

## STUDY 24

### HEBREWS 11: 1-40

### PERSEVERING FAITH

#### EXPOSITION

In chapter 10, we found ourselves challenged by the faith of Christians who were ready to commit themselves entirely to God, whatever the cost. We read in verse 38 - **'Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. (Habakkuk 2:4) But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.'** Christians must and will be determined to go on in their faith. It was John Calvin the Reformer who wrote, **'Whoever made this the beginning of the eleventh chapter broke up the sequence wrongly. The purpose of the writer is to support what he has said, that there is need for patience.'**

We acknowledge the tension there is in the Church when one desires to go on in the Christian life and another finds himself drawing back. The quotation given above is from the prophecy of Habakkuk — **'The just shall live by faith'**. (2:4) This was repeated by the Apostle Paul as the centrepiece of his gospel presented to the Church at Rome. (Romans 1:17) Faith is vitally important in both salvation and sanctification.

Now, in the last three chapters of Hebrews (11-13), we notice the great emphasis on the Christian virtues of faith and hope and love:

Chapter 11 - the most effective remedy for backsliding is a living faith.  
Chapter 12 - the need for hope.  
Chapter 13 - an appeal for love.

Chapter 11 addresses two important questions:

**'What is faith?'**  
**'How does faith act?'**

What a magnificent chapter this is! It is sometimes called 'the great portrait gallery of the faithful', whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament. We discover the triumph of faith in all circumstances. Here were imperfect saints who experienced the temptation to fall back in faith, but who persevered, and continued on, and, in the end, triumphed. Their victory is our victory, their faith our faith. John speaks of **'the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.'** (1 John 5:4) And that faith of ours is firmly directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great anchor of our soul. (Hebrews 6:19-20) It is a faith, not in something we believe, but in the Person of Jesus Christ, to whom we are fully committed.

Reading chapter 11 is like walking through a great art gallery, where, set before us, are portraits of some of the greatest saints of God who have ever lived. In Romans 1:17, the Apostle Paul admits of the possibility of extending and deepening our faith with the words - **'For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith'**. That is, we receive a greater faith the more we exercise our faith. The true remedy for backsliding is in the exercising of our faith. Indeed, when we are tempted, or when we come into circumstances that confound us or cause us great stress, it is then that we use 'the muscle' of faith. Now, muscles can only develop when they have something to push against. And so it is with faith. Our faith will only develop as we exercise it. Christians must persevere and progress in their faith.

#### A USEFUL DEFINITION OF FAITH (1-3)

Well, that leads us to our first question: 'What is faith?' The words of 11:1 give us a perfect definition - **'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'** When Thomas the disciple doubted that the Lord had risen from the dead, he was convinced when the Lord Jesus revealed to him the marks of the nails in his hand and the scar of his wound in his side, both suffered on the Cross. When he saw the marks, he fell down and cried, **'My Lord and my God!'** (John 20:28) This was a confession of great faith, but it was a faith based on the evidence of his eyes. It was not the best, nor the strongest, sort of faith. For

Jesus went on to remark - **'Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'** (John 20:29).

Now, that is the sort of faith we must exercise; when we do not see, yet believe. The writer then goes on to tell us four things about faith:

### 1. It is a forward-looking faith

It is **'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'** The word 'evidence' means 'assurance', which is an established conviction of things hoped for. What sort of things? Well, the things he had been writing about in his letter: of assurance of heaven, of the Church as it exists in heaven, of God and our experience of salvation, of Jesus Christ who is the anchor of our souls, and who lives in our hearts by faith. They are **'things hoped for'**. Indeed, whenever we experience these things, we do not need any evidence, for we know them. They are all forward-looking.

### 2. It is a spiritually assuring faith

It is **'the evidence of things not seen.'** It is through faith that we are put in touch with the spiritual world. You can think of it as an electric plug. With the plug, an electrical appliance can be connected to a power source. Now, there is no power in the appliance until the plug is pushed into the socket; then the power flows through it. In the same way, faith is like that electric plug. Unless our faith is connected to the source, then there will be no power in the Christian life.

### 3. It is a faith approved and commended by God

**'For by it [faith] the elders gained a good testimony.'** (2) Indeed, most of the remaining part of the chapter is devoted to those saints of God who, in the exercise of their faith, pleased God very much.

Now, children like to feel approved by their parents. How rarely, in their own estimation, does any girl feel approved by her mother, or a son by his father! It does happen occasionally. Well, in the same way, we all like to feel the approval of other people in what we are doing, and are pleased when we are commended. God actually commended his Old Testament saints in this chapter. He commends them for exercising their faith in him; and he tells them so.

### 4. It is a faith tested by considering the creation

**'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.'** (3) How do we know that God created the world? In fact, there is no proof. Neither is there proof for the existence of God. It is something known, something assured, something revealed to us by God. There is no argument in Genesis 1:1 - **'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'** How do we know this was so? Because we accept it by faith. God told us in his Word, and we believe his Word. The words of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says the same thing - **'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.'** The scope of faith is cosmic. This is part of his definition of faith.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF FAITH (4-38)

Now this is a very long chapter with sixteen named individuals (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab the prostitute, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel) and numerous other un-named prophets of faith and persons of faith. Indeed, we could look at the lives of each character, spending a great amount of time looking through this gallery of faithful saints. We will not try the patience of our congregations, just as our writer earlier was not prepared to try the patience of his readers by going into the details of the law and sacrificial system. We will make appropriate comments on the named individuals and their exercise of faith.

### 1. Abel (4)

**'By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.'** (4)

Abel was pointing forward in time through the sacrifice of the animal to the sacrificial fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ. John Calvin comments, **'... the sacrifice of Abel was more acceptable than that of his brother only because it was sanctified by faith'**. It was an illustration of the tragic fact that sin demands a sacrifice, and the wages of sin is death. The name 'Abel' means 'the breath of life'; and although he was slain by his brother Cain, the example of his faith still speaks to us. Our writer points out to us that he lived in obedience to God, and that the only way to come to God is by way of the sacrifice. Cain was not obedient for

he offered a bloodless and inferior sacrifice, and was set aside by God. But Abel came offering a more acceptable sacrifice. He was righteous. So, here is one aspect of faith: obedience in coming before God.

## 2. Enoch (5)

**'By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death; and was not found because God had taken him (Genesis 5:24); for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (5)**

Our writer then adds a significant comment about faith, and the object of faith; indeed, a point of principle concerning the nature of true faith - **'But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.'** (6)

The name Enoch means 'dedicated'. He was one whose example shows us how we ought to live, by a dedicated life lived close to God. This walk of faith pleased God greatly. Indeed, so close was his walk with God, that God took him straight to heaven. You can imagine how it might have been, when one day God said to Enoch, 'Well, you have walked in faith a long way with me. You are very nearly home. Come with me now.' And so he took him.

## 3. Noah (7)

**'By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.'**

'Noah' means 'rest', and what a great salvation he brought from the Lord to his family whom he saved from the flood by his obedient faith! You will notice that he exercised his faith in a world that totally rejected his message. For hundreds of years, he was a **'preacher of righteousness'** (2 Peter 2:5) who won no converts outside his own family. God commended him as a man of faith.

## 4. Abraham (8-19)

This is a long section, but it repays closer study. The name 'Abram' means 'High Father', and 'Abraham' means 'Father of a multitude'. How did he become the highly respected father of the nation of Israel? Verse 8 tells us that he left Ur in Chaldea. He stepped out in faith as an example to us all:

**'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.'**

His faith was abundantly rewarded - **'By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.'** (9) The impermanence of their dwelling place pointed to a higher truth, as our writer explains - **'... for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'** (10) The gospel is also about the future, and tells us about eternity. Like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, believers are daily reminded of their pilgrimage through this world, seeking a permanent dwelling in heaven. The words of our Lord Jesus the night before his death on the Cross bridge with faith the gap between the time now and eternity to come - **'Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 to myself; that where I am, there you may be also.'** (John 14:1-3) The same thought comes to our writer at the end of his letter, so as to encourage his readers to avoid backsliding in this life by considering their destiny in heaven - **'Therefore let us go forth to him [Jesus], outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.'** (Hebrews 13:12-14)

Abraham's faith was beyond reproach in looking for the unexpected son of his old and faithful wife Sarah - **'By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age.'** (11) This was a physical impossibility; and it appears that at first she had a questioning faith for she laughed. (Genesis 17:13-14) It was not a laugh of faith. With Abraham, however, it was an accepting faith; but with Sarah it took longer, for our writer comments - **'... she judged him faithful who had promised.'** (11) And so it came about. She bore Isaac, her only child, whose name means 'laughter'.

