

Hebrews - Commentaries by John Gifford Bellett

The Christian Shepherd: 1997, Opened Heavens: Hebrews 10:19-39, The (10:19-39)

Beginning with chapter 10:19 we come to another beautiful part of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The general structure of the epistles is that the doctrinal truth comes first and then the moral application of it. Here, in verse 19, we are just entering on the practical application of what has gone before.

Constantly we have been looking up and seeing the full glories of the Lamb. Now we will see that in these "last days" God, who has set Christ on high in the midst of the glories, has set the poor believing sinner down here in the midst of glories.

We do not wait for the kingdom to see glories. Is it no glory for you to have a purged conscience? Is it no glory to be fully entitled to be in the presence of God without a blush? to call God, Father? to have Christ as your Forerunner in heavenly places? to enter into the holiest without a quiver of conscience? to be introduced into the secrets of God? If we can lift up our heart and say, "Abba, Father"; if we can lift up our heart and say, "Who shall condemn?" or "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"; if we can believe that we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh and that we are part of Christ's fullness, will anyone say there is no glory in all that? This epistle tells me to look up and see Christ adorning the throne, and look down and see the poor sinner shining on the footstool.

The world sees nothing of these glories. I look up and see the Lamb in acquired glories. I look down and see the saint in gifted glories. Now the moral application begins "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There I look at myself, and will anyone say there is not glory in such a condition? That is my title. Now the exhortation is that you are to enjoy your title. To enjoy is to obey. The first duty you owe to God is to enjoy what He has made you and what He has given you. "Let us draw near." Use your privilege, as we say. It is the first and grand duty of faith, and I am bold to say it is the most acceptable duty of faith.

How slow we are to enjoy these glories. If we say in the secret of our heart, with exultation of spirit, "I am a child of God," and if we can say, "I am coheir with Christ," that is the way to begin obedience. Here it is exactly that. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

We should look at ourselves as the priesthood of God. The priests of old were washed when they were put in office and their feet were washed every day before they entered to serve in the tabernacle, so that the pavement of the presence of God was not stained by their foot. He went in, in a character worthy of the place. Are you occupying the presence of God all the day long in the consciousness that you are worthy of the place? How will you be presented before Him by and by? Jude tells you "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." You ought to know that you are in His presence now faultless or without spot. We cannot put ourselves in the flesh too low, and we cannot put ourselves in Christ too high.

Now He tells me, having got into the presence of the holiest, what to do there. "Let us hold fast the profession of our [hope] without wavering" (as the word should be). We are to be there with boldness and to talk of our hope and of our charity, "to provoke unto love and to good works." What exquisite service!

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting one another." This is what you are to be doing together when you get into the house. These are the activities of the house. We dwell together in one happy house, exhorting one another and so much the more as we point to the sky and say, "Look! the dawning of morning is near; the sky is breaking." We want to exhort one another to know our dignity in Christ rather than to know our degradation in ourselves. Confession is very right, but to gird up the mind to the apprehension of our dignity is much more acceptable and priestly work than to be ever in the depths. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee." Here we see ourselves accepted and holding our hope without wavering.

Having conducted us to chapter 10:25, he brings in a solemn passage about willful sin. We read the counterpart of this in Numbers 15 where presumptuous sin is looked at. Under the law there were two characters of offense a man might find a thing that was his neighbor's and deal falsely about it and there was a trespass offering. But when a man picked up sticks on the sabbath day he was to be stoned at once. There remained nothing for him but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." This is the presumptuous sin of the New Testament. We are not to be careless about sin, but the thing contemplated here is a defection from Christianity.

In verse 32 he exhorts them to "call to remembrance the former days." Most people know the moment of their illumination, and if there is a moment of moral energy in the history of the soul, it is the day of its quickening. Why do we not carry the strength of that moment with us? He is the same Jesus. I know that the day was when all was over between God and me concerning my flesh, and now the day has come when all is over between the world and me; that is practical Christianity. The day he called on them to remember was the day they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Why was this? Their eye was on a better inheritance. Let me grasp the richer thing, and the poorer thing may pass away for aught I care.

We can account for victory over the world just as easily as we can account for access to God. That, let me say, is just the knot that this epistle ties. It puts you inside the veil, outside the camp. The lie of the serpent made Adam a stranger to God and at home in this polluted world inside the camp and outside the veil. Christianity alters that, and verse 35 of this chapter is the one verse in the epistle that knits these things together.

Hold fast your confidence and it will be the secret of strength to you. Where do we see victory over the world? In those who are happiest in Christ. Why are you and I so miserably down in the traffic of the world? Because we are not as happy in Christ as we ought to be. Give me a soul that has boldness and joy in God's presence and I will show you one that has victory over the world.

Now the Apostle tells us that a life of patience intervenes between the day of illumination and the day of glorification. I am not to count on a path of pleasure or ease or prosperity. I am to count on a path of patience. And is there not glory in that because there is companionship with Christ? There is no greater glory than to be companion of your rejected Master. That is your path, and "if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." He was not ashamed to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were strangers here. But if we become citizens here—strike an alliance with the world—He who could say, "I am the God of my strangers," can say to the citizen of the world, I "have no pleasure in him."

