principal or chief point is—“We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the Majesty of the heavens.” God has given us such a Priest—One who “became” us, exactly fitted to our condition. We need a priest who is very high up, for we are called with a heavenly calling, and such an high priest “became” us, as this one whom God has given us. The sum total of all that we can possibly want is in Christ. God has found for me, given me a Priest, in whom there is sufficiency commensurate to my need: strength for weakness; succour from temptation; salvation all the way from every form of evil. All this we are learning and proving as we pass through the wilderness—learning what will be of infinite value in eternity. O to make good use of this Great High Priest; to allow Him to daily break us in and lift us up, as we journey along! “A minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle.” Our calling, our Priest, and our place of worship are all in heaven. There is no veil there, as in the earthly tent, hiding the glory and hindering our access. To that heavenly sanctuary which has been set up by the Lord, in which He ministers, all believers have access, as worshippers. To raise us up there, and draw our minds and hearts heavenward, is His service in that heavenly tabernacle, all the days of our earthly pilgrimage. There is no holy ground, no sacred edifice, or place of worship, on earth, for God’s people. Earth is the place of their pilgrimage: heaven, the place of their worship.

Verses 3, 5.—“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices.” Christ is both Sacrifice and Offerer. He fulfils in Himself all the types. “He offered Himself, without spot, to God” (chap. 9:14): “He gave Himself for us an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). And now He stands by His Sacrifice (see Gen. 15:11; Numb, 23:3) administering its benefits to His people, and they, as worshippers, stand by that Sacrifice also, finding in it their rest and the procuring cause of all their blessing. The earthly Tabernacle was but a copy of all this. It was made after a pattern, which was followed by Moses, in all its details, “as the Lord commanded Moses,” which is seven times repeated in Exod. chap. 40: There was nothing left to human device or skill: all was planned by Jehovah, for He was there telling forth, in type and shadow, the glories of the Person of Christ.

Verses 6, 7.—Here the superiority of all that Christ has brought in is clearly shewn. “A more excellent ministry”—“a better covenant”—“better promises.” The old passes away to make room for the new: type gives place to antitype, the shadow to the substance. All through this Epistle, God is seen laying aside one after another, to make room for Christ, and when Christ is brought in, He displaces everything, and fills up the entire space in Himself. Everything withdraws when the Holy Ghost brings Christ to the front, and this is just as it ought to be, and what God claims for Him. What perversity in men, to cling to shadows and reject the substance: to occupy themselves with earthly priests and vestments—with all the mummeries of a dead and worldly religion, which is a farce in God’s sight—yea, a distinct denial of all that the Holy Ghost has testified of

Christ in this Epistle! For, be it remembered, that to say an earthly priest or a sacrifice is required, is, in God's estimation, to discredit Christ—to say, in effect, He is insufficient.

Verses 7-9.—“The first covenant” was a contract between Jehovah and man, in the flesh. It pre-supposed sin, and only revealed what was in man's nature. Its promised blessings were dependent upon man's promised obedience, and because he failed, all was forfeited. The new covenant is based upon “better promises”—even the promises of God—the “I wills” (see 5:10) of sovereign grace. Of this covenant Christ is Mediator: in Him all its blessings are made secure. Christ fills up before God the entire void, and God looks upon Him and His work as everything. Man and his works have no place. Christ offered Himself to God—His blood was shed for man's sin. He could say, as He gave the cup to His disciples: “This is My blood of the new covenant, shed for many” (Matt. 26:28). It is worthy of notice here, that the original word for “covenant” occurs thirty-three times in the New Testament. Thirteen times it is rendered “covenant,” twenty times, “testament.” Two widely different ideas are expressed by these terms, such as the following. In a covenant two act, while a testament is the bequest of one. A covenant is dissolved by death (Rom. 7:1-4), whereas, a testament is only valid by the death of him who makes it (Heb. 9:16-17). A covenant has no inheritance implied; but a testament implies something bequeathed. Yet the Holy Ghost, throughout the New Testament, has intentionally used only one word, and that, while there is quite another word, more exact, in the Greek language, to express a “covenant.” The reason for this, I believe, is, that God

would thereby fix our gaze upon the Cross of Christ, and see there, that what had existed up to that day as a covenant, then, for the first time, became a testament, and that while the covenant between God and Christ is from everlasting (Heb. 13:20), “the new testament” dates from the death of the Son of God on Calvary.

Even the old covenant made between Jehovah and Israel, of which Moses was mediator, looked onward to death (Heb. 9:20). So, in the new, the main requirement was “blood” (Heb. 13:20). So unyielding was the compact between God and Christ, the sole contracting parties, that it cost Him everything, even His blood, to fulfil it. Now that this has been given, it only remains for God to fulfil His pledges to Him. This He has done already, by resurrection from the dead (Heb. 13:20), and Christ Himself, in resurrection, becomes His own Executor, to carry out His own desires toward His people, and to Him all power is given. Could the execution of His will be in better hands? Would you desire it to be in those of any other? He has gone up yonder to prove His will in courts above, and to take possession, not for Himself, but for those on whose behalf He ministers there. From Him has already descended the Holy Ghost, the Comforter (John 16:7), the Witness of Christ’s acceptance and glorification, and the Earnest of our inheritance. And as His prayer in John 17 freely tells, He associates His people so fully with Himself, that they who now share His life, shall yet share His glory also.

Verses 10-13.—When the time has come for Jehovah to resume His dealings with His earthly people, after the Church’s call is complete, He will deal with the “house of Israel”—not as in the wilderness, under law, but in

grace; not according to their “We will do” (Exod 19:8), but according to His own “I will” (v. 10). The law can tell me my character and shew me what I am; but in the Cross of Christ I learn the character and the heart of God. Therefore, in that day, under that new covenant, all Israel shall be saved, all shall “know the Lord,” and all their “unrighteousness, sins, and iniquities” will be gone together, in one sweep, from God’s remembrance; His law will be written in their minds and hearts. To ours He has already sent His Spirit (Gal. 4:6).

Chapter 9

Here we begin a new section of the Epistle. Already the Holy Ghost has fixed our attention on the enthroned Sinpurger, the living Victor at God's right hand, and the mode of our association with Him there, and next proceeded to direct our eye to Him as our Priest, succouring and befriending us, in all our unworthiness and weakness, as we pass along, through the world, to that throne which He as our Forerunner, has already reached, and from which He will come to consummate His work of grace, by lifting us up bodily and altogether into His presence and glory, with exceeding joy. Had it been the purpose of the Holy Ghost to trace, in chronological order, the glories that must follow His exaltation there, then this chapter on which we are about to enter, must have treated of His millennial kingdom and rule, and told out His glories as King. But, instead of this, the Holy Ghost here proceeds to unfold the value of the Sacrifice He has offered—in other words, to look back to Calvary, rather than onward to the millennial glory and the universal sceptre. For the time of His kingdom is not yet, save in the hearts of His own. The present time is, so to speak, a parenthesis—a period of infinite patience, during which Christ is hid in God. Having been rejected by His earthly people Israel, He retires, as it were, into a higher glory, and during His session there, the Spirit is engaged in revealing to the ear of faith the glory of His acceptance there, and so of associating with Him there as His Church, His Body, His Bride, those who are being gathered out from the world, during the period of His rejection here, and His exaltation there. To tell out the value of His Sacrifice,

the matchless worth of that blood-shedding, which is the ground of our association with Him there, is therefore the delightful work of the Spirit in this and the following chapters. The full worth of which work will require all the resources of God in grace to be drawn upon, to glorify Him in the ages which are yet to come.

