

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

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Chapter 1

THE APOSTLE OF OUR PROFESSION

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3: 1).

"God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2).

The Epistle to the Hebrews in importance stands side by side with Romans and Corinthians as one of the major messages of the Holy Ghost to the Church after Pentecost. At the same time it has a unique place not only on account of the special people to whom it was addressed, but of the great wealth of Old Testament allusion and illustration which it contains, throwing as it does a flood of light upon the ancient types, and more fully than any other New Testament writing unfolding the intimate connection between the Old and New Testament.

I. AUTHORSHIP

The authorship of this epistle is in doubt. Popularly it bears the name of Paul, but the style and internal evidence are all against his authorship. In any case if he wrote it he must have written it in Hebrew, and some other hand translated it into Greek, thus dropping the peculiarities of his style in the translation. The most probable alternative suggested is that it was written by Apollos, the learned Jew of Alexandria, who was mighty in the Scriptures and who was led into deeper spiritual truth by Aquila and Priscilla, who themselves were disciples of Paul. The uncertainty, however, of the human channel through which it came makes it all the more the message of the Holy Ghost to the people of God. While addressed to the Hebrew Christians it is no less the heritage of the whole Church than the other epistles that were also addressed to particular churches or individuals, but meant for the whole household of faith.

II. PLAN

The plan of the epistle is very simple. Its chief design is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and show His superiority to Moses, Joshua, the angels, and all other beings, as the Son of God and the divine Head of redeemed humanity. This is done in three distinct sections representing Christ in various offices and aspects:

1. Christ the Apostle of our profession, or the divine Messenger by whom God hath spoken in these last days to His people (Heb. 1: 1; 4: 13).
2. Christ our Great High Priest (Heb. 4: 14 to 10: 34).

3. Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 10: 35 to 13: 25).

III. CHRIST OUR APOSTLE

The word 'apostle' means "one sent, a messenger." The first section of this epistle is devoted to the consideration of Christ as God's last messenger to men.

The opening sentence of this epistle is most impressive, standing out like an inscription cut in stone over the entrance to some majestic building, or, like the frontispiece of some great volume. Three words compose this majestic message, "God hath spoken." "God . . . hath spoken unto us by his Son."

Long and vainly had the world waited for some message from above. Nature had spoken, but her message was too confused and vague to tell us what we needed to know. Written on the glowing skies and the verdant earth the dullest eye could read the two words, "God is." But there the sentence ended with a note of interrogation, and another voice was needed to complete the sentence and write it fully out, "God is Love." Philosophy had sought to penetrate the mysteries of truth and from human intuition and natural reasoning find out the unknown God; but the best that philosophy could find was the dead, cold, abstract trinity of Plato, "The True, the Beautiful, the Good." But this had no power to lift humanity from its wretchedness and sin. Idolatry had spoken, but its gods were monsters of cruelty and corruption, and it had no light or help for hopeless humanity. Sorcery and spiritualism pretended to speak, and they brought some messages from the darkness of the unseen and the future world, but their words were idle and unsatisfying and only ignis fatuus gleams that left us in deeper darkness.

But "God hath spoken." "At sundry times and in diverse manners" He had previously spoken by the prophets, but now "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." He has given us at length His greatest, fullest, latest word, and it is the living Word Himself, Jesus, who is not only the Messenger of the truth, but Himself "the way, the truth and the life." The gulf between earth and heaven is spanned. The mystery of the unknown is unsealed. The will of God is revealed, and "God hath spoken." How solemn, how thrilling, how important to know that the Sovereign of the universe has condescended to make Himself known to the inhabitants of this remote and insignificant world, and that we have in this sacred Book and this holy Gospel the word and will of eternal God!

But the weight of the message is infinitely enhanced by the dignity of the Messenger. In a previous Chino-Japanese war an attempt was made two or three times through some subordinate officials of the Chinese government to negotiate a peace. But no attention was paid to the message because of the unimportance of the messenger. But when at last the Chinese government expressed their earnestness and sincerity by sending to Japan their plenipotentiary, their most distinguished citizen, the viceroy himself, the government of Japan treated the matter with due consideration and steps were taken to meet the embassy and arrange an amnesty. And so God has shown His deep sincerity and profound interest in our race and the great question of reconciliation between man and God by sending to us as His Ambassador and Apostle no less a person than His own beloved Son.

The difficulty with the Hebrew people in receiving the Gospel of Christ was their profound veneration for Moses and the prophets, and their unwillingness to admit any other to a place of equal authority, and therefore the author of this epistle takes special pains to prove to them that the Lord Jesus Christ in His own right and by His Father's recognition is superior in dignity and importance to Moses and the prophets.

IV. THE DIGNITY AND GLORY OF THE MESSENGER

1. He is the Son of God. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father and He shall be to me a Son?" God's last Messenger to men is His own well-beloved Son. This is finely set forth in the parable of the vineyard (Mat. 21: 33ff). The husbandman sent his servants one by one, but they took them and beat them and killed them. "But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." Foreknowing all this, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. He is the Heir of all things. It is for Him that all things were made and planned. He is the end as well as the beginning of the universe of God. "All things were created by him, and for him." In Him at last shall be summed up all the glory of nature and all the government of the new heaven and earth. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." It is this glorious and dignified Person who has come to us from the heavenly world as the bearer of God's last message to men. He is the Viceroy of the universe and the Viceregent of God Himself.

3. He is the image of God, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." This stronger language expresses His equality and unity with God. He is the effulgence and outflow of the Father's glory and the very counterpart of His person. Two persons of equal dignity and glory and yet distinct personality are here described. Therefore all that the Father is He is, and He can truly say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," for "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Would you know the character of God, the will of God, the thoughts of God, the plan of God for men, look at Jesus, listen to His words, accept His teachings.

4. He is the Creator of all things. "By whom also he made the worlds"(or more literally, the aeons or ages). He is the Creator therefore, not only of space, but of time; not only of matter, but of all the cycles, dispensations, and ages to come. His wisdom has planned the unfolding stages of God's mighty purpose down to the latest ages of eternity. His hand has formed and poised every circling planet and every central sun amid the constellations, and as you look up into the shining firmament and think of the infinite wisdom and grandeur of God's works and ways turn sweetly to the gentle Presence that is filling all your heart with peace, and say, "This is my Redeemer and my Friend."

5. He is the Sovereign Lord as well as Almighty Creator, "upholding all things by the word of his power." He is the God of Providence as well as nature, controlling all events and circumstances from the fall of a sparrow to the conquest of an empire.

6. He is the mediatorial King. "When he had by himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

This is not the same authority referred to in the last paragraph. This is a new kingdom given to Him in consideration of His completed redemption and accomplished atonement. This is the place of ascension glory on the right hand of the Majesty on high where He sits enthroned as King of saints and King of nations, and in a little while to be the Lord of the millennial world.

7. He is greater than the angels. The apostle enters into a very elaborate argument to prove Christ's superiority to all angelic beings. Mighty beings they doubtless are. A single one of them by a touch destroyed an army of one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. A single one sitting on the stone of the sepulcher frightened away the whole Roman guard. But Christ is mightier than all the angels, and they are but His obedient servants, nay the servants of His disciples, "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

8. Christ is witnessed to by the Father. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. . . . Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." This is the language of the Father to the Son. With the deepest reverence the eternal God addresses Jesus Christ as God and Lord, and how can any reverent heart ever doubt again the deity of Jesus? Rather should we in humble fellowship with the Father's testimony bow at His feet and cry, "My Lord and my God."

9. He is witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. "God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." The miracles of Christ were all testimonies by His Father and by the Holy Spirit to His divine character. The forces of nature, the powers of hell, the germs of disease, the dread monster death itself, were all subject to His command, and His mighty works give emphasis to His authoritative words and seem to say, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him."

10. He is the Head of redeemed humanity and Lord of the Millennial Age. "For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. . . . But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." That is, man as a race has not yet attained his lordship over the world, but the Son of man has. We see Jesus exalted as Lord of all, and we know that His people will share the glory which He has

achieved. He is already crowned King of the millennial earth, and is only waiting until all the many sons that have been given Him shall be brought unto glory for the final manifestation.

11. He is the Conqueror of death and Satan. By the grace of God He tasted death for every man, and "forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

He who speaks to us as our great Apostle has not only come from above and dwelt on earth with man, but He has also penetrated the underworld of death and hell and brought back its spoils, and now can speak with authority as He gives to us eternal life and declares, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Satan has no power to resist the authority of His Word, and death is spoiled of its awful sway.

12. He is greater than Moses, "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house, . . . and Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, . . . but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we."

13. He is greater than Joshua, their victorious leader into the Land of Promise, for He, too, is leading them into a better rest, and as the Captain of their salvation bringing many sons unto glory. "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest unto the people of God. . . . Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest."

14. He is the Living Word (4: 12). Not only is He the Messenger of the truth, but He is Himself the Truth. Therefore He is called by the disciple who was nearest His heart, the Word of God. God has not merely spoken to us in articulate sentences but by a living personality. Like the ancient prince who begged for the freedom of his captive queen, and the conqueror sent him not a written answer to his plea but his very queen herself with the message, "This is my word of reply," God has given us Jesus as His highest, sweetest, last Word, and when we receive Him we have within us as part of our very mind, the heart, the will, the thought of God. This mighty Word is here described as living "and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Shall we receive Him as God's Word to us? Shall we hear Him say, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"? And shall we follow Him as the Captain of our salvation until He leads us into all the fullness of the Land of Promise, the rest of faith and the will of God?

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Chapter 2

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S MESSAGE

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2: 1).

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3: 12).

"While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb. 3: 15).

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4: 1).

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4: 11).

God has spoken. This is the first message of Hebrews. But what response does He expect from us? That is our present message, and it is answered in the passages quoted above.

1. "Let us give heed." The word "heed" is derived from "head," and it means that we should give our most earnest and careful attention and consideration to the great Messenger whom God has sent from the throne to bear His last word to men. How little attention we give to His Word! Preoccupied with a thousand other things when we hear it, and distracted afterwards by the whirl of the world's cares, pleasures and temptations, it scarcely finds a lodgment in our minds, and birds of the air bear away the falling seed from the trodden wayside. "Take heed how ye hear." If God has sent His only Son as His last Messenger to men, He expects us at least to listen to His message. "This is my beloved Son," He says, "Hear ye him."

But not only does He demand attention, but retention. "Lest at any time we should let them slip." The word means "to leak out as from a broken vessel." How much leakage there is in our recollection of sacred things! How soon we forget! The word is also translated by some "lest we should slip away from them." How soon forgetfulness leads to backsliding! It is not enough that we should have hold of the truth, but we want the truth to have hold of us.

Beloved, we are living in a day when men and women easily slip away from the authority of the words of Christ. To do this is to drift from all the moorings of safety and find yourself afloat at last on the downward tide of ruin. Cling to the Word of God. Believe it, and let it keep you from the perils of Time's last days.

2. Let us take heed. And to what shall we take heed? That we not only hold to the Word, but

that we believe it. "Take heed . . . lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The Bible must not only be understood but believed. It is not given for speculation, but for simple, absolute, implicit faith. The word unbelief is translated in the margin "disobedience," and the connection between faith and obedience is indeed very close. The old Saxon word "believe" originally meant by a simple inversion "to live by," and we will always find that we live by that which we believe. The only secret of a right life is a true faith, and the only proof of a true faith is a life committed to our creed and reflecting it in our conduct. Do we believe the Word of God and are we living by it, putting our whole weight upon it and making it the standard, the safeguard, and the guide of our whole life?

3. Let us hearken. "If ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." As we have seen, it is not only the spoken and the written Word, but it is the living Word in the heart, and His voice is often so still that we will fail to hear it unless we have the hearkening ear. The first condition of hearing is the desire to hear, the readiness to listen to the Master's voice, and to know and to do His will for us in everything. God's covenant with His people was, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians" (Ex. 15: 26). It was not enough to obey what they knew already, but it was essential that they should be watching and waiting to know His voice in everything and at all times. It was the failure to do this that lost Saul his kingdom, and brought upon him the solemn warning and reproof, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." God will always be ready to speak if we are ready to listen, but if we close our ears and refuse His counsel He may leave us in silence to our ignorance and folly. Let us listen to the Holy Ghost. Let us be in touch with the Shepherd, and we shall know His voice and follow Him in perfect safety through every dangerous path of life.

4. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." This is founded especially on the typical connection between Joshua, the ancient leader of Israel, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Captain of our Salvation. The word "Jesus" here used (4: 8) undoubtedly refers to Joshua, which was the Old Testament name of Jesus. The Land of Promise into which Joshua brought the people of God was simply the type of the better inheritance into which Christ the great Captain of our salvation is bringing His people. Certainly it did not refer to our future heaven, for in Heaven there will be no Canaanites and no conflicts. It was the type of the present rest into which Christ is bringing His willing people. It is of that He says in this passage, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God," and we which have believed do enter into rest. There is for us in Christ an inheritance of reality, of victory and of peace as different from the condition of the average Christian as the Land of Promise was different from the weary wanderings of the wilderness. Now there is a promise left us of entering into this rest. That promise is repeated over and over again in God's Word. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee," is the ancient Hebrew form of the promise. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is Christ's new edition of the promise turned into a great request. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." This is the bequest divided among the children, and proved in the actual

experience of life.

Now, if this is left us it becomes a very serious thing for us to fail to receive it. It would be a very serious thing to allow your father's will to go by default and waste the great inheritance which amid sacrifice and toil he spent his life accumulating for his loved ones. And how much worse is it to waste the purchase of the precious blood of Christ and allow to be of no effect His costly sacrifice and His infinite gift of love! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" How serious it is even to seem to come short of it! It is not the danger of a life of open wickedness that is here pointed out; it is a life that just barely misses God's best. It only comes short, but loses it just the same. Was there ever a more pathetic story than that of the tribes that marched behind the pillar of cloud and flame, that came right up to the gates of Canaan, and yet right there at the very threshold failed to enter in? Was there ever a sadder spectacle than those ancient millions turning back into the desert day after day and year after year, in that endless round of fruitless wandering, until at last they sank and perished in the sands? They just came short, that was all. They reached the borders of the land. One day more and they would have been across. But they hesitated, they doubted, they feared, they disobeyed, and they failed. They were willing enough next day to go, but God refused to let them. They had missed their opportunity. They had come too late. Well may we fear this coming short of entering into His rest. Well may we "make speed" to enter in.

It marks the difference between two classes of Christians, the one, the wanderers in the wilderness, the other, victors of the Land of Promise; the one ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, ever seeking and never obtaining, with just enough religion to make them wretched, just enough light to know how much they have lost. But the saddest part of it is not merely its influence upon themselves, but its influence upon others. Not only do they lose, but their work suffers, their testimony for Christ is vain, their prayers are unanswered, and their lives are a reflection upon their Lord as well as a disappointment to themselves and everybody else.

5. "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest." There is such a thing as laboring for rest. The struggle of war is necessary to bring the victory of peace. The toil of busy years is the prelude to affluence, retirement, and repose. The full surrender in which we die to some strong self-will is the pathway through which we rise to a new and better life. There are some things that we must let go in order to keep. There are crisis moments through which a soul must pass in the throes of a great conflict ere it can find lasting peace. And so there is a moment in every life when we meet God, and by a supreme surrender enter into His sovereign will and His perfect peace.

John Bunyan tells us of his significant dream when his soul was struggling to enter into the better life. He saw a company of happy women dwelling in a region of celestial light, and bearing upon their faces the expression of infinite rest and blessedness. Many of them were faces that he knew among the saints of God. But he was not among them. But a great wall rose between, shutting him out in the cold and cheerless darkness. He wept and struggled to find some entrance, until at last he discovered the secret passage under the wall, but so

narrow that he could not get through with all his belongings. But then he heard their voices calling him and telling him that if he was willing to part with all, he, too, could pass within the narrow gate and enter in. At length after a painful struggle he was able to leave his impediments and possessions, and slowly pressing through the narrow passage he awoke to find himself in this Land of Light. "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest." God has been leading you up to it all your days. There is some decisive act, some supreme surrender, some great letting go or taking hold which He will show you, which probably He has shown you, and in which you will find the problem solved, the die cast, the door opened, and the land possessed. So may He help you to labor to enter into His rest.

But the word translated "labor" has a slightly different literal meaning. "Make speed," is its exact force. It calls to instant action, and thus it harmonizes with the previous message "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." There are some things which in their very nature must be done quickly or they lose their effect. There are processes that will bear slow, deliberate action, but there are great decisions that must be instantly made, and advance movements that must be carried forward as the walls of the fortress are stormed by swift and sudden assault. When God is calling to some great decision there is no time for Paul to confer with flesh and blood, for Elisha to go home and bid his friends farewell, or for the young disciple to wait until he has buried his father. It is today, "While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." It is the moment when God is speaking. It is the moment when the resources of grace are waiting to carry you through. That is the time, the only time for action, and God will not brook delay. Beloved, is He so calling you today? The moment to answer is the moment He speaks. Oh, then, "Today if ye will hear his voice" make speed to enter into His rest. Go forward, step out into the Jordan of death to do all His will; step out into the act of obedience which is calling you on; step out to trust Him in the dark and stand waiting for Him to vindicate you and to carry you through.

Therefore, beloved, since God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," let us "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

Let us take heed "lest there be in any of [us] an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Let us today if we would hear His voice harden not our hearts.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of [us] should seem to come short of it."

And, finally, let us make speed to "enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

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Chapter 3

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4: 14-16).

After Moses, Aaron. After the great leader and messenger of God to Israel, the Great High Priest. After Jesus as the Apostle of our profession the writer of this beautiful epistle proceeds to represent Him as our Great High Priest. This is the second theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. Although there were two brief references to His priesthood in previous passages (2: 17, and 3: 1), yet the regular discussion of this subject commences with our text, Hebrews 4: 14, and continues until near the close of the tenth chapter. There was no figure more impressive in all the imposing ritual of ancient Judaism than the high priest when arrayed in his magnificent official robes. Every part of his garments had a special typical significance. His inner robe of white linen expressed the perfect purity of the Great High Priest of whom he was the type. His outer garments of blue, purple, and scarlet were all significant of His high character and lofty functions. The blue signified His heavenly and divine character. The purple proclaimed His royalty; the scarlet His atoning blood. The priest's brow was crowned with a flashing miter on which were inscribed in jeweled letters, "Holiness unto the Lord." His shoulders bore two epaulettes, each composed of a massive jewel inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel. On his bosom blazed twelve many-tinted gems, each bearing in the crystal stone deeply engraved the name of one of Israel's tribes. These jewels on his shoulders and his breast proclaimed at once the power and tenderness of the great High Priest bearing His people in the place of strength and in the place of love.

As he passed into the holy place on the Day of Atonement, having offered the sacrifices of that momentous occasion and bearing the precious blood and the holy incense into the innermost chamber where the Shekinah shone and God manifested His living Presence, awful suspense fell upon the people as they stood waiting outside, for they knew that the fate of the nation hung upon his acceptance. Solemnly and silently he passed within the veil, sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat, made intercession for the sins of the people, and stood for a moment in the awful and immediate presence of Jehovah and then came forth with the signal of divine acceptance. With hands uplifted, he stood at the door of the tabernacle and pronounced upon

the waiting congregation the great benediction of the ancient ritual, and then they knew they were accepted in their high priest, and that for another year the cloud of Jehovah's presence would rest upon them still, and the pillar of His guidance lead them forth in safety and victory.