May you and I exhort one another to love and to good works, and, pointing to the eastern sky, say, The day is dawning. Amen.

J. G. Bellett (from The Opened Heavens)

Musings on the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Opened Heavens, Hebrews 10:19-39: Musings on the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:19-39)

We are coming now to another beautiful part of the epistle, and as we hinted to a new division of it. We will read from verse 19 to the close of Hebrews 10. You may have observed the general structure of the epistles. Take the Ephesians, for instance: in the first three chapters we get doctrinal truth, and in the last three the moral application of it. So in Colossians, Galatians, Romans, and so forth. Now in Hebrews it is the same, and we are just entering now on the practical application of what has gone before.

"Now the full glories of the Lamb adorn the heavenly throne," as a beautiful hymn of Dr. Watts says. Constantly through this epistle we have been looking up and seeing this. But let me ask, do you see glories anywhere in "these last days" that are not attaching to the Lord in heaven? You will tell me that all glory belongs to Him, and I grant it; but I tell you, you ought to see glories attaching to yourselves. Such is the wondrous working of God, that He has made the poor sinner a glorious creature. These same last days that have set Christ on high, in the midst of the glories, have set the poor believing sinner down here in the midst of glories.

I want that you and I be girt up to an apprehension of them. We do not wait for the kingdom to see glories. Is it no glory for you to have a purged conscience? Is it no glory to be fully entitled to be in the presence of God without a blush? no glory to call God, Father? to have Christ as your Forerunner in heavenly places? to enter into the holiest without a quiver of conscience? no glory to be introduced into the secrets of God? If we can lift up our heart and say, "Abba, Father"? if we can lift up our heart and say, "Who shall condemn?" or "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" If we can believe that we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh; that we are part of Christ's fullness, will any one say there is no glory in all that? So that this epistle introduces us to most precious thoughts. It tells me to look up and see Christ adorning the throne, and to look down and see the poor sinner shining on the footstool.

The world sees nothing of these glories. We only apprehend them in the glass of the Word by faith; but I do say boldly, that I do not wait for the kingdom to know what glory is. I look up and see the Lamb in acquired glories. I look down and see the saint in gifted glories. Now the moral application begins. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There I look at myself; and will any one say there is not glory in such a condition? That is my title. Now the exhortation is that you are to enjoy your title. To enjoy is to obey. The first duty you owe to God is to enjoy what He has made you, and what He has given you. "Let us draw near." Use your privilege, as we say. It is the first grand duty of faith, and I am bold to say it is the most acceptable duty of faith.

How narrow we are to enjoy these glories. Do you ever look at yourself in the glass of the Word? We are very much accustomed to look at ourselves in the glass of circumstances — in the glass of relationships. If we say in the secret of our heart, with exultation of spirit, "I am a child of God"; if, with exultation of spirit we can say, "I am co-heir with Christ," that is the way to begin obedience. Here it is exactly that. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

We should look on ourselves as the priesthood of God. The priests of old were washed when they were put into office. Then every day their feet were washed before they entered the tabernacle to serve the Lord. The pavement of God's own presence was not stained by the foot of the priest. He went in, in a character worthy of the place. Are you occupying the presence of God all the day long in the consciousness that you are worthy of the place? How will you be presented before Him by-and-by? Jude tells you — "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." You ought to know that you are in His presence now faultless or without spot. We cannot put ourselves in the flesh too low; and we cannot put ourselves in Christ too high. If one may speak for another, we find it much easier to degrade ourselves in the flesh than to magnify ourselves in Christ. That last is what the Spirit is doing here.

Now He tells me, having got into the holiest, what to do there. If I know my title to be in the presence of God, let me know also that I am there as the heir of a promised glory; I am there to be kept there till the glory shines out. We are the witnesses of a class of glories, just as the Lord Jesus is the witness of a class of glories. We are in a wealthy place; and having got in there we are to hold our hope without a quiver. "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering" (as the word should be). If we got in without a quiver, we are to hold our hope without a quiver. That is what our God has called us to. We are there with boldness; and being there, we are to talk of our hope. And we are to talk of charity also, "to provoke unto love and to good works." What exquisite service! Who can utter the beauties of these things?

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting one another." When you get into the house, what are you doing together? Are you to be down in the depths of conscious ruin? No; but exhorting one another to love and to good works. These are the activities of the house. We dwell together in one happy house, exhorting one another, and so much the more as we point to the sky and say, "Look! the dawning of morning is near; the sky is breaking." We want a great deal more to exhort one another to know our dignity in Christ than to know our degradation in ourselves. It is very right to know ourselves poor worthless creatures. Confession is very right; but to gird up

the mind to the apprehension of our dignity is much more acceptable and priestly work than to be ever in the depths. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee." Here we see ourselves accepted; holding our hope without wavering; exhorting one another; and saying, as we point to the eastern sky, "The dawn is coming."