The whole of the present dispensation corresponds to the day of atonement in Israel, and to that part of it in which the high priest went into the holiest with the blood, while the people waited without for His return (see Leviticus 16). He is now appearing there in the presence of God for us. The whispers of the Spirit in our hearts correspond with the tinkling of the bells on the high priest's robe, as He moved in his service in the holy place, telling he was alive and active there. O, had we but ears to hear, and hearts to perceive, what sounds would we hear from heaven; what revelations of the grace and glory of Him who is our great High Priest up there. Thus, the period of His session there, is identical with the period of the Church's call here, the doctrine of which Paul was raised up and called to unfold, after the final rejection of Christ, in resurrection, by the Jews, shewn by their rejection of the Spirit's testimony to Him through His servant Stephen, whom they murdered. Then He sat down, and God's dealings with the earthly people were suspended until, after the present out-calling of the Church, they are resumed at the point at which they were broken. Then shall His brethren according to the flesh, own Him and bow down to Him whom they once rejected, as did Joseph's brethren of old. Then they will discover, as these did, that, during the time of their hardness and impenitance, He has won and married a Gentile Bride!

“A worldly sanctuary;” a sanctuary for the earth, for the state of things on this planet. There was such a sanctuary owned of God upon earth once; there will be such again in the age to come (see Ezek. 48:8; Dan. 9:26); but there is none now. The devil is the “prince” of this world, and the “god” of this age. It is called “the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4), especially in its religious aspect. “The Jews religion” (Gal. 1:13)—Judaism, was a religion for the world; it had its day; but passed away at the rending of the vail. The Holy Ghost calls it “the elements of the world” (Gal. 4:3), “beggarly elements” (v. 9)—a religion of works down here, instead of a Christ in glory.

Verses 2-5.—“For there was a Tabernacle.” It is not the Temple in Jerusalem, but the Tabernacle as reared in the wilderness, that is here described. The reason for this is: the Temple represents an established religion on earth, as it will be when the true Solomon reigns; whereas, the Tabernacle was a moving tent, suited to the pilgrim condition, and God was a pilgrim God. How blessed is this to us, who are only pilgrims passing over to the rest beyond, to have such a God, and “such a Great High Priest” (8:1), exactly suited to our condition. The Ark in the Tabernacle stood on the desert sand: in the Temple, on the golden floor. There was in the Tabernacle of the Wilderness, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded—the former, the type of Christ, who had humbled Himself, now glorified, hid in God; suggestive too of the secret communion of the Father and the Son now, as to the shame and suffering He endured here (Rev. 2:17): the budded rod tells of Christ’s priestly work in resurrection, and of grace to rebels. “The cherubim of glory shadowing the mercyseat.” They looked down

upon the blood, in the Tabernacle: in the Temple, they looked out toward the glory, for it then filled the land. "The Ark of the Covenant," with its two tables of stone, represents Christ, in whose heart the law of God had its place. He only could say: "Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40:9), The mercyseat, or propitiatory, points to Christ—"whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:25). All God's dealings in mercy and grace rest on absolute, perfect righteousness, through shed blood. The tables were within, hid from man's gaze: it is in a living Christ there as He is before God, in all the glory of His person and infinite value of His work, that we are accepted. "Cherubims of glory." Here only are they so called. The glory rested between them, on the blood. O, it is so precious: the blood brings us so near!

"So nigh, so very nigh to God, More near I cannot be."

And God will yet get "glory in the Church in Christ Jesus, throughout all the ages" (Eph. 3:21). The last glimpse we get of her is, as the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven, "having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10, n). God rests in Christ first, then in His Church for ever.

It is worthy of notice that "the golden altar of incense" is not mentioned here, the reason being, that it was not used on the day of atonement; whereas, "the golden censer" is spoken of as in the most holy place, which was only on that one day. Then the high priest carried it there, when he entered with the blood of atonement (see Lev. 16:12). Three hundred and sixty-four days every year, Aaron ministered at the golden altar which stood in the holy place; but on this one day, he passed right

through, into the presence of God, bearing the censer, with its incense and its fire. The incense tells of Christ's merit, His preciousness to God: the fire taken from the brazen altar, of Justice satisfied. And so our Great High Priest has now passed "through the heavens" (Heb. 4:14), with His own blood. We have boldness to enter there by the same title. God would thus teach us where to pray and worship—not at a distance, but in the immediate presence of God, where the blood has brought us, and where the incense ascends for us. O, to grasp this in our souls; to live in the joy and power of it continually; to bring all our cares, as well as our praises, and tell them out to God. The three pieces of furniture of the holy place, were the golden candlestick or lampstand, made of pure gold, with its continual light. In the Tabernacle, there was no window—no natural light. This shews that the Holy Ghost alone is the Teacher of the Word, and that ministry and testimony in the Church must be in the power of the Spirit. There was no wood in the candlestick—no human nature: all was pure gold—all Divine. The table of shewbread, with its twelve loaves, speaks of fellowship. As priests, we are called to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another, around the Lord's table, where only the redeemed should gather.

The altar of incense tells of intercession—the merits of Christ ever ascending before God, for His people.

Verses 6, 7.—The vail is done away now, and the place of all God's priests is in the holiest, the very presence of God. In Acts 2:42, the early Church continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers—which four correspond to the four vessels in the sanctuary of old.

Verses 8-10.—“The Holy Ghost this signifying.” All this is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. He it was who caused that ancient tabernacle to be reared in such a manner as that it might shew forth “the time then present.” It was a standing witness that there was no way into “the holiest of all,” under the covenant of law. It told of the insufficiency of the sacrifices then offered. There was no access to God; no rest to the conscience. And need we wonder? For the services of that tabernacle were “only meats and drinks and divers washings.” Not one sin did they actually take away; no nearer to God did they bring the offerers. They were but shadows, pointing onward to the substance.

Verses 11-14.—“But Christ being come.” This changed everything. Not into Moses’ tabernacle, but into one not made with hands, “not of this creation,” has He passed with “His own blood.” As Man He has entered into a glory, where creature’s foot has never trod, right into the presence of God. And He has entered there “by His own blood.” He might have gone up there on other ground (John 17:5), but then He would have gone alone. But He entered by “His own blood,” in order that we might enter on the same footing (chap. 10:19); that is to say, our title into God’s presence is perfectly identical with His own. If that title be weak for us, it is also weak for Him. If in virtue of that blood, God has fully welcomed Him, and caused Him to sit down there, so its efficacy avails for us. Thus Christ and His own, stand or fall together. Had there been the slightest flaw in the title upon which He entered there, it would assuredly have been detected by the gaze of Omniscience in that light, where for over eighteen centuries He has been. But there He remains, with the eye of God resting upon

Him with infinite delight. And there also are His people equally welcome, for they enter upon the same ground. Oh how assuring to the heart is this! Is it any wonder we sing—

“Accepted I am, in the once-offered Lamb,

It was God who Himself had devised the plan.”