It is not difficult for us to understand how hard it was for the Hebrew mind for one moment to think that any other could usurp a place so sacred and lofty, or claim higher honor and authority than their venerated high priest. And when the author of this epistle proceeds to show them that even Aaron was but the figure of a greater, and that the Lord Jesus Christ whom they had crucified, was the true Mediator and Antitype of Aaron, no wonder that they listened with the gravest questionings and needed the most powerful arguments to persuade them that He could be worthy of such honor. This is the subject of his argument in the epistle to the Hebrews, and it is needless to say that it is as powerful and convincing as the inspired Word of the Holy Ghost might be expected to be, and presents one of the sublimest and sweetest pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ in all the sacred volume. Let us as we follow it "consider the Apostle High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

I. HIS FUNCTIONS

These are explicitly defined in chapter five, verse one, "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin." And again, "That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (2: 17). He was ordained for men in things pertaining to God. He was man's Representative to God just as the apostle was God's representative to men. He was especially the Mediator between God and men in dealing with sin. The ministry of the high priest was specifically on account of sin. His business was to open and maintain relations of friendship and fellowship between an offended God and a sinful people. This involved two ministries,

1. **Sacrifice.** This our Great High Priest has accomplished by offering Himself as the great Sacrifice. The entire ritual of Aaron and the entire teaching of the New Testament proceeds on the recognition of the necessity of satisfaction to the justice of God through vicarious suffering on account of sin. The primary work of the Lord Jesus Christ was to die in the place of guilty men. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." There is no ambiguity about these statements. Let there be none about our faith or testimony. The only ground of a sinner's justification is through the precious blood of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3: 25, 26). Salvation is not merely the forgiveness of the sinner; it is the justification of the sinner. It is not mere pardon; it is righteousness. It is not overlooking our account; it is settling our account in full.

2. **Intercession.** Having accomplished His sacrifice He passed within the veil and there for eighteen centuries He has been engaged in our behalf as our Advocate and Representative. His work as our High Priest in heaven is just as unselfish as His work on earth. He is not there

for His pleasure, but for our interests. He belongs to us and His one occupation is to represent us, befriend us, and help us in time of need. His intercession involves in the first place His presenting to the Father His accomplished sacrifice and claiming on the ground of His finished work for His people all the blessings of the covenant of grace.

Next it involves His constant representing of their interests before the throne as expressed a little later in this epistle, Christ is entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Not only has He secured for us the forgiveness of past sins, but He is constantly securing for us forgiveness and grace for every fault and every need. Therefore we read, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." His advocacy includes the receiving and presenting of our prayers before the throne, and the mingling with our imperfect petitions of the sweet incense of His merits and righteousness through which we find continual acceptance. He is the strong Angel before the throne who presents much incense with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne (Rev. 8: 3). Thus we are kept in constant fellowship and can say with holy boldness, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

II. HIS QUALIFICATIONS

1. He is divine. We have "a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." In seeking an attorney to conduct some important case in court it is usual that men should endeavor to secure some person of high standing and superior influence, a great name in the legal profession, one who has access at headquarters and influence in places of authority. Our Advocate is the Judge Himself, the most potential name in heaven and all the universe. His pleas are all demands. His petitions are always claims. Him "the Father heareth always." He has never lost a case, and He is your Advocate. You do not need to retain Him by some enormous fee. You do not need to fear that He will ever be retained by your adversary. His one business is to attend to your interests and represent your case. There is emphatic force in the phrase, "We have a great high priest." You have Him. He is yours.

2. He is as human as He is divine. He is committed to the interests of our race. He is one of us. He wears our nature and stands before the throne a man. "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

3. He has passed through the heavens. He represents not merely the natural life, but the resurrection life. He has entered into the world of the unseen. He has traversed the realms of death. He represents the future life as well as the present. He is able to carry us not only through, but beyond the present sphere and stage of our existence. He has passed not only

into the heavens, but through the heavens; as it is expressed in another passage, "He has passed above all heavens." There is no part of the universe that is not beneath His feet and under His control. He is supreme in authority, infinite in influence and all-powerful in His advocacy and resources. What confidence we may have in confiding all our interests to His almighty hands!

4. He is able to sympathize with us to the fullest possible extent, "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

(a) He is able to sympathize with us in our temptations. He has felt the keen pressure, and while He has not yielded to it He knows all the pain, the strain, and the horrible contact with the powers of darkness. There is no form of temptation which He has not experienced, and in the hour of painful pressure He is near at hand and "able to succor them that are tempted."

(b) He is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. He knows what it is to be peculiarly susceptible to temptation. He remembers the long fast days, when, exhausted and hungry, the enemy tried to take advantage of His infirmity and make Him eat forbidden bread. And so when you are pressed above measure, in sore extremities, nervous, tired, and susceptible to evil influence, He understands. He makes allowance and He will give supernatural help and deliverance if you will but look to Him and never be discouraged.

(c) He is able to sympathize with us even in our failures. He can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. He does not judge harshly even the sinner so long as he is willing to forsake his sin and receive the help of the Savior. His one business is to deal with sin and save the erring, and we can come boldly to Him not only when we are right but when we are wrong, for mercy to pardon as well as grace to help.

(d) He is able to sympathize with us in our sorrows. There is no form of affliction which He has not shared. Have you mourned in bitter bereavement? He, too, wept at Bethany. Have you felt the keen pang of a false and faithless friend? He, too, was denied by the disciple for whom He had done the most. Have you been betrayed by those whom you had harbored and who had accepted your friendship only that they might have a better opportunity for perfidy? He, too, felt the kiss of Judas and "knew what was in man." Have you been poor and homeless? He had not where to lay His head. Have you ever felt the anguish of spiritual desertion and vainly sought your Father's face? He, too, once cried in darkest agony, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" There is no step on the dark path of human sorrow, not even the last deep plunge of death itself, through which the Forerunner has not passed and in which He does not come back to your side and whisper, "Fear not, for I am with thee."

Once, it is said, a timid prisoner was sentenced for some breach of discipline to spend the night in a dark and lonely cell so terrible in its isolation and its gloom that it was the one horror of the prison, and was dreaded almost worse than death itself. He was borne away in chains to his dark and dreary dungeon, and at last flung in upon the damp floor while he felt the loathsome

air creep over his vitals and almost choke out his life. As he heard door after door close behind him, and knew that he was there for one hopeless night, far removed from every human voice or ear, buried underground in a living tomb, he sank upon the floor with a gasp of despair and his very reason for a moment seemed to fail him. Then suddenly he thought he heard above him the sound of footsteps, and as he listened he knew that someone was pacing the floor above with measured steps. It was an infinite relief, although he knew not who might be there. And as he listened the steps ceased and a low voice was heard speaking through the floor to him, and saying, "Fear not, I am here; I am the chaplain of the prison. I heard of your terrible fate. I learned that you were here. I knew you could not stand it alone, and want you to remember that I will be here as long as you remain." Instantly that dark vault was transformed into a place of rest. He was no longer afraid. He was no longer alone. Another heart was throbbing by his side. A friend was near with love and sympathy. Beloved, listen in the darkest hour and the loneliest night and you, too, will hear Him softly saying, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age"; and you will answer back, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

(e) He is able to sympathize with us in our physical sufferings and conflicts. The word 'infirmities' is often applied to physical disease, and our Savior was tested in His body as well as in His spirit, and learned in more than one conflict to take divine strength for His physical frame. In the wilderness, when weak and faltering the enemy pressed Him to accept forbidden bread, He left us the lasting message that for man, as well as the Son of man, physical strength may be received not from bread alone but from the mouth of God.

But this epistle tells us of another conflict, "In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5: 7). This seems undoubtedly to refer to that conflict in the garden when the devil tried to take His life before the time, and He cried to the Father that the cup might pass from Him. We have been accustomed to be taught that His prayer was not heard. But we are told in this passage that "He was heard in that he feared." His life was preserved. There appeared an angel unto Him strengthening Him, and He was able to go through the awful strain of the judgment hall and the cruel cross, fulfilling every Scripture, finishing every task, and then voluntarily yielding up His own life, and saying, "It is finished," as He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. So He still understands your disease and pain, your fight for life, your faith that overcomes disease and lives till your work is all complete through His almighty life and strength. Let us, therefore, come boldly to His throne for physical help in every time of need.

(f) He is able to sympathize with us in all the steppings and painful discipline of our Christian life. He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2: 10). He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5: 8). And having been made perfect He now comes to perfect us and lead us to glory by the same path through which He, the Captain of our salvation, went before. Christ's perfection had no suggestion in it of moral imperfection. It simply means completeness and full growth. He did not come upon the scene like Adam, full grown, to bring to us a cast-iron example of holy character, but He was born a little babe and His whole life

unfolded in perfect naturalness and simplicity like ours. And so His trials, temptations, and various situations all came to Him in the course of a perfectly human life, and He met each of them in detail, just as we meet ours, developing day by day all those traits of patience, unselfishness, and obedience which at last left the record complete and yet perfectly human. He had learned obedience by a long and painful discipline, and His life was symmetrical and perfect. So now, He comes to walk with us in all the details and teach us step by step and day by day to finish our course and complete our life-pattern even as His.

III. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS or CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

1. Let us hold fast our profession (Heb. 4: 14). Let us be true to Him who is so true to us.
2. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4: 16). Literally, "Let us draw near." We have perfect access; let us accept it. Let us enter into our holy privileges and heavenly rights in Him. Let us do it with boldness: let us have perfect assurance of His love and our acceptance, and without fear or faltering let us come boldly to the throne of grace. Let us come in time of need, for He is ready to give us instant help. It is grace for timely need. We need not wait. The telephone is always on. The door is always open. As someone has said, "He is such a handy God." There need not be one lost link or one instant of failure. Let us make more of the privilege of prayer, and come boldly to the throne of grace.
3. Let us go on unto perfection (Heb. 6: 1). Let us follow Him in obedience until the Captain of our salvation shall have made us also perfect through sufferings, and brought us unto glory even as Himself.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 4

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST SUPERIOR TO AARON

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8: 6).

Having shown that our Great High Priest is divine and human, and thus able at once to sympathize with and help us, the author of this epistle next proceeds to show His superiority to Aaron and all the priests of his line. It was very difficult for a pious Hebrew to believe that anyone could succeed or supersede the imposing figure of the great high priest. And so the writer devotes several chapters to a masterly argument to prove the superiority of the Son of God as the One to whom Aaron was but the type and forerunner. In the course of this argument he brings out many points of profound interest and instructiveness, illustrating the connection between the Old and New Testament, and showing with great beauty and power the blessed character of our Advocate in the heavens.

I. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST BELONGS TO A SUPERIOR ORDER OR PRIESTHOOD

He is not a priest of the Levitical line, but "after the order of Melchisedek." This is expounded and expanded with great fullness in Hebrews 7: 1-17. This ancient figure looms out of the gray mists of the patriarchal age with a strange dignity and importance. He comes upon the stage of time, as the writer expresses it, "Without father, without mother, without descent" or pedigree, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; [He] abideth a priest continually." Perhaps it is only meant that Melchisedek's descent is unrecorded, and yet there are many who believe that he was none other than the Son of God Himself anticipating His incarnation, and as Dr. Andrew Donar once expressed it, "trying on the garments of His humanity a little in advance of the time."

His very name is typical and significant, King of Righteousness. His very office as priest of the Most High God set him forth as the forerunner of Him who came to bring in everlasting righteousness. His very capital was emblematic of his great Anti-type. King of Salem, which means peace, foreshadowed the coming Prince of Peace. Meeting Abraham on his return from a glorious campaign, he blessed him in the name of the Most High God whom he represented, and received from him tithes in acknowledgment of his high official character as God's representative on earth. The most striking feature of his priesthood was that he was both priest and king, which was true of no one else in the whole history of the priesthood, except of Jesus only, of whom it was said that He should "sit and rule a priest upon his throne." Christ as our Great High Priest is also a King with power to answer His own petitions and guarantee to us

the blessings for which He intercedes. Now, this is a dignity far higher than any of the priests of Aaron's line enjoyed, and the apostle uses it to demonstrate the inferiority of Aaron to Melchisedek, for when Abraham acknowledged Melchisedek, Aaron and his sons who were then "in the loins of Abraham" virtually acknowledged him too as their superior, for as the writer well expresses it, "the less is blessed of the greater." If Aaron was inferior to Melchisedek he must, of course, be inferior to Christ, and so the apostle's argument is demonstrated by an inevitable conclusion, while at the same time the picture of our Great High Priest is exalted to the highest possible sublimity.

II. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST BELONGS TO A SUPERIOR TRIBE

Aaron and his sons were of the tribe of Levi, but Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7: 14). Judah was the royal tribe bearing the scepter of domination, of which it was said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come"(Gen. 49: 10). Judah always marched first among the tribes of Israel, and Christ's peculiar preeminence is that He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In this alone consists a distinct preeminence as well as a line of demarcation separating Him wholly from the whole line of Aaronic priesthood. Indeed, He could not lawfully belong to the Hebrew priesthood, and "if he were on earth, he should not be a priest," because they all necessarily belonged to the tribe of Levi. Therefore His priesthood is of a heavenly order and belongs to the great sanctuary in the heavens and the relations of God with sinful men of every race and time.

III. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST HAS A HIGHER CALLING AND APPOINTMENT

The Aaronic priests were set apart by ceremonies of peculiar sacredness, which are described in the twenty-ninth chapter of the book of Exodus. But Christ was appointed by far more sacred authority, even by the oath of Jehovah Himself. (Heb. 7:21.) Back of the work of redemption and the Gospel of salvation there is a great divine transaction known as the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. And this is the source and foundation of all the blessings of grace far back in the ages before angels sang or sinner fell. The Father and the Son, foreseeing the ruin of the human race, entered into an eternal covenant by which the Son agreed to fulfill all the conditions of the broken law by His obedience and death, and the Father swore that in consideration of this He would give the Son to the people whom He redeemed, and all the blessings which He purchased by His sacrifice. Therefore when He was finishing His earthly work our Lord appealed to His Father in His final prayer, claiming the fulfillment of this covenant, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." It was in connection with this covenant that the Father pronounced the solemn oath constituting Christ our Great High Priest. In the 110th Psalm we find David referring to this covenant and oath, saying, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Our Savior's priesthood and our salvation rest upon a foundation as strong and sure as the Rock of Ages and the everlasting throne.

IV. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST HOLDS HIS OFFICE BY A BETTER TENURE

"They were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Heb. 7: 23, 24). With every human generation there was a new family of official priests. Some like Aaron were true to God. Some like the sons of Eli were sinful men. But our High Priest remains unchanged through the eternal years. He on whose bosom John leaned is just as near to us. He whom your father and mother trusted is still as real to you. He who is your Friend today will be your Friend forever. When the sun has ceased to glow and the heavens have passed away He will remain your everlasting Friend.

V. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST BEARS A HIGHER AND HOLIER CHARACTER THAN THE PRIESTS OF AARON'S LINE

"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). He is absolutely spotless, while they were sinful men. He has no guilt to atone for, while they had to offer first for their own sin. While so perfectly human that He can fully represent us, He is so perfectly sinless that all His merits become available for our unrighteousness and sin. Not only does His death expiate our guilt, but the obedience of His perfect life is credited to our account and we become invested with His merits and righteousness and stand in the same place as if we, like Him, had kept God's holy law. At the same time His greatness adds immeasurable worth to His goodness, for He is made higher than the heavens.

VI. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST MINISTERS IN A BETTER SANCTUARY

Aaron's place of service was the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9: 24). That ancient Tabernacle was shifted day by day, and after awhile it perished and passed away. But the heavenly tabernacle is a greater and more perfect tabernacle "not made with hands," "eternal in the heavens." Not only so, when He brings us near He Himself becomes to each of us "a little sanctuary," and the heart of the believer becomes a holy place where God meets him as of old He met the people, and we understand the meaning of such mighty words as these: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "Abide in me, and I in you." "I will set my tabernacle among you, . . . and I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." In our very heart of hearts we may still come to the altar of sacrifice, the laver of cleansing, the golden lamps with their perfect light, the Living Bread, the sweet incense, nay, even the innermost chamber of the personal presence of God within the veil.

VII. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST IS THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT

This part of his argument commences at chapter 8: 6-13 and is repeated in chapter 10: 15, 16, so important does He deem it. It draws a striking contrast between the message of the old covenant and the new. Four particulars are specially emphasized. The first is the promise of sanctification. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." God does not demand of us external obedience merely, but He puts in us the nature, the principle, and

disposition to obey. He makes His law the law of our being, and we as naturally follow it as a material body falls to the ground by the law of gravitation, or, as an acorn develops into an oak because the law of the oak is in the heart of the acorn. So He puts His will into our heart as the new constitution and impulse of our nature, and it becomes second nature for us to love it, to will it, and to do it.

The second promise of the covenant is His guarantee to give us Himself first, and then to make us His people. "I will be to them a God," He says, "and they shall be to me a people." He does not condition His relationship upon ours, but ours upon His. He takes the initiative and gives Himself to us, and in consequence we give ourselves to Him.

The third promise is His fellowship, intimacy, and the personal revelation of His will to us. "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." He reveals Himself by the Holy Ghost to the simplest child, the most illiterate mind, and to the most humble saint, so that we are not dependent on earthly priesthoods and secondary channels for our knowledge of His will, but we know Him for ourselves as our Father, our Teacher, and our Friend.

And finally the promise of full forgiveness, constant friendship, and deliverance from even the consciousness of sin is added; "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

VIII. OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST BRINGS A BETTER OFFERING AND SACRIFICE

This great truth occupies a large part of the ninth and tenth chapters. (Ch. 9: 12-14; 10: 1-14.) The sacrifices of Aaron's office were dumb and soulless brutes. The sacrifices of our Great High Priest is His own precious life. The sacrifices were involuntary. They were dragged as victims to the altar. His was voluntary. "Lo, I come," was His glad cry, as He plunged from the heights of heaven to give Himself to save ruined man. His heart was in it. His love was in it. His will was in it, "By the will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10: 10). Their sacrifices had no personal merits. His was the life of the holiest Being in the universe, who had no sins of His own to atone for and whose merits are all availing for others. It was the life also of the greatest and noblest Being in the universe and it represents the infinite value which suffices to make atonement even for the sins of the whole world. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

And finally His sacrifice was once for all completed. Theirs were constantly renewed because they never were effectual except as figures of His greater sacrifice which was to come. "But now once in the end of the [age] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It is final and complete and now we are going to enter into all the fullness of its glorious fruition.

IX. FINALLY, THE EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE IS GREATER THAN THAT OF THE ANCIENT PRIESTHOOD

"The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. 7: 19). "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are [being] sanctified" (Heb. 10: 14). Their sacrifices could not take away from the conscience the sense of sin, but His sacrifice is able to "purge [our] conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9: 14; 10: 2). Their ministrations only brought temporary blessing and needed to be constantly repeated; His priesthood brings us the promise of eternal inheritance and settles every question forevermore. (Heb. 9: 15.) There is no limit to the blessings of His priesthood, but "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." What this uttermost salvation means none of us has fully fathomed. It reaches down to the lowest depths of unworthiness, helplessness, and misery. It reaches out to the wildest range of sinful men and the farthest circle of human experience and spiritual need. It reaches on to the remotest age of eternity, and it will not have been fully interpreted until the Millennium shall have ended and the ages of glory begun to roll. It reaches to our temporal affairs, to our physical needs, to the outermost extremity of our being, and the innermost need of our heart and life. It is an infinite, everlasting, complete salvation of spirit, soul, and body for all time and all eternity. Blessed be His holy name!

Such then is an imperfect picture of the work of our Great High Priest. Saved by His death, how much more are we saved by His life! Not only did He plunge for us to the depths of death and Hades, but He has thrown His glorified life across the gulf that separated us from God and heaven.