Then, having thus conducted us to verse 25, he brings in a solemn passage about willful sin. We read the counterpart of this in Numbers 15, where presumptuous sin is looked at. Under the law there were two characters of offense. A man might find a thing that was his neighbor's, and deal falsely about it, or he might lie to his neighbor, and there was a trespass offering provided. But when a man picked sticks on the sabbath day he was to be stoned at once. There remained nothing for him but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." It was presumptuous sin, flying in the face of the legislator. This is the presumptuous sin of the New Testament. It is running in the face of the God of this dispensation, as the gatherer of sticks ran in the face of the God of the law. We are not to be careless about sin. If we do the least sin we ought to be broken-hearted about it. But that is not the thing contemplated here. It is a defection from Christianity.

Then, having come to verse 31, he exhorts them to "call to remembrance the former days." Let me ask your souls, "Do you all remember the day when you were illuminated?" One might say, "The light shone brighter and brighter upon me." I believe Timothy may have been such an one. Timothy, I have often thought, under the education of his godly mother, may have passed gently into the flock of God. But most people know the moment of their illumination; and if there is a moment of moral energy in the history of the soul, it is the day of its quickening. Why do not you and I carry the strength of that moment with us? Is He a different Jesus that we have now? When I know that the day was when all was over between God and me, and that now the day has come when all is over between the world and me, that is practical Christianity. What was that day that he called on them to remember? The day when, being illuminated, they "took joyfully" the spoiling of their goods. Why was this? How does he account for it? Their eye was on a better inheritance. Let me grasp the richer thing, and the poorer thing may pass away for aught I care.

We can account for victory over the world just as easily as we can account for access to God. That, let me say, is just the knot that this epistle ties. It puts you inside the veil, outside the camp. In the wondrous, divine, moral character of Christianity, the grace and the blood of Christ work exactly contrary to the lie of the serpent. The lie of the serpent made Adam a stranger to God, and at home in this polluted world — inside the camp and outside the veil. Christianity just alters that. It restores us to citizenship in the presence of God, and strangership in the world; and verse 35 of this chapter is the one verse in this epistle that knits these things together.

Hold fast your confidence and it will be the secret of strength to you. Where do we see victory over the world? In those who are happiest in Christ. Why are you and I so miserably down in the traffic of the world? Because we are not as happy in Christ as we ought to be. Give me a soul that has boldness and joy in God's presence and I will show you one that has victory over the world.

Now the apostle tells us that a life of patience intervenes between the day of illumination and the day of glorification. I am not to count on a path of pleasure — a path of ease — a path of prosperity — on being richer or more distinguished tomorrow than today; but I am to count on a path of patience. And is not there glory in that? Yes; there is companionship with Christ. No greater glory is or can be yours than to be the companion of your rejected Master. That is your path. "If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." He was not ashamed to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were strangers here; but if we become citizens here, instead of strangers — strike alliance with the world — He who could say, "I am the God of my strangers," can say to the citizen of the world, "I have no pleasure in him."

May you and I exhort one another to love and to good works, and, pointing to the eastern sky, say, The day is dawning! Amen.

Miscellaneous Papers, Pilgrim Fathers, The (11:17-20)

What is declared in these verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews of the fathers in the book of Genesis, is beautifully exhibited, and thereby fully verified by their histories. I feel anxious to consider this a little carefully, the Lord leading the heart (as through circumstances I trust He graciously has done lately) a little more vividly beyond the grave.

1. "These all died in faith." The history strikingly illustrates this. They valued their dead bodies and the burying places which held them. While they lived, they were content to sojourn in Canaan without having so much as to set their foot on. But "they died in faith." The promise of God had made over that land, that very land, to them, though they themselves were to be gathered to their fathers (Gen. 15); and this was the warrant for their dying in faith, in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection unto the enjoyment of it. They would link their dead, though not their living, bodies with that land. Their care in securing the field of Ephron, the cave of Machpelah, for a burying-place, tells us this; and so the jealousy with which those of them who died in Egypt secured the carriage of their bones over to the promised land. All this verifies that "they died in faith." Whether their bodies lay in Machpelah or Sychem mattered not, for their bones would, in either case, be equally linked with the promised land. Stephen tells us that all the fathers were animated with this same faith (Acts 7:13). And I quite agree with those who say that this solves that difficult verse (Acts 7:16). Stephen shortly tells us that all were carried over from Egypt to Canaan, but whether to the ground which Abraham bought of Ephron, or that which Jacob bought of Hamor, it mattered not, for both equally linked their hopes with the promised inheritance. By faith they "gave commandment concerning their bones" (Heb. 11:22).

2. "They saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." As they died in faith of the promises, so did they live in the full persuasion of them, though still distant. Their history, in like manner, gives beautiful witness of this.