Two gaps separated the sinner from God. First, that which must be between the Creator and the creature; next, the still wider gap between a Holy God and a sinner. The blood of Christ carries the believer right across both, and places him in the light of God, where Christ is. He may not always be in the enjoyment of it, but there is his home.

“He entered in once”—once for all times, in contrast with Aaron who entered once a year. And His redemption is “eternal.” In striking contrast to the oft-repeated sacrifices of the old economy, He, “through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God;” and of His sacrifice, there will be no repetition. It has eternal efficacy, and the conscience of the saint is so perfectly purged from dead works, as to serve and “worship the living God.” By considering the perfect object thus set before us, our conscience must inevitably be perfected, and established before God, for He could not be there, had He not put away our sin. If we believe what that sight teaches, the conscience must be clean.

Verses 15-21. The saints of old had the promise of the inheritance, but not till the sacrifice was offered, could they enter upon its undisputed possession. They were forgiven in trust, as we learn from Rom 3:23, and God in view of the blood which was to be shed, could do it. His righteousness in so doing was declared, when the

mercy-seat with the blood of Christ was “set forth.” No blessing could reach sinners save through that blood. Even at the ratification of the first covenant, the book and the people who had promised obedience to all that God had spoken, were sprinkled with blood, thus was it ratified on both sides. But they failed to do their part, and all its blessings being dependent upon obedience, were forfeited, yea, even life itself. How blessed to know, that in the new and real covenant, all is dependent upon Christ. And in virtue of His shed blood, which is of priceless value in the sight of God, we are brought into that very dazzling light in which He dwells, and there, in virtue of that blood, we are perfectly at home.

Verse 22.—“Almost all things are by the law purged with blood”—the only exception being Leviticus 5:11. All things under grace are so purged. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” No arrangement between a holy God and rebellious man was possible, save on the ground of shed blood. Even in the past, when Jehovah dwelt in the midst of His chosen but sinful people, it was because the blood shed and sprinkled on the tabernacle and its vessels, had adjusted His holy claims, and established a divine harmony between the worshipped and the worshippers. So that in spite of all their sin and failure, He could say through the lips of Balaam, He had not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither had He seen perverseness in Israel (Numbers 23:21).

Not a blessing we possess, we owe not to that blood; yea, the very world owes all the mercy it receives to the death of Christ. But for the shed blood, sin would have blocked up the way, and God’s love had been locked up in His own bosom.

Verse 23, tells that the time of shadows is past, and that we live in a day of realities. God, Christ, sin, redemption, heaven, are intensely real. The heavens have been put on a redemption footing, by the sacrifice of Christ.

Verses 24-28.—Three times does the word “appear” occur in these verses; in each case a different word in the Greek. In verse 26, the word “appear” means that the Eternal One became visible, came into sight, so that He could be beheld. The same word occurs in 1 John 4:9 —“In this was manifested the love of God.” That love was made visible in the sending His Son. Next, in verse 24, He appears officially, “is manifested before the face of God for us.” All His virtues, all His excellencies are bared before God. He knows them all, and gives them their full value. “For us.” What a thought! All that He is, all that God sees Him to be, is for us. Here is something for the soul to ruminate upon, to derive joy and strength from. Then in John 14:27, “I will manifest Myself to Him,” tells how He makes Himself known to the obedient disciple, who, sacrificing His own pleasure, seeks to do His will. To such He even now manifests Himself: with such He makes His abode.

Then in verse 28, “He shall appear,” that is, He shall be “seen face to face,” with which connect 1 John 3:2, —“We shall see Him as He is.”

The first of these is past. He became visible to put away sin, and this He did once for all, by the sacrifice of Himself. So fully, so completely did He accomplish this, that He will never again need to repeat His work. He put away sin as a barrier between God and man; He cleared it away from before God. Once God could see nothing but sin; now He sees Christ’s atoning blood. Ultimately

sin will be cleared out of earth as well as heaven, and shut up in hell. "By the sacrifice of Himself." Nothing else would do. Sin is easily committed: hard to take away. But Christ has done it, and now the grace of God can flow out in righteousness to all men. No matter how bad, how vile the sinner, when He rests in Christ, God at once accepts him, saves him, sees him in Christ; while on the other hand, the most moral, refined, or religious sinner who refuses Christ, He rejects. The sin question is settled: the Son question God now presses on the consciences of men. What think ye of Christ? is now the test. According as men now treat Christ, so is their present relation to God, and so will their portion be eternally. Two different words are in these verses translated "world." "Since the foundation of the world"—the material world, "He must oft have suffered." "Now once in the end of the age hath He appeared." It is an accomplished fact. Now in all the infinite value of that perfect sacrifice, He is manifested before the face of God for His own.

In verse 28, this great work is attributed to God, as in verse 26 it had been to Christ. "So Christ was once offered," regards Him as the Victim, and God as the Provider and Offerer. Thus it is seen that God the Father's love of and desire for us, has been commensurate with that of the Son. It was according to the Father's will and purpose, that we should be before Him (Eph. 1:4), yea, it was His own act, to lay our sins upon His Son (Isa. 53:6), and to put them out of His sight for ever. O what a God is our God! Well may we praise and adore Him.

The words "as" and "so" in verses 27, 28, tell the consequences of sin, and the results of sovereign grace.

“As it is appointed unto men once to die.” To this God’s answer is, “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” He died. But there was a further consequence of sin, “After this the judgment.” And this judgment had it overtaken us in our sins, would have been our damnation. Immediately after death men know their doom. In hell the rich man lifted up his eyes in torment (Luke 16:11). Remotely they will, at the great white throne (Rev. 19:11), from which the wicked are hurled into the lake of fire. God’s answer to this is, “He shall appear without sin unto salvation.” It will then be seen how completely He has put these sins away, for He appears without them, and instead of His coming bringing “judgment,” it will bring “salvation” to those who are on the look out for Him. Salvation here is regarded in its full and final aspect, which includes the redemption of the body. For this we wait. But while all His own do look for Him, all do not “love His appearing” (2 Tim. 3:10), for in this is embraced the judgment-seat, where our ways and works will be manifested (2 Cor. 5:10). O to be swayed by that coming! To have the heart beat true to Him. To be on the tiptoe of expectation, looking for Him. For some will “be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 Jno. 2:24).

Chapter 10

This chapter opens by asserting, that the law had only a “shadow of good things to come.” Not only were its sacrifices insufficient, they were not even an exact similitude of the perfect sacrifice. They had to be offered again and again, yet they never took away sin, or gave a perfect conscience to the offerer. And this is what the worshipper drawing near to God must have. Apart from a conscience perfectly at rest, there can be no true worship; yet thousands go on week after week, in what they call the worship of God, who have no certainty that their sins have been purged. “No more conscience of sins”—is the result of gazing on the perfect sacrifice of Christ. It does not mean that the believer has no consciousness of sin in him—this he will have on to the end (see 1 John 1:9)—but that there is no sin on his conscience, being “clean every whit,” as the blood of Christ can make him before God. O how gladsome is such a statement by the Holy Ghost. “The worshipper once for all purged, should have more conscience of sins.”