An incident in the early life of the late Louis Agassiz, the distinguished naturalist, has been published. When he was a little boy in Switzerland his mother once sent him with a younger brother across a frozen lake to carry some message to his father on the other side of the lake. After they had started she observed that in the middle of the lake was a great crack in the ice, over which Louis might be able to leap, but which she was quite sure the little brother could never pass, and she tried in vain to call them back, but the wind was unfavorable and she could not make them hear. All she could do was to pray and watch. At length the little fellows came to the crack, and Louis took a long look at it and seemed to be measuring the distance and the ability of his little brother to get over. Then after giving some careful instructions he threw himself across the gulf on his face, forming a living bridge over which his little brother safely passed, and then he gathered himself up and leaped across.

There is One who has for us become the living Ladder that leads from earth to heaven, the living Bridge that spans the great abyss, the Way that carries us through every dark and strange and impossible place. He has saved us by His life. Let us take His uttermost salvation and let us go forth to carry it and to represent Him to the world, which so sorely needs Him, each of us in turn a living bridge over which our helpless brothers may pass to Him.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 5

THE AUTHOR OF OUR FAITH

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

"But without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11: 6).

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. 10: 35).

Having unfolded the first two themes of the epistle, Christ our Apostle and Christ our Great High Priest, the writer now proceeds to the third, Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Christ our Apostle comes from God to us. Christ our Great High Priest goes from us to God. Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith brings us with Him to God in actual touch and fellowship. Faith is the point of contact, the organ of the spiritual life, the sixth sense by which we come into connection with the unseen spiritual realm all around us. The last portion of the epistle is devoted to a discussion of the nature and effects of faith, and a full unfolding of its influence in the lives of all the long array of holy witnesses who fill the page of sacred story.

I. THE NATURE OF FAITH

A very clear and comprehensive definition is given of it in the first verse of the eleventh chapter. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Many expositions and various versions of this important passage have been given, but the following points sum up substantially the meaning of this definition:

1. Faith is not a mere sentiment, but a substantial reality. The word "substance" carries with it the idea of solidity and reality. Faith is not a mere subjective state of mind, but there is corresponding to it an actual fact of which the confidence faith gives is as a shadow cast by the substance. There are in fact two realities in every instance of true faith. There is first an inward consciousness and confidence which gives to the soul a realizing and satisfying sense of the blessing claimed, and there is secondly an actual blessing, a real fact corresponding to the inward conviction and coming into our personal experience according to our faith. The man who believes in God is not therefore an idealist and a theorist building castles in the air, but he has something reliable to count upon and God can be counted upon to meet our expectations and prove the reality of His confidence. In fact, the only men that have made their mark on the religious history of the world are the men who definitely believed in God and ventured all the weight of their life upon Him.

2. Faith is not a future hope, but a present fact. It is the substance of things once hoped for, but

now not hoped for but believed. The difference between faith and hope is that hope is always in the future, and faith always in the present. Hope is expecting, faith is accepting. The language of the one is, "He will bless"; the language of the other, "He does bless." In the first great object lesson of faith in the Word of God we find God leading Abraham through three tenses: the future, the present, and the past. First He says, "I will bless"; next "I do"; and finally, "I have made thee a father of many nations." All this, it will be remembered, was said long in advance of the actual fulfillment, and yet God counted it and Abraham had to count it the same as if it were already accomplished. It is thus that faith takes salvation and exclaims: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Thus we receive the Holy Ghost and begin to act as if He were abiding in us. It is thus we take the answer to our prayers. "When ye pray, believe that ye receive [the things ye ask] and ye shall have them." It is thus we may take His healing and His help, and count upon Him literally as He speaks to us, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." It was thus He gave the Land of Promise to Joshua, saying to him, "Arise, go over this Jordan ... unto the land which I do give . . . to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." And so it is true still that "We which have believed do enter into rest." This is, perhaps, the most vital and supernatural feature about faith, its power to anticipate the future and call "The things that are not as though they were."

Some years ago a little woman used to attend our meetings in the Tabernacle very regularly, and she was always giving bright and encouraging testimonies of God's wonderful help and her confidence in Him. She had a very hard life. Her husband was blind and helpless, her family large, and she the only breadwinner among them all. But she would get up at four in the morning and finish her washing in time to get to the Friday meeting, and she would always have a shining face and a bright, glad message. Her husband was an old soldier and they were entitled to a pension, for which she was steadily praying and believing. One day she came rushing into my office with both hands extended, crying out with exuberant joy: "Oh my dear pastor, I want to tell you the good news. We've got our pension. We've just had a telegram from Washington that it has passed." She could hardly restrain herself for joy as she talked about the change that it was going to bring, the help and comfort for her husband, the leisure for her, for her Christian work, and the means to give to the cause she loved. After she got somewhat through I asked her if the money had come. "Oh, no," she cried, "we may not get the money for a year, but we've got the pension all the same." And so it came to pass. It was a long time that the case went through the slow forms of the department, but all the time she counted the money just the same as if it was already in her hand, and she was planning for the future without a particle of question. She was simply counting on the government and discounting its promises, so that to her the future was substantially present. How much more should we count upon our God and overleap the intervening spaces by that faith which Abraham had "before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

3. Faith is not vision, but it lives in the unseen. Its watchword is: "We walk by faith, not by sight." It can step out in the dark and people the barren wastes with creations that have not yet come into being. It can look at the most unfavorable conditions and see them transformed until

the wilderness blossoms as the rose. Like Abraham, without being discouraged, it can consider its own body as good as dead, and against hope believe in hope. It is the proving of things not seen. Seeing is not believing. Seeing is the material demonstration. Faith is confidence in the word of another, and against its own senses. As we have formerly said, it is a new sense that sees what others cannot see, and hears what others cannot hear, and lives in a world beyond the ken of man's material senses. So Moses believed as seeing Him who is invisible. So David set the Lord always before Him and said : "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." So the Lord Jesus Christ as He walked through the world could say: "The Son of man which is in heaven"; "He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone." So Peter could write : "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. Faith is not probability, but certainty. It "is the evidence of things not seen," or as some have translated it, it is the "assurance," or the "proving" of things not seen. This brings us to the fact that the word usually used for faith in this epistle is a stronger term, denoting not merely faith, but the boldness of faith. It is the term employed in the thirty-fifth verse of the tenth chapter, "Cast not away your boldness." There are some things which if done at all must be done audaciously. A calvary charge cannot be made with caution and timidity. When once the order is given it must be all charge and nothing else. The faintest hesitation would defeat the whole movement. The very element of its strength is its abandon. When Peter went out to walk on the water it was too late to feel his way or resort to the alternative of swimming if he failed to walk successfully. He must either walk or sink, and when afterwards he tried to swim he actually did sink. It must be the natural or the supernatural. And so when we come to deal with God, if it be God at all it is an infinite God. It is as easy for Him to do the hardest thing as the easiest. It is said of Abraham that he "staggered not at the promise." The Greek is a little finer; he "faltered not." He did not even quiver, but steadfastly pressed forward "being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was" not only able but abundantly "able also to perform." The difference between believers consists entirely in this element of assurance of faith.

There are some who believe the Bible,
 And some who believe a part;
 Some trust with a reservation,
 And some with all their heart.

It is these who reach the throne and move the world. This is the grain-of-mustard-seed faith which lifts the sycamore tree and levels the mountain. There is power in it. It is the boldness of faith. It is the only faith that is worthy of God or equal to man's emergencies. Let us ask Him for it. Let us cultivate it. Let us exercise and use it. It is the one victorious weapon of our spiritual warfare. It is the one link of connection between helpless man and the infinite resources of God. "Cast not away therefore your confidence," your boldness, for it "hath great recompense of reward."

II. THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF FAITH

1. It makes us partakers of Christ. (Heb. 3: 14.) "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold

the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." It brings us into partnership with our Lord and puts at our command all His resources. The difference between faith and works is that in the one case we do it, and in the other God does it. This was what Christ meant when He said: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." There are two in this partnership. They are working together. We are doing His works because He is doing them in us, and this is only while we believe in Him. It is just the same as when the belt is applied all the power of the engine passes into the machine, and when the belt is disconnected the power ceases. Faith is the belt, and while we use it, it brings all the strength of Christ into our being and work.

2. Faith brings us into rest. "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Heb. 4: 3). This denotes that state of victorious rest, that Land of Promise into which we pass when we turn from our own strength and will, and enter into the fullness of Christ. It is a land of rest. It is a life of victory. And so at every step faith alone brings rest and peace. Thus only can the anxious, troubled heart grow still. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." "All joy and peace" come "in believing." Would you know His perfect rest? "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him." "Rest in the Lord."

3. Faith inherits the promises. "Followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 4:12). You may give me a check and it may be good, but it is practically useless to me if I keep it in my pocketbook, but if I endorse it, come into personal relations with it, and deposit it in my bank, it becomes available for actual things. But even then I must draw upon it, giving my check for perhaps a score of little needs in detail, and each one will be honored up to the full value of that check. I have simply converted it into coal, food, rent, clothing, and the actual necessities of life. It is thus that we take the promises of God. They are bank checks, all signed and endorsed by the potential name of Jesus Christ, but we must put our endorsement on each one, and we must send in our definite check for the things we actually need, and thus the promises become converted into the currency of life, the blessing of every day, the pardon, peace, comfort, strength, and help in time of need, which each covers as we claim it. There are tens of thousands of these "exceeding great and precious promises." But they must be appropriated, applied, and inherited or they become dead letters and drafts that have gone by default. Thus let us inherit the promises, and turn them into glorious victories and living experiences.

4. Faith has a great recompense of reward. (Heb. 10: 35.) It has glorious recompenses here, but these are nothing to the recompense of the reward of which this epistle speaks a little later. (Heb. 11:26.) The highest place in heaven today is given to a man who never preached a sermon, built a church, or organized a mission. He simply believed God, and Abraham, the father of the faithful, sits at the head of the table yonder, and we behold the translated souls who pass above carried to Abraham's bosom. The first that entered paradise after Christ's ascension was a poor sinner whose hands were stained with crime, but who, in the brief moment before his spirit was torn from his suffering body, sent up one little prayer of faith to the crucified Redeemer hanging by his side, and received the instant response, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," and so passed through those gates as the first ransomed spirit to

claim the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, all because he simply trusted Christ and committed his future unreservedly to His mercy. "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," and it will bring to us the recompense of the reward. If you can do nothing else for God you can, at least, be like Abraham, who was "strong in faith giving glory to God."

5. Faith pleases God. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11: 6). Our trust expresses confidence in God, and there is nothing so offensive as to be doubted. The great Lord Shaftesbury related in Exeter Hall a little before his death a personal incident full of beautiful significance. He said that once crossing the crowded streets of London on a slippery day, a little girl was standing at a crossing in evident perplexity, looking up and down the street and eagerly scanning the faces of the passers-by. She gave a keen look at the old statesman, and then with simple frankness stepped up to him and politely asked him if he would help her across the crowded street. He did so with great courtesy and care, and after he had landed her safely on the other side he ventured to ask her why she had selected him. She looked up simply and said: "Why I looked into your face and felt I could trust you." He was very much gratified, took her name and address, and afterwards remarked that although he had often been honored by his queen and his country he had never been so highly honored as when that little girl put her hand in his and told him that she would trust him. How must our Father feel when we doubt Him! Let us please Him by trusting Him more.

6. Faith is the principle by which our very life is sustained. "The just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10: 38). Not only are we saved by faith, but it is our vital breath and the channel of our constant communion with the sources of our spiritual strength. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." The moment we cease trusting we cease receiving, and our life begins to die. It is only as we abide in Him that we live, or He says, "without me ye can do nothing."

7. Faith is the secret of the life of every saint that has passed on before, and the one testimony of all the cloud of witnesses is: Let us be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." We shall take this up more fully later.

III. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3: 12). Let us guard against the evil heart of unbelief.

2. Let us "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14).

3. Let us "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3: 6). We must keep our joy or we shall lose our faith.

4. Let us give "diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end": and "be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6: 11, 12). This is earnest work and needs vigilance, diligence and faithfulness.

5. "Let us hold fast the profession [or confession] of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10: 23). Let us not only cherish it, but proclaim it, and as we tell it to others it will strengthen our own hearts.

6. Let us have patience in the exercise of our faith. "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10: 36). God will keep us waiting until He has proved to us and all others that we really do believe Him.

7. Let us be careful of the little shrinkages of faith. "If any man draw back [or shrink back], my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10: 38). These are the little soft-winged moths that cut holes in our garments. Let us not wait till the mischief is done, but check the first approaches of doubt and unbelief.

8. Let us look back often and "call to remembrance the former days" (Heb. 10: 32), and all we have already suffered, and not lose our victory now by casting away our confidence.

9. Let us look forward and remember the "recompense of the reward" so soon to come, and hold fast our confidence. (Heb. 10: 35.)

10. Let us look up "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12: 2) and trust Him to keep it to the end.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 6

THE PATRIARCHS OF FAITH

"For by it [faith] the elders obtained a good report" (Heb. 11: 2).

That is to say, the men of old, the patriarchs of ancient times, made a record and obtained witness to their high character and achievements only through faith.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a star cluster in the firmament of inspired biography. It is more: it is a whole Milky Way crowded with constellations of light and glory. Think a moment of the difference between the heroes of mythology and ancient secular history and the characters of this inspired cluster, and you will be struck with the self-evidencing power of the Bible. Just as the character of Jesus Christ is the supreme evidence of the divinity of His teachings, so these ancient lives bear witness to a source of power and goodness infinitely higher than mere human virtue. Look for a moment at the divinities of heathen religions: the coarse and brutal Ram, the household god of India; the cruel Kali, their Supreme female divinity; or even their venerated Buddha himself, who was but a dreamer. Look at the heroes of Greek and Roman history, Aeneas, Romulus, Achilles, Hercules; or at their fabled deities, the imperious Jupiter, the licentious Venus, or any of the real or ideal figures that loom out of the gray antiquity of the world's traditions. Then contrast with them the humble faith of Abel, the holy walk and glorious translation of Enoch, the magnificent spiritual courage of Noah, the overshadowing grandeur of Abraham's life, the triumphant fortitude and splendid coronation of Joseph's sufferings; and note how the very ideals themselves transcend the characters of human history and tradition as high as heaven is above the earth, and prove to us that back of these conceptions there must have been some greater reality that inspired them and some supernatural power that impelled them.

And this really is the secret of the difference. Man's ideals are but human and reflect the imperfection of the human; back of these lives there is divine power, and they are but reflections of God's goodness and God's strength.

In fact this is the essential difference between the heroes of human history and the examples of the Bible. The character of a Washington, a Dewey, or a Lincoln stands out in bold relief, and men hold up to the rising generation the virtues and achievements of these distinguished examples as patterns of what we can attain by energy, patience, courage, and genius. But the characters of Holy Writ stand forward in the light of something greater and better than themselves. They make no claim to personal superiority. They tell us at the outset that they were but weak and fallible men without strength or virtue, and that all they became and all they

accomplished was due to a power behind them.

Take, for example, Jacob in the Old Testament. The one lesson of his life was unlearning, undoing, and suppressing his own self-confidence and self-sufficiency. Take the character of Paul in the New Testament. The very watchword of his experience is: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." These men exhibit not themselves but the grace of God through which they overcame. Thus they became examples of faith, for faith is just that organ that touches God and brings Him into our life, enabling us to cease from our own strength and draw our life and strength from Him alone.

Let us look at this galaxy of holy character and victorious faith, and as we do so we shall find that it consists of a series of groups each complete in itself, and rising to a climax by successive stages.

The first of these groups consists of the eight witnesses taken from the book of Genesis and reaching from Abel to Joseph. We shall find that these eight patterns cover a complete series of progressive steps in religious experience.

I. ABEL, OR THE FAITH THAT SAVES

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Abel began at the beginning. This is more than a great many are willing to do today. Rather they are learning to climb up some other way and get into the life of Christ a little beyond the cross. The other day a clergyman in the old orthodox Southland flung aside a hymn book with a gesture of impatience because of the hymn, "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood," which he said was coarse and unfit for refined ears. The idea of a bath of blood was an outrage on good taste. Happily there was another minister present who was brave enough to get up and read a passage of Zechariah speaking of a "fountain opened . . . for sin and for uncleanness."

The first thing about Abel's faith was that it recognized his sin. He came as a guilty sinner needing atonement, and bringing a sacrifice. Cain came as a gentleman to exchange compliments with God and present some fruits and flowers as a visitor on equal terms. But God would have nothing to do with him. Faith always takes the sinner's place and then claims the sinner's Savior.

The next thing about Abel's faith was that it brought a bloody sacrifice as the type of the dying Lamb of God. This must always be faith's first acceptable act, to present the blood of Christ as the settlement for our sin and the ground of our acceptance. It was for the sake of this that Abel was accepted, God testifying not of him but of his gifts. God did not look at Abel, but He looked at the lamb, and he, like us, was "accepted in the beloved."

The third thing that happened to Abel was his justification. He was declared righteous. He was recognized as standing in exactly the same relation to God as his great Sacrifice and Representative. And so God pronounces us righteous and treats us as if we were as righteous

as His Son and had obeyed every commandment of the law even as He.

And finally Abel received all this by faith. He did not feel it or wait to feel it, but he claimed it simply because it was God's prescribed way. He counted upon it. He took his stand upon it and God made it good to him. And so he was saved in exactly the same way as every poor sinner is today, by coming in simple faith as a sinner, claiming the promise, putting his weight upon it, and going out to act as if it were true for him. There is no finer illustration of the faith that saves than the simple testimony of Hedley Vicars the moment he accepted the blood of Christ to cleanse him from all sin and went forth saying: "If this be true for me I act from this moment as a man who has been cleansed from all sin in the blood of Christ."

II. ENOCH, OR THE FAITH THAT SANCTIFIES

This is the natural order. Having found Christ as a Savior we next want to walk with Him as our Sanctifier and very life. And so we find the second step of faith in Enoch's life. The first thing we see about him is his walk. He has begun, now he is going on. This takes in every department of our life, our inner experiences and our outward conduct. It is all to be by faith and under the influence of God.

Next we see Enoch's companion. We are not told so much about Enoch as we are about the One with whom he walked. It was not his holiness that was so marked, but that of his Friend. This is the New Testament conception of holiness; fellowship with Jesus, union with God, Christ in the heart, "Abide in me, and I in you." There is no simpler, deeper, higher definition of the life of faith unless it be the Pauline edition of that truth: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Sanctification is the Christ life; it is to know Him, to be with Him, to have Him in us, to look to Him every moment, and to lean upon Him for everything, drawing our life moment by moment entirely from Him.

Next we are told that he pleased God. The will of God was the rule of his life. The divine acceptance was his constant aim and joy. His supreme purpose was his Master's example, His Master's Word. We can please God too. The best part of it is to want to please Him. A little child full of imperfection can have a perfect heart to please its mother, and even amid all our errors of judgment and stumbling steps our hearts can still turn to Him as the needle to the pole and say: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

And finally we are told how Enoch pleased God and walked with God and had the testimony that God accepted and loved him. It was by faith. He just believed in the love of God. He walked with Him in confidence. He looked to Him as a little child. He leaned hard upon His presence and dwelt in the very love-life of his Lord. So let us by faith realize the Master's precious words: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

III. NOAH, OR THE FAITH THAT SEPARATES

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became an heir of

the righteousness which is by faith." The difference between Noah and the people of his age is this, that they were living for the present world, building their houses, investing their money, forming their attachments as though the existing order of things was to go on forever, while Noah believed that his present age was condemned and soon to pass away, and all his plans and works had reference to the age beyond on the other side of the flood. They were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," but Noah was building that house of refuge that was to bear him across to his true inheritance on the shores of the new world which faith continually saw before. Thus Noah's was a separated life and it was separated by his belief of the great fact which God told him respecting the destruction of the world by the flood and the new age that was to follow.