## 5. Isaac (20)

**'By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.'**

What a wicked man Jacob turned out to be in his younger years! Yet after the blessing, Jacob became quite different through adversity, and turned to the Lord who revealed himself to him. His father did not know that,

but gave him a glorious blessing in faith - **'Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you'**. (Genesis 27:29) John Calvin was right to comment —

**'We see therefore that this blessing depended on faith because apart from the Word of God Isaac had nothing to bestow on his sons.'**

## 6. Jacob (21)

**'By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.'**

Now, before Jacob as an old man came down to Joseph in Egypt with the rest of the family, God promised him that he would be returning to the Promised Land. (Genesis 46:4) Well, he accepted that promise in faith; and when he died in Egypt, his son Joseph took his remains to Canaan and buried them there. (Genesis 50:5-14) You see, both father and son had faith, and God rewarded their faith.

## 7. Joseph (22)

**'By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure [Exodus] of the children of Israel ...'**

The name Joseph means 'God takes away and adds'; and reading the story of Joseph, and the death of his mother, then you would understand why Joseph committed his bones in faith to be returned to the land of God's promise. Hundreds of years after his death, his bones were indeed taken up by those who escaped from slavery, and were led by Moses, and were taken back to Canaan to be buried there. (Exodus 13:19).

## 8. Moses (23 -29)

The story of Moses' life is an illustration of God's gracious working in providence. God's saving purposes were fulfilled through this baby whose name means 'drawn up', drawn from the waters of the river Nile. Moses was raised under the very nose of the Pharaoh who was killing all the Hebrew babies, and was one who later would deliver his people from his evil-minded son. Notice in verse 23 that his parents' actions were also motivated by faith - **'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents'**. Then they entrusted him to the river, and God not only preserved him, but provided for his upbringing in the household of Pharaoh's daughter.

We also notice that, **'By faith Moses, when he came of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin'**. His parents began his life with their faith, but now he begins to exercise his own, which involved him in much personal suffering.

Then we come to a magnificent challenge in verse 26 - **'[By faith] ... esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.'** He was so enlightened by God that he knew something about the coming of the Messiah in the future. Our writer picks out three examples of Moses' faith:

**'By faith he forsook Egypt'**. (27)

**'By faith he kept the Passover'**. (28)

**'By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land'**. (29)

Moses' life was a life of faith from start to finish, where for the sake of the Messiah, who was to be born of his people, he was willing to leave all riches and status and to commit himself to the providence of God. Are we also willing to give up everything for the sake of Christ? Moses did.

There are two examples given here of the way in which the whole nation followed Moses' example of faith in God. (29-30)

Firstly, he left Egypt after killing a cruel Egyptian task-master - **'By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.'** (27) The result was the Exodus, forty years later, and **'by faith they passed through the Red Sea'**. (29) Here was the nation trusting God as they passed through the Red Sea as though on dry land; and God destroyed their enemies by drowning them. (Exodus 14:27-28)

Secondly, here is another example of the impact of Moses' faith on national life, even after he was dead - **'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.'** (30) You can imagine the scorn of the people of Jericho as the Hebrews tramped round the indestructible walls. Yet, in just a moment, the walls fell down, and the battle was won through faith.

We also have the example of a woman of Jericho involved in that incident.

### 9. Rahab the prostitute (31)

**'By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had welcomed the spies with peace.'**

Here was a Gentile to whom God granted the gift of faith that led not only to her salvation, but also that of her entire family. (Joshua 6:23) She was also held out to the early Church as a great example of practical faith - **'You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?'** (James 2:24-25)

### 10. Many, many more, known and unknown (32)

Then we arrive at a whole collection of wonderfully heroic and faithful individuals:

**'And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith ...'**

What marvellous exploits these men accomplished because of their faith in God. They were not supermen. They were not supernatural beings. They did not have enormous faith. They failed, they sinned, they were weak; but God used them. The little faith that they had, God nurtured in them, so that it grew, and they did great things for the Lord - tales which take us beyond the scope of this study

And look at the things they did. They **'subdued kingdoms'**. Consider how David overcame the Philistines. They **'worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions'**. We are bound to think of Daniel in this connection. (Daniel 6:18-23) They **'quenched the violence of fire'**, illustrated so beautifully in the faithful lives of Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, so that when they were brought out of the fiery furnace, not even the smell of burning was upon them. (Daniel 3:27) What faith they had in God, whom they would trust whether he would deliver them or not. **'...out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.'** We remember how Elisha went down to the little boy who died of sunstroke and how, by faith, he restored him to life again. (2 Kings 4:32-35)

### FAITH DURING TIMES OF ADVERSITY (35-38)

**'...others were tortured'**. Remember in this connection the magnificent example of that patient prophet Jeremiah, who was put into an awful pit by his enemies (Jeremiah 38:6-13) where he would most certainly have perished if his faith had not been rewarded and God had not sent his servant to pull him up out of the pit.

They **'had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two'**, as was the case of Isaiah who was taken by the wicked Manasseh and sawn in two, dying a martyr's death. They **'were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about ... being destitute, afflicted, tormented ... They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.'** All these things they were willing to endure for one reason - their faith in the God who kept them.

### THE SCOPE OF FAITH (39-40)

We found at the beginning of this chapter a definition of faith. Then we saw faith in action in the lives of many individuals. Now we come to the scope of faith. Verse 39 offers this commendation - **'And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.'** It was a faith that worked, for - **'All these having obtained a good testimony through faith...'** Yet their faith was only a glimmering compared with the great light of the gospel which is available to us today.

As gospel preachers, how do we apply this chapter on faith to our hearers? Perhaps something like this:

**"How does God see us? Is it with approval because we are exercising faith? Do we feel weak? Are we tempted? Are we falling back in our faith? Or, are we doing exploits for the Lord? We need to exercise our faith.**

**We have a faith that looks forward too; but the Old Testament saints did not receive what they were promised. Their faith could only be perfected together with us. They \*were looking forward to the Messiah who would come to redeem his people. These old saints of God were one with us. We are**

linked together. But these Old Testament saints were not complete. Their faith was magnificent, but there are greater things to be done by the Lord's people. We have the power of the Holy Spirit. We can look back to Calvary. We know what happened in the empty tomb. We also know that we have a Saviour coming back again for us. These things were only known to the Old Testament saints very dimly. They had a faith that looked forward. But their faith was the same as ours.

Their faith was our faith. Their trust was our trust. Their exploits were our exploits. Yet God provided something better for us so that apart from us they should not be made perfect - "They without us". We are one with them. What a glorious day it will be when we have the opportunity to talk to David and Samson and Deborah and Rahab the prostitute and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. What great men and women of faith they were! How does our faith stand in comparison with theirs? Indeed, we love the same Lord."

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 24

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE VERSES QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### **Read Habakkuk 2:4 & Romans 1:17**

1. Which part of the verse in Habakkuk is not quoted by Paul?
2. Who is it, then, who cannot be justified by faith?

#### **Read 1 John 5:4-5**

3. Who overcomes the world?
4. To our astonishment, what is the ground of our victory?
5. What does the over-comer believe?

#### **Read John 20:28**

6. Explain the circumstances that led Thomas to this great confession.

#### **Read Genesis 5:24**

7. What was characteristic of the life of Enoch?
8. What was unusual about Enoch's end?

#### **Read 2 Peter 2:5**

9. What did Noah preach about?
10. Explain your answer to question 9.
11. How many people accepted his preaching?

#### **Read John 14:1-3**

12. What is the focus of believers' lives?
13. What is Jesus doing in heaven now?

#### **Read Hebrews 13:12-14**

14. Which 'camp' were the Jews invited to leave?
15. What is the permanent city?

#### **Read Genesis 17:12-14**

16. What was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham?
17. How old should a male child be for circumcision?
18. What happened if the parents refused to have their son circumcised?

#### **Read Genesis 27:29**

19. Who made the blessing?
20. To whom was the superior blessing given?
21. Explain how he tricked his father into receiving this blessing?

**Read Genesis 50:5-14**

22. Who was to be brought back and buried in Canaan?
23. What happened to Joseph's bones? (See Exodus 13:19)

**Read Exodus 14:26-28**

24. Which miracle did Moses need much faith and obedience for?

**Read Joshua 6:23-25**

25. How were the soldiers to know that Rahab and her family were to be spared? (See 2:17-19)
26. Who commanded Rahab to be spared?
27. What faith did Rahab have? (Read chapter 2)
28. What was the eventual outcome of her faith? (See Matthew 1:5)

**Read Daniel 6:18-23**

29. Why did Daniel protest his innocence before God and man? (22)
30. What testimony did a heathen king give concerning Daniel? (20)
31. What effect did Daniel's faith have this king? (See 6:26-27)
32. What had happened to the lions?