Abraham lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob. That was so indeed. But, then, they were heirs together of the promise. Of this they were, in the midst of their pilgrim-days, fully persuaded. And, therefore, on fitting occasions, they can act upon that full persuasion, in a way which nothing but such persuasion can account for, assuming the dignities and places which the promise warranted. Their "name was to be great" "and the land was to be theirs," and they would, if the moment called them, act in such character without thinking it robbery. See some instances of this.

Abimelech the king of Gerar courts the friendship of Abraham. Abraham at once allows the veil to drop, and puts off the pilgrim-girdle that hid or bound up his royal apparel, and takes headship of the Philistine king (Gen. 21).

Isaac, in his day, does the same. Another Abimelech, king of Gerar, with the high estates of his kingdom, waits on Isaac, and Isaac accepts his person, grants his requests, prepares a feast, and then (instead of being sent away by Abimelech as before, in the day of humiliation) sends Abimelech away as in a day of power and majesty. His state is kingly. The great man of the earth, and the heavenly pilgrim, for— a mystic hour have exchanged places; or, if not quite that, the pilgrim has become “king of kings” (Gen. 26).

And so Jacob. He blesses Pharaoh, taking to him without reserve the place of “the better.” For “without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” The confessed pilgrim assumes, for a moment, a dignity beyond that of the chief man of the earth in that day, the Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen. 47).

Delightful scriptures, indeed, these are. Without reserve or apology, the heavenly strangers assume the station which will be theirs under promise of God in its season. And such an act tells us that, though as yet they “had not received the promises,” yet were they “persuaded of them, and embraced them.” They could, in the faith and spirit of their Lord, ascend the mount of transfiguration, on a due occasion.

3. “They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” This was literally so, in the progress of their journeys along the stream of time. By word of mouth they declared this of themselves (Gen. 23:4; 28:4; 47:9).

Their actions, also, were according to this. The moral principles on which they carried themselves spoke the same language.

They lived in tents, signifying plainly that they were not taking up any certain settlement in the earth. They surrendered their rights in the world. Abraham, for instance, gave up the choice of the land to his younger brother, leaving it with him to appoint him whatever portion he pleased (Gen. 13).

And Isaac does the same. The instance is very striking. The Lord so signally blesses him, there was so much of the divine presence manifestly with him, that his company becomes oppressive to the world, and the men of Gerar require him to withdraw from them. He yields at once. But the blessing follows him. His servants dig a well, and the Lord fills it. And then the uncircumcised seek his wells, and he yields again.

This was a pilgrim’s practical life. He would put up with either insult or injury, with an affront to his name, or damage to his estate. This was moral power—the principle of a pilgrim’s life. This was conduct becoming his confession, that he was a stranger on the earth. “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.” It is natural they should. But neither Abraham nor Isaac are potsherds of the earth, but heavenly strangers.

Thus was their confession verified by their ways. They acted, and in their behavior bore witness that they were pilgrims here.

4. “If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to return.”

The history very largely warrants this thought concerning the pilgrim fathers; a thought which tells us that their sense of strangership on earth did not arise from regrets, but from hopes. They were dissatisfied with the present thing, not because of that which was past but of that which was to come. The scene around was a wilderness by reason of the power over them of the scene before and not of that behind them.

They might easily have retraced the road to Padanaram-Eliezer did so. They had not forgotten the way, for he did not mistake a step nor had to inquire it. And as easy would it have been for Abraham or for Isaac to have taken that journey as for Eliezer. But Eliezer went there only to do a certain business and to return. In a moral sense, his visit to the land from whence his master, Abraham, had come out, was no return to it. He did not linger there beyond the term of the appointed service. “Send me away unto my master,” was his word then, and no entreaties or kindnesses could change it (Gen. 24).

And Rebecca’s mind was the same. “I will go” was her immediate decision, when the matter was referred to her. All this being according to the purposes and thoughts of the great patriarch himself. For on sending Eliezer away, he had taken an oath of him that he would, on no pretense whatever, take his son back to that land of his kindred. Let consequences be what they may, that was never to be done.

Jacob, too, however to appearance it may be otherwise, acts exactly in the same spirit and on the same principles. His wrong way brings him under divine chastening, and he has to seek the distant land of his forefathers. But he is there as an exile rather than as at home. He is there actually because of God’s discipline, but not there morally, because of the desire of his own heart. He remains there, it is true, a far longer time than Eliezer had; as many years, perhaps, as the other had hours. But still, all the time, he is there in the spirit of Eliezer. For, like him, as soon as the business was done, as soon as the purpose or hand of the Lord gives him his dismissal, he leaves it—leaves it, too, I may add, though Laban’s contract and God’s blessing were making it profitable for him to remain; and though Esau’s enmity, he might well judge, awaited him if he dared to return. But so it was. With loss behind and danger before him, he leaves it. Indeed, such had been his purpose throughout, from beginning to end. As he was setting out, he talks, with all desire, of his return. As soon as Joseph is born, his hopes are all alive that the time of his banishment is over. And he remains after that only under God’s sanction, and departs as soon as God’s word allows him (Gen. 28:21; 30:25; 31:3-13). All this surely telling us that morally, or in the spirit of his mind, he had no more returned to that land than Abraham or Isaac.