Verses 5-9, “Wherefore, when He cometh into the world.” In Christ all the sacrifices have their antitype. His “Lo I come,” tells of a work He had given Him to do before He came; before He appeared that body was prepared for Him. It was the will of God that He should come, that sin should be put away, that we should be saved. O how grand to hear these words uttered in the eternal past, by the Son of the eternal God, before He came here in the flesh! And to know that it was the will of God, written in “the volume of the book,” that He

came with delight to do. Then link with this, the words of verse 10—"By the which will we are sanctified"—set apart by God, to God, and for God. As Christ found His delight in doing the will of God, so should we, for it was to this end He set us apart, not to please ourselves, as in the days of our unregeneracy, but to please God. O what joy it should give us to know we can please God, and know His presence with us in the daily walks of life, doing His will there, as Christ did when here. In verse 8, the four words, "sacrifice, offering, burnt-offering, and offering for sin," refer to the four offerings in the first five chapters of Leviticus, all of which had their full answer in Him who said, "Lo, I come," and set them all aside. Thus, the first was removed because of its weakness, its inability to remove sin, or give the worshipper a perfect conscience; while the second has been established, bearing witness to the complete removal of sin, and the sanctification of the believer.

Verse 10.—"By the which will we have been sanctified." This is done once for all; while in verse 14, the word is "them that are being sanctified." Done it was once for all in God's account at the Cross, but since He laid hold of us, He has been taking a tighter grip of us by His Word and Spirit, so that our very bodies are being set apart for God day by day.

Verses 11-14.—"Every priest standeth daily." For Aaron no seat was found: his work was never done. "But this Man," or rather this One, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down." The red-letter day in Israel was "once a year," when the high priest entered the holiest with the blood of atonement, but its value was not abiding. Christ's sacrifice is "for ever." This is not the word commonly rendered "for ever," but a word

which means, “in perpetuity.” “After He had offered one sacrifice for sins in perpetuity”—“He hath perfected in perpetuity, them that are being sanctified.” As one grain of incense will fill a room with its fragrance, yet remain undiminished, so that perfect sacrifice of Christ, will ever ascend in its fragrance before God, and there remain perpetually, ever the same since the moment it was offered. He is seated yonder, expecting, till His foes be made the footstool of His feet. So perfectly, so gloriously has He done all for His friends, that He can now think of His foes at leisure. If they trample under foot the Son of God (verse 29) now, in this the day of His grace, He will tread them down in judgment when He comes again (Rev. 19:15). His session there at God’s right hand is His witness to us (chap. 1:3), of His perfect work. God has given His witness to it by seating Him there, and the Holy Ghost gives His testimony also (verses 15-18). Thus by the threefold witness of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are we assured that our sins are gone, and that we are “perfected for ever,” in the holy eye of God, in whose presence we are to be at home.

Verses 19-22.—“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness.” Here exhortation follows teaching, as indeed it does throughout this entire epistle. First, when our eye is directed to the enthroned Sin-purger in chap 1, and to His glory in ages to come, the inspired penman pauses to enquire, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation” (2:1-3). Next, having set forth the Rest of God in redemption, he warns, lest any through unbelief come short of it (chap 4:11-16). Then the appointment of Christ to be our Great High Priest, is certified, followed by an earnest admonition and warning (chap. 6:11-20). And now having spoken of the value of Christ’s sacrifice

before God, the inspired apostle turns to us, to bid us make application to ourselves of the wondrous truth He has just unfolded. Here, we are beckoned within the vail. Twice in these verses, we are told of "having "what will enable us to enter there. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus" (verse 19). "Having an High Priest over the House of God" (verse 21). The blood gives a title to enter, the Great High Priest gives a capacity to enjoy the presence of God. He is over "the house," head of the priestly family, as Aaron was of his house, and we are descended from Him who is the Head. Only Aaron's sons were priests of old; only those who are in living union with Christ are "a holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5) now. "Boldness to enter." There is no thought of fear; no idea of what people constantly speak of as "holy boldness," which added word, much spoils and cramps the sentiment, for our title there is no attainment of ours at all, but "the blood of Jesus;" in other words, the very ground on which He has entered there Himself, as chap. 9:12, tells us. That blood is our title to come there (Eph. 2:13), and there to remain (1 John 1:7). "By a newly-slain and living way, through the vail." The sin offering without the camp, the brazen altar with its accepted sacrifice, are behind us, the rent vail is before, and yonder is our Priest in the presence of God, to lift us up. The word "brethren" here, reminds us, how all are equally near to God, and that there is no room here for the popular notion of a distinct clergy, who may come nearer than the rest. Such a wicked invention disparages the costliness of Christ's sacrifice.

Verse 23.—"Let us hold fast the confession of the hope:" so it ought to read. We are to grasp it firmly without

wincing. "The hope," is His coming again, and His promise cannot fail. But we may relax our grasp of it, and lose its power in our lives. The Thessalonians when first converted, had "work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope" (1 Thess. 1:3), but in 2 Thess. 1:3, while the faith and love are increased, the hope had gone. They had relaxed their grasp of it, and lost its power.

Verse 24.—"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love." Faith, hope, love. Not to watch for the failings of our brethren, but to "consider them" to provoke to love. What a play on the word "provoke"! Provoke we may, but only to good works and holiness. Our aim should ever be, to help each other in the struggle with self and the world, to draw forth the good, and suppress the evil, never to stir up what will impede or hurt a fellow-saint.

Verse 25.—"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." The chief opportunity for giving such help, is in the Assembly, which on no account under ordinary circumstances, are we to absent ourselves from. If any neglect it, seek to draw them back, for it is surely a good work. The assembling of "ourselves together" occurs only here and in 2 Thess. 2:1, where the great gathering of saints around the Lord in the air, is spoken of. Thus our gathering now, and then, is linked together. Both are "unto Him": He the Magnet and the Centre, gathering and grouping His own around Himself. "The day" here, is not His coming to the air for His saints, but the time when He will interpose in judgment. We see everything preparing for this. As "the day" evidently draws near when the Lord Himself will interpose, let us seek to help and minister to each other, as some were doing when He came before (Luke 2:38).

Verse 26.—“If we sin wilfully.” The connection between this and the previous verse is very solemn. To forsake the assembly, to continue absenting ourselves from the gathering where the Lord, according to His own word is “in the midst” (Matt. 18:20), is regarded as the leaving of Christ Himself, and a step towards that final apostasy which shall yet be seen on earth Isolation, independency, or separation from God’s true people, is opposed to His holy will. That will is, that His people should be found together. “Gather my saints together unto Me.” God’s call is to union and communion with Christ, and with each other. And whilst separation from sin and evil is holiness, so separation from holiness is sin. The allusion is to the stragglers found in the uttermost part of the camp (Numb. 11:1), who were consumed by the fire. Judgment must begin at the house of God, and He knows those who have no real love for His Name.