**Read Daniel 3:26-27**

33. How did Nebuchadnezzar come to regard the faithful three men?
34. What effect did their faith have on their unknown future? (See 3:16-18)
35. What happened to the fire?

**Read 2 Kings 4:32-35**

36. Of what did the boy probably die? (18-20)
37. What did Elisha's faith make him do? (33)
38. How did Elisha know that the boy was alive?

**Read Jeremiah 38:6-13**

39. Who wanted the prophet dead? (4)
40. Where did they put Jeremiah?
41. Why did he sink?
42. Why did the king command Jeremiah to be rescued?
43. How did they pull him out?
44. What effect do you think this had on Jeremiah's faith?

**B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

1. The meaning of the Hebrew names Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham (Abram) is given in the exposition. Suggest how these meanings could have anything to do with faith — theirs, those around them, and ours today.
2. In your own words, state the true nature of faith from Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6

## C. PRACTICAL

Take an opportunity to speak to a group of young people.  
Your subject will be: FAITH.

- (1) Take any name (except Rahab) from Hebrews 11 as an example of faith.
- (2) Tell his or her story in full from the Old Testament.
- (3) Show how the young people could apply the lessons learnt in their own lives today.
- (4) Ask the young people to say what they think of the character you have chosen.

Write a full report of what you said to the young people, and send it in.  
Write a summary of any comments or reactions you received.

**[IF IT IS MORE REALISTIC FOR YOU TO SPEAK TO A GROUP OF WOMEN,  
THAT WILL BE ACCEPTABLE.]**

There is no work involved in reading the following. Here is a sermon from Charles Haddon Spurgeon the 'Prince of Preachers'. It is a sermon on Rahab, and is a masterpiece in evangelism! Enjoy it.

## RAHAB'S FAITH

A Sermon by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

In easier English by Geoffrey Stonier

**'By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. (Hebrews 11: 31)**

In almost every capital of Europe there are varieties of triumphal arches or columns upon which are recorded the valiant deeds of the country's generals, its emperors, or its monarchs. You will find, in one case, the thousand battles of Napoleon recorded, and in another, you find the victories of Nelson pictured. It seems, therefore, but right, that faith, which is the mightiest of the mighty, should have a pillar raised to its honour on which its valiant deeds should be recorded. The apostle Paul undertook to raise the structure, and he erected a most magnificent pillar in this chapter before us. It recites the victories of faith. It begins with one triumph of faith, and then proceeds to others.

We have, in one place, faith triumphing over death: Enoch did not enter the gates of Hades, but reached heaven by another road from that which is usual to men. We have faith, in another place, wrestling with time: Noah, warned by God concerning things not yet seen, wrestled with time, which placed his deluge a hundred and twenty years away; and yet, in the confidence of faith, he believed against all reasonable expectation, against all probability, and his faith was more than a match for probability and time too. We have faith triumphing over infirmity: when Abraham had a son in his old age. And then we have faith triumphing over natural affection as we see Abraham climbing to the top of the hill and raising his knife to slay his only and beloved son at the command of God. We see faith again, entering the lists with the infirmities of old age and the pains of the last struggle, as we read: **'By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.'**

Then we have faith combating the allurements of a wealthy court: **'By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.'** We see faith daring in courage: when Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, and equally patient in suffering when he endured as seeing him who is invisible. We have faith dividing seas, and casting down strong walls. And then, as though the greatest victory should be recorded last, we have faith entering the lists with sin, holding a contest with iniquity, and coming off more than a conqueror: **'Rahab did not perish with them who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.'** That this woman was no mere hostess, but a real harlot, I have already proved to every sincere hearer while reading this chapter. I am persuaded that nothing but a spirit of distaste for free grace could ever lead any commentator to deny her sin.

I do think this triumph of faith over sin is not the least here recorded, but that if there is any superiority to be ascribed to any one of faith's exploits, this is, in some sense, the greatest of all. Well faith, did you fight with hideous lust? Would you struggle with that fiery passion which sends out a flame from human breasts? Would you touch with your innocent fingers foul and beastly debauchery? 'Yes', says faith, 'I did encounter this abomination of iniquity; I delivered this woman from the foul bed of vice, the wily snares of enchantment, and the fearful penalty of transgression. Yes, I carried her off saved and rescued, gave her purity of heart, and renewed in her the beauty of holiness. And now, her name will be recorded in the roll of my triumphs as a woman full of sin, yet saved by faith.'

I have some things to say this morning concerning this notable victory of faith over sin, such that I think will lead you to see that this was indeed a mighty triumph of faith. I make my divisions alliterative, so that you may remember them. This woman's faith was a saving faith, a singular faith, a stable faith, a self-denying faith, a sympathising faith, and a sanctifying faith.

Let no one leave after I have expounded the first point and miss the rest, for you cannot know the total power of her faith unless you remember each of those particulars I am about to mention.

### **1. FIRSTLY, THIS WOMAN'S FAITH WAS A SAVING FAITH**

All the other ones mentioned here were doubtless saved by faith; but I do not find it specially remarked concerning any one of them that they did not perish through their faith; while it is particularly said of this woman that she was delivered amid the general destruction of Jericho purely and only through her faith. And, without doubt, her salvation was not merely of a passing nature, not merely a deliverance of her body from the sword, but redemption of her soul from hell. Oh, what a mighty thing faith is when it saves the soul from going down to the pit! So mighty is the ever-rushing torrent of sin that no arm except that which is as strong as God's can ever stop the sinner from being hurried down to the gulf of black despair, and when, nearing that gulf, so impetuous is the torrent of divine wrath, that nothing can snatch the soul from perdition but an atonement which is as divine as God himself.

Yet faith is the instrument of accomplishing the whole work. It delivers the sinner from the stream of sin, and so, laying hold on the omnipotence of the Spirit, it rescues him from that great whirlpool of destruction to which his soul is being hurried. What a great thing it is to save a soul! You can never know how great it is unless you have stood in the capacity of a saviour to other men. That heroic man who, yesterday, when the house was burning climbed the creaking staircase, and, almost suffocated by the smoke, entered an upper room, snatched a baby from its bed and a woman from the window, brought them both down in his arms, and saved them at the peril of his own life, he can

tell you what a great thing it is to save a fellow-creature. That noble hearted youth who, yesterday, sprang into the river at the risk of his life, and snatched a drowning man from death, he felt, when he stood on the bank, what a great thing it is to save life. Ah, but you cannot tell what a great thing it is to save a soul! It is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can tell you that, for he is the only one who has ever been the Saviour of sinners. And remember, you can only know how great a thing faith is by knowing the infinite value of the salvation of a soul.

Now, **'By faith, the harlot Rahab was delivered.'** That she was really saved in a gospel sense, as well as a passing sense, seems to me to be proved from her reception of the spies, which was an emblem of the entrance of the word into the heart. Her hanging out of the scarlet thread was an evidence of faith, not unsuitably picturing faith in the blood of Jesus the Redeemer. But who can measure the length and breadth of that word - salvation? Ah, it was a mighty deed which faith accomplished when he bore her off in safety! Poor sinner! Take comfort. The same faith that saved Rahab can save you. Are you literally one of Rahab's sisters in guilt? She was saved, and so may you, if God will grant you repentance. Woman, are you loathsome to yourself? Do you stand at this moment in this assembly, and say, 'I am ashamed to be here. I know I have no right to stand among people who are pure and honest?' I beg you, remain here still; indeed, come again and make this your Sabbath house of prayer. You are no intruder! You are welcome! For you have a sacred right to the courts of mercy. You have a sacred right, for here sinners are invited, and you are such. Believe in Christ, and you, like Rahab, will not perish with the disobedient, but even you will be saved.

And now, there is some gentleman in the audience who says, 'There's a gospel for you! It is a kind of sanctuary for the wicked to which the worst of people may run and be saved!' Yes; that is the stale objection which Celsus used against Origen in his discussion. 'But', said Origen, 'it is true, Celsus, that Christ's gospel is a sanctuary for thieves, robbers, murderers, and harlots. But know this, it is not a sanctuary merely, it is a hospital too; for it heals their sins, delivers them from their diseases, and they are not afterwards what they were before they received the gospel.' I ask no one today to come to Christ and then continue in his sins. If so, I should be asking him to do an absurd thing. As well might I talk of delivering a Prometheus while his chains are allowed to remain on him and bind him to his rock. It cannot be. Christ takes away the vulture from the conscience, but he also takes away the chains, and makes him completely free when he does it. Yet, we repeat it again, the chief of sinners are as welcome to Christ as the best of saints. The fountain filled with blood was opened for black-hearted ones; the robe of Christ was woven for naked ones; the balm of Calvary was made for sick ones. Life came into the world to raise the dead. And oh, you perishing and guilty souls! May God give you Rahab's faith, and you will have this salvation, and will stand there with her, where the white-robed, spotless hosts sing unending hallelujahs to God and the Lamb.