This mind not to go back to the place from which they had been called was, therefore, the mind which strongly impregnated the whole ‘pilgrim family. It was so much the air they breathed, that even the Syrian servant inhaled it, and lived by it, and the elect bride felt the virtue of it at once. The language of their walk concerning their native land, was what ours should be concerning “this present evil world.”

“‘Tweer easy, did we choose, Again to reach the shore;But this is what our souls refuse:We’ll never touch it more.”

Musings on the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Opened Heavens, Hebrews 13:25: Musings on the Epistle to the Hebrews (13:25)

"There are some who, because the epistle is not descriptive of us as the church, see nothing in it for us. Truly it is NOT about us; it is only about Christ." G. V. Wigram

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Musings on the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Opened Heavens, Hebrews 13:24 Conclusion: Musings on the Epistle to the Hebrews (13:24)

We may remember that I have observed several distinct lines of thought running through this epistle. In taking leave of it we may consider it and see how these various lines all meet in harmony and give us in result a conclusion infinitely divine. The lines of thought are these:

1. The Spirit is displacing one thing after another to let in Christ.
2. Having brought in Christ, the Spirit holds Him up in the varied glories in which He is now filling the heavens.
3. The Spirit shows how Christ, being brought in, acts on everything to perfect it; that whatever a glorified Christ touches He perfects; and among other things He perfects our consciences.
4. This being so, on the ground of my reconciliation as a sinner I am introduced to a temple of praise.

These four things may be looked at independently, yet it is very blessed to see that they acquire fresh glory when seen in connection one with another. Now I do say there is a magnificence in such a divine writing that needs nothing but itself to tell its glory. I am in contact with something that is infinitely the mind of God, with some of the most wondrous discoveries that God can make of Himself to me.

But ere we quit our sweet and happy task we will look a little particularly at these four things. In Hebrews 1 and 2, the Spirit displaces angels to let in Christ. In Hebrews 3 and 4 He displaces Moses and Joshua. In Hebrews 5-7 He displaces Aaron. In Hebrews 8 He displaces the whole covenant with which Christ has nothing to do. In Hebrews 9 He displaces the ordinances of the old sanctuary with its altars and services to let in the altar where Jesus as the Lamb of God lay. One thing after another He takes up and sets aside to make room for Jesus. This is a delightful task to the Spirit. God knows His own delights. If the Spirit can be grieved He can be delighted too.

Then having brought Christ in, what does He do with Him? He keeps Him in forever. Christ has no successor. When the Spirit has got Him in He gazes at Him. And what is it to be spiritual? It is to have the mind of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever delighted to get out of the house to make room for Jesus? Indignantly the Spirit talks of the things we have been looking at as "beggarly elements." Have you ever treated them so? The Spirit sees no successor to Christ. In the counsels of God there is none after Him Is it so in the counsels and thoughts of our souls?

So, having kept Him in, He gazes at Him. And what does He see in Him? He sees glory upon glory. In Hebrews 1 He sees Him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the purger of our sins, and hears a voice saying, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." He looks in Hebrews 2 and sees Him as our Apostle talking to us of salvation. Then He finds Him as the Owner of an abiding house, as the Giver of eternal rest, and sees Him in the sanctuary above, seated there with an oath, and hears Him uttering the salutation, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." In these various ways the Spirit delights in Christ. Then in Hebrews 9 we see Him looked at in the heavens as the Bestower of the eternal inheritance, having first obtained eternal redemption.

In Hebrews 10 we see Him seated there in another character, with this voice saluting Him, "Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." Have you ever in spirit followed Christ up to heaven and heard these voices addressing Him? We want to give personality to the truth. We are terribly apt to deal with it as mere dogma. I dread having it before me as a thing I could intellectually learn. In this epistle it is the Person that is kept before you; it is a living One you have to do with. These are heavenly realities. Moses pitched a temple in the wilderness. Solomon pitched a temple in the land; God has pitched a temple in heaven. And oh! how it shows what an interest God has in the sinner, when for our — Priest He has built a sanctuary, and that because He is our Priest and about to transact our interests. Then in Hebrews 12, when He had ascended, He was received and seated in heaven as the Author and Finisher of faith:

That is the second line, and we see how it hangs on the first. The Spirit, having fixed Christ before us, displays Him to us.

The third thing we get in this epistle is perfection. If I get Christ perfect as Savior, I get myself perfect as saved. If I am not saved Christ is not a Savior. I am not speaking now of a feeble mind struggling with legality, but of my title — and I have no more doubt that I have a right to look on myself as a saved sinner than that Christ has a right to look on Himself as a perfect Savior. Salvation is a relative thing. If I take myself as a sinner to Christ and doubt that I am saved I must have some doubt of the perfection of His Savior-character. But we have already looked at the epistle as a treatise on perfection. It became God to give me none less than a perfect Savior. Wondrous! He has linked His glory with the perfection of my conscience before Him. He has condescended to let me know that it became Him Does it become you to come and serve me in some capacity? You might do it through kindness, but I should not think of saying so. Yet that is the language God uses.