So, beloved, our lives must be separated from this present age. "This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world [that is, the stage show which is merely being acted for an hour] passeth away." The only power that can lift us into this and keep us there is the blessed hope of Christ's coming believed and realized. It will make the next age so real that the present age will lose its power of attraction and we shall live under the "power of the age to come." It is one thing to hold the theory of the Lord's coming; it is another to believe and realize it and constantly live under its power. This can only be effected through a realizing faith, a faith that condemns the world as unworthy of our affection and confidence, and gives us our inheritance in the age to come.

When the old city of Rome was abandoned as the capital of the great Roman Empire, and Constantinople was selected as the new site, then every man who was in the secret would doubtless hasten to exchange his old possessions in the Ancient City of the Caesars, for a little strip of barren sand on the shores of the Bosphorus, for he knew that in a little while the value of the latter would infinitely surpass and supersede the former. And so if we are truly believing in the Lord's return we will be turning all things into the currency of the coming age and investing our lives yonder. Are we doing so, and have we the faith that separates us from this present evil age and leads us like them to live as strangers and pilgrims and look "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"?

IV. ABRAHAM, OR THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." In a sense Abraham combines in his own life all the other qualities already represented. He is the overshadowing figure of ancient faith and holy character, the father of all that believe, and, as someone has said, the Christopher Columbus who first stepped out into the new realms of the spiritual world and discovered new continents of faith and blessing. The first thing about Abraham's faith is that he obeyed God. Here we see faith not trying to get God to do something for us, but faith doing something to please God. Beloved, if you stop and think you may find that the reason you

do not get more from God is because God has been waiting a good while to get something from you. Have you learned the obedience of faith? Have you responded to the call of Abraham's God? Let us take in some of the meaning of this great act of faith. Modern research has taught us that Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham dwelt, was no semi-barbarous haunt, but a cultivated, wealthy and important city in ancient Chaldea. In fact, it was a great university town, and to this day there are remains to attest its importance and its culture. Here Abraham had dwelt in the midst of every earthly attraction. Probably he had a position of influence, for everything about his subsequent history attests the dignity of the Arab chief, the man of weight and culture. But he was called in a moment to part from all this and go out into a dismal desert across more than four hundred miles of barren sands, without even knowing the land to which he was to go, or one step of the way. All he knew was that God had said: "I will be with thee." But that was all he asked to know, for the next thing about Abraham's faith that we should note is the fact that he believed God. It was not merely the promise of God, the attraction God held out to him to recompense him for his obedience, but it was God Himself he believed. To him God was a personal reality, and it was enough for him to have God's Word, God's presence, God's guiding hand. Then when he trusted God it was easy to trust His Word. Beloved, back of true faith there is more than a truth, more than a promise, more than a creed. There must also be the living personality and the conscious presence of God Himself. This was what satisfied Abraham's faith and made it easy for him to go out, not knowing whither he went, so long as he was going out with God. This is faith. Beloved, is it our faith?

But again, Abraham had next to learn to believe God's word, for the promise grew more definite and explicit, and soon it became the promise of a country and the promise of a child. But even then it was a promise that, humanly speaking, seemed impossible. The promised child was to be born in his old age contrary to nature, and yet Abraham believed and waited even when men laughed him to scorn, and his faith certainly seemed the wildest fanaticism. He even dared to assume the new name of Abraham, "the father of a multitude," when it would only make him the jeer of all his friends. But still he trusted God and waited for the fulfillment of His word, and in due time the promise was fulfilled. But once again his faith had to be tested in the severest way, and the very thing that God had given him had to be surrendered and given back, although it seemed that it was necessary for the very honor of God Himself that it should be retained. Isaac, through whom the promised seed was to come, had to be laid on the sacrificial altar and God's own very word appear to become a contradiction. But still he wavered not until every test was confirmed and Abraham stood before the ages the supreme example of faith in God and the father of all that believe.

V. SARA, OR THE FAITH THAT TAKES SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH EVEN FOR THE BODY

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age." There is something very emphatic in the language here. The particle "herself" seems to imply that Sara was the very last who might have been expected to believe, for indeed she had begun by laughing to scorn the promise of the seed. But the time came when even Sara herself could not only believe, but could take into her body a

supernatural power that, like Mary, in later times gave her a glorious part in the lineage of the coming Savior. We are not told of the struggle through which she passed until at last she came to believe the word which once she had laughed to scorn, but we know that God had transformed her doubts into supernatural trust and given through her to the ages the first object lesson of that faith that can take the life of God into our mortal frame and renew our youth like the eagle's. This is the lesson which Samson's life afterwards taught and which the great apostle expresses when he says: "The life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." This is divine healing in its truest lesson, the very life of God Himself lifting us above the human and anticipating even here the coming resurrection.

VI. ISAAC, OR THE FAITH THAT SUFFERS

The patience of faith. This is one of the largest sections of every true Christian experience. God has given us the story of Isaac to illustrate it. His was the faith that could yield up his own life at his father's command and lie down without a rebellious word on the altar of Moriah. His was the faith that could let another choose for him the object of his dearest affections, and the wife of his bosom. His was the faith that could give up his wells as the Philistines pressed upon him and pushed him from place to place. His was the faith that could renounce his choice of his favorite Esau and give the blessing to Jacob at God's command. All through it was a life of self-renouncing faith and love, the love that "suffereth long and is kind," that "beareth all things, ... endureth all things" and "never faileth." Beloved, it is only faith that can teach us patience. It is only when we know that we have something better that we can let the present good go by and the present wrong be forgotten, and wait for God to vindicate and recompense.

VII. JACOB, OR THE DISCIPLINE OF FAITH

Jacob stands before us as the type of a life that began with poor materials and had to be cut and polished at every point by keen affliction until at last "learned he obedience by the things which he suffered," and the man of earth was transformed into the Israel of God. There is no place where we need faith so much as when God is chastening us and the heart grows discouraged and we are tempted think that He is against us. It is then that we need to believe in His everlasting love and lie like plastic clay in the potter's hand, or like the gold in the consuming crucible and say: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Are you there today? Trust Him. "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers." Take the lesson He is so severely teaching. Thank Him that He loves you with inexorable love and will not let you go astray, and some day you will bless Him most of all for the things that hurt you most keenly now. It was not Abraham, it was not Isaac, it was not Joseph, but it was Jacob, the chief of sinners and the meanest of men, that became God's patriarchal prince, the head of Israel's tribes, and the one who gave his own new name of Israel to the race that shall endure when dynasties and empires shall have passed away.

VIII. JOSEPH, OR THE FAITH THAT OVERCOMES SORROW AND TURNS THE CURSE INTO A BLESSING

Space will not permit us to dwell on this illustrious prince further than to say that through all the

depths of his humiliation and anguish which were not, like Jacob's, on account of his own sin and folly, but simply through the wrongs of others, there was one golden ray of light that illuminated every dark place, and it was this; that God was in it and above it all. "Ye thought evil against me," he could say to these wicked men, "but God meant it unto good." Only when our faith can see His overruling hand, His ultimate and victorious purpose, shall we also be able to rise above our sorrows and "glorify ye the Lord in the fires."

Standing once on the banks of the St. Lawrence during a summer holiday, I threw my little ships of paper and of pine into the stream beside me, and I noticed that they all flowed upward against the stream. At first I wondered, and said, "Am I mistaken, does the river run the other way?" Then I looked into the center of the stream and saw a great log sweeping down toward the rapids a little below. "Why no," I said. I looked again and then I understood. Ah, this is but an eddy on the shore and things are not what they seem. And so, beloved, if you look at the things immediately around you they may often appear to be going in the wrong direction, but if you will look up to God and fix your faith upon the great mid-current of His love and faithfulness, you will find that one unvarying purpose of blessing is running through it all and you will know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

God gives us the faith of Abel that saves; the faith of Enoch that sanctifies; the faith of Noah that separates; the faith of Abraham that obeys; the faith of Isaac that endures; the faith of Jacob that learns; and the faith of Joseph that overcomes wrong and sorrow and turns every midnight into morning; and finally, above all the faith of Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 7

THE SEVEN TYPES OF FAITH

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Heb. 11:23).

This passage (Heb. 11: 23-31) contains a separate cluster of stars in the firmament of faith. The last group was taken from the book of Genesis. This includes seven types of faith selected from the next period of Bible history, from Moses to Joshua. This also forms a complete group and, like the other, reaches a climax. It covers a period of trial and conflict as the story of faith ever does. The night is necessary for the stars, and it is out of the darkness of trial that the brightest examples of divine grace and human trust shine forth in every age. Just as it is true that the golden age of a nation's literature is often an age characterized by stirring and trying events, so in Christian experience and Bible story the most illustrious examples of holy character, high achievement, and lofty faith are wrung from the bosom of anguish and forged in the flames of affliction.

I. FAITH FOR THE FAMILY

Here we see the germ of Moses' future life and Israel's history in the breast of a humble mother and a godly father. They were two slaves in the brickfields of Egypt, and all that has come down to us from them is their name and the record of this mother's faith. But there was a spark of celestial fire in those lowly breasts, which kindled all the flames of faith and power that afterwards consumed the hosts of Pharaoh and lighted the torches of Israel's marvelous revelation. Eternity alone will reveal how often the life-story of some illustrious man started in a mother's bosom, and grew out of a little germ of maternal trust even as the mighty oak out of the little acorn.

The cruel law had gone forth that every baby boy should die; but as this mother looked on her little one she saw he was a beautiful child. What mother ever saw anything else in her babe? But her faith saw deeper than even a mother's love, and although it might be death to her as well as to her babe to conceal it, yet she dared to defy the king's commandment, and when she could no longer conceal her treasure God led her to devise the little ark of bulrushes, and then to wait beside the stream until she was called to exchange the place of mother for that of nurse, and bring up the little life that she had committed in faith to the hands of God. Blessed privilege indeed to have the strength of a father's faith and a mother's prayers behind us. Blessed resource for a parent's heart to have the same God still to whom we may confide the lives that are dearer than our own, and the tasks that are too hard for us. Beloved, have you

covered the heads of your precious ones with the sheltering wing of a covenant God?

Once, it is said, Audubon, the great naturalist, while collecting specimens in South America, saw a little bird fluttering in great excitement over its nest. He soon discovered the cause. A huge black snake was slowly climbing up the tree to devour the little birdlings and the mother was vainly struggling to beat him off. Suddenly she shot into the forest and soon afterwards returned with a trailing vine in her beak which she softly spread over the nest, and then went back for more, until she had securely covered the little ones and tucked them in beneath the leaves of this strange plant. Then she sat over on a branch and watched the issue. The snake still crawled steadily up, but when he reached the vine there was something in it that evidently distressed and repelled him. He shrank from it as from a poisonous breath. Again and again he tried to crawl around the tree and approach the nest without touching this thing. But it was all in vain, and at last, disgusted and angry, he dropped from the tree and coiled himself up in despair upon the ground, while the little bird chattered out its joy and praise and seemed to thank the heavenly powers for their protection. So God has given to us not only our salvation, but for the protection of our homes and our loved ones, the leaves of the tree of life which we place about their defenseless heads and defy the serpent's sting. There is a promise in the New Testament which many of us read only half way through: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But there is another clause: "and thy house." Why should this be true only of our salvation? You have taken that promise for yourself; take it for your child; take it for your brother; take it for every unsaved member of your household. Claim it and hold fast to it until, a reunited family above, you thank Him that His word is just as true for you as for the little family of old in Egypt's bondage and on the shores of the Nile.

II. FAITH FOR OUR INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." There comes a time when even the mother's prayers cannot be a substitute for our personal responsibility. Then we must act and choose for ourselves. Moses had the benefit of a mother's teachings as well as a mother's faith, and when the crisis hour came he was true to the convictions that she had instilled into his youthful mind, and he stepped out and assumed for himself the full responsibility of faith.

His religious life began as every life really does, in a true purpose, in a right choice. It is the will that is the helm of life. It is our choice that determines our destiny. Two lives opened before the young Hebrew standing out in clear relief and separated as far from each other as pole from pole. One was a life of honor, luxury, and power; in fact, all that the world at its best could offer, for he was the heir to Egypt's throne, and there was nothing within the scope of human ambition which he might not have claimed. The other was a life of danger, affliction, sacrifice, possible violent death through the vengeance of those whose kindness he refused, and yet withal the blessing of God and the fellowship in suffering, and reward of God's people. But the prospects and the recompenses were all in the distance. The allurements were all at hand, and only the eye of faith could make real the overbalancing value of the things of God and eternity.

But Moses had that higher vision which makes the distant and the unseen more real than the present. He had respect unto the recompense of the reward, and without a moment's hesitation he made his choice. He said one eternal 'No' to the world, and one everlasting 'Yes' to God. He gave up a throne and a crown, and he chose his lot among the afflicted people of God, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." This is the very essence of faith. This is the first principle of consecration. This is the root of piety. This is the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. This is the crisis of every soul. This was the great temptation in the wilderness when the Master refused the devil's splendid bribe and chose instead the will of God alone. There are two sides to this great decision. There is a choosing; there is a refusing. There is a 'Yes', there is a 'No'. Beloved, have you spoken the decisive word? Have you said 'Yes' to God without reserve? Have you said 'No' to the world, and self, and sin?

III. FAITH SEPARATING FROM THE WORLD AND MAKING GOOD ITS CHOICE?

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." The time came when the will must become the deed, and the choice must be translated into action. That time came when the preparations were complete for the departure of the children of Israel from the house of bondage. It was a step of the most serious danger. Pharaoh had bitterly refused and opposed it, and his reluctant consent had been slowly wrung from him; but Moses knew at the last that consent would be withdrawn and that all the power of Pharaoh's armies would be used to draw them back, but "by faith he forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king," and bravely marched forth until he found himself with Pharaoh's chariots behind him and the rolling flood before. And so, beloved, your decision must be proved. God will take you at your word. He will put you to the test and He will help you, like Moses, to persevere "as seeing him who is invisible."

And yet it is just this that renders many a decision abortive. There are thousands of souls in heathen lands who believe the Gospel and have lost all faith in their old traditions, but they dare not step out and confess their faith and risk the sacrifices that are sure to be involved; the grief and anger of their heathen friends, the loss of influence, reputation, employment, family, and sometimes of life itself. And there are thousands in the homeland whose decision for God is rendered comparatively impotent by the compromises they make with the world, and their failure to be out and out for God, to forsake Egypt like Moses, and stand unequivocally on the side of Christ. Unless you dare to confess your Lord and let your former associates know just where you stand, you will be sure to be entangled once more and drawn back perhaps to a life of sin.

It is interesting to notice how Pharaoh tried to keep them back from leaving Egypt. He was willing for anything but this. First, he said they might sacrifice to the Lord, but they must do it in the land. And so the devil is willing that we should have all the religion we want, but we must not leave the world. Next, when beaten from this position he said they might go out of the country, but they must not go very far away. And so the enemy tries to compromise again and lead us to give up the evil things of the world but hold the harmless idols. Baffled in this, he

made a third compromise. He was willing that they should go, but they must leave their children. And so the devil's next move, if he cannot get us to the theater and dance, is to take our children, and we begin to lower the standard of Christian life for the young and consent to a license that we would not claim for ourselves. Finally, Pharaoh fought his last compromise battle on the ground that they and their children might go, but they must leave their property. If the devil cannot have us, he wants our business, our investments, our money. We can have the Sunday, but he must have the six days of the week, the bank book and the safe, the stock exchange and the spirit of mammon. And so millions today have made the compromise, and the result is that every year in this so-called Christian country many millions of dollars are spent for whiskey and tobacco and a relatively small amount is given for the spread of the Gospel. What the Church of Christ needs today is what Dr. Chalmers used to call an "oo and oo" religion, that is the broad Scotch for "out and out."

IV. FAITH APPROPRIATING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

"Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them." All our choices, separations, and sacrifices are vain until we come to Calvary and reach the sprinkled blood. "What would Jesus do?" is not the question until first we have understood what Jesus has done, and accepted it for our salvation. It is this alone that gives us acceptance with God. It is this alone that takes away the paralyzing blight of guilt and sin. It is this that puts us to death in His dying and brings us the new life of His resurrection. It is this that not only atones for the past but, by feeding on the flesh of the Lamb of God, gives us divine strength for the future. Never let us get away from the blood. Never let us cease to feel the heart-throb which those precious words should bring to every ransomed soul,

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power.

A silly minister sitting beside a dying saint forgot himself enough to say to her that it must be a great comfort to her in her dying hour to be able to reflect on a well-spent life. "Yes," she said, "it is." And then with a little twinkle even in her dying eye she looked hard at him and said: "But, my dear pastor, the well-spent life on which I am reflecting is not mine, but that of Jesus Christ, my Savior, and I am occupied in putting my good works in one bundle and my bad works in another, and turning from both to Christ."

V. FAITH STEPPING OUT AND GOING FORWARD ON THE WORD OF GOD

"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." This is a fine description of the act of faith; stepping out on the word of God and acting as if it were true. Their way apparently was utterly closed. Behind them was the pursuing foe, before the pathless flood. There was no way of escape, and yet the word came: "Go forward." Whither? There was no other way but into the darkness and into the depths of the sea, and it was not until they had stepped forth into the very margin of the flood that the waters rolled apart and opened a pathway for their trusting and obedient feet. So faith must not only accept, but also act. It must take its stand upon the Word of God. It must venture on it. It

must count it true and simply step out as if it were an accomplished fact.

"Thank you, Captain," said a grateful general to the private soldier who had saved his life by a sudden act of heroism. He was not a captain, but his general's word was enough for him, and looking up quietly answered, "Thank you, General. Of what company?" He simply went forward and acted according to his master's word, and he found it good. So not only at the entrance, but all along the way of faith we must act upon the Word of God, put our weight upon it, risk our life upon it, face impossibilities upon it and then find the sea divided, the stone rolled away, the mountain become a plain, and the darkness and shadow of death turned into the morning.

VI. FAITH OVERCOMING AND ENTERING INTO THE FULL INHERITANCE OF PROMISE

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Here we pass at a bound over forty years of Hebrew history, and from the Red Sea to the other side of the river Jordan. The wilderness is passed, the Land of Promise is before them, the realization of their grandest hopes is about to begin, the inheritance of faith is awaiting their grasp. But it must be taken also by faith.

There is a formidable barrier lying across their path. There always is when God has some new and glorious experience for us, something too hard for us, some crisis hour, some midnight conflict, some towering Jericho which we cannot leave behind us. It is then, like Jacob, that we must get alone with God, and through the narrow place of trial come into a large place of exalted blessing and lifelong victory. Perhaps some reader of these lines is there today. The struggle through which you are passing is to decide your whole religious future. It is God's opportunity for your spiritual triumph. God can bring you through, but only by faith can the walls of your Jericho fall down. The first thing is to believe that it is possible, that it is for you, that it is for you today, and then to take the place of faith and stand fast through all the seven days and the sevenfold test, until the shout of victory shall ring, and prayer shall be turned to praise. Beloved, have you taken this higher step of faith? Have you not only left Egypt but entered Canaan? Will you take God for it, and will you press on until it becomes for you, as for them, a glorious realization?

You will notice that all the interval including the forty years in the wilderness is omitted in this record. There was no faith in it and it did not count. And so all your years are lost and you have only your labor for your pains until you believe God and enter into the rest of faith and the fullness of your victory and your inheritance.