## **2. BUT NOTE, RAHAB'S FAITH WAS A SINGULAR FAITH**

The City of Jericho was about to be attacked. Within its walls, there were hosts of people of all classes and characters, and they knew right well that if their city was sacked and stormed they would all be put to death. But, strange to say, there was not one of them who repented of sin, or who even asked for mercy, except this woman who had been a harlot. She, and she alone, was delivered, just one among many. Now, have you ever felt that it is a very hard thing to have a singular faith? It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as everybody else believes; but the difficulty is to believe a thing alone when no one else thinks as you do; to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause when the enemy musters his thousands to the battle. Now, this was the faith of Rahab. She had no one who felt as she did, who could enter into her feelings, and realise the value of her faith. She stood alone. Oh, it is a noble thing to be a lonely follower of despised truth!

There are some who could tell you a tale of standing alone. There have been days when the world poured continually a river of infamy and blame on them, but they stemmed the torrent, and, by continued grace, were made strong in weakness, holding their own until the current turned. And they, in their success, were praised and applauded by the very men who sneered at them before. Then the world accorded them the name of 'great'. But where lay their greatness? Why, in this, that they stood as firm in the storm as they stood in the calm - that they were as content to serve God alone as they were in companies of fifties.

To be good, we must be singular. Christians must swim against the stream. Dead fish always float down the stream, but the living fish forces its way up against the current. Now, worldly religious men will go just as everybody else goes. That is nothing. The thing is, to stand alone. Like Elijah, when he said, **'I only am left, and they seek my life'**, to feel in ourselves that we believe as firmly as if a thousand witnesses stood by our side. Oh, there is no great right in a man, no strong-minded right, unless he dares to be singular. Why, most of you are as afraid as you ever could to be out of fashion, and you spend more money than you ought because you think you must be respectable. You dare not move in opposition to your brothers and sisters in the circle in which you move; and therefore you involve yourselves in difficulties. You are blindfolded by the rich fabric of fashion, and therefore many a wrong thing is tolerated because it is customary. But a strong-minded man is one who does not try to be singular, but who dares to be singular when he knows that to be singular is to be right. Now, Rahab's faith, sinner as she was, had this glory, this crown about its head, that she stood alone, 'faithful amongst the faithless found.'

And why should not God vouchsafe the same faith to you my poor sinning, but repentant hearer? You live in a back street, in a house which contains no one but Sabbath breakers, and irreligious men and women. But, if you have grace in your heart, you will dare to do right. You belong to an infidel club: if you should make them a speech after your own conscience, they will hiss at you; and if you forsake their company, they will persecute you. Go and try them. Dare them. See whether you can do it; for if you are afraid of men, you are caught in a snare which may prove your grief, and is now your sin. Mark you, the chief of sinners can make the most daring saints; the worst men in the devil's army, when they are converted, make the truest soldiers for Jesus. The forlorn hope of Christendom has generally been led by those who have proved the high efficacy of grace to an eminent degree by having been saved from the deepest sins. Go on, and the Lord give you that high and singular faith!

### **3. FURTHERMORE, THIS WOMAN'S FAITH WAS A STABLE FAITH**

It stood firm in the midst of trouble. I have heard of a church clergyman who was once visited by his churchwarden during a long period of drought, and was requested to pray for rain. 'Well', said he, 'my good man, I will offer it, but it's not a bit of use while the wind's in the east, I'm sure.' There are many who have that kind of faith: they believe just as far as probability goes with them, but when the promise and the probability part, then they follow the probability and part with the promise. They say, 'The thing is likely, therefore I will believe it.' But that is no faith, it is sight. True faith exclaims, 'The thing is unlikely, yet I will believe it.' This is real faith. Faith can say that 'mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in the day.' Faith is to look through that cloud, not with the eye of sight, which sees nothing, but with the eye of faith, which sees everything, and say, 'I trust him when I cannot trace him; I tread the sea as firmly as I would the rock; I walk as securely in the tempest as in the sunshine, and lay myself to rest on the surging billows of the ocean as contentedly as on my bed.' The faith of Rahab was the right sort of faith, for it was firm and enduring.

I will have a little talk with Rahab this morning, as I suppose old Unbelief did when he communed with her. 'Now, my good woman, don't you see the absurdity of this thing? Why, the people of Israel are on the other side of Jordan, and there is no bridge. How are they to get over? Of course, they must go up higher towards the fords; and then Jericho will be secure for a long time. They will take other cities before coming to here; and, besides, the Canaanites are strong, and the Israelites are only a parcel of slaves; they will soon be cut in pieces, and there will be an end of them. Therefore, do not harbour these spies. Why put your life at risk for such an improbable thing?' 'Ah,' says she, 'I do not care about the Jordan; my faith can believe across the Jordan, or else it is only a dry-land faith.' By-and-by, they march through the Jordan dry-shod, then faith gets firmer confidence. 'Ah', says she secretly within herself, what she would willingly have said to her neighbours, 'Will you not now believe? Will you not now plead for mercy?' 'No', they reply, 'the walls of Jericho are strong. Can the feeble host resist us?' And so, on the morrow, the troops are out, and what do they do? They simply blow a number of rams' horns. Her neighbours say, 'Why, Rahab, you do mean to say you believe now? They are mad.' The people just go round the city, and all hold their tongues except the few priests blowing rams' horns. 'Why, it is ridiculous.'

It was quite a new thing in warfare to hear of men taking a city by blowing rams' horns. That was the first day. Probably, the next day Rahab thought they would come with scaling ladders and mount the walls. But no; rams' horns again, up to the seventh day. And all the time, this woman kept the scarlet thread in her window, and, all the time, kept her father and mother and brothers and sisters in the house, and would not let them go out. And on the seventh day, when the people made a great shout, the wall of the city fell flat on the ground. But her faith overcame her womanly timidity, and she remained within, although the wall was tumbling to the ground. Rahab's house stood alone upon the wall, a solitary fragment amid a universal wreck, and she and her household were all saved.

Now would you have thought that such a rich plant would grow in such a poor soil - that strong faith could grow in such a sinful heart as that of Rahab's? Ah, but here it is that God exercises his great husbandry! **'My Father is the husbandman'**, said Christ. Any husbandman can get a good crop out of good soil; but God is the husbandman who can grow cedars on rocks, who can not only put the hyssop on the wall, but put the oak there too, and make the greatest faith spring up in the most unlikely position. All glory to his grace! The greatest sinner may become great in faith. Be of good cheer, then, sinner! If Christ should make you repent, you have no need to think that you will be the least in the family. Oh, no; your name may yet be written amongst the mightiest of the mighty, and you may stand as a memorable and triumphant instance of the power of faith.

#### 4. THIS WOMAN'S FAITH WAS A SELF-DENYING FAITH.

She dared to risk her life for the sake of the spies. She knew that if they were found in her house she would be put to death, but though she was so weak as to do a sinful deed to preserve them, yet she was so strong that she would run the risk of being put to death to save these two men. It is something to be able to deny yourselves. An American once said, 'I have got a good religion; it's the right sort of religion; I do not know that it costs me a cent a year; and yet I believe I am as truly a religious man as anybody.' 'Ah!' said one who heard it, 'The Lord have mercy on your miserable stingy soul! For, if you had been saved, you would not have been content with a cent a year - a half-penny a year!' I put forward this assertion, that there is nothing in the faith of that man who does not exercise self-denial. If we never give anything to Christ's cause, work for Christ, deny ourselves for Christ, the root of the matter is not in us. I might call some of you hypocrites: you may sing —

**‘And if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I could give him all.’**

Yes; but you would not though; you know better than that, for you do not, as it is, give all, no, nor yet half, nor yet the thousandth part. I suppose you think you are poor yourselves, though you have got some thousand pounds odd a year, and so you keep it yourself, under the notion **that ‘He who gives to the poor lends to the Lord.’** I don’t know how else it is you make your religion square with itself, and be at all consistent. This woman said, ‘If I must die for these men, I will; I am prepared, bad name as I have, to have a worse name still. As a traitor to my country, I am prepared to be handed down to shame, if it is necessary, for having betrayed my country in taking in these spies. For I know it is God’s will that it should be done, and do it I will, whatever the risk.’ O men and brothers, do not trust your faith unless it has self-denial in it. Faith and self-denial, like Siamese twins, are born together, and must live together, and the food that nourishes the one must nourish them both. But this woman, poor sinner that she was, would deny herself. She brought her life, even as that other woman who was a sinner brought the alabaster box of precious ointment, and broke it on the head of Christ.