The verses that follow must not be passed over lightly; they form with those already looked at in chapter 6, the most solemn warnings of the epistle. In both “the Son of God”—the Divine Person of the Lord Jesus is pre-eminent. There is no other sacrifice, no other Saviour. He alone was competent to deal with the question of sin. He has taken it up, dealt with it according to God, once and for ever, and is now yonder on the throne. O to think that the wonderful Being amid that glory and that light, is the One who purged my sins. He has made a clean sweep of them all. He must, else He could not be there. What then? Shall I turn from Him to a religion of forms, of dead ordinances, or of works of mine? This in the reckoning of God, is to despise Christ. “To have trodden under foot the Son of God.” Awful words! Yet thousands

are doing it, religiously too, every day, preferring self, and human religion, to God's beloved Son; counting "the blood of the covenant, wherewith He is set apart an unholy—or common—thing." By the Cross, Jesus was set apart (John 17:19), taking a new place up there, from which he calls a people into association with Himself. That blood sets them apart, cutting them clear from the religion of the world. But if all this, under any pretence whatever, is rejected, then the blood of the covenant, the Person of the Son of God, and the Spirit of grace, are all despised. Need we wonder therefore, if the punishment for all such is "certain," and "sore" (verse 39). "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy." Who was this man? The reference is clearly to Numbers 15:30-36. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He instructed His people, even before the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (Exod. 16:23-26), to keep His sabbaths. Until redemption in type had been accomplished (Exod. 12), we hear nothing of sabbath-keeping after the fall. But when God had by His own arm, brought salvation by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and the passage of the Red Sea, He taught the chosen people to rest where, and when, He rested. That sabbath rest was "a shadow" of things to come (Col. 2:16, 17). The typical people, typically redeemed, were to keep a typical rest. But one man refused to do so. While others rested, he went out and gathered sticks on the sabbath-day. He "despised the word of the Lord," sinning "presumptuously"—as the word declares in Numbers; here in Hebrews, "wilfully." For him there was no mercy; he was stoned to death without the camp. The application of the passage here is plain. In chapters 3 and 4, we have seen God's true and final rest in Christ, and in His finished work. There is no other. It is for each of us to ask—Do I rest where God

rests? Or do I seek by efforts of my own to gather sticks, to heap up works, to walk in the light of a fire of my own kindling: to heap on the sticks and stubble of religious performances, seeking thereby to please God? God here designates all who refuse to share His rest in Christ, and to accept His salvation, as “adversaries,” and as such they will die without mercy at God’s hands. And as the Antitype exceeds the type, so shall the punishment be sorer than his who was stoned to death for the breach of Moses’ law, for the rejection of the Son of God is the greatest of all sins. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not”—is disobedient to—the “Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on Him” (John 3:36).

Verses 32-39.—The closing verses of this chapter shew our place is with Christ “outside the camp,” in identification with Him there, in shame and rejection. The path of the believer, if he is true to God, must be a path of suffering down here. And faith joyfully accepts, and cordially approves, thankful to be on His side in a world that is against Him, and casts Him out. Flesh may recoil; but faith, with its eye on the crown, embraces joyfully the Cross, knowing that the path has ever been a rough one to the man of faith. “A great fight of afflictions” a conflict of sufferings—is his appointed lot, if he follow in the steps of his rejected Lord. Nor will he eschew the fellowship of those who are thus maltreated, for they are his “companions.” Yea, he will even have compassion for those in bonds, although it should cost him his worldly all—the despoiling of his goods, knowing that up yonder in heaven, he has a substance, a real inheritance, which can never be taken from him. Confidence in God and patience, are needed to sustain

the saints in the midst of such trials, and these will have their reward. They are, in the estimate of heaven, of great price, and will have the Master's "well done," at the judgment-seat. "After ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." His promise is our hope, and although we may have to suffer here, it is only "a little while, as little as may be, and the Coming One will come." Till then the righteous man is to live by faith, treading the marked-out path, with his eye upon God, who is pleased to have His child's confidence and love. But a faith that costs nothing, is worth nothing. Do any shrink from such a path? Then they had better ascertain whither they are tending. It may be easier, but what if the end is "perdition"?

Chapter 11

On this chapter, we have a panorama of faith's heroes, and their victories of Old Testament times. Not indeed all that faith is or does, but enough to shew us by the examples cited, how faith operates, both in doing and suffering. It was by their faith that these elders of ancient time were attested. Thus they became witness-bearers. So too must we walk; our motto is to be—"I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25).

Verses 2—"By it the elders obtained a good report." Who these elders or seniors are, verse 39 tells. The saints of olden time trusted God; they were swayed by things unseen. They said, "I believe God," and thus they pleased Him. So too must we.

Verse 3. When He tells us that it was by His word that the worlds were framed, we believe Him, and the very same voice that said "Light be," is the voice that throughout this chapter encourages us to fight the good fight of faith, by holding forth the reward of victory. Let us believe Him in this also. If when He tells us He made the "worlds" by His word, we believe Him, in like manner let us take Him at His word when He sets the glory and the victor's crown before us, and take our place with a rejected Christ outside the camp down here. For faith not only exults in drawing near to God up there, but dares to seek to be identified with Christ in His shame and rejection down here. Various examples of faith in its operations, its doings and sufferings, as seen in these ancient worthies, pass before us. They may be divided into four sections, as follows. First, the faith of a

sinner looking onward to the blood of the Lamb. Second, seven specimens of faith with its eye fixed on the glory to come. Third, cases in which the faith of saints in surmounting difficulties and enduring trials of the present, appears. Fourth, a brief hint of "some better thing" still in reserve for us, "better" than any of these elders had ever thought of.

Verse 4.—"By faith Abel offered." It is significant that Adam's faith is not recorded here; that he had faith is clear from his word in Gen. 3:20; but the Spirit of God puts Abel in the fore-front, because he came as a sinner confessing his sin, and his entire dependence on the blood, for his acceptance before God. This must ever come first, for how can a sinner look into the future until he has known a present justification and peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Thus, the first of this line of faith, was a sinner saved by blood. He knew that he was accepted. "He obtained witness that he was righteous." What religious people often put at the end, to be gained by imaginary attainments of their own, God puts at the beginning. The sacrifice was accepted: the offerer declared righteous. Seven specimens of faith with its eye fixed on the future. The first two, Enoch and Noah, are dispensational: the second two, Abraham and Sarah, have a doctrinal application; while the last three, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, tell us of what is experimental. Thus we shall see, they are not thrown together haphazard. The Word of the Lord is definite; the lessons are exact.

Verses 5-7.—"By faith Enoch was translated." From the faith of a sinner in the blood, to translation to the presence of God, is a single step; it shews there is nothing between us and our hope. Enoch was a typical man 3 typical of the heavenly calling. He was taken out

of the world, caught away without seeing death, ere the judgment came. Noah, on the contrary, was a witness for God to the end, passing through it unscathed. In Enoch, is foreshadowed the call and hope of the heavenly people: in Noah the earthly people are represented. Very little is said of Enoch. He was evidently a stranger in the earth, where Cain's sons (Gen. 4) made themselves great. He walked with God, and he testified for God (Jude 14), and had the testimony that he pleased Him. His prophecy recorded by Jude, shews that he was not a world-flatterer: he told men their character and their doom, as he had learned both in the Divine presence. So if we walk with God, shall we see men and things in their true light, and not be deceived by the false appearance of things, as many are. Noah was not taken away; he was left to testify to the end, yea, to be borne through the judgment, to a region where the olive leaf and the promise awaited him. Thus early does the Spirit of God give indication of the Divine purpose, to have a heavenly and an earthly people.