VII. THE FAITH THAT LIFTS THE VILEST SINNER INTO THE HIGHEST PLACE OF BLESSING AND SENDS US FORTH FROM THE FULLNESS OF OUR BLESSING TO SAVE THE LOST

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." The story of Rahab is strangely interwoven with the victory of Joshua. The book that tells us of the highest Christian life quickly reminds us of the mercy of God for the vilest sinner, and bids us blend the work of salvation with the higher work of sanctification. The heart of God is as much concerned in

seeking and saving the lost as in leading His people into a higher blessing. Let us, like Him, ever be found close to the publicans and sinners. The very best proof that we have reached the Land of Promise will ever be that we are found seeking to save the Rahabs all around and plant the Cities of Refuge for the manslayer and sinner. How beautiful to know that He who raised poor Rahab from the ranks of deepest sin to be the mother of our Lord in His human lineage still waits to lift the most lost and helpless to the very highest place of blessing !

"What are these . . . and whence came they?" we might ask as we look upon the radiant clouds that gather about the setting sun, and the answer would be: "These were the foul and fetid miasmas that came from the swamps and marshes, but yonder sun has transformed them into the glorious forms that wait upon the chariot of his ascension." "What are these . . . and whence came they?" we might ask about the shining pages on which the beautiful words of inspiration are printed, and the answer might be: "These were filthy rags trodden by the passing throng, reeking with uncleanness, but they have been cleansed and purified until they became the very messengers of God and leaves from the Tree of Life." "What are these . . . and whence came they?" will be asked some day by the visitors from distant worlds as they gaze upon the faces and forms of ransomed saints around the throne, and a voice will answer: "These were Rahab the harlot, and the dying malefactor; these were vile and sinful men, but they 'have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" Beloved, this is God's great laboratory of grace, God's living miracle of love, God's sweetest, highest, most enduring work, and in it He lets us have a part. Saved ourselves, let us live to save and serve, and let us remember that the secret of all our power to save is the same old secret by which we were saved ourselves, faith and faith alone.

Lord, give us such a faith as this,
 And then whate'er may come,
 We'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
 Of an eternal home.

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Chapter 8

LIGHTHOUSES OF FAITH

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Heb. 11: 32).

Lighthouses indeed they were, these men of faith that illuminated the darkest periods of Old Testament history, from the time of the Judges to the great reformation under Samuel. Sad as was the story of the wilderness when Israel wandered for forty years, it was not half so sad as the declension after Joshua's conquest of Canaan and the glorious inheritance of the Land of Promise, which was not for forty, but for four hundred years. But the lighthouse is not kindled for placid seas and sunlit skies, but for starless nights and raging storms. And so these troublous times brought out the highest and noblest types of faith and character in all the story of the past. In like manner it will be found that in our own experience faith is born not of favorable circumstances and comfortable surroundings, but of deep afflictions, temptations, and sorrows.

Out of this humiliating chapter of Israel's history, the apostle selects half a dozen unique examples of the highest faith and the noblest achievement. Each is a distinct type, and all together form a third series and reach a still higher climax.

I. GIDEON; OR FAITH FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

1. We see this illustrated in Gideon's call. Hiding from the Midianites in his threshing floor, and trying by stealth to thresh a little grain for his daily supply, Gideon is visited by the angel of the Lord and greeted with this surprising message: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Never was mortal more startled and mortified by such a message. It seemed as if even God was mocking him. He a mighty man of valor, indeed! Rather might he be called a miserable coward. And very naturally he began to remonstrate and tell of his own insignificance and the overwhelming trials that had fallen upon his people. But God quickly reminded him that it was not his might, but the might of Jehovah in which he was to go, and that taking this by faith he was, notwithstanding all his insignificance, a mighty man of valor. "Go in this thy might," said God, "and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" And so Gideon put on the strength of God by faith, and a little later we find this striking expression regarding him: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon [clothed] Gideon" (Judges 6: 34), and henceforth the feeble coward was the mighty man of valor.

2. We see this illustrated in Gideon's company. At his summons thirty-two thousand men

gathered from Israel to fight the battle of freedom. But God told him that he could not use so many. And so the sifting process began. Reduction is not always loss. When that diamond is cut back from six hundred carats to less than one hundred, its value is multiplied ten times over, and every new facet cut in its form adds to its glorious luster. And so when God would strengthen His work He often reduces its apparent proportions. First, He allowed them to sift themselves as He still often does with us. Gideon was ordered to tell all the timid ones that they might go home, and soon twenty-two thousand men were marching back. In like manner, still, God often frightens away from a work the people that are in the way. He makes the reproach so heavy and the sacrifices so great that they cannot stand it, and they leave to find something easier and more honorable.

But there are still too many. It is necessary that they be sifted again. As they drink from the brook all those are set aside who drink with weariness and caution, dipping up the water like a dog from hand to mouth and watching meanwhile against surprise, while the rest, who go down upon their knees and drink with reckless abandon as though there were no danger and no foe to watch are sent away. These men will not do for the Lord's work. He wants hearts that are alert, minds that are wide awake, and soldiers that He can depend upon. Let us not think that faith means dullness. God does not need a great many men, but He must have the right kind. So Gideon's three hundred are all that are left, but these are enough, and with this little host Midian's myriads are hurled back in disaster and destruction.

3. Again we see this principle illustrated in Gideon's conflict and victory. The battle must be fought by faith as well as the army prepared. First, Gideon must get his token from the Lord and know that it will be victory. With a single companion he is sent to Midian's hosts to reconnoiter, and as the two listen on the borders of the camp, lo! a Midianite has awakened from his sleep and is telling his comrades the dream he has just had of Gideon's cake of barley tumbling into the host of Midian. That is enough. It is God's token of coming victory. Gideon hastes back to prepare for the assault. Surely the weapons of that warfare are weapons of faith: fragile pitchers, useful only when they are shivered into broken fragments; flaming torches and rude trumpets proclaiming the name of God and the sword of Gideon -- this is all. And these are still weapons of our victorious warfare. We, ourselves, must become as broken vessels, and then the light will shine through our displacement, and the message which we ring out will become the power of God to the salvation of men and the destruction of the enemy. It is still as true as ever that the greatest hindrance to God's working is dependence on human genius, wealth, influence, and power, and that the men whom God is using today are the men who have learned to say with Paul, "Therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." When tens of thousands were thronging Mr. Moody's meetings in London, the leading journal of England sent an experienced reporter to find out the secret of his power. He listened for several days and then declared that he could see nothing in the manner or the matter of the evangelist's addresses to interest such multitudes of people or to explain this movement. When Mr. Moody heard of it he laughed quietly and said: "Why that is the very secret of the movement, that there is nothing in it that can explain it but the power of God." It is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

II. BARAK; OR THE PRESENT TENSE OF FAITH

Barak had gone forth at the call of Deborah, willing to take second place to a woman in the work of the Lord, and to receive from her lips the keynote of his victory. Very finely does she give it in Judges 4: 14. Her name signifies a bee, and there is a wholesome sharpness in her words that might well wake him up from his languor and delay. "Up"; she cries, "for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?" Here we have the very essence of faith. It is stepping out to meet a God who has already stepped out in front of us. It is not waiting for something to turn up, or hoping for something to happen, but it is instant action, accepting and not expecting.

One day I listened to a very humble colored man as he told the wonderful story of his experience and the way God had used him, which I knew to be true, and then he told us that all this had begun by his one day taking literally a single verse in the eleventh chapter of Mark: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," or, as he put it: "Believe that you take them and you've got them." Sinner, Christ meets you as He met the paralytic at Capernaum saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." If you believe it this moment it is true for you. Discouraged and defeated one, He meets thee as He met Gideon, and He says: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." If you take Him at His word it becomes a living fact in your experience as it was in Gideon's. Sinful, struggling soul, He says to thee: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." If you take it, it is true for you and you go forth cleansed through His precious blood. Sick one, this is the secret of your healing. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." And this is the prayer of faith: "Believe that ye receive . . . and ye shall have." God is always speaking in the present tense. He lives in one "eternal now," and this is where faith must also dwell with Him, moment by moment taking Him for each new deed and having only what we take. O ye that are lingering, leaning, and losing your blessing, "Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered [your enemy] into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?"

III. SAMSON; OR THE FAITH THAT BRINGS PHYSICAL STRENGTH

If Samson had lived today he would have been the leading man in all our college clubs, and no price would have been too high to secure him for the football team, and the athletic tournaments that so rapidly are turning American brains into heels, hands, punch bags, and prize fights. But Samson's strength was not that of material brawn, but a far more subtle and supernatural power. It came to him through the touch of faith and the Spirit of God. Away back in those Old Testament times we have three object lessons of this kind of strength that even a material age can appreciate: the strength that enabled Abraham and Sara to defy the decaying power of age and natural infirmity, and claim the fulfillment of the great promise of a child when naturally it was impossible, and the strength that clothed Samson with more than Herculean power when probably his own frame was not materially stronger in himself than any of his fellows. Samson's strength could not have come from gigantic stature or exceptionally developed muscle, for we know that in a single moment he lost it, and yet he had probably not

lost an ounce of weight, but had touched the forbidden earth and lost the secret of the Lord. Samson's physical strength was a vital principle that came to him from the unseen world and the living One, and it came to teach us that there is for our mortal frame a life and strength in God which we may claim as surely as the power that quickens our soul. For One has lived on earth since Samson's day who contained in His own human frame the power that could raise the dead and heal the sick, and who has become for us, in His resurrection life, the second Head of redeemed humanity and the living Source from which we can take our perfect life for body and for brain. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."

But Samson teaches us one lesson more; namely, that the supernatural life of God in the human body is dependent upon our separation from the world and sin. We can only retain it while we live in His holy will, and we lose it whenever we touch the forbidden world of evil. There is nothing that is so sanctifying as the life of Christ in your mortal flesh. There is nothing that so holds you to a life of separation and dedication. If Christ is dwelling in your body that body must be used as His holy temple and for the things that Christ Himself would do if He were living in your place. This then, beloved, is one of the providences of faith, to take the Lord for supernatural strength, and give it back to Him in living sacrifice and loving service.

IV. JEPHTHAH; OR THE FAITH THAT KEEPS FAITH WITH GOD

Jephthah was an outcast. He was born under discouraging circumstances, repudiated by his father's house, and covered with a stigma of reproach from his mother, for which he was not responsible. But instead of giving up to discouragement, he turned to God for help, and God always loves to take up the cause of the wronged one. Is there a soul within reach of this message whose life has been crushed by some misfortune, wrong, or hereditary entail for which you were not to blame? Beloved, Jephthah's God will be your Vindicator and your almighty Friend. Nay, even if there has been wrong and fault and folly, and you are suffering from the effects of your own mistake, still there is One that will "restore the years that the locust hath eaten," and undo the bitter past. And so the time came when Jephthah's brethren turned to him to lead the forlorn hope of their country's struggle, and with his brave freebooters to give them back their freedom. Jephthah was not slow to respond, and in due time his courage was crowned with victory. As he prepared for the battle he vowed to give to God the first thing that he should meet, and the sequel gave a singular opportunity for illustrating another of the highest qualities of faith. It was his own and only daughter whom he met leading the triumphal dance of Israel's maidens in celebration of his victory. "Alas, my daughter!" he cried, as he rent his clothes, "thou has brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." We do not believe that this sacrifice meant the literal immolation of his child on an altar of blood, but rather the dedication of her life in perpetual virginity to the service of God. This is confirmed by the later references (Judg. 11: 37, 40). What all this meant to Jephthah and his daughter can only be understood by one who realizes all that posterity meant to an Israelite, especially to a ruler like Jephthah, who longed for an heir, and more especially to every Hebrew woman, who felt herself the possible mother of the coming Messiah.

But Jephthah was true to his pledge. Not for a moment did he falter in his purpose of obedience, and so he stands to latest ages a type of the man who not only can count upon God, but a man upon whom God can depend.

Beloved, if you expect God to keep faith with you, how can you forget that God expects as much of you? Therefore, faith and obedience go hand in hand. Oh, to live so that God can say of us as He said of Abraham, "I know him," I can depend upon him, I can fulfill to him all that I have promised.

V. DAVID; OR THE FAITH THAT CAN WAIT GOD'S TIME AND STILL, CLAIM GOD'S PROMISE

David was anointed king over Israel years before he ever sat upon his throne. Indeed the very first result of his anointing was a long period of persecution, trial, and the apparent defeat and defiance of all that God had given. For nine years he wandered a refugee in the mountains of Judah, hunted for his life by the hate of Saul; and still through it all, he counted himself God's anointed king and held himself with the lofty dignity of an heir of promise.

So faith on our part can discount the future, and while the promise seems to tarry, still hear His voice whispering: "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Next we see the faith of David strengthening his hands for battle and girding him with power in the conflict with his foes. Speaking of this in the Psalms he says, "It is God that girdeth me with strength." "He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms." It was faith that fought the battle with Goliath. It was faith that went into every conflict asking God, "Shall I go up against them? Wilt Thou deliver them into my hand?" It was faith that took the victory before the battle began and gave God the glory. So still we fight the good fight of faith, and like David may exercise the faith by which God's heroes "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

But the last, and perhaps the highest exercise of David's faith was in the dark hour of its eclipse, when through subtle temptation he sank into his double crime and fell under the judgment of his God. That is the darkest hour in the history of a soul, and only faith can save it from utter despair. It was then that David's faith reached up from the depths and the darkness until it found God and put on record its simple and sublime confidence in that tender penitential psalm, in which deeply conscious of his guilt and sin he still could cry in his confidence in the power of divine grace: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." To believe that God could thus save him from the uttermost to the uttermost was indeed a faith that reaches down to the deepest experiences of New Testament times.

VI. SAMUEL AND THE PROPHETS; OR THE FAITH THAT HEARKENS AND THEN SPEAKS FOR GOD

It was Samuel who began his life of faith by the simple response: "Speak Lord, for thy servant

heareth." This is the first attitude for all who would be messengers and voices for God. They must first hearken and be good listeners before they learn to speak. The true watchword of every effectual witness for God must ever be: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."

And having learned to hear, Samuel next was as faithful in repeating the message and giving forth the word of God. Therefore he became the prophet of the Lord and the founder of the school of the prophets which remained through all succeeding times the truest body of men among all the classes of ancient Israel. When kings and priests and princes failed, still the prophets were true to God. The prophetic office has been continued in the New Testament Church. It does not consist merely of men who can foretell future events, but is thus defined: "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). He, then, who speaks to men to edification, exhortation, and comfort is a true prophet of the Lord. God wants men in this and every age who can thus represent Him, who can catch the message from above and echo it out around the world. But our words are weak and vain unless we get them first from God. Our messages must be burned into our souls. Our texts must take us before we take them. Our preaching must be the giving out of our very life. We must get the Word at His mouth and warn them from Him. Then the least message that we speak by the wayside, in the inquiry room, in the hospital, in the prison, or from the pulpit will be a prophetic word. It will go just as far as the height from which it comes. God will go with it and as He said it will "not return unto me void, but will accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." A man may speak ever so eloquently; he may prepare his address with scholarship and rhetoric and polished sentences; he may give it with the most impressive elocution; and yet it may be the voice not of a prophet, but of a parrot. He is simply repeating something that he has heard from man. It is the message of God the world wants, and it is the men of God that must give it. Oh, for the faith that knows how to get from Him His word for the age in which we live, His message to the men of today, and give it to all the world.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 9

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

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

The writer has already given us three distinct star clusters in the firmament of faith, and now he sums up a great multitude, of whom the time would fail to tell individually, in one mighty cloud of witnesses, identified rather by their achievements than by their names. His mind becomes lost in a cloud of light, a great Milky Way, as it were, of countless stars spanning the sky of his holy vision. But there is no confusion. The examples fall into distinct classes, and stand for definite lessons of faith and obedience.

I. THE CLOUD ITSELF

Let us look at the cloud itself. It contains four classes of witnesses representing first, the achievements that spring from faith, or what faith can do; next, the personal qualities that spring from faith, or what faith can be; third, the sufferings of faith, or what faith can endure; and finally, the blessings that faith can claim from God, or what faith can receive.

1. The achievements of faith. "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, . . . stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, . . . turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Three classes of achievements are here described. The subjugation of kingdoms refers to Joshua and David; it was by faith that they won their great inheritance. Let us not think that there are no kingdoms left for us to conquer. There are mightier victors still than Alexander or Tamerlane. "He that ruleth his spirit [is greater] than he that taketh a city." There are kingdoms of self-conquest that cost more than a cavalry charge or a bombardment from besieging armies, and there are kingdoms of glorious service for God and the world which are being won by the heroes of faith in every age. When Robert Moffat entered South Africa as a physical and moral wilderness and left it not only one of the richest provinces of the British Empire, but one of the most successful of modern mission fields, a kingdom was subdued more valuable than the empires of the Caesars. When David Livingstone fought and won the battle of his own education and preparation for the ministry, and then went forth to traverse all the heart of Africa and win it from barbarism to civilization, commerce, and Christ, and to leave upon the hearts of the natives the memory of his own high character and stainless goodness, so that for his sake the white man is still treated with kindness and reverence in the regions through which he passed, Livingstone subdued a kingdom whose worth can never be told.

When William Duncan sat down amid the inhospitable regions of northern Canada and out of the wild forest and wilder Indian tribes slowly built up a settlement and a colony of civilized and Christian natives, who can be seen today in the village of Metlakatlah, an object lesson of Christian civilization, with their industries, schools, chapel, and happy homes, surely it is a kingdom for which earthly heroes might well lay down their crowns. When John Geddie passed up to his great reward from the New Hebrides and left upon his tombstone this simple epitaph telling the story of thirty years of self-denying triumph: "When he came there were no Christians, when he left there were no heathen," surely it was a triumph for which angels would gladly leave their thrones. And there are such kingdoms still left in the wide field of this sinful world, if only we have the faith and love to win them for God. As Joshua said to the men of Ephraim when they asked him for a larger inheritance: "Go to the mountains and conquer for yourself all you want. You can have as much as you will subdue." So still God is saying to every aspiring soul: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." You may conquer your own kingdom. You may forge your own crown. You may win as much as you will dare. Never was there an age with such possibilities of heroic faith and self-denial as today.

The Son of God goes forth to war
 A kingly crown to gain,
 His blood-red banner streams afar,
 Who follows in His train?

Next he speaks of those who through faith achieved deliverance from dangers. Three kinds of dangers are mentioned; namely, wild beasts, the elements of nature, such as fire, and the sword of cruel men. Of course, this includes the story of Daniel in Babylon, of his three companions who passed unscathed through the fiery furnace, and of Peter who was rescued at the last moment from the sword of Herod in answer to the faith and prayers of the disciples. But the story of divine deliverance did not end with the age and the page of inspiration. Still the heroic servant of the cross can tell of the tiger of the jungle shrinking away from the fearless eye of the undaunted missionary; of the stormy wind becoming a calm, or the becalmed vessel being saved by the breeze that came in answer to the prayer of the suppliant missionary, and bore them safely from the cannibal shore; and of the oft-repeated story of the Covenanters in Scotland, of the Waldenses in Italy, and of missionaries in pagan lands, who were saved from the cruel hatred of their persecutors by providential interpositions supernatural and divine. Dr. Paton tells of a night when the savages had surrounded his cottage and determined to have his life. But afraid to venture into his immediate presence, they set fire to the outbuildings of his home, and the wind was fiercely driving the flames to the house itself. But the good man calmly prayed to God, and lo, the wind was changed to the opposite direction and the flames were swept back into the faces of the foes, who fled in dismay, pursued by the missionary as he shouted to them the warnings and threatenings of his God; and they flew as from an avenging angel. When the story of our individual lives is all told in the light of eternity, and we see the hidden dangers from which the hand of love has oft delivered, how we will wonder and adore the God of faith, and praise Him for the faith of God!