## **5. THIS WOMAN’S FAITH WAS A SYMPATHISING FAITH**

She did not believe for herself only; she desired mercy for her relatives. Said she, ‘I want to be saved, but that very desire makes me want to have my father saved, and my mother saved, and my brother saved, and my sister saved.’ I know a man who walks seven miles every Sabbath to hear the gospel preached at a certain place - a place where they preach a sort of gospel. You know that very particular, superfine sort of gospel, a gospel, the spirit of which consists in bad temper, worldly security, arrogance, and a hardened conscience. But this man was one day met by a friend, who said to him, ‘Where is your wife?’ ‘Wife?’ said he. ‘What! Does she not come with you?’ ‘Oh, no’, said the man; ‘she never goes anywhere.’ ‘Well, but’, said he, ‘don’t you try to get her to go, and the children?’ ‘No; the fact is, I think, if I look to myself, that is quite enough.’ ‘Well’, said the other, ‘and you believe you are God’s elect, do you?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Well then’, said the other, ‘I don’t think you are, because you are worse than a heathen and a publican, for you don’t care for your own household. Therefore, I don’t think you give much evidence of being God’s elect, for they love their fellow-creatures.’

So sure as your faith is real, it will want to bring others in. You will say, ‘You want me to make proselytes.’ Yes; and you hear what Christ said to the Pharisees, ‘You compass sea and land to make one proselyte.’ Yes; and Christ did not find fault with them for doing so. What he found fault with them for was this — ‘When you have found him, you make him ten-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.’

The spirit of proselytising is the spirit of Christianity, and we ought to desire to possess it. If anyone will say, ‘I believe such-and-such a thing is true, but I do not wish anyone else to believe it, I will tell you it is a lie. He does not believe it, for it is impossible, heartily and really, to believe a thing without desiring to make others believe it. And I am sure of this, too, it is impossible to know the value of salvation without desiring to see others brought in. That famous preacher, George Whitefield said, ‘As soon as I was converted, I wanted to be the means of the conversion of all that I had ever known. There were a number of young men that I had played cards with, that I had sinned with, and transgressed with; the first thing I did was, I went to their houses to see what I could do for their salvation, nor could I rest until I had the pleasure of seeing many of them brought to the Saviour.’ This is a first-fruit of the Spirit. It is a kind of instinct in a young Christian. He must have other people feel what he feels. Says one young man, in writing to me this

week, 'I have been praying for my fellow-clerk in the office; I have desired that he might be brought to the Saviour, but at present there is no answer to my prayers.' Do not give a penny for that man's piety which will not spread itself. Unless we desire others to taste the benefits we have enjoyed, we are either inhuman monsters or outrageous hypocrites; I think the last is most likely. But this woman was so strong in faith that all her family were saved from destruction. Young woman! You have a father, and he hates the Saviour. Oh, pray for him! Mother! You have a son, and he scoffs at Christ. Cry out to God for him.

Yes; my friends - young people like myself - we little know what we owe for the prayers of our parents. I feel that I shall never be able sufficiently to bless God for a praying mother. I thought it was a great nuisance to bear when we used to pray, and more especially to be made to cry, as my mother used to make me cry. I would have laughed at the idea of anybody else talking to me about these things; but when she prayed, and said, 'Lord, save my son Charles', I was overcome, and could not get any further for crying. You could not help crying too; you could not help feeling; it was of no use trying to stand against it. Ah, and there you are, young man! Your mother is dying, and one thing which makes her death-bed bitter is that you scoff at God and hate Christ. Oh, it is the last stage of impiety when a man can think lightly of a mother's feelings! I would hope there are none such here, but that those of you who have been so blessed as to have pious parents, take this into consideration — that to perish with a mother's prayers is to perish fearfully; for if a mother's prayers do not bring us to Christ, they are like drops of oil dropped into the flames of hell that will make them burn more fiercely on the soul for ever and ever. Take heed of rushing to perdition over your mother's prayers!

There is an old woman weeping - do you know why? I believe she has sons too, and she loves them. I met with a little incident in company the other day after preaching. There was a little boy at the corner of the table, and his father asked him, 'Why does your father love you, John?' Said the dear little lad, very nicely too, 'Because I am a good boy.' 'Yes', said the father, 'he would not love you if you were not a good boy.' I turned to the good father and remarked that I was not quite sure about the truth of the last remark, for I believe he would love him if he were ever so bad. 'Well', he said, 'I think I would.' And said a minister at the table, 'I had an instance of that yesterday. I stepped into the house of a woman whose son was transported for life, and she was as full of her son Richard as if he had been prime minister, or had been her most faithful and dutiful son.' Well, young man, will you kick against love like that - love that will bear your kicks, and will not turn round against you, but love you straight on still. But perhaps that woman - I saw her weep just now - had a mother who has gone long ago, and she was married to a brutal husband, and was at last left a poor widow. She calls to mind the days of her childhood, when the big Bible was brought out and read around the hearth, and, 'Our Father who art in heaven' was their nightly prayer. Now, perhaps, God is beginning some good thing in her heart. Oh, that he would bring her now, though seventy years of age, to love the Saviour! Then would she have the beginning of life over again in her last days, which will be made her best days.

## **6. RAHAB'S FAITH WAS A SANCTIFYING FAITH**

Did Rahab continue a harlot after she had faith? No; she did not. I do not believe she was a harlot at the time the men went to her house, though the name still stuck to her, as bad names will. But I am sure she was not afterwards, for Salmon the prince of Judah married her, and her name was put down among the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ. She became after that a woman eminent in piety, walking in the fear of God. Now, you may have a dead faith which will ruin your soul. The faith that will save you is a faith which sanctifies. 'Ah!' says the drunkard, 'I like the gospel, sir; I believe in Christ.' Then he goes over to the Blue Lion to-night to get drunk. Sir, that is not the believing in Christ that is of any use. 'Yes' says another, 'I believe in Christ.' Then, when he gets outside he will begin

to talk light frothy words, perhaps suggestive ones, and sin as before. Sir, you speak falsely. You do not believe in Christ. That faith which saves the soul is a real faith, and a real faith sanctifies men. It makes them say, 'Lord, you have forgiven me my sins; I will sin no more. You have been so merciful to me, I will renounce my guilt; so kindly have you treated me, so lovingly have you embraced me, Lord, I will serve you till I die.

## STUDY 25

### HEBREWS 11:26

#### WAS MOSES A BELIEVER IN CHRIST?

Here, in this study, we have an example of how the gospel may be preached using the lives of the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11. Here we note the close association of Moses with Christ.

### EXPOSITION

#### A PUZZLING REFERENCE TO CHRIST

How was it possible for Moses to know about Jesus Christ over one-thousand years before he came? Well, Christ is mentioned in connection with Moses in Hebrews 11:26:

**'... esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt'.**

Moses is said here to put the reproach of Christ before anything the world offered him. Therefore, if he accepted the reproach of Christ he must have known Christ. But how could he? Jesus Christ would not be born for a thousand years into the future. So here is a puzzle - how did Moses know Christ? Was he a believer in Christ?

It is interesting to read in the New Testament how often Moses is contrasted with the Lord Jesus. (See Matthew 17:4; John 1:17, 45, 6:14; Acts 28:23) For example, we looked earlier in our course at the words of Hebrews 3:2-3, 5:

**'Consider ... Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him who appointed him, as Moses also was in all his house. For this one has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who built the house has more honour than the house...And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant.'**

The writer was speaking here of the nation of Israel - **'Moses indeed was faithful in his house'**. All those who were slaves in Egypt, and were groaning under its bondage, were Moses' people. And Moses was called by God to bring them out of slavery, and grant them freedom to go to their own land. Yet our writer continues - **'Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterwards, but Christ as a Son [was] over his own house.'** Here he draws a contrast between the two: Moses was faithful, and Christ was faithful. So what was the difference? **'Christ as a Son [was faithful] over His house'**.

Also, the 'house' of Christ was not just a national people, the nation of Israel, but all the people of God from every nation and in every century.

Another contrast is found in John 1:17. John points out that **'the Law was given through Moses'**. Now the Law was the glory of Israel, and was found in the first five books in the Bible - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Here we have an account of the creation of man, and the giving of God's good and holy laws for his good. These laws are summed up in the Ten Commandments. Thus the Jews were very proud of Moses through whom God gave his commandments. **'The law was given through Moses'**, and

this law was **'holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.'** (Romans 7:12) The trouble was, sinful man could not keep the law perfectly. It was as impossible for him to keep the law as to climb the highest mountain in the world. He could not do it. God gave his perfect Law, and expected his creatures to keep it. But no one could. There was no way to please God by keeping the Law. So God made it possible for sinners to come to him by another way; not by works, by trying to keeping the law, and failing, but through his own Son Jesus Christ. So this verse in John continues - **'... but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'** He alone is the only way to God. Moses opened the door, but it was too difficult to get through by our own efforts.