The ark with its inmates, affords another type of the safety of all who are in Christ, because the deluge of wrath has been borne by Him, and in Him, they have passed into a new order of things, in which there is no condemnation. And that ark rested on Mount Ararat on the very same day as the Son of God emerged from the tomb (see Gen. 8:4, with Exod. 12:1, where the seventh month was changed to the first month).

Verses 8-22. Abraham and Sarah are the next witnesses. Sarah, that the flesh profiteth nothing; that death is written on all below. Abraham, that life is in resurrection. The call of the God of glory (Acts 7:1), severed him at once from his native land and its idols.

So we, when we hear the call of a risen Christ in glory (Acts 26:13-16), leave the world, and go forth as pilgrims to the heavenly country. He “obeyed.” Yes, faith always involves obedience: to believe is to obey. And as further revelations of God come to the soul, faith appropriates them, hugs the promise, and contents itself with pilgrim fare, while looking for the heavenly city. Isaac and Jacob are witnesses to the same faith, as the force of the word “with,” in verse 9, shews. “The stars of the sky,” refer to the heavenly people: “the sand of the sea,” to the earthly (Jer. 23:22); for Abraham is the representative of both (Gal. 3:7, 29). The land of Canaan was the promise of the earthly seed (Gen. 13:27); the “heavenly country,” the “city which hath foundations,” for the heavenly. O, to let our lives so speak that they shall “plainly say,” we are no longer of the present world, only strangers here, passing through it, to that country on which our affections are already set.

Verses 17-19. Abraham’s faith was long and sorely tried: not so severe at first, for here, as in nature, there is the blade, the ear, and the full corn. The fervour and zeal of youth, is followed by the mellow and matured faith that bends its head like the ripened grain; tested by the varying circumstances of life, yet holding on to God, and to His divine call. Abraham’s faith in the God of resurrection, enabled him to promptly, joyfully, render full obedience to His Word. Isaac was offered: he was as good as dead, but as his words in Gen. 22:5—“I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again,” shew, he accounted that God was able to raise him up. Never before had the glorious truths of death and resurrection shone out so brightly, as when Abraham saw the ram offered in Isaac’s stead, and “the only-begotten son

“loosed from the altar, was received back as from the dead, to his father’s arms and home.

Verses 20-22. The three instances of faith’s working that follow, are experimental. Isaac once gave way to nature’s desires, and would have thwarted the purpose of God, by giving the blessing to Esau; but faith quickly regained his full acquiescence to God’s most holy will. Jacob, who much of his life, acted according to nature, is seen at its close to act as one who had through much discipline, learned the goodness of God, and now when asked by Joseph to do the very thing that Isaac his father desired to do, he refuses. Isaac, whose usual way was obedience, oscillated there, while Jacob, whose life had much resembled an untamed colt, “worshipped leaning on his staff,” and blessed Joseph’s sons. He thus judges all the glory of Egypt, while he distributes Canaan among his sons, as if he were actually reigning there. His was indeed a bright close to a cloudy day. In Joseph we see one who had been what the world calls “a prosperous man”: he had risen from being a prisoner in Egypt’s dungeon, to being next to the throne; yet here in the closing scene, when what a man really is oftenest comes out, it is seen that his eye is on the future. All the years of his sojourn in Egypt, his soul had been sustained by the promise of God, that His people Israel would be brought out. Thus, while surrounded by Egypt’s pomp and splendour, his heart was not there at all, but with his people in their future glory and blessing. And so when the day of their departure came, Israel took up his bones, and carried them for forty years, as an inspired reminder that the promise of God could never fail (Exod. 13:19; Josh 24:32). The next group tells of faith’s action in regard to the present. Moses’

parents, as we gather from Ex.6:20, were of nearer kin than was allowed by God, yet in that same chapter JEHOVAH reveals His Name, and unfolds His character in seven "I wills," as if just to shew what grace can do for and by, very ignoble and worthless instruments. Moses' parents had learned God's Name, and put their trust therein. The eye of faith saw in that helpless babe, one "beautiful to God" (Acts 7:20), marked out by Him as His chosen instrument, and that faith acted, fearing not the king's commandment. Nor was their faith in vain: God honoured it, and the child was saved, yea, raised to a position which by no other course He could ever have reached. And although grace does not run in the blood, yet it must have often encouraged Moses in his later years, to remember, how his preservation as a child, was due to his parents' hearing ear and seeing eye. Then his day of trial comes, in each of the two ways by which Satan can tempt a soul with the circumstances which surround. First, by pleasure, next by fear. Pleasure is the most common snare for youth: fear for maturer years. Dressed up in various garbs at different seasons, but in their nature still the same. Moses made his twofold choice, fully and deliberately. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter:" he chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God." His separation from Egypt and his identification with the afflicted people of God, were the proofs of his faith, and are so still. He might have reasoned as many do, that to remain in the palace would be more beneficial to his people; that he could better serve them by retaining his influence there; but he had not learned the world's adage "Out of two evils choose the less." His separation from the world was complete. So his identification with God's people was hearty. Thus by his example, do we

learn the two-fold character of faith's choice. That such a choice involves "affliction" and "reproach" is true now as then, but faith judges that the worst of Christ's, a share in His reproach, and the afflictions of His people, is infinitely better than the best the world has to give. "The recompence of the reward "is the divine counterbalance for all this, to which, like him, we are to "look off," and which amid reproach and shame will enable us to suffer cheerfully for Christ. O how His smile and His "well done," will recompense any loss for Him here. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king," for his eye was on the invisible God. To see One who to nature's eye is invisible, is faith: to bring God into everything is to endure. And to those who by thus resisting temptation prove that they love God, there is not only the promised crown (James 1:12), but the present companionship of the Father and the Son (John 14:23), and an ever-increasing knowledge of, and intimacy with both.

Verses 28-31. The Passover, the Red Sea, and the Jordan, are typical of the salvation of God in its threefold aspect. At each step, the way of faith is marked. "The sprinkling of blood," tells of God dealing in righteousness. Not only were the sons of Israel not destroyed with Egypt's first-born, but the destroyer did not even "touch" them under the crimson banner. At the Red Sea, God was for His people, and against their foes. They trod the open path through death, to life and liberty. The one is like John 3:14: God dealing in righteousness; the other like John 3:16: God manifesting His love. Egypt's judgments tell what we have been saved from. Across Jordan, in Canaan, tells of what Christ's death and resurrection has brought us unto. There is nothing said here of the

wilderness: it is a blank, for unbelief wrought in most who wandered there. Rahab's scarlet line and living witnesses, complete the testimony. Not the scarlet thread alone, for what would it have availed, had not the living spies returned to fulfil their promise? But Salmon, the great-grandfather of David, a prince of Judah, who most likely was the spy who pledged his word to come again and save her. did all that he had promised, and took Rahab for his bride as well (Josh. 6:25: Ruth 4:21: Matth. 2:5).