There is still a third class of achievements; namely, victory over adverse circumstances and armies, "Turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Doubtless he was thinking when he wrote these lines of David's triumphs over the Philistines and the later victories of Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, and Hezekiah, and of the legions who tried in vain to capture Elijah and found themselves out-witted, stricken with blindness or with death; or, of Elisha, surrounded by heavenly horses and chariots. But the story of victory over difficulties and enemies is not yet ended. Every great work for God has to face opposition and attack, and our strongest weapon still is to believe and wait, and to see our God triumph, until instead of fearing and hating our foes, we shall pity them from the depths of our hearts and pray for them in tender compassion, as we behold their humiliation and ruin.

Beloved, shall we claim our place among the conquerors of faith and count all the difficulties and foes that surround us this very hour as only God's challenges to win a crown, and God's opportunities to enable us to prove the possibilities of faith and the power of God?

2. The personal qualities which faith gives. "Who through faith . . . wrought righteousness, . . . out of weakness were made strong." This is what faith can be. Spiritual righteousness and both spiritual and physical strength, these are its personal fruits. There is no greater miracle in Bible history than the personal characters of the men of faith. See Daniel in Babylon, against whom his foes were obliged to say: "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Note the three men who could answer Nebuchadnezzar's threat with the lofty defiance: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter . . . be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." These men were a greater stumbling block and wonder to the heathen world than even the miracle of their deliverance. There is nothing mightier than personal goodness and virtue, and it is today the strongest proof of the power of faith and the grace of God.

The London Christian in publishing a sermon of Rev. F. B. Meyer, related the following incident concerning it. Among the hearers was a very rough and ill-tempered man, of whom his wife and family had often cause to be much afraid. That morning as he returned from church his wife met him with terror, for she had just had the misfortune to drop the cage containing his favorite canary, killing the bird, and she expected as usual a violent storm and a cruel beating, but to her amazement he simply smiled when she told him, and said, "Never mind, Mary, I am glad it was not you." Her little boy was looking on behind the scene, and afterwards came up to his mamma and said: "What's the matter with papa? I thought he'd nearly kill you, but he didn't do nuffin'." Yes, it was the other side of the sermon. It was the faith that "works righteousness" which tamed his wild and savage heart into gentleness, and made the desert blossom like the rose. It has done it, beloved, for you and for me, and it can do it for any temperament, in the face of any situation, and it can do it this moment if you will only believe and receive.

Then faith is just as effectual for physical as for spiritual strength. The faith that strengthened Sara to become the mother of the seed of promise, that made Samson mightier than the giants of Philistia, can still heal the sick and bring the life also of Jesus to quicken our mortal bodies

and still make it true of us as of our fathers: "Who through faith . . . out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

3. The sufferings of faith. Its supreme power appears in the hour of trial. Every variety of suffering is here described. There is pain, shame, privation, temptation, and even death itself. But faith not only enabled them to endure, but even to triumph over persecution, pain, reproach, and death. "What can your Christ do for you?" they asked the little martyr of Antioch as they beat him before the judges and the soldiers until he was almost insensible. "My Christ," he said, "can make me so happy that I scarcely feel your blows." And when they stretched him on the rack until life was almost gone, they brought him back and asked him again: "What can Christ do for you now?" "He can make me love my enemies," the hero answered, "and pray for those who despitefully use me and persecute me." Once more the awful ordeal was renewed and once more they brought him back from death to torture him with the same question, and he meekly breathed out his last breath with the sweet reply: "My Christ can take me to Himself where I shall never suffer pain again." Such was the story of ancient martyrdom ten thousand times repeated by noble children, heroic maidens, venerable fathers, insulted mothers, and a great cloud of witnesses of whom the world was not worthy. No longer are we compelled to prove our faith at such a cost, but there are daily martyrdoms, there are little annoyances, there are ceaseless fires of humiliation, temptation and pain that are often harder than one great sacrifice, but still the grace that comes to faith can suffer long and be kind, can endure all things, and even count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. It is not merely suffering that God asks, but triumphant suffering, suffering that keeps its love, its sweetness, its shining face and triumphant song, and for the joy set before us endures the cross despising the shame.

4. The last class of witnesses in this catalogue includes those who through faith "obtained promises," and received blessings from the hand of God. This is the highest province of faith. It is not so much what we do, what we suffer, what we are, as what we take from Him. Faith is just an open hand and all its power comes from outside itself. It brings us into contact with God and receives His all-sufficiency, for He gives what He commands and supplies what He requires. Therefore the chief business of faith is not so much to be as not to be. Its very weakness is its strongest plea. Therefore we find that those who took most from God through faith were not strong men but feeble women. The very height of its achievements is this: "Women received their dead raised to life again." Still faith can take from God as much as it will dare to claim. The treasure house is as full, the promise as large, and the need is as vast as in the days of old. Still there are "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," and "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," and still we may obtain "like precious faith" to claim these promises and receive this fullness of His power. This is today the great province of faith, and the men who know how to use this victorious weapon are the men who as in the days of old shall once more prove what faith can do, can suffer, by what faith can receive. So let us take the fullness of our inheritance that we may give it back in service to God and blessing to the race.

II. THEIR WITNESS TO US

What is the message of this cloud of witnesses to us? What is our relation to them?

1. They encompass us. Somehow we are closely related to them. They have preceded us in the race and perhaps they are watching us now as spectators from the galleries. There is an inspiration in a noble past telling us that what man once did man may do again. "Soldiers," said Napoleon to his little band at the battle of the Pyramids, "from yonder pyramids forty centuries are watching you to see you do your duty." But this cloud of witnesses covers more than forty centuries. The good of all the ages are perhaps surveying us as we follow on; at least we may survey their glorious example and follow in their footsteps.

2. But they call us to run the race ourselves. This is not a mere play that we are looking at for our entertainment. It is for us a tremendous and a living reality. We are standing in the arena. We are in the dust and heat of the conflict. Our crown is still at stake. Our very life is hanging in the balance. For us it means the most strenuous endurance. It is not a dream of sentiment, and it is not a piece of fine art, but it is a sober and awful reality involving the stake of every interest that the heart can hold most dear.

3. It means the most careful preparation for the contest. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." In the athletic contests of today we find the competitors are willing to sacrifice every appetite and indulgence while training for the course, and in this heavenly race there are things to be laid down, sacrifices to be made, self-denials to be proved without which we cannot hope to win the prize. The sin which so easily besets us must be laid aside, whether this be some easily besetting habit into which we are most likely to fall, or simply the sin of unbelief against which the whole force of this epistle has been directed, the one sin which leads to all other sins. But not only so, there are also weights as well as sins that must be laid down, things not necessarily wrong in themselves, but things that hinder us in our course, which each heart must learn from its own experience and the voice of a sensitive conscience. All things may be lawful, but all things edify not. The question is how does it affect our spiritual life, our love to Christ, our readiness for service, our power in prayer? It is by this that we must decide the question of what is best. The prize is too precious, the issue too vast, and eternity too long to be weighed in the balance with any bauble of earthly pleasure or earthly gain.

4. We must run the race with patience. Not by paroxysms of sudden enthusiasm, but by the slow and steady plod of a life of patient endurance shall the struggle be won and the victory be made complete. Faith must learn to stand as well as to run, and having done all, at last to stand approved and crowned.

5. But after all that has been said the apostle adds that these glorious witnesses failed to receive the fullness of the promise. "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." What is this better thing wherein we possess the advantage over them? Surely it is in this, that we have the Holy Ghost and the living Christ, of which they had but the promise and the occasional visitation. To us the Spirit has come to abide. In us the living Christ dwells not only as the Example, but as "the author and finisher of our faith." Not only are we called to look up the shining way whither the Forerunner has gone in

-- but He comes back to hold our hand and lead us up the steps of faith until we reach our coronation too -- but all that He has won we also may claim, and where He has entered in there we may follow.

A bright and intelligent young lad from a very poor family had been received to a position of confidence and responsibility not only in the business but also in the family of his employer. One night he had been invited to spend the evening at a social gathering in this home of wealth and luxury. Of course he never took his family with him for they were wretchedly poor, and all that he could do was just to keep them from destitution. But late that evening a gentle tapping was heard on the door of the mansion and when opened two little tots were standing there clothed in rags and as dirty as little animals, and they timidly said: "Please may we come in? our elder brother is in there." It is needless to say that they were very cordially welcomed, and yet it would not be strange if that elder brother flushed with shame and hurried away with his little wards as soon as possible. But there is one palace home where the poorest sinner may come with boldness, and knocking at the door may say: "May I come in? my Elder Brother is there." The doors will swing wide open. The Elder Brother will meet us with a welcome which will have in it no flush of reproach or shame, for "He is not ashamed to call us brethren," and all that He has shall be ours. This is the next vision that comes before us in the cloud of witnesses. And so as the witnesses pass by let us lift up our eyes and see "no man save Jesus only," and go forth to run the race "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 10

THE FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the working out of three magnificent thoughts. First, Jesus Christ our great Apostle, coming from God to us. Second, Jesus Christ our great High Priest, going back from us to God. Third, Jesus Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith and the Captain of our salvation, taking us back with Him to God. It is the last of these thoughts that the writer is now expounding. He has already explained the nature and province of faith, and given us four groups of examples from the Old Testament, and now he brings the series to a lofty climax by introducing the Lord Jesus Christ as the crowning witness of faith both as an example of its power and as its Author and Finisher in the hearts and lives of His people.

I. CHRIST IS THE PATTERN OF OUR FAITH

The expression in this verse has been translated more literally in some versions "the Prince Leader," or "Forerunner" of our faith. Christ was Himself a great believer. In the earliest glimpse which we have of the life of His boyhood we find Him studying the Word of God and asking questions as well as answering them. It was through the Scriptures of truth that He reached the profound conviction which enabled Him to say: "I must be about my Father's business."

Later the Holy Spirit brought to Him the more direct and personal witness of His divine Sonship when at His baptism in the Jordan the voice of the Father proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In His first temptation in the wilderness it was His faith that was directly assailed. "If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter; as much as to say, "You, the Son of God, and in this deserted and desolate condition? It cannot be! It is some great delusion. You are mistaken."

But Christ held steadfastly to His faith, and trusting in His Father's care, rejected the tempter's prescription and met him with the sword of the Spirit, "It is written." All through His life we find Him expressing the most complete and constant dependence upon His Father for His life, strength, and even His very messages. "I can do nothing of myself," He says. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." "He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." This is the language of faith in its deepest essence, the

very element of trust and dependence.

Then in the crisis hours of His life it was faith that sustained Him. In this very epistle we find the writer quoting from the Old Testament and applying to Him the language of trust and confidence in God, "And again, I will put my trust in him" (Heb. 2: 13, quoted from Ps. 18: 2). Again in Isaiah 50: 6-9, we have a fine exhibition of His faith in the hour of trial. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?" But the finest exhibition of our Savior's faith in the hour of trial is in the 22nd Psalm, the inspired Psalm and portraiture of our Redeemer's last sufferings. "My God, my God," he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me?" But still in that dark and dreadful hour when even His Father's face was averted, He continued to trust. The very taunt of His enemies is "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." And so He cries: "Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. . . . Be not far from me; for trouble is near." And soon His cry of agony is changed to a song, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him." "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard."

Again in His ministry the secret of His power was faith in God. When the disciples wondered at the withering of the fig tree He simply answered, "Have faith in [the faith of] God," as much as to say, "This is the work of faith and if you will have the same faith which I have exercised, you, too, may accomplish the same works." It was in this spirit of faith that He stood at Lazarus' grave and cried, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always"; and then the grave was opened and the dead came forth obedient to the power of faith. It is delightful to think of our blessed Redeemer as fighting the good fight of faith just like us. For while He was the Son of God and is forevermore the equal of the Father, yet we never should forget that during His earthly life He voluntarily suspended the exercise of His independent rights and powers, and placed Himself in the same attitude of dependence upon God and trust in God as He requires of us, His disciples.

II. CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF OUR FAITH

Here the parallel between Him and all others ends. Abel and Abraham are patterns, but each had to live for himself and they cannot share with us their faith. But Christ, having traversed all the pathway of life and won the crown of victory, comes back to take us with Him up the ascent of faith till we reach the throne. There are three ways in which Christ is the Author of our faith.

1. By His words. He has given to us the precious promises which are the foundation of faith. How much His own personal words have contributed to the faith of His disciples! There is something in the utterances of the Lord Jesus which in their very manner and terms are peculiarly fitted to inspire confidence. Take that single promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will

in no wise cast out." How could language be more explicit, simple and encouraging to a timorous and troubled heart? There is no possibility of evading its sweet and reassuring force.

It wakens in us its own response and makes it so easy for us to come. Or take again the words: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." It seems as if a fond and tender face were looking into ours and saying, "Won't you trust Me?" and everything within us answers back, "Lord, I will believe in Thee."

2. His work. Back of His gracious words is the finished work of redemption which has made them possible and guaranteed their fulfillment. The promise of forgiveness means infinitely more when we know that behind it is the precious blood that has atoned for our sins and opened the way for our acceptance with the Father. The promise of answered prayer has tenfold meaning when we realize that behind it is His own name in which we may come, and His intercession for us at the Father's right hand, so that all His words are guaranteed to us by His glorious redeeming work. He has given us the standing and the rights of faith. He has clothed us with His own righteousness, and placed at our credit His infinite merits, and so faith has its firm foundation not only in the words, but also in the greater works which have guaranteed His exceeding great and precious promises.

3. But Christ is the Author of faith in a more direct sense, inasmuch as He inspires our faith and by the Holy Ghost puts in us the spirit of trust and confidence. For our faith is just as much the work of Christ as our holiness, our love, or any of the graces of Christian life. When He comes to abide within us He simply imparts to us His own nature and spirit, and puts into our heart the very same sentiments of trust toward His Father which He Himself ever cherished. There is nothing so delightful as this consciousness of the very life and heart of Christ within us, the trust that springs spontaneously within our breast, the prayer that prays itself, and the song that sings its joyous triumph even when all around is dark and strange. God help us to understand this deepest secret of the Lord and to be able to say in a literal sense, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

III. CHRIST THE FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

There is nothing more touching in the life of the Master than the incident in which He tells Peter of the great temptation that is coming to Him. "Simon," He says, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

The difference between Simon and Judas was not in the intensity of their sorrow, but in the fact that Simon's faith failed not. At the last moment there was just one cord left that held him and brought Him back to His Lord, -- his confidence in Christ. This was really one of Christ's own heartstrings. It was the prayer that kept the faith of Peter. And so He keeps us. Again and again in the darkest hour of life all else had failed us, but the heart could still trust. Christ was keeping our faith.

But not only does He keep it, He educates it. He lets the trial come to strengthen it and establish it. He puts it into situations where we must have more faith or be overwhelmed, and

He gives us the faith in the hour of need and leads us on from strength to strength and grace to grace. Just as the eagle teaches her young to fly by hurling them from their downy nest; and compelling them to strike out with their own feeble pinions and learn to soar upon the pathless air, so Christ puts us into impossible situations that He may prove to us that "all things are possible to him that believeth," and that with God nothing is impossible. Sometimes in this process He even hides from us His face, as once the Father's was hidden from Him, and teaches us to trust where we cannot trace, and walk with Him in the dark. Thus by various means He is preparing us for some future day when by faith we may perhaps be able like Him to create a world and prove the full meaning of His own mighty Word, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Be not discouraged, tried and suffering child of God, "though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

IV. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

1. Let us look to Him as our Example, and as He endured the cross, despising the shame for the joy set before Him, so let us look over every seeming trial, and in view of the glorious reversion by and by, let us rise above our trials and triumph over all their pain and shame.

2. Let us look to Him as the guarantee of our victory. He has overcome. He has sat down upon the right hand of the throne of God. His trials are over forever. His triumph has begun. And as surely as He has overcome, so shall we. Not for Himself did He enter in, but for us. He passed through the gates of suffering and death that He might record our names on yonder thrones and hold possession for us until we come. So let us look to the glorious end, and count nothing too dear if we may finish our course with joy and sit down with Him on His throne.

3. Let us keep looking to Him for help as we run the race, for He is there for the very purpose of helping us. His one business is to uphold and succor us and see us through. Every moment, every breath, we may be in communication with Him and drawing strength and help from above.

A little newsboy was complaining of his discouragements, and a Christian friend was trying to tell him how to bring them to Jesus. But the little fellow could not easily comprehend the mystery of prayer. Putting his finger on the boy's forehead the gentleman said, "What do you do in there?" "I think," said the little fellow, "Well, now," said the other, "God can look down and see your thought. Suppose therefore that you just think a little wish or prayer every time you are in difficulty; God will look down and read it, and it will become a telegram to heaven and bring you an answer." The next time the gentleman met his little friend he hardly knew him, he looked so bright. "Oh," said he, as quickly as they met, "It's all right since I began sending them sky telegrams. Everything is different, and I sell twice as many papers as I used to." So let us keep looking unto Jesus, and when too tired or busy to formulate a prayer, let us think it, and the Holy Ghost will flash it to heaven.

4. Looking brings life. There is in the eye a strange power to bring the object into contact with us. Looking at the sun the sun comes into my brain. The photographic plate exposed to the camera receives the very impress of the object before it. Attached to a telescope a photographic plate will absorb in the course of a night the whole circle of the heavens exposed to view, and in the morning the finest stars will have written their impress on that sensitive surface. So also the microscope will reveal minute worlds the human eye never saw. This is the secret of the strange power of hypnotism which through a look lets one mind control another. So as we look at Christ yonder He becomes a living act in our consciousness and in our heart, and just as the dying Hebrew gazing on the brazen serpent felt life and power flowing through all his being, so looking unto Jesus we are healed, we are comforted, we are filled with His life and power, and we become partakers of His very nature and being.

5. But the expression means not only looking, but looking off, or looking away. It has an obverse and negative side.

(a) We are to look away from others, from their failures, yes, and even their attractions, if they distract us from Him.

(b) We are to look away from ourselves undiscouraged by our shortcomings, expecting nothing from self, and moment by moment looking away from our work and our best to Him.

(c) We are to look away from the world's attractions and illusions to Him. He is the only power that can break the spell of earth's enchantments. I have seen a child from whose careless hands no power could wrest the razor which it held without danger of its wounding itself to death, drop it instantly when some counter-attraction was held before it, and the little hands reached out for the beautiful picture, or the more attractive candy.

(d) Let us look away from our trials to Him. There is power in care and sorrow to mesmerize the soul until everything else is absorbed in one corroding sense of vexation and discouragement. We must look away from all this. Christ will not give you strength to carry your cares. You must drop them and look on the brighter side. There is always a bright side, and as happy Nancy said: "It is allus sunshine where Jesus is." "You see, Massa," she said to her troubled master, "when I sees the dark cloud coming and 'pears like it were jes' crushin' down on me, I jes' whisks 'roun' on the other side and I finds Jesus there, and then all is bright an' cl'ar. The bright side is allus where Jesus is." But the dark side has a strange fascination for some minds. Like the astronomer who had spent a day watching one of the sun spots, and when his friend called and remarked what a beautiful sunshiny day it had been, he looked up surprised and answered, "I thought it was rather dark today, but now you mention it, the sun does seem very bright." The poor fellow had been watching a speck all day and it had eclipsed the sun. Let us look away from all this into the eternal light of His unchanging love and our sun will no more go down, but God will be our everlasting light and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

Finally, let us not only look, but run, for there is an intensely practical side of faith. Let us run while we look and let us look while we run. Let us take our inspirations and exaltations with us, and live them out in the quiet plod of daily duty, and become better workmen, better

businessmen, better husbands, wives, and children because we are living in heaven while our feet are still treading the pathways of earth.