But Christ came and opened another door to make it easy for us to come to God. He did all the work for us by dying for our sins on the Cross. Although we have broken his laws, we are not condemned, for Christ received our rightly-deserved punishment on himself. However, in contrast, both Moses and Christ were obedient to God. Both opened a door to God, but only Christ's way was effective.

### **WHAT DID MOSES KNOW ABOUT CHRIST?**

We now return to Hebrews 11:26, and the puzzling words - **'the reproach of Christ'**. How did Moses know about Christ? Actually, it does not say! It simply says that Moses was pleased to accept **'the reproach of Christ'**. **'Christ'** is a Greek word, which, in its turn was the translation of a Hebrew word found in the Old Testament. In Greek, it is CHRISTOS; and in Hebrew it is MESSIAH. The two mean the same thing - the pouring out of olive oil on to — someone's head, whom God had chosen and set apart for a special task. It means **'to anoint'**. Christ was the anointed of God, set apart for the special task of saving sinners, and of bringing about the forgiveness of their sins.

Moses bore **'the reproach of Christ'**, which indicates that the way of Christ was the way of shame. But that still does not tell us how Moses knew of Christ and was willing to bear his reproach. The supreme revelation to Moses concerning Christ is found in Moses' own words in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 —

**'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear ... And the LORD said to me ... "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."'**

He is speaking here, looking through the centuries, of a vision God had given him of One who would come to proclaim the whole counsel of God, and who would indeed be the word of God, the Supreme Prophet, the spokesman of God. He would say all that would ever need to know about God, and man, and salvation. That Prophet would be the Christ. At some special time, God had told Moses about his Anointed, the Christ who was to come.

### **THE FAITH OF MOSES**

Now, after answering the question about Moses' knowledge of the Christ, there is still more that needs to be said. We read in Hebrews 11:23 these words - **'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.'** Thus Moses' parents were people of great faith, and this rubbed off on Moses: **'By faith Moses, when he came of age...'** (24) The story of Moses when he was a baby is well-known, but is nevertheless dramatic. A very wonderful thing happened as a result of the wisdom of his older sister Miriam. When Pharaoh's daughter looked for a nurse for the baby, after he was found floating down the river in a little ark, Miriam volunteered in secret his own mother. This was Jochebed. (Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59) So that is how it came about that

Moses was made aware of his Hebrew origin.

Now, continuing in verse 24 - **'By faith Moses, when he came of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter'**. It is impossible to describe how much that must have cost him. He was next to Pharaoh himself, yet he renounced all his riches for the sake of the faith of his own people - **'... choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.'** (26) It was not an earthly reward, but a spiritual one, that of fulfilling God's purpose in his life.

In our evangelism, we should stress the cost of following Christ. True evangelism, which calls people to Christ must also warn concerning 'his reproach'. He who would build a house must first sit down and count the cost. (Luke 14:28) This Moses did. He counted the cost of following God; of being true to the vision that God was going to give him concerning his purpose for his nation Israel, in bringing them out of bondage and sending his Son to be the Messiah.

We have a startling similarity in the births of Moses and Christ. For example, think of the great threat to the lives of little children by the agents of Pharaoh, and consider how Jesus, when he was born, was threatened by Herod, a man of blood and violence. Great indeed, was his wickedness and deceit. We remember how the family was warned by an angel in a dream to flee into Egypt while Herod was attempting to destroy him. (Matthew 2:13-14) Jesus was spared, just as Moses was also spared. We also remember how the family remained in Egypt until Herod died, and when it was safe to return from Egypt. (Matthew 2:15) It is also interesting how Matthew quoted from Hosea 11:1 - **'And out of Egypt I called my Son'**. However, if we look carefully at the context of this passage in Hosea, we find that that verse is not referring to the Messiah, but to Israel - **"When Israel was a child, I loved him, 'And out of Egypt I called my Son.'"** Here is reference to the exodus from the land of Egypt. But Matthew was obviously struck with the similarity that Jesus himself was also brought out of Egypt - a close link between Moses and Christ. Later, Christ refused to be made a king (John 6:15), just as Moses refused to be king over the Egyptians.

When Christ entered Jerusalem, he did not come on a war charger but on the back of a young donkey. (John 12:14) John picked out a verse from Zechariah 9:9 - 'Behold your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. What a way to reject kingship! Just as Moses rejected his position as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, so Christ refused political recognition. When Pilate asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' (John 18:33), he replied, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' (36) He refused great political power as Moses did. Just as Moses accepted the afflictions of his people, so Christ accepted the afflictions of his people and went to his death on the Cross.

## REPROACH

There is a further thing to consider: that to hurt the people of God was to hurt God's Anointed. To afflict the people of God was to bring affliction upon God's Anointed. The psalmist declared —

**'Remember, Lord, the reproach of your servants - how I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, with which your enemies have reproached, O LORD, with which they have reproached the footsteps of your anointed.'** (Psalm 89:50-51)

Here is the same word 'reproach' again, which is found in Hebrews 11:26 - **'esteeming the reproach of Christ'**. Christ is the Anointed, the Messiah. There is a unity between the people of God as God's 'anointed' and Christ, the 'Anointed' of God. To touch the people of

God and bring reproach upon her, and to cause her to suffer and be afflicted, is to bring reproach on God's Messiah, and cause him to suffer. To touch one is to touch the other. Christ is the bone of Israel's bone, and flesh of Israel's flesh. He is the head of all the people of God. To reproach the people of God is to bring reproach upon the head, who is Christ himself. So the afflictions of Israel are the afflictions of Christ.

The reproach of Moses was, therefore, the reproach of Christ. This affliction he was willing to accept for the sake of Christ and for his people. (Hebrews 11:25) The apostle Paul said much same thing —

**'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him'.** (Philippians 3:7-9)

Here, then, is an opportunity for an evangelistic challenge, which might go something like this:

**'Are you willing to accept the loss all things for the sake of Christ? Suppose you received this message from heaven: "You have ten minutes to live. Put your life in order." What would you do? What would you count as the most important thing in your life? What are you living for? You have five minutes to live! Would you count your money? Would you go round the house collecting up your jewels and rings? Would you spend the time embracing your husband or your wife or your children? Are those things the most important in your life? Indeed not, if you are a believer! If you follow the pattern of Moses, the most important thing in your life will be Jesus Christ, and the purposes of God that relate to him; and nothing else.'**

### THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

Moses suffered the reproach of Christ. Are we willing to do that? The Christians in the Hebrew churches were finding it very difficult to live with the fact that to become a Christian brought immediate opposition. This is happening today in many countries. Where Christians desire to serve Christ with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, despite the suffering that will inevitably come to them. They willingly take up the reproach of Christ. Such examples should make us feel ashamed. We are overcome by the thought of such suffering and reproach. We say, 'This is too much for me. I cannot bear it.' Well then, if we cannot bear it, Christ will not bear us! He wrote to the Church in Laodicea —

**'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.'** (Revelation 3:15-16)

We are either for Christ a hundred percent, or not at all. It is either one or the other. We can only serve one master. And Moses chose 'the reproach of Christ'. The Hebrew Christians had to learn for themselves that the way of faith in Christ is the only way of fulfilment, the only way of purpose, the only way of satisfaction. Are we willing like Moses to bear suffering and affliction and reproach for the sake of Christ.

Our writer concludes his letter with these words of exhortation concerning the reproach of Christ —

**'Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to him, outside the camp, bearing his reproach.'** (Hebrews 13:12-13)

Well, then, are we willing to suffer as Christians? Are we willing to maintain our testimony for Christ, even if it means reproach? Are we willing to do what he wants us to do, and not what others tell us to do? Are we willing to suffer the reproach of Christ? This is what Christ himself was willing to do for his people - **'...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'** (Hebrews 12:2) His reward came after he **'endured the cross, despising the shame'**.

## THE PROTECTION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

There are some very puzzling words in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, which also help us to see that Moses was a believer in Christ —

**'I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.'**

Israel was protected by Jesus Christ. Even in the early history of Israel, the Messiah was with his people, for not only was he their Messiah to come, but their Messiah was already with them. He was with them in their sufferings in Egypt; he was with them in the Exodus; he was with them in their wanderings for forty years; and he was with them when they entered the Promised Land. He was with them, protecting them, helping them, and making his presence known.