So then, in the third place, we find the epistle a treatise on perfection. Not, however, the perfection of millennial days. Christ will be the Repairer of every breach. But the greatest breach of all was in the conscience of the sinner. There is mischief and confusion abroad in creation still. There is mischief abroad in the house of Israel. Christ has not yet set to His hand to repair that. There is a breach in the throne of David — Christ has not yet applied Himself to heal that. But the mightiest breach of all was between you and God. By-and-by He will turn the groans of creation into the praises of creation; but He began His character as a Repairer by applying Himself to repair the breach that separated you from God; and now we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

And then, in the fourth place, we find in this epistle the Spirit doing nothing less now than building a temple for praise. Is He about to tack up the veil again, which the blood of the

Lamb of God has torn in two? Is He going to revive the things that He has indignantly talked of as "beggarly elements"? Unspeakably glorious is this fourth and last thing. The Spirit of God has built a temple for you to praise Him — the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name.

What have we not in this epistle? Though we may look on each line of thought independently, yet they do lend to each other exquisite and increased glory. The Spirit is, as it were, making a whip of small cords, and telling all to be gone to make room for Jesus. Of course I know they were willing to go. John the Baptist uttered the voices of them all when he said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" Moses, Aaron, angels — all were delighted to be put out of the house for Christ.

These things are combinedly serving your soul by introducing you to deeper apprehensions of the Christ of God. What a servant to our souls the Holy Spirit is in this dispensation — as the Lord Jesus was a Servant from the manger to Calvary.

I believe we each need individually to be fortified with truth. We do not know how far Romanizing and infidel errors may be getting ahead. If we have not the truth, we may be the sport of Satan tomorrow. I will give you an instance of it. The Galatians were an earnest, excited people (and I do not quarrel with revival excitement); they would have plucked out their eyes for the apostle, but the day came when he had to begin afresh with them from the very beginning. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." There was excitement without a foundation of truth; and when mischief came in the poor Galatians were next door to shipwreck — and this epistle is a witness to the same thing. The Hebrew saints were unskillful in the word. But we must be fortified by truth. A state of quickening wants the strengthening of the truth of God.

And now what shall we say? O the depth of the riches! O the height of the glory — the profoundness of the grace — the wonder of the wonders — God unfolding Himself in such a way that we may well cover our faces, while we trust Him in silence and love Him with the deepest emotions of our souls! But some of us can surely say, "My leanness, my leanness!"

Miscellaneous Papers, Heir of All Things, The (1:2)

There is a great secret in Hebrews 1-2. "The Son" being appointed "Heir of all things," takes His appointed inheritance as a Redeemer.

The inheritance had become lost to man by sin. Adam forfeited it; and it was itself corrupted, and under the burthen of sin. If it be again inherited, it must be taken with this burthen upon it, as others have long since expressed it. The Son, appointed Heir, is therefore to take 'it as a Redeemer, or as One that relieves it of its burthen.

This secret or mystery is suggested in Psalm 8, cited in Hebrews 2. There, the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man (who is "the Son," the "appointed Heir," of Hebrews 1), is seen with all things put in subjection under Him; but He is seen also to have reached such lordship as One, who, by the grace of God, had tasted death for the inheritance.□ He is therefore a Redeemer-Inheritor, and not a simple Inheritor.

Therefore, we may say to His praise, He will enter the kingdom as a Redeemer-Inheritor, while the inheritance itself will appear there as a redeemed thing. And in this manner, He alone will be glorified there, while all around Him or under Him will be in blessing and security. And let me add, this mystery of the redemption of the inheritance is set forth in Colossians 1:20, where Christ is declared to be the Reconciler of all things in heaven and on earth, through the blood of His cross. And the cross itself bore witness to the same mystery, or His lordship of the world by reason of His death; for His royalty, with which His dominion and inheritance are linked, was there inscribed (and inscribed not to be erased), in all the languages of the nations. There it was made known, therefore, that the crucified One was the King, that the cross was His way and title to the crown. (See John 19:19-22.)

All this makes "the world to come," or this inheritance of Christ, a new creation, that is, creation under new conditions. In the old creation, all things were "of God," it is true; but they were of God who created them. But in the new, all things are "of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5). All these will witness redemption; the blood of the Lamb of God, and not simply the power of the hand of God, will be traced there.

And this distinguishes the dominions of the Second Man from those of the first, or Christ from Adam. Adam received lordship of the creatures from the hand of God at once: Christ, the Son, the Man of Psalm 8 takes it, after having been made lower than the angels, that, as man, or in manhood, He might taste death for it.