"I suppose John is your best weaver," said a clergyman to the foreman of a factory, where one of his people was employed, a man who was always talking about his religion. "Well, no," said the foreman, "John is a good fellow, but he has yet to learn that while it is all right to talk about religion in its place, yet in the workshop a man's religion should come at his fingers and not at his mouth."

So let our lips and lives express
The holy Gospel we profess;
So let our works and actions shine
To prove the doctrine all divine.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 11

THE SCHOOL OF FAITH

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12: 11).

The mystery of suffering is deeply interwoven with every thread and fiber of the web of nature and of life. Not a blossom breathing its sweet fragrance on the air of spring but came from a buried seed or a bursting bulb. Not a shining pearl but was evolved from the suffering of the life that gave it birth. Not a human life but came into being through travail and sore agony. The world's oldest poem is a deep discussion of the mystery of suffering. The book of Job is the inspired drama which seeks to fathom the meaning of sorrow and affliction. Every heroic page in human history was gilded by some sacrifice or deed of daring or suffering. The glorious galaxy of Bible characters that have just been set forth in these verses as witnesses and types of faith were all evolved out of circumstances of severest trial, and reached their high achievements and splendid triumphs through such scenes and circumstances as these. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; . . . they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." It was thus they reached the heights of victory and won the great rewards of faith. And He who marks the climax of this series, Christ Himself, the Author and Finisher of our faith, reaches His place at the "right hand of the throne of God" by enduring "the cross, despising the shame" and suffering the "contradiction of sinners against himself." It is suffering all the way through, but suffering transformed and glorified by victorious faith.

And so this chapter takes up the mystery of suffering and links it with the education of our faith. It is quite remarkable that immediately after the profound discussion which the apostle has just given of the subject of faith, the very first theme that he should introduce to us should be trial. And yet this is always God's order; after faith trial, after trial more faith. God never leads us into the eleventh chapter of Hebrews without also bringing us into the twelfth. The writer once heard George Muller say, when asked by a friend how one could have more faith, "My beloved brother, by having more trial."

I. THE NAME HERE GIVEN TO TRIAL

It is translated "chastening" in our revised version. Rotherham renders it "discipline," but the

original means "son training." The training of a child; this is the beautiful phase of affliction which the Holy Spirit would impress upon every troubled heart. It is not judgment. It is not punishment. It is not even chastisement. Nay, it is not even the education of a school, but it is the education of a father or of a mother. There are some children who have had the great privilege of being educated by a loving mother, and it is a peculiar privilege where the mother has been fitted for her sacred task. There is a touch of tenderness in such a schooling that no conventional discipline can ever give. It is not as our schoolmaster, but as our loving Father; nay, as our very mother God, that the Holy Spirit teaches us and trains us for our future destiny. What a difference it makes when a trial comes, to see in it not the hand of an avenger, but the loving discipline of a father and the gentle admonition of a mother! God would not have us feel even the shadow of His anger. Judgment hardens the spirit and God never wants to break the spirit of His obedient child, but to win us by His love and transform us by His gentleness. Beloved, let us ever look upon our trials in the tender light of the Father's love. It is not the token of His displeasure, but the very pledge of His jealous love, a love so inexorable that it will not let us miss His holiest and best.

II. THE PRESENT EFFECT OF TRIAL

Not now "joyous, but grievous." We must not be disappointed if the blow is keenly felt and the trial is hard to endure. We must not wonder if the heart sinks in depression and every feeling and instinct is crushed for the time, and we must "count it all joy" when we cannot feel a throb of joy in our actual consciousness. It is true often that for the time "if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations." There came an hour when even the Lord himself had to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." It is not a sign of unbelief, rebellion or an unsanctified heart if the iron should enter the soul and the chastened spirit should cry like Him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is hard to feel the blow of sharp disease and excruciating pain.

It is hard to see your loved ones suffer and be unable to relieve them. It is hard to see the grave close over our fondest treasures. It is hard to be scorched and blistered with the fiery heat of temptation and feel the very breath of hell upon our souls. It is hard to be wronged, misrepresented, betrayed by those who have trusted and benefitted, and like the Master, to meet the kiss of Judas and the denial of Peter. It is still harder to suffer the deep spiritual silences of God and find that even He has withdrawn the light of His countenance and the shining of His face. He knows how hard it is for He has felt the same, and He tenderly reminds us that He is not grieved with us when the fiery trial comes if it does seem strange, and is not joyous but grievous.

III. THE FRUIT OF TRIAL

"Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." It is afterwards that it comes. Give it time to appear. The bleeding plant cut back by the gardener to a single bud might well seem to say, "How cruel! How harsh!" But wait a little until that single bud has burst into a rich hanging cluster and the purple grapes of autumn bear witness to the wisdom and the kindness of the gardener's knife. The lawn might

well cry out against the sharp scythe and the crushing mower, as they leave the little plants bleeding and crushed. But wait until the soft velvet of that lawn carpets the ground with a glory that no upholsterer could imitate, and then compare it with the dry and withered stalks on yonder common, where the same grass has been allowed to grow untrained and run to seed, and you will not question the wisdom or the beneficence of the process. The precious gold might well cry out against the crushing roller, and the consuming flame. But wait a little, until the rough and rugged lump of ore has become the shining jewel, or the glistening chain of burnished gold, and you need no one to explain the crucible and the fire.

So God is putting His children through the ordeal of trial with a hand of infinite wisdom and perfect love, and the very "trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire," will be "found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

It is called the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." That is, it is both righteousness and peace. It corrects and directs our life into His perfect will. It shows us the weak places in our character and leads us to put on His righteousness and strength, and then it gives us the deeper peace and rest, the chastened tenderness, the mellow and subdued depth which you can always trace in those that have passed through God's deepest testings, and learned all the lessons in the school of heavenly discipline. It is all so different from the callow, crude, and shallow profession of souls that have learned it by rote, but have not yet lived it in the school of sorrow, or had it burned into their inmost being in the very crucible of God. Such souls have entered into a rest which never can be moved. Sorrow has burned out all that is combustible and only that is left, which, like the pure gold, even trial cannot consume but only purify the more.

IV. THE PROCESS THROUGH WHICH ALL THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED

"Unto them that are exercised thereby." Trial is not always a blessing. There are souls that suffer and are not sanctified, sweetened, and mellowed. There are trials that are wasted and thrown away. There are bitter tears that leave only desolation behind. There are lives that are scorched, soured, and crushed by their trials, and only driven farther from God and righteousness. Suffering in itself cannot sanctify; else Satan and his angels would long ago have been purified. Punishment is not a purifying process. Everything depends upon our attitude to the trial and our being exercised thereby. What does this mean?

1. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." We are not to think too lightly of it. We are not to regard it as a mere accident or incident, and plan for its removal by our own counsels or the advice of others. God means that we shall feel it. It has a message for us, and He wants us to understand it and take it deeply to heart and hear what God the Lord will say.

2. On the other hand, we must "not faint when . . . rebuked of him"; rather when we are "reproved" of Him. We must not take it too much to heart. We must not let it discourage us or break our spirit. We must never look on the dark side. We must never see God's anger, but always His love. If we lose heart we shall be sure to miss the meaning of our trial, to fail to get our true lesson, and to fly from God instead of sweetly turning to Him in the hour of trial. It was

thus that Israel lost their blessing. God was chastening them, but in the chastisement He was there to meet them and to help them, and His gentle message was, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." But they would not. They fell into a panic. They said, "We will flee upon horses." And they flew. But their pursuers flew faster, and God looked on and said, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you." In the time of trouble our greatest danger is that we will become alarmed and run away from God instead of running into His everlasting arms. Therefore remember, no matter what the nature of your trial, no matter though you may yourself be to blame for it, do not give up your trust, do not give way to fear, do not become discouraged, faint not.

3. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Remember how much more severely He suffered. Remember how triumphantly He maintained His courage and His joy, how He endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy set before Him; and remember that what He once accomplished in His lone conflict He can still enable you to accomplish through Him.

4. "Lift up the hands which hang down." That is, take a firmer hold by the hand of faith. The time of trial is faith's opportunity. As the old colored man once said, "When God tests me I always turn around and test Him." Take more because you need more through His providence, and the trial that He has permitted. Tell Him that He has brought you into this hard place, and He must see you through. Stir up yourself "to take hold of his strength," and you will find that He will never be displeased with the boldness of your faith and the largeness of your believing claim.

5. "And the feeble knees." The knees may stand for prayer as the hands for faith, and if they do, it is needless to say that the time of trial is the time for prayer. It is God's challenge to ask more from Him. "Call upon me," He says, "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me." "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things." Hard places are God's very challenges to prayer. Or the knees may stand for courage, the courage that strengthens itself to stand firmly upon His promises and upon the ground that faith has claimed. The feeble knees represent perhaps the paralysis of fear, when the knees smite together and the frame trembles with alarm. This is the effect of sorrow on the natural heart. But faith can give courage and take away our fear, and enable us to triumph in the darkest hour and shout before the ramparts fall. It is not our courage. It is the courage of faith. And so we are exhorted to "add to our faith courage." It is God's courage, not ours. He will clothe us with it in the time of need.

6. "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." This seems to mean that we are not to turn aside from the obstacles of faith, but to press on through and above them, and take strength from God to enable us to do so. The feeble and the lame would naturally be tempted to go round the mountain, and the enemy would say you are not able for this hill of difficulty and this rugged height of danger. But faith takes God to heal the lame, and then it marches forward boldly and victoriously through every obstacle, and keeps right on its way rejoicing. Of course, this may literally be applied to the

healing of bodily disease. Many a time through physical infirmity it seems almost unavoidable that God's servants should turn back from some task of difficulty and take the easy way of escape. But God will give us faith and strength to claim His healing power and go right on in the path of service and of duty, finding His grace sufficient from moment to moment, and His strength made perfect in our weakness.

But it also applies to difficulties of every sort, and inspires us with a faith that presses forward in the face of every discouragement and obstruction. So Israel, pressed on at the Red Sea, refusing to turn aside, and the floods divided and the way was opened for their escape and for the destruction of their foes. So Daniel pressed forward when he knew that his life was hanging in the balance and a little subterfuge might have saved him from the den of lions. But no, when he knew that the decree was passed, and that the spies were already skulking under his window and watching for him to fall into the snare, he went quietly home and, entering his house, he set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem and prayed unto his God "as aforetime." There is a sublime heroism in those two words, "as aforetime." There was no advertising of his courage for the sake of showing it off. But he just went on as before in the consistent course of implicit faith and inexorable fidelity.

7. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." This is the great end of all our trails, to lead us to be right with God and with our fellow men. In the hour of trial it is a great comfort to feel that our relationships with one another are right, and there is no unseemly strife or wrong. And above all else, trial comes to deepen our holiness and lead us to that sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord. The reference here seems to be to the Lord's coming. Holiness is the preparation for that glorious meeting in the air, and without it we shall not see Him when He comes, nor can we hope to share the welcome of His glorious Bride. But He does not expect us to work up this holiness by our own exertions. He tells us that we are to be "partakers of his holiness." Therefore trial comes to show us where our holiness is at fault that we may put on His righteousness and receive His grace and all-sufficiency. We shall be so glad some day when the supreme test comes that we have been already tried by fire and not left to go through the final conflict with armor unproved and weapons that may fail us in the crisis hour.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 12

THE GOAL OF FAITH

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest,

"And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

"(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

"And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:18-24).

We have seen in our former studies in the epistle of Hebrews, the Captain of our salvation bringing many sons unto glory along the pathway of faith; and now in this sublime passage we have presented to us the final goal to which He is bringing them. The figure is a strong antithesis, presenting in striking contrast the difference between the Old Testament and the New. The whole epistle has been richly laden with Old Testament allusions and quotations. The writer has taken us back to Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Melchisedek and Joseph, Moses and Joshua, Gideon and Barak, Samuel and David, the Old Testament prophets, and the ancient High Priest. The Tabernacle in the Wilderness and its imposing ritual, and indeed all the ordinances and types of the ancient Scriptures, have been laid under contribution to unfold the richness of Jesus Christ in whom they are all fulfilled. Now he gathers up the substance of all these ancient types and figures in one magnificent contrast between the Law and the Gospel, the Old Testament and the New.

He had already told us in the close of the eleventh chapter that God had "provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." In the present passage he shows us by this striking antithesis how much better the thing that He has provided is, and how lofty and sublime are the immunities and privileges to which we have been introduced by the Gospel and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. HE TELLS US THAT WE ARE "NOT COME UNTO THE MOUNT THAT MIGHT BE TOUCHED, AND THAT BURNED WITH FIRE, NOR UNTO BLACKNESS, AND DARKNESS,

AND TEMPEST"

All this is descriptive of the terrors of the ancient Law. This was the dispensation of judgment. We are not under it now. We have been delivered from it, and there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Not by the sanctions of fear and the threatenings of judgment, but by the gentle constraint of love are we held to our sacred obligations. Let us not get under the Law or back to bondage, but "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." We are under the law of faith and not of works, and the law of faith is the law of love, and the reign of grace.

II. "WE ARE COME UNTO MOUNT SION"

Mount Sion is the antithesis of Mount Sinai. It is the mount of mercy as the other was of judgment. Therefore the ark of God was set up on Mount Sion and the symbol of God's covenant and mercy was established there and it became significant of divine grace. The ark and the tabernacle were symbols of God's mercy and types of Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill the Law and deliver us from its curse and condemnation, therefore Mount Sion stands for the grace of God in contrast with the terrors of Sinai. Let us ever remember this and dwell in the light of its mercy and so "keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

III. WE ARE COME UNTO "THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM"

The earthly Jerusalem was the center of God's earthly people; the heavenly Jerusalem is the home of God's spiritual people. It is a city which He is preparing out of spiritual realities, and of which His holy people are the materials and elements which He is building together, and which shall one day be seen descending from heaven as a vision of transcendent glory, more radiant than the rainbow, more precious than all the gems of earth. We are come to this city now. We are members of its glorious society. "Our citizenship is in heaven," and our names are written in its civic records. Faith claims our high position even here,

And hope foredates the joyful day
When these old skies shall cease to sunder
The one dear love-linked family.

IV. WE ARE COME "TO AN INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF ANGELS"

These celestial beings are also inhabitants of the city of God and attendants upon the heirs of salvation. Already we are compassed about with them as ministering spirits, and although we see them not yet, doubtless their interposing love often rescues us from hidden dangers and snares. Undoubtedly they are the spectators of our earthly course, and are watching with intensest interest our conflicts and our victories. We are to them object lessons of the government of God and the wonders of redeeming love, and they are doubtless our protectors and guardians and often the unseen messengers of answered prayer and divine blessing. Let us realize the honor of our glorious associations and walk worthy of such high companionship.

V. WE ARE COME "TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN, WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN"

Literally this means, "the first born ones." This description includes the whole company of the redeemed, the great assembly of the saints of God from every age and clime. They are all called firstborn ones; that is, they share the inheritance of the firstborn, and they stand in exactly the same position as Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and the Elder Brother in the divine family. Our inheritance as God's children is not that of a younger son, but is the same as the Elder Brother's. Jesus, the firstborn, shares with us all His privileges, and reminds us that God is "his Father and our Father; his God and our God." In what sense are we come to this general assembly and heavenly Church? Our names are written there. We are recognized already as if we also were there. We are counted one with the ransomed saints above.

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God
At His command we bow,
Part of the host have passed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

VI. WE ARE COME TO "GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL"

The idea of this reference seems to be that through the redemption of Jesus Christ we have been brought back to the Father, and have been restored to our original place as His children. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins," we are told, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We were "without God in the world"; we were strangers and enemies to God; we were far away from God; but Christ has brought us home, and now we are back in the Father's house. He came from God to seek us and to bring us the message of His love. He went back to God as our High Priest to present His offering and sacrifice for our salvation, and now He has taken us back to God with Him, and so once more it is true that God is our home and our dwelling place, and we are restored to that place for which He interceded in His last prayer by Kidron's brook, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." Union with God in the blessed beatific fellowship of His eternal love; this is the goal of faith and the consummation of redemption.

VII. WE ARE COME "TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT"

This is almost synonymous with the previous statement that we are come "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn." But it seems to refer to the individual spirits of the glorified, rather than to the collective body of the whole general assembly and Church above. Perhaps it suggests the precious hope and consoling thought that we are standing in close

fellowship with the glorified dead whom we have known and loved on earth. Is there not back of the lie of Spiritualism a truth somewhere, perhaps but dimly revealed, but not forbidden to our clinging, longing hearts, that those who have left us are not, perhaps, so far away as we sometimes deem? And although they cannot speak to us and we must not attempt by the arts of sorcery to open communications with the world beyond through them, yet through Him in whose presence they dwell, and to whom we may freely come in prayer, they have a very close connection with our earthly life. It may be that they are conversant with our struggles, joys, and triumphs. Perhaps they are permitted in some sense to minister to us still, and are undoubtedly allowed to keep alive the love that still binds our hearts together, and are waiting with joyful expectation for the time when we shall meet them again at His glorious coming. How much there may be hidden behind those gentle words of Christ, "If it were not so, I would have told you."

VIII. WE ARE COME "TO JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT"

Perhaps this was inserted here to keep us from thinking for a moment that our beloved dead could in any sense be mediators between us and God. There is but one Mediator, and that is Jesus Christ. Through Him alone we have access to the eternal world, and through Him all our interests and relationships are maintained. We are come to Him, but in coming to Him He brings us to all that He represents on the heaven side. He brings us to the Father and to the family. He secures for us the help and strength we need from moment to moment. He keeps open to us all the resources of divine sufficiency. He presents our prayers before the throne and sends the answer from above. He represents us continually to the Father, and through Him we are accepted every moment even as He. And by and by, should His public advent be delayed, He will be the Mediator through whom our spirit will pass from the earthly to the eternal world and we be translated, in the arms of His love, into that heavenly city and society, for He says: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

IX. WE ARE COME "TO THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING, THAT SPEAKETH BETTER THINGS THAN THAT OF ABEL"

The blood of sprinkling refers to the constant provision of Christ's Priesthood for our acceptance and full salvation. The blood shed was the figure of Christ's life offered to atone for our sins, but the blood sprinkled refers to the constant application of Christ's grace to our souls in sanctifying and keeping us from the power of sin. It speaketh better things than that of Abel inasmuch as Abel's blood cried out for judgment against his murderer, but Christ's blood cries out for pardon even for His murderers and enemies. Perhaps also the better things may refer to the fact that while Abel's blood availed for justification, Christ's blood avails for sanctification, cleansing us both from the guilt and power of sin.

X. "SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT HIM THAT SPEAKETH"

On account of these high and glorious dignities and distinctions that belong to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our standing in Him, there arises a corresponding responsibility on our part,

much greater than even under the ancient Law. Therefore the apostle adds, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Let us not imagine that because the spirit of the Gospel is more beneficent than that of the Law, our transgression against its grace and love will be suffered with impunity. The very gentleness of that grace will but aggravate our guilt and increase our punishment. He who can despise such mercy and trifle with such love can only look for the severest punishment. The God of the New Testament not less than the Old is a consuming fire. Only the fire seeks now to consume the sin rather than the sinner, but if the sinner refuses to part with the sin it must consume him too.