How extraordinary that is! Yet it provides a wonderful opportunity for preaching the gospel from the Old Testament, just as Paul did. The apostle described Christ as 'spiritual food', 'spiritual drink', and a 'spiritual Rock'. It is true that they received manna in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:14-35) They ate it; but it fed their bodies, not their souls. It was definitely not spiritual. Moses struck the rock, and water came out and they drank it; but it was not spiritual for they grew thirsty again. (Exodus 17:3-7; Numbers 20:5-11) These things were for the body that perished. But God also gave them spiritual food and spiritual drink, both of which were fulfilled in Christ who declared himself to be the living water of eternal life (John 4:13-14) and the true bread from heaven (John 6:31-35, 48-51, 57-58)

Paul was right to say, **'...and that Rock was Christ.'** We have here a picture of Christ before he was born as a man, helping his people through many centuries, sustaining and preserving them with his presence. Moses knew that from his own personal experience. It is very useful to go through the Old Testament, looking for the appearances of Christ there. We all know the story of the pagan king who cast three godly Jewish youths into a burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3:19-25) and described a fourth figure saving them as 'the Son of God'. There are many other places in the Old Testament where Christ appeared among his people. He was the Rock on which their future history was based. **'That Rock was Christ.'**

Surely the presence of that Rock (who was Christ) was not unknown to Moses! Thus gladly he **'...esteemed the reproach of Christ'**. Oh yes; Moses knew Christ, and was aware of him. He knew the presence of Christ among his people, and he was willing to give up everything in the world for him. So we close with this important question: 'Are we willing to do the same?'

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 25

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE VERSES QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

**Read Matthew 17:4**

1. Two of Israel's greatest prophets appeared with Jesus after the Transfiguration. Name them.

**Read John 1:17, 45**

2. From verse 17, how was Moses inferior to Christ?
3. Philip knew that Moses wrote of someone special. Who was it?

**Read John 6:15**

4. Why did Jesus go away secretly?

**Read Acts 28:23**

5. From which two biblical sources did Paul quote to show that Jesus was King in his kingdom?

**Read Hebrews 3:2-3, 5**

6. What was the house in which Moses was faithful?
7. Who was master over this house?

**Read Romans 7:12**

8. What do our mortal bodies expect us to do?

**Read Deuteronomy 18:15, 18**

9. Who was this promised Prophet?
10. How was Moses honoured in the promise?
11. What exactly will this Prophet do?

**Read Luke 14:28**

12. What must a man building a tower do?
13. Who else does this? (See verse 31)

**Read Hosea 11:1**

14. Who was called out of slavery in Egypt?
15. To whom did Matthew (3:15) refer these words?
16. What bondage was stronger than slavery in Egypt? (Hosea 11:2)

**Read Zechariah 9:9**

17. In which city was this prophecy fulfilled?
18. Who fulfilled it?
19. What showed that this was not an earthy king?

**Read John 18:33, 36**

20. Why did Jesus refuse the title 'King of the Jews'?

**Read Psalm 89:50-51**

21. Reproach came from two sources. Name them.
22. What does 'reproach' mean?
23. How did this refer to Jesus Christ?

**Read Philippians 3:7-9**

24. What did Paul consider his former 'gains' to be?
25. What did he count as his 'gain'?

**Read Revelation 3:15-16**

26. Which church is being described here?
27. Was it a good or a bad church?
28. What great judgement did God threaten?

**Read Hebrews 13:12-13**

29. Outside the gate of which city did Jesus Christ suffer?
30. What happened there that brought so much reproach upon him?
31. Which religion was the writer to the Hebrews exhorting them to leave to follow Christ?

**Read Hebrews 12:2**

32. Jesus is called two things here. What are they?
33. What was the attitude of Jesus to his reproach?
34. What helped him endure the Cross?
35. Where is he now, and what is he doing?

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4**

[Read again the section in the Exposition on these verses]

36. 'Under the cloud' is referring to what? (See Exodus 13:22)
37. Which sea did they pass through?
38. Moses' baptism is described by two things. Name them.
39. Who was the spiritual Rock that followed Israel?

**Read Exodus 16:14-35**

40. What is the meaning of 'manna'?
41. Which day did it not come?
42. What did it look like?

**Read Exodus 17:3-7**

43. Why were the people grumbling?
44. What was Moses commanded to do?

**Read Numbers 20:5-11**

45. What happened to the rock after Moses struck it?
46. What did Moses do wrong? (See verse 11)

**See John 4:13-14**

47. What was wrong with the water from the well?
48. What is the water Jesus offered?

**Read John 6:31-35, 48-51, 57-58**

49. If Moses did not give true bread from heaven, who did?
50. What is the difference between the manna and the true bread from heaven?

## **B & C. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION & PRACTICAL**

- 1. State carefully the things that are the same, and the things that are not the same, in comparing Jesus Christ with Moses.**
- 2. Preach a sermon based on this Study of Moses.**

**Do not send in an outline, but write a report on the following:**

- (1) How did you use the story of Moses in your evangelism?**
- (2) Describe how you prepared this sermon at home, and what you prayed.**
- (3) How were your prayers answered?**

## STUDY 26

### THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT HOPE

#### HEBREWS 12:1-29

### EXPOSITION

#### THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

Hebrews chapter 11 is about faith. Chapter 12 reminds us also that an important characteristic of God's children is their hope. 'They are not like those', says the apostle Paul, '**having no hope and without God in the world.**' (Ephesians 2:12) He also says that they are not like those who '**sorrow...who have no hope**' (1 Thessalonians 4:13). In this passage in 1 Thessalonians, they are assured of the safety and survival of their loved ones who have died, and that they too will be raised from the dead in Christ. The onward look of hope is most characteristic of a Christian. It is not the 'hope' in 'hoping for the best', believing that circumstances will turn out well, but a sure and certain hope - '**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.**' (Hebrews 6:19)

So what exactly is this hope? It is a hope firmly founded in all that we know and all that we have experienced of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is where our anchor is grounded. We are secure in him.

Now, this chapter brings us to the end of the final theme, where our writer draws attention to Christians who were once in Judaism, but have now found all they were looking for fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We continue this theme in the context of providing a remedy for backsliding. The readers were being tempted to lose their first love, their first glow, their assurance of faith, their desire to go on in the Lord and serve him, and return to Judaism. He says to them in chapter 10, 'Look to the Cross where the price for your sin was paid, where the one sacrifice is sufficient for all your sins, for all time.' Then he goes on to say in chapter 11, 'Look at all those great saints, the great multitude of the children of God who lived by faith, and died in faith, and made a great triumph of their profession despite their imperfections, their sins, their faults and their failures.' What great glory they brought to God!

Now, as we come to chapter 12, we are introduced to yet one further remedy for our faith when tempted to backslide. We are first exhorted to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Then we will not fall away - '**... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.**' (2) We are reminded of Peter when he walked on the water. But his eyes strayed away from the Lord to the storms, the waves, the alarms of life, and the impossibility of coping with these things. As soon as he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink. (Matthew 14:27-31)

Thus our writer again reminds his Christian readers of the One who is the author of their faith, the One who will never desert them, and the One who will be the finisher of their faith. How did Christ persevere? By considering what was laid up for him. How did he persevere in the face of such suffering when he died on the Cross? By remembering those for whom he was dying, that he might present this great multitude to the Father, saying, 'Look, here are those I redeemed! They are all safely here. They trusted me; they believed in me. They experienced great suffering, shed many tears, and felt many heartaches. They were troubled by their sins, but I dealt with them all; and here they all are.' What a triumphant day that will be!

So why did he do it? Well, the writer is quite clear on this point: he did it for love. And so, as a remedy for our inward desire to backslide, he says 'Think of all those faithful witnesses who were willing to lay down their lives for God. Think also of the love of Jesus who died of the Cross. (2) 'Now', our writer implies, 'consider what love you have for God?' Here is the opportunity for a strong evangelistic call. As gospel preachers, we could put it to our hearers like this:

**'Do not think of your love for Jesus Christ, because you might say, "Oh, what a terrible Christian I am! What a poor love I have!" No; you must think of God's love for you. Consider the way in which God deals with his children. Consider how he sent his Son to die for sinners. Consider how God loves you in all your circumstances. God turns upside-down all your adversities and sufferings in this life, and gives them meaning, so that instead of destroying us, they cause our eyes to turn and look to a loving God.'**

Hebrews 12 is divided into two sections:

### **(1) Eternal issues**

In the first section (verses 1-24), we are encouraged to consider eternal issues. It is too easy to become depressed with our anxieties, the pressures of life, and so many problems. All these things put great pressure on us. In addition, there is also the pressure of failing health, of increasing age and of weakness, and perhaps even feebleness of limb and of mind. All these things worry us, and tend to beat us down. However, we are told to **'set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth.'** (Colossians 3:2)

We act as if we are building palaces in this world when we are living in tents. We are pilgrims and strangers looking on to an abiding palace, a heavenly mansion to come. The city of God waits for us, and we look to it with the eye of faith. Meanwhile, we erect our tents 'one day nearer home'. Instead of living comfortably in the world, we look over the other side of Jordan; for that is our destination. As far as the world is concerned, we do not become too closely involved with it. The message comes to us - **'looking unto Jesus'**. We look beyond the adversities and pressures and stresses of life to eternal things. All these things will be left behind. **'For'**, said Paul (of his sufferings), **'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'** (Romans 8:18)

### **(2) Another warning (25-29)**

Here our writer gives the sixth of the warnings scattered throughout his letter, a warning to those who are tempted to fall back in their faith.