But there is more in this mystery. The redemption of the inheritance by blood, as we have been speaking, is to be made good by power. Power will have to reduce or rescue the inheritance; or, in other words, to clothe the title of Christ with possession. This action is given to us in the Apocalypse; and it is an action, consequently, conducted by strength on the ground of purchase; that is, conducted by Him who is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and who had already been "the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5). This is to be noticed. And thus it is, by the action of that Book, that "all things" are actually "put in subjection" to Christ. As to "the Son," therefore, the "appointed Heir of all things," the Man of Psalm 8, the Lord of "the world to come," we see these things.

The decree which puts all things under Him is recorded in Psalm 8. That decree, commented on in Hebrews 2, is declared to be not as yet made good to Him. The action by which this is accomplished (the manner in which all things are made subject to Christ), is given to us in the Book of the Apocalypse; and then, the results of that action are displayed to us in the pages of prophets and apostles; for there we see "the world to come," or "the kingdom," or "the inheritance of all things," is in the hand of "the Son."

Thus, “the Son” is the “Heir of all things,” and after this manner, and in this due time, the inheritance will be His, brought into actual possession.

But, in the riches of His grace, He will have heirs of this inheritance together with Himself—as we read of the saints, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” Or, as we read in our epistle (Heb. 2:10), as the Captain of salvation He leads the sons to the glory; and as these Heirs had redemption by blood, as the inheritance itself has, this Captain of salvation is also a “Sanctifier,” as our chapter goes on to teach us (vs. 11). For if He takes us up, He must take us up with all our burthens likewise. He must charge Himself with us, from the place of our ruins to the place of His glories. And this is just what He has done, as we still further read in Hebrews 2:16, “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” He laid not hold of angels, as the meaning is, but He laid hold of the seed of Abraham. That is, the Son, who is the Christ, made the interests of elect sinners (here called “the seed of Abraham”). His care, charging Himself with their blessing, and having respect to them in all His ways and doings, till He takes them into the glory, or into the inheritance of all things with Himself. In all the successive parts of His history, from the first to the last, He never lets them go. They are always seen with Him.

This, I judge, is the force of those words, “He took on him the seed of Abraham.” And this is necessary to that great mystery, the Sanctifier making the sanctified joint-heirs with Himself of the appointed inheritance—and this we find to be so, as we read Hebrews 1-2 throughout. For we there find, that we never lose sight of ourselves while we are tracing Him from the beginning to the end of His blessed, mysterious journey. And surely this is a great and precious truth. I would notice this, as these two chapters give it to us.

1st. His incarnation.

This, of course, was the beginning of His path. But this we here learn took place, because of us. Because we, the children, were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part of the same (2:14).

2nd. His life of suffering temptation.

This, as I may say, followed immediately upon His incarnation. But all His life He went through, because of us. It was, that He might succor us in our temptations (Heb. 2:18).

3rd. His victorious death.

This closed, as we know, His life of suffering temptation. But this death was likewise for us. It was, that He might deliver, us who, through fear of death, were all our life-time subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14- 15).

4th. His ascension.

This gloriously succeeded His death and resurrection. But in this He appears also for us. For He took His seat on high as the Purger of our sins (Heb. 1:3; 2:9).

5th. His present priesthood in heaven.

His ascension led Him to this service and dignity. But it is all exercised for us. He makes intercession in the tabernacle for us according to our need (Heb. 2:17).

6th. His future coming and kingdom.

This will be in due season, after the present service on high is over. But on this great occasion, and in this age of the glory, He will still appear for us. As the Captain of salvation, He will lead us to this glory, that we may sit with Himself in the sovereignty of all things in the world to come (Heb. 2:10).

And thus we see ourselves with Him, throughout all this wondrous journey, from the womb of the virgin to the throne of the kingdom. We see ourselves interested in every character which He bears, and in every action or suffering that He fulfills. He is the Incarnate One, the Tempted One, the Dead One, the Risen and Ascended One, the Priest in the heavens, and the Captain of salvation entering the world to come, where the glory is, but in each and all He is either with us or for us. We are never allowed to lose sight of ourselves or of our interests for a single moment, while tracking His path from the beginning to the end of it. He is “Heir of all things,” but we are joint-heirs with Him, having been made meet to be so by Himself in the earlier parts of His ways.

We have a fuller, brighter view of all this mystery now, in the light of the day of Hebrews 2, than they could have had who walked in the light of the 8th Psalm only. But this of grace and of God also. The light shines brighter and brighter, as we pass on, through the oracles of God. And the day is still to come, when, with an emphasis beyond even this, it shall be said, “O LORD, our Lord, how exalted is Thy name in all the earth.”

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Support (2:12)

“Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb. 12:12).

We are exhorted not to let our hands hang down. There is no reason why it should be so. Though you are under the scourge, there is not one single reason why your hands should hang down or your knees be feeble, for the Spirit has shown you yourself first in company with Christ and then with your Father who loves you. Is there any reason why you should travel as if you did not know the road?