XI. "WHOSE VOICE THEN SHOOK THE EARTH"

But the goal of faith will not be fully reached until the coming of that more glorious day of which this passage speaks in the concluding verses when Christ shall come in all His glorious power. "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." That is to say, in a little while this dispensation is to reach its close in a grand upheaval and convulsion of both earth and heaven, and in a tragedy more tremendous than Mount Sinai ever saw. Then everything that is shakeable shall be shaken to pieces and disappear with the dissolving world. And so God is testing us now that He may shake out of us the things that are transient and temporal, and that we may be established in the things which cannot be shaken and which shall remain. This is the meaning of all the tests and trials of life. Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith is searching and proving our faith, and bringing to light every weakness and defect so that we may be established, and settled and prepared for the testing day. Whatever is subject to change, let it change and pass away. Let us not fear the fire. Let us not shrink from the sifting and shaking process. Let us be thankful that we have One who loves us with such inexorable love that He will not let us go into judgment unprepared, but is giving us armor proved and tried before that testing day. Let us welcome the ordeal and echo the prayer:

Burn on, O fire of God, burn on,
Till all my dross is burned away,
Burn up the dregs of self and sin,
Prepare me for the testing day.

XII. "WHEREFORE WE, RECEIVING A KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE MOVED, LET US HAVE GRACE, WHEREBY WE MAY SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY WITH REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR"

Let faith claim her kingdom in all its fullness and glory, and let her also claim the grace and power to be worthy of it. It is all grace from first to last, and the grace that prepared the kingdom can prepare us for it and keep us true to it until the final consummation. Glory be to God, and thanks and praise for the riches of grace and the possibilities of faith!

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 13

"LET US"

In the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews our attention has been chiefly confined to the unfolding of the great doctrinal plan of the writer, the revelation of Jesus Christ, as our Apostle, our Great High Priest, and the Author and Finisher of our faith. But there is no portion of the New Testament more intensely practical and whose argument is more frequently broken up with brief and pungent interjections of exhortation and appeal addressed to the conscience and the heart. These are mostly expressed in a uniform phrase commencing with the two little words, "Let us." There are no less than twelve of these appeals in the course of the epistle, and they constitute together a very complete series of practical homiletics and personal application. The number twelve is particularly appropriate to this great epistle, which is based on the connection between the Old and New Testaments, and it is scarcely necessary to say that twelve is the symbolical number of God's covenant people suggested by the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

I. "LET US FEAR"

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4: 1).

The point of his appeal lies in the phrase "come short," or still finer, "seem to come short." In fact the very feature of the whole epistle consists not in emphasizing the more common qualities of the Christian character, but in bringing out the finer points of the life of faith and holiness. It is not faith that the writer emphasizes as much as the boldness of faith, the confidence of trust. So it is not salvation that is presented to us so much as the "great salvation," the deeper fullness of Christ, the test of faith and the Land of Promise. Here we are exhorted not so much to fear lest we should lose our souls, as that we should miss something of God's best and come short of the fullness of our inheritance, or even seem to come short of it. A single degree in the physical world constitutes the boiling or the freezing point, and one step less or more marks the line of demarcation between the life of failure and the life of victory. It is so sad to be almost there and yet to lose our victory and our crown. We may well fear the faintest seeming and symptom of it, and be on our guard lest we seem to come short of all that God has so abundantly provided at such cost, and so jealously guards from our indifference and neglect.

II. "LET US ENTER INTO HIS REST"

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4: 11).

The word "labor" literally means, "let us make speed to enter into that rest." Here again the point lies not so much in entering into that rest as in entering at once and making it the supreme business of life to enter in now. In the ancient story on which this appeal is based, we read that they were willing a little later to enter in, but they were too late. The opportunity had passed and the Lord would not allow them to renew it. For a whole night He waited while they parleyed and questioned, and then the irrevocable sentence went forth that sent them back to traverse the sands of the desert for forty years until all the unbelieving generation had passed away. And so we may come too late. There are souls along the path of life who reach the crisis hour of some great decision. Every leading of God's providence has converged to that point, and at last the Holy Ghost, with solemn urgency, is pleading, "While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," and, beloved, tomorrow will not do. Oh, if God is speaking through these lines to any undecided soul, make speed this moment to say, "Yes, Lord, forever yes."

III. "LET US HOLD FAST"

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4: 14).

This may be perhaps better translated "our confession." It is not so much our faith we are to hold as the confession of our faith. After we enter into His rest and receive any deeper blessing from the Lord there is always a time of testing, and the adversary will try his best to make us abandon our confidence and give up our high claim. Even God cannot fully bless us, and make real to us what we have taken by faith, until we have been proved and tried. After Jesus received the Holy Ghost He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness forty days to be tempted of the devil. Let us not count it strange concerning the fiery trial that tests our faith, and let us remember that the weapon is, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith." But our faith must be exercised and established by our testimony. If we hide it in our heart, and are afraid to commit ourselves to it, it will die of strangulation. But if we boldly take our stand upon it and proclaim it in the face of the enemy, it will grow by the very conflict, and when we have proved true to our testimony God will make the reckoning real, and "bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

IV. LET US COME FOR TIMELY AID

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4: 16). Our struggle is not in our own strength. In our conflict we are not left to our own resources. Our Great High Priest has gone to the headquarters of the universe for the one business of succoring and sustaining us, and now the way is open, the throne of grace is accessible, and there is mercy for the sinful, grace for the helpless, and instant succor for the moment of need. We cannot only come, but come again and yet again, and keep coming for continual supply. We never can exhaust either His grace or

its resources. We never can find Him too busily engaged to hear our cry and send us help. We need not wait for the long-deferred response, but before we call He will answer, and while we are yet speaking He will hear. It is grace for timely aid. He is a very present help in time of trouble. Thus let us come, and come boldly, and take His fullness to meet His highest claims upon us.

V. "LET US GO ON"

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6: 1). Having entered in, become established and found the source of all-sufficient grace, let us now advance, let us make progress, let us grow in grace, let us not be easily satisfied with present attainments, for, unless we go on we shall surely go back. It is not safe to lose an inch of ground. "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition." The faintest drawing back may land us in perdition. There is no portion of the Holy Scriptures so filled with impressive warnings against backsliding as this. In two of its leading chapters, the sixth and tenth, we are told of the peril of the soul that falls away, and the only remedy against falling away is to go forward. Are we going on? And are we going unto perfection? Is our goal the very highest? Are we aiming at nothing less than the highest possibilities of a life of faith and service for God? Nothing less is safe, and nothing less is worthy of our high calling and our exceeding great and precious promises.

VI. LET US DRAW NIGH

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10: 19-22).

This marks a still deeper nearness. Having gone on in our Christian progress, God calls us along the way at various times to still deeper fellowship and closer intimacy. There are depths and heights in the Christian life, and new stages of Christian experiences through which the Captain of our salvation loves to lead His obedient followers. Just as in the structure of the crust of this world we often find the different geological periods marked by successive strata, and these in turn separated by great masses of conglomerate rock, showing that there was for a time a regular deposit of stratified matter, and then a great upheaval and a new layer of rock, so God marks our experience by successive blessings; but there is beyond this more and more for all who will enter in. The nearness described in this passage is accomplished through the Redeemer's crucified flesh, and, of course it follows, our crucifixion with Him. As we pass through new and deeper surrenders we pass into closer fellowship with Him. As we die deeper deaths we rise to higher planes of resurrection life. But let us remember that it is neither through our dying or our efforts at rising, but through the new and living way of Jesus Himself, that we must enter in. It is by our first entering into His death, and then receiving His life to dwell within us, that we pass in where He already dwells, and our life is hid with Christ in God through Him our Living Way.

VII. "LET US HOLD FAST"

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

This is the second time that this language is employed and this appeal made. After deeper experience in the life of God it is necessary for us to have a new establishing, and therefore God again tests us, and settles us in the closer place into which we have entered, before He sends us forth once more to service and testimony. This time we are not only to hold fast, but we are to hold fast without wavering. We have reached a deeper, stronger place and henceforth we become "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

VIII. LET US HELP OTHERS TO ENTER IN

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10: 24, 25).

Every new experience is a preparation for a higher ministry. We can only give to others the Christ that we ourselves know. After coming closer to God we shall always find some hungry heart waiting for our message and ready for our assistance. Let us go out of ourselves as soon as we can, and find our blessings in blessing one another. There is special reference in the following verse to the approaching day of the Lord's coming, and the ministry referred to has doubtless reference to the gathering out and preparation of the Bride to meet her Lord. This, indeed, seems to be the great work which the Holy Spirit has for the disciples of Christ today, not so much the conversion of sinners, although that is not to be forgotten, but the purifying and preparing of the Lord's own people to meet Him in the air. We shall find as we endeavor to give our blessing to others that it grows in the exercise, even as the traveler who found that he had saved himself from death by the warmth that came into his freezing limbs while he rubbed and chafed the limbs of a fellow-traveler, who was dying in the snow. So let us "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."

IX. LET US RUN THE RACE

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

We are not spectators in a great amphitheater. We are competitors for a prize. For us the contest is immensely practical and solemnly real. The life of faith is a life of holy activity and yet of patient endurance. So let us run "that we may obtain."

X. LET US RECEIVE

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12 : 28).

This verse comes at the close of the splendid contrast which the writer has drawn between the Law and the Gospel. There all was darkness. Here all is light. There terror was the strong but insufficient sanction. Here love is the mighty and all constraining motive. While more is demanded than under the ancient law, yet grace gives what it demands and the exhortation to us is not to try harder or do or suffer more, but to receive and take from Him the grace, the divine supply through which we shall be able to render the service demanded, and rise to the height of the kingdom into which we have been introduced. God is not calling upon us for more strenuous endeavors, or more severe sacrifices, but for simpler faith, for larger confidence, for the spirit that takes more that it may give it back in better service and larger love. So let us receive that we may give, and say like the Psalmist of old, "Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee."

XI. "LET US GO FORTH"

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13: 12-14).

Here we enter upon the sufferings of Christ. We are not only to share His grace but His cross, and bear His reproach, but we are to bear it gladly because this world is not our place of recompense, but the city that is to come. Therefore we are to be willing to be misunderstood, not only by the secular world but even by the religious world. The camp outside of which He had to go was the camp of religious professors and leaders of His day. Christ was cast out by what was accounted the best society in His time. Need we wonder if in following Him in the life of faith and holiness, we, too, should be misunderstood by the public opinion of the large majority even of the people of God? We are not encouraging a spirit of rashness and criticism, but no thoughtful observer can deny that today there is a great mass of lukewarm and merely professing Christians, and inside this multitude there is a little flock of humble followers of the lowly Jesus, who are learning what it is to go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. Let us not deserve criticism by open wrong, but let us not fear reproach if it comes for the name of Jesus. Let us be content to be unpopular and stand with the minority for the fullness of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the separated life, and the religion of service and sacrifice.

XII. LET US PRAISE AND SERVE

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13: 15, 16).

Two things are here required of the soul that has entered into the fullness of Christ and passed within the veil. First, we are to come forth with shining faces, rejoicing and praising; and

secondly we are to go forth and bless the world. The sacrifice of praise is a life of thanksgiving. Our first duty is to God, and that is the habit of continual worship, praise, and thanksgiving. It is more than service, more than testimony, more than any work we can do for our fellow man. It is the sweet ointment of Mary poured upon His head and His feet, while service is busy-handed Martha ministering in loving activity. He asks both, but the love and the praise have the higher place. Let us not, however, forget the other. There are two ways of doing, one by our own personal efforts, the other by the gifts of our money, supporting those who work as our substitutes. This is included in the meaning of the word "communicate." It means to give of our substance for the support of the Gospel and the sending forth of laborers, and even to give until it becomes a real sacrifice, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Beloved, let us not forget these holy ministries. It is all vain to talk of our deeper experiences, if our outward services and sacrifices do not express them. Money today is the measure of value, and tells how much we care for things and how highly we estimate them. What we give and what we sacrifice for the cause of Christ is the true test of how much we love.

The writer remembers a very rich man who on his death-bed longed to live to serve God, but although reminded of it, utterly failed to leave a penny to support a substitute to work for him when he was gone, but held on to every dollar to the last, and then left it to relatives to whom it became not a blessing but a curse. How much happier had he laid up his treasure in heaven.

Christ in the Bible

Hebrews

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 14

CONCLUDING MESSAGES

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13: 20, 21).

We have now reached the close of the doctrinal portion of this great epistle, and the last chapter is occupied with a number of practical applications, and a final benediction and doxology, followed by a few parting salutations.

I. PRACTICAL APPLICATION (Heb. 13: 1-19)

1. Love (verses 1-4).

The great theme of this epistle has been faith, but faith ever works by love. And so four kinds of love are here enjoined:

(a) Love to the brethren. "Let brotherly love continue."

(b) Love to the stranger. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

(c) Love to the suffering, a love that leads us to make common cause with them, and take upon us in practical sympathy their very burdens and bonds. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

(d) Domestic love and personal purity in the relationships of the home (v. 4).

2. Contentment and freedom from the restless and inordinate desire for earthly things. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (v. 5).

It will be noticed here that this virtue is founded upon faith and springs from a spirit of confidence in God's protecting and providing care, for it is added, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But our faith must be very positive, and meet God's promise with full confession and perfect confidence. Therefore it is added, "So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." There is a beautiful

correspondence here between what He has said and what we should say. Faith should take up and echo back the Word of God, and only as it does this will the promise be made good, and the reckoning become real.

3. Constancy. "Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (v. 9). The Hebrew Christians were in great danger, like the disciples of Galatia, of being disturbed by false teachers, especially those that sought to persuade them to go back to the law, and give up their simple faith for a religion of ceremonialism. The apostle seems to connect this exhortation with the two preceding verses, seven and eight, the one reminding them of the example of their teachers; the other recalling to them the unchangeable character of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the most beautiful verses in the whole Bible, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever," and while it stands in splendid isolation in this chapter, apparently disconnected from the context, there can scarcely be a question that there was a latent connection in the mind of the writer between the unchangeableness of Jesus and our stability as Christians. This is the only way for us to hold fast our constancy, by having in us as the source and strength of our life the heart of the unchangeable Christ. If Jesus Christ is in us in every thought and feeling, word and action, we, too, shall be the same yesterday, and today and forever, and all our moods and tenses will be resolved into one blessed present tense of immovable peace and victorious joy.

4. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (v. 13.) We have already referred to this verse in the former chapter, and it is only necessary here to notice that it is connected with the blessed hope of the coming kingdom and the city which God is preparing for His separated and suffering people. In the assurance of that blessed hope, it should not be hard to give up the earthly camp, and the prizes of human ambition and success.

5. Service. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (verses 15, 16). Here, as we have seen in the last chapter, there is a double service, thanksgiving to God and blessing to our fellow men, both by our personal acts and our liberal gifts.

6. Submission to one another in the Lord, especially to our spiritual teachers and leaders. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (v. 17).

7. Mutual prayer, especially for the Christian ministry. "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner" (verses 18, 19). This is the highest of all service, -- our ministry at the throne of grace. This is a blessed work from which nothing need ever debar us, and if we are hindered from personal activity we can pour out the strength of our lives through those for whom we pray. So let us love, so let us be content, so let us stand steadfast, so let us

enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, so let us serve, submit ourselves and pray for one another in the blessed household of faith and family of God.

II. PARTING BENEDICTION

But now the full heart of the writer turns from didactic speech and personal exhortation, and pours out one burning prayer and benediction, in which he gathers up the deepest teachings of this whole blessed epistle. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (verses 20, 21).

1. The God of peace. This beautiful expression sums up in a single phrase the spiritual results of the great redeeming work with which the Epistle to the Hebrews has been occupied. We have already seen that the first great thought was the coming of Jesus Christ from God to bring us the message of His will. The next was the going back of Jesus Christ to God as our Great High Priest. But the consummation of the writer's thought was the bringing of us back to God in full reconciliation and perfect fellowship, as the Author and Finisher of our faith. This is the idea expressed by the "God of peace." Jesus Christ has brought us back to God, and now He steps back from the foreground of the picture, and leaves us in the Father's house, and in direct relations with God Himself. There is no cloud between us and the eternal Father. He is to us the very God of peace.

2. "The great shepherd of the sheep." But while we recognize our reconciliation to the Father, not for a moment can we forget the blessed Mediator through whom it has been accomplished and is still maintained. Here a new figure is introduced, although it is used to express an old fact. It is the figure of the shepherd, and back of it there rises the vision of the lost and wandering sheep, of the long and loving search, of the midnight, the wilderness, and the terrible cost, the glad home-bringing, and the peace and safety of the heavenly fold. But while this is a new figure in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is not a new figure in the Old Testament from which this beautiful epistle is so largely drawn. Indeed, it is the oldest, sweetest, and most frequent image under which the grace of God has been portrayed, from Abel down to Christ Himself. And so it adds a delightful touch of tenderness and completeness to the whole epistle, to represent our Lord Jesus, in the last picture of His person and work, under the figure of the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

3. The everlasting covenant. This expresses the security of our salvation and the solid and permanent foundation on which our relationship to God through the work of Jesus Christ has been established. It is the result of an arrangement as stable as the throne of God. Every condition of justice and equity has been met. Every possible cause of failure has been anticipated, and the interests of Christ's redeemed people are guaranteed by an everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son, in which all the conditions have been fully met, and all the contracts and promises ratified so completely that, as the Psalmist expresses it, it is "In all things well ordered and sure." This is one of the most helpful truths brought out in the

Epistle to the Hebrews, that we are saved not through the work of the Law, but through a new covenant in which Christ has met and fulfilled all the conditions and bequeathed to us all the promises. As the writer expressed it in a former passage, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6: 18, 19).

4. The Precious Blood. "Through the blood of the everlasting covenant." This covenant has been ratified by blood, and the blood runs as a crimson thread all through this evangelistic epistle. It is perhaps the most prominent thought in the central portion of the letter. There is no ambiguity about the teaching of this portion of the Scriptures respecting the cross of Christ. It is the blood that purchases our redemption. It is the blood that puts away our sin. It is the blood that seals and ratifies the covenant. It is the blood that sanctifies and keeps us. It is the blood that opens the way into the holiest of all. It is the blood that pleads for us, and claims the answer to our prayers. Over every page of this beautiful book we might well write the caption, "The Precious Blood of Christ."

5. The practical outworking of this great redemption. "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will." It is not a mere treatise on systematic theology; it is not a mere intellectual diversion; but it leads to the very highest standard of holy living. His will becomes our rule of action, perfect conformity to it our goal of attainment, and every good work our mode of reaching this lofty standard and heavenly aim. The life of faith, if genuine and sincere, will always lead to the life of holy activity and practical righteousness. But here it is more than an ordinary standard of righteousness. It is nothing less than the highest perfection that the apostle asks for his readers. Just as the faith required in this epistle is the highest confidence, so the holiness presented as our ideal is entire conformity to the will of God "in every good work." This would be impossible for us, but it is not impossible when we remember the crowning thought of the whole epistle, that Jesus Himself is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and this truth is not forgotten in the closing benediction, for in the very next clause he reminds us of:

6. The divine inworking which is to bring about the practical outworking. This high and holy standard is not to be reached by our most strenuous exertions, but by God's "working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." It is union with Christ, abiding in Christ, the heart and life of Christ within us, the realization of that fine expression which we find in Colossians 1: 29: "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily," and which we find yet again in Philippians 2: 12, 13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

7. The Doxology. And so the benediction ends in a sublime doxology: "To whom be glory forever and ever, Amen." Instead of being crushed with discouragement, and paralyzed with a sense of the impossibility of our task, we are lifted up to sublime confidence and praise by the delightful fact that it is not our working, but His, and duty is transformed into delight and the

heart can only sing:

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be,
Once I tried to use Him, Now He uses me.

Well may we say of such a Savior and such a salvation, "to him be glory forever and ever.
Amen."