Verses 32-40.—These verses tell more of faith's victories: it is ever triumphant. Nothing is too hard for it to do, or to suffer. It stays itself on the living God, with whom nothing is impossible. Of many of its sacrifices, its services, and sufferings, we know but little now, but when He comes to distribute His rewards, they will all shine forth in their full lustre in heaven's own light. And now that He has come and manifested His Father's Name and His own love, providing for us what the saints of old knew not, surely we may expect to find that the victories of faith, though all unknown at present, will, when made known, far exceed those of ancient time, and utterly astonish the unbelieving world, and many heartless professors of Christ's Name. For this, faith patiently waits. Both they of old, and we of His church, look for His coming, when, not only rest from toil and suffering such as those who pass one by one to be with the Lord, enter upon, but glory which is to be entered by all together then. Both shall be perfected in resurrection. Even there, "some better thing" is provided for us, for, as the next chapter makes plain, (Verse 23,) there will be no confounding of the Old Testament saints with the church, which is His Body and

His Bride. Well may we therefore wait and suffer for Him here. It will not be for long. Lo! He comes! He comes!

Chapter 12

In this twelfth chapter to which we now come, the Spirit of God directs our gaze unto the Lord Jesus Himself, who trod the entire path of faith from beginning to end, without a break. These worthies of former times did but trust occasionally and with effort, at such periods as have been specially named to us. But there was no such inconstancy in Jesus. His path, like His work, was one whole. His advance along that path was continuous and unswerving. No matter what arose to tempt Him to turn aside, still on and on He went, even though He sank into deeper sorrow and trouble at each succeeding step. His enemies multiplied, and His friends became fewer, yet His faith in God was unshaken. How beautiful to holy intelligences above, must have been the path of the Holy One of God, as they watched Him pass along through a world where, since the day of Adam's distrust of God, and belief of Satan's lie, God had been distrusted and dishonoured! How they must have joyed as they beheld His unfailing faith in God, and his unfaltering steps in the way marked out for Him to tread, even when the clouds gathered thicker and thicker around, and the Cross loomed in His view! Yea, when that Cross was reached, when earth had rejected Him, and heaven seemed to give no response to His cry, He still confided in God, and refused to deliver Himself. Forsaken by God, allowed to sink even into death itself, His faith wavered not. His expiring cry was, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Then, but not till then, did God break His silence. ' He "raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory." God's answer to that life of unwavering obedience and perfect dependence, was resurrection

glory, and this in order that our “faith and hope might be in God” (1 Pet. 1:21). Thus He is our great Exemplar, “the Author and Finisher of faith”—not our faith, for the translation should be “The Beginner and Completer of the faith, the Divine Leader of the host of faith’s pilgrims, who trod the entire course from end to end. And thus, as has been often and well remarked, the Holy Ghost’s great delight in this epistle is, to set aside one person after another, in order that He may bring in Jesus, and fix the eye stedfastly upon Him. Angels, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, all give place to Jesus, and now the eye is taken from these worthies of Old Testament time, enumerated in chapter xi., to be fixed on the one solitary Example, who implicitly, and at all times, confided in His Father’s love and care.

The “cloud of witnesses “are not—as is often erroneously represented in hymns and otherwise—watching us, but witnessing unto us. The testimony borne is not by Angels, but by faith’s witnesses in the preceding chapter, to whose trust God gave response, which we beholding, should be encouraged to trust Him also.

“Looking off unto Jesus”—is not here a word to direct the sinner’s eye from self to Christ. Although that is true enough, it is not the lesson here. Rather is it, that we need not tarry longer at such imperfect and wavering acts of faith as those of chapter xi., but, “looking off” to the one perfect Pattern, the Beginner and Completer of faith, Jesus, press on along the same road, even if God continues silent, and foes increase. He will yet speak out. Look up to the throne! He has set down there the One who dared to please and trust Him here, who

“endured the Cross, despising the shame,” and so He will to all who follow in the same path.

Verses 3, 4, “Consider Him”—not now up there, as the Apostle and High Priest, as chapter 3:1,—but the One “who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” O how He “endured” it all, silently and patiently! He was a “Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.” Yet for the “joy set before Him,” He wavered not, but went onward to the Cross. We have not yet “resisted up to blood” in our siding with God, against the world and sin. Let His example and His promise —“Be thou faithful unto death,” that is, up to blood, “and I will give thee the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10)—animate us to go boldly forward in this blessed path. O how every step of it will shine out in golden lustre, in the day when God tells out His full estimate of all that has been of and for Him, in His people’s ways down here.

Verses 5-11. Even here, God makes use of the very trials that our faithfulness to Him brings us into, for our discipline. The very trials that in chapter 11 are from men, are here traced to be from a Father’s hand. The “chastisement” here, is not the whip for disobedience, but rather the pruning-knife, with the gracious design, that the subjects of it may be partakers of His holiness. Separation to God from everything that is not of Him, is the end in view, in all the Father’s dealings with His children. All had to suffer somewhat even in former times, Abel, Abraham, Joseph, David, but now that His love has been fully told out, and His own children received so tenderly, He “scourges” them. In those who are, by the Father’s chastisement, “exercised”—trained as in a gymnasium—“the peaceable fruits of righteousness” are brought forth. We are not to faint

when we are “convicted”—it is not rebuked—“of Him.” His object is to wean us from everything that takes His place, and to cast us the more on Himself.

“Blest is the sorrow, kind the storm,

That casts me more on Him.”

To “endure chastening”—that is, stay under it, instead of avoiding or despising it, although for the time it is very “grievous”—will yet yield its fruit, and train us to know experimentally the Father’s love. Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law” (Psalm 94:12). Chastening alone weighs us down: teaching apart from chastening, might lift us up: together they form God’s way of training His children. Paul was caught up to the third heaven, where he heard unspeakable words, then he got a thorn in the flesh to keep him from being exalted above measure. “The Father of spirits” tells of our new relationship, our regeneration, like as that word in 1 Peter 4:9, “as unto a faithful Creator,” tells of our re-creation.

Verses 12, 13, “Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down.” God would have us to encourage our souls in Him, and press on. The road may be rough, but it cannot be long, and yonder at the end is the glory. Therefore, let us go straight forward in the path divine. As the kine that took the straight path to Bethshemesh (Judges 6:12), so let us “make straight paths” for our feet, turning neither to the right nor to the left. If we go aslant, if we diverge from the path of obedience, ever so slightly, who can tell where we may drift? O then, let us seek to “make straight paths,” and to be upright with our God.

Verse 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." All men, even the wicked, shall see Him in a sense, but not in His loveliness and beauty. None but His saints have the capacity to see Him then, none else have it now.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Not only are we to stand up for spiritual doctrine, but holiness, without which no man, whoever he is, shall see the Lord. Peace is to be followed, but to holiness are we called. That "God is love," is precious, but it is not everything. Nor must it be separated from "God is light." How can we see Him now, or dwell with Him then, or how expect His companionship, if we are walking in darkness, or if we are not walking in the truth. There is no other way of holiness than in the path of obedience.