Beautiful conclusion! We all know how the hands will hang down, but there is no reason that we should be faint-hearted. Having come to that, he looks around. Do not let your own hands hang down, and in connection with others follow peace in connection with God follow holiness. "What communion hath light with darkness?... What concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15).

J. G. Bellett

Christian Truth: Volume 35, Psalm 150 (2:8-9)

"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." Heb. 2:8, 9.

Here the Apostle states two things-what we do see, and what we do not see. On earth we do not yet see all things put under Christ; in heaven we see Him in power and glory. But in the intelligence and enjoyment of Christ in resurrection, faith sees the things of earth in their proper relationship to Him. Thus, and thus only, is our estimate of earthly things correct. Christ is not in earth's fairest scenes-the eye does not see Him there. The busy, active, crowded, and, it may be, gorgeous scene is empty. The glory of all nations, tongues, and peoples may be concentrated within the limits of the eye's vision; still, He is not there-all the glory fades before the eye of faith- the thought of His absence dims its brightest luster. But, unhappily, the eye of faith is sometimes dim. Sometimes Christians get so far away from Christ in heart that they become engrossed in the affairs of this life, and some even visit and enjoy the poor, empty, tinsel shows of this world's vanity. What could be more lamentable? They forget that death's stamp is deeply graven on everything this side of resurrection. But such actions clearly prove that the heart must have been away from Christ for some time. Such points are only reached step by step.

Even the natural man himself, although he knows nothing better, will own that such things are but the mere glitter of human vanity, and all vexation of spirit. But, in faith's estimation, everything is empty which Christ does not fill; and there, it has to confess, His hand is not seen in the whole assemblage of this world's glories. They are not yet under His hand; they are not yet the reflection of His glory. Hence, important questions arise. Whose hands are they under? Of whose glory are they the reflection? Faith's ready answer is-What is not of the Father is of the world-What is not of Christ is of Satan-What is not of the Spirit is of the flesh. "We see not yet all things put under Him."

We have only to wait "a little while" and "the world to come" shall be put in subjection under the Son of man. The expression "world to come" means the dispensation to come, or the millennial age. The Lord's name will then be excellent in all the earth, and His glory above the heavens (Psalm 8). But till then, the Christian must pass through the world as a stranger and a pilgrim. Our citizenship is in heaven; we cannot be citizens of both heaven and earth at the same time; once we were citizens of this world; now we are citizens of heaven, and ought to walk as such, though still here. We no longer belong to the old world out of which the Lord has called us, but to the new world into which He is leading us. What a good report the Spirit gives of the patriarchs on this point. "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11:15, 16. What a noble testimony this is! "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Happy for the believer when the Lord is not ashamed of the place he takes in this world, or rather, outside of it!

Let us now turn for a moment to the second thing-what we do see. "We see Jesus." This is more important to us than the coming Millennium. He who bore our sins on the cross and suffered death for us is on the throne. What could be more wonderful to us? And what a proof to us that our sins are gone! His finished work ought to be the complete settlement of every question about our sins and should produce perfect rest of the heart, and the living spring of joyous worship. The first glimpse of Jesus crowned with glory and honor should separate the heart forever from the world which crucified Him, and, practically, unite it to heaven. It should change completely the thoughts and feelings by transferring them all to Him who is there. All we love is there; all our interests are there. That is the only way of becoming heavenly minded. We can never become so by trying; we must be occupied with a heavenly object; we must "see Jesus... crowned with glory and honor."

True, most true, there are many still here whom we love, and many may be the tender ties and interests that we cherish; but everything is to be viewed in the light of the risen Jesus, and loved according to our connection with Him. But there are few things that we realize so little as our resurrection life.

What, then, do we see when we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor? Most surely, we see our place and image in Him there. How simple, yet how powerful! It is the proper action and power of faith. Christ is the divine expression, the perfect definition of every Christian's position in the presence of God. Oh, what a truth this is, and what a power it has when enjoyed in communion with the mind of heaven! The more we contemplate Him, the more intensely and fixedly the eye gazes on Him there, the more will our thoughts and feelings become heavenly. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18. This is the only way of becoming spiritually minded, the only path to true happiness, and the only ground of heavenly worship and of continual joy in the Lord.

Footprints for Pilgrims: Evening Meditations for the Day of Days, Footprints for Pilgrims - 345 (4:12)

"The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." Whatever is flesh it cuts down mercilessly, and thank God for it, because it is a hindrance to our blessing.... Whatever is not a thought that comes from God, and an intent that goes to God, the word of God judges.

.. There is nothing for the flesh but the sword—a figure, of course, of that which judges, detects, and condemns it.

Footprints for Pilgrims: Evening Meditations for the Day of Days, Footprints for Pilgrims - 17 (7:26)

I very willingly suffer with you in your suffering, and I am glad that you can have a sympathy greater than I could render, from Him who not only supports you under the suffering but raises the sufferer to His own side, to His own company. This to me is the force of "For such a high priest became us... made higher than the heavens." He lifts me to Himself. His arm comes down to me, but it lifts me up to Himself.

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