Verses 15-17, "Looking diligently"—literally "oversee each other"—act the bishop, in order that we may stand fast in the grace to which, by faith in Christ, we have access, yet which most, even of religious professors, despise, because it would lift them out of this world and up to God, whereas they wish to be citizens of earth, for their hearts are set on earthly things. These spiritual fornicators, or worldly religious men, and these profane Esaus, who prefer some passing trifle, some fleshly satisfaction to God's abiding favour, are on every side of us. Their maxim is to "make the best of both worlds," but it is a vain thought. Too late they will learn that their love of the present world, their "one morsel" of present indulgence, has cost them much. When at last the terrible words ring in their ears, "I never knew you, depart from Me, ye who work lawlessness," they will learn how grossly they have been deceived, but their chance is gone for ever. Esau's rejection was consequent

upon his long obduracy. He wept, not because he had sold his birthright, but because he had lost it: not because he was a sinner, but because he was a loser. There are such tears in hell, but they effect no change. The die is there cast for ever.

Verses 18-24.—Not to the bondage, fear, and darkness of the mount of law, but to the very presence of God. The blood has brought us there; yea, we are at home in the innermost, uppermost circles of blessing. “Ye are come;” already we are at home in all the gradations of glory to which these verses introduce us. Thus would God detach us from this sin-cursed world, and allure us upward to His very throne. Here follows a beautiful millennial picture. First, there is “Mount Zion,” which will be the joy of the whole earth “(Psa. 48:2), “exalted above the hills” (Isa. 2:2), the highest peak of the millennial earth, and nearest to the overshadowing heavenly glory (Isa. 4:5). There, in the highest, holiest spot of earth, we shall be at home. Higher still, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”; there too are we welcome. Yea, there is our citizenship. “To an innumerable company,” to myriads “of angels, to their general assembly.” The angels will not then be God’s administrators of this world; they are here seen to be at a greater distance from it than those who then reign with the Son of Man. Higher than all, is “the Church of the first-born,” whose names are enrolled in heaven, in a glory above, and nearer to God than angels. For it will be observed that the saints of the present dispensation are twice mentioned in this picture; in a glory nearer to earth than angels, as kings, ruling; and in a glory above angels, as priests, worshipping. And “to God, the Judge of all,” whose omniscient gaze we can challenge, and who will

give to each His reward (1 Pet. 1:17). Then descending from that throne on the other side, we come to the spirits of the just, perfected at length in resurrection bodies—those just men of chap. 11, who shall be raised together with us in the first resurrection. Lower down on that side is “Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant”—the fresh covenant which shall in those days be made with Israel, and closer still to the earthly people is “the blood of sprinkling,” on which they gaze, and to which they, like us, have first to come. To all these glories we have already come, amid them all we are at home.

Verses 25-29.—“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” That enthroned Sin-Purger is speaking now from heaven: on earth He is rejected, in highest glory He is crowned. You must either hear Him, or take sides with worldly Christianity, and reject His salvation. There is no middle ground.

Chapter 13

This last chapter mainly consists of exhortations suited to the doctrine of the earlier parts of the epistle.

Verses 1-6.—Once it was a nation with which God was in relationship, and in those days His command was for each to love His neighbour. But now He has a family called out of all nations, by which He is known as Father, whom He tells, as His children, to love one another as brethren. And this love must not be in word, but in deed and in truth. If some go forth to testify for Him, we are to welcome such stranger-brethren, “that we may be fellow-helpers with the truth.” And to us also it is given to be in hearty sympathy, and to identify ourselves fully with the suffering saints of God, not excusing ourselves from taking their part, because of some imperfection we see in them, or because we think they are going “too far.” The aim of each is to be purity, whether in single or married life, “for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness” (1 Thess. 4:7, 8). And to such godliness let us add contentment, for we are only pilgrims here. It is but little we need, and how can we lack it when God hath said—“I will not, not leave thee, neither will I not, not forsake thee.” With the assurance given by these five “nots,” we need have no shadow of doubt of His watchful, Fatherly care, but boldly say, “The Lord is my helper.” Not merely think but utter it, so that our hearts may be lifted up and refreshed, and others who mark our faith, encouraged.

Verses 7-9.—“Remember your guides,” literally, “those who are leading you,” for until “we all come unto the unity of the faith,” the Lord will raise up in the

assemblies of His saints, those who will speak to them "the Word of God." Although there are none now authorized to appoint such, they may easily be discerned by the spiritual. Their message comes to the soul in power, and, as they follow and lead on after Jesus, we are enjoined to "remember" (ver. 7), "obey" (ver. 17), and "salute" (ver. 24) them. And if some who once thus guided us have passed away, yea, possibly had their days shortened by their faithful service to the Lord and His saints, He Himself remains, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." To keep the eye steadily on Him, is the best preservative from evil doctrine. If you are occupied with Christ you will not be carried about or drift with the new doctrines which are invented every year by crafty men. Grace alone is what keeps saints right.

Verses 10-14.— The spotless Victim, whose blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, was cast forth without the camp; the further within, into the presence of God, that blood was brought, the more thoroughly without was the body of the Victim cast. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp," taking our place in association with Him, outside the camp of Judaism, clean outside the world's religion, even should it entail reproach. But what matters it, if the reproach is "His"? It is "unto Him" we are to go; this will more than compensate for what we may lose or suffer. Gleaming yonder is the city, where "an hour with our God" will make up for all the sneers and reproaches borne for Christ down here.

Verses 15-16.— Thus in happy fellowship with God, a double stream of living water shall flow from us; first, upwards to God in praise; then, outward toward others,

in blessing. To confess His name in worship, is well-pleasing unto Him, so also is doing good to others. Both are called “sacrifices”; they are joined together; let us not put them asunder. Thanksgiving and thanks-living, worship and service, spirituality before God, and untiring efforts to serve others, must be constantly combined.

Verses 17-19.—There are under-shepherds, faithful men, who watch with unceasing care the flock, for well they know the devices of the devil, who most frequently appears in the garb of an angel of light, to tempt and turn aside from the path. What a solemn responsibility and holy work such watchmen have!

Verses 20-21.—Finally, we are cast upon God Himself, in His beautiful character as the “God of peace,” here, as elsewhere, at the very close of the epistle, as if He would thus remind us that His presence thus is to be known and enjoyed in the way of obedience (see Phill. 4:9; 2 Thess. 3:16). “The Great Shepherd of the sheep” is the title given to “our Lord Jesus” in resurrection. As the Good Shepherd, He gave His life for us (John 10:11); as the Great Shepherd, He loves to befriend and guide us; as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), He will appear with crowns of glory for those who have served Him here among His saints, it may be, with little earthly cheer, patiently awaiting His own commendation and reward. And as He to whom God has given such power and glory, served God down here perfectly, up to “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” so can He now, according to His heart’s desire and expressed will (John 17:24), serve us. And thus, God, perfectly fitting us together, as the words “make you perfect” mean—each unto our several places in the Body of Christ, the

Church, so that in every good work we may do His will—
He works in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight
“through Jesus Christ.” Thus we end, as we began, with
the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus. Well may the Holy
Ghost add—“to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”