There are seven things in these verses believers should consider:

1-4: look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

5-13: look beyond the adversities, the sufferings, the stresses and strains of life. Look through them; see what they mean, and consider them as God's way of disciplining us, so that your faith and assurance may be strengthened.

14-17: look to the way you live your Christian life. Go on to be a better Christian, and act as a better Christian. A good soldier is one who acts like a soldier. A fighter is one who fights. A lover is one who loves. And a Christian is effective only as he lives as a Christian.

18-24: look towards the city of God. That puts everything into perspective.

25-26: consider carefully how you respond to the will of God. Our Lord prayed, ‘... **not as I will, but as you will.**’ (Matthew 26:39) In the Lord’s Prayer, ponder the words, ‘**Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**’ (Matthew 6:10-11) That means listening to God’s voice and obeying his will.

27: look to eternal matters that alone last - the things of God and eternity.

28-29: look to the way in which you serve God, and the kind of service you are offering him. Is it half-hearted or whole-hearted? It should be a holy service in which you devote your lives to the Lord Jesus. Is it a part-service or a whole-time service for him?

Here, then, are seven things we should consider carefully. Now, let us consider these things in more detail. We say to ourselves, ‘My Christian life is a bit like an engine. It is hard to start, and it very easily stops. It sometimes comes on strongly, and then it goes off.’ Well, of course, that is how we are. Jesus knows that! The wonder is that he takes anyone successfully home to his Father. But the fact remains that he gives us encouragement along the way. You remember when Peter failed the Lord, failing him three times after saying that he would not. That must have been devastating for him. For Peter to break his word which he gave before witnesses was a degrading thing. After Peter’s denials, the Lord went to the Cross. Then after the resurrection, the Lord did not reprove him, but simply said, ‘**Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?**’ (John 21:16-17) After some reluctance, Peter replied, ‘**Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.**’ What did the Lord reply? In effect, simply, ‘That is sufficient for now. We will go on from there.’ We are often frightened that when we fall down in our Christian lives, God will take out a big stick and beat us with it. No; the Christian life is not lived in fear. We are delivered from our fears. (Psalm 34:4) Instead, we live in love. God loves us and cares for us. That does not mean that we can abuse that love, but that God deals with us in love. Whatever he does is always in love. Even when he is disciplining us, he still loves us.

Now, God always deals with his servants in love and he always grants to us the necessary faith. All right, we admit that we have fallen down when things became too much for us, when the pressures became too great, and we were anxious about many things. There was a woman called Martha who was just like that. She was very anxious about how she should serve the Lord who was staying in her home. He said to her, ‘**Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things.**’ (Luke 10:41) She was so burdened with all things domestic - preparing and making sure that the food was satisfactory. Then there was her sister Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, just loving his fellowship; and Martha was busy and anxious. It was too much for her.

Well, the same thing happens to us. But suddenly there comes a great shout from the stands, ‘Go on! Go on! Go on in your faith!’ We read:

**‘Therefore since we also are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus’.** (Hebrews 12:1-2)

These witnesses see that we are faltering, but they shout, ‘Go on! Go on! I was once like you. But the Lord helped me. And here I am. I have finished the race!’ There is so much encouragement. We are ‘**surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses**’. They too knew adversities, cares, sicknesses, worries and all the pressures of life. Some of these witnesses were put to death for their faith. They encourage us to go on.

How do we go on? By looking unto Jesus. We fix our eyes on him, for, **'... when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'** (1 John 3:2) There is no perfection in this life. No one expects us to be perfect Christians. It is impossible. But we can go on making progress. There is plenty of forgiveness in the love of God. If we fall down, God says, 'Get up!' Then he lifts us up and we go on **'looking unto Jesus'**. The One who has begun faith in us will perfect that faith, and bring us safely to the end of the journey.

### **The link between love and discipline**

Why does God allow us to go through dark and anxious times? Well, he does it as a mark of his love. Our natural reaction is to think, 'Oh, what have I done wrong?' We wonder, 'Is God punishing me?' That is a natural question to ask.' Many people think that. Well, they are wrong! Adversities are a sign of God's love, not his punishment. How can we know that? Our writer quotes the following words in verse 5: **'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.'** (Proverbs 3:11-12)

Instead of looking at these things as a destroyer of our faith, let them act as an encouragement and spur to our faith, for they are the marks of God's love.

Hebrews 12:11 deals with the reality of our sufferings - **'Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous'**. We have a right to our sorrows and pain, for they are marks of God's love and concern for us. Indeed, Paul says - **'...that I may know... [something of] the fellowship (sharing) of his sufferings'**. (Philippians 3:10) We have a right to suffer. We have a right to grieve. We have a right to bear our burdens. **'But afterwards...'** So what do these things achieve in Christians? **'...afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.'** (11) Not only does it bring a greater trust in God, but it helps us appreciate just how much our heavenly Father loves us.

Those who have experienced hurricanes will appreciate the great peace that comes after their passing. Well, it is like that for Christians. The Lord first brings a period of difficulties and sorrows, and then comes the peace - **'...the peaceable fruit of righteousness'**. Coming through such experiences leads to a deepened faith, and a greater appreciation of the love of God. **'Righteousness'** with God means more than being put right with God. It involves a deepening relationship with God as Father and friend.

Verse 14 is part of renewal of the spiritual life of a Christian — **'Pursue peace with all men, and holiness without which no one will see the Lord'**. Paul wrote - **'If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.'** (Romans 12:18) Obviously, this will happen; for if we are at peace with God, this will profoundly affect our relationships with others. They will notice it, as we make progress in the Christian life. There comes peace, poise, and security into our lives after such periods of testing.

**'... looking diligently lest anyone should fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up should causes trouble, and by this many become defiled.'** (15) Chastening does two things: it either softens or it hardens. This would be a good time to challenge our hearers:

**'Now, what does God's chastening do for you? Is it making you softer towards the Lord and softer to other people who are in need? Or is it hardening you towards God, and hardening you towards others who are in need? Which one is it? If you are a Christian who has fallen back in your faith, let not God's chastening become 'any root of bitterness'. It is a fearful thing for a Christian to become bitter, for bitterness is destructive. Instead, live in the love of God, accepting his ways,**

**desiring always to be right with him and sensitive to the needs of others. When you do that, there can be no root of bitterness. The root of bitterness is probably self-pity, when you put your own concerns before God when things do not go your way. You will become full of yourselves, and think only of yourselves. Instead, when you are full of the love of God, there is no way for bitterness to take root.'**

Verse 18 warns believers not to go back to Moses. The Hebrews should not want to go back to their old ways and give up their Christian profession. Our writer asks in effect, 'Why go back to Moses?' Moses brought darkness, and a trembling mountain where the Commandments were traced out by God's finger on two tablets. Oh, what a fearful horror of darkness and lightning and earthquakes was at Mount Sinai! Why do they want to go back to that - darkness and hopelessness and sin and condemnation? Instead,

**'...you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are registered in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.'** (22-23)

Well, that is a glorious thought; but something else is even more important — **'...to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.'** (24) By coming to Jesus, we find our healing. There is the source of our faith. There is the object of our hope. There is our holiness. There is all our strength. We come to Jesus.

Finally, our writer urges, 'Don't go back. For if you do, what gain is there in that? There is no escape from the One who will judge the world, who shakes not only the earth but the heavens also.' (See verses 25-26) If the Lord is shaking our lives at this moment, shaking the very foundations of our being, and if we are beginning to wonder if we really do possess a true faith, we must not go back. Haggai 2:5-8 is a most remarkable passage which uses the very 'shake' in an almost unique way. It prophesies two things: (1) the preservation of God's people with whom he made a covenant, and in whom his Spirit remained; (2) the conversion of the Gentile nations as fruit in God's saving purposes. The 'shaking' is that of the last days when God will save people from all nations. Both Jews and Gentiles will be brought together on the last day when **'the glory of the latter temple will be greater than the former'**.

Yet the author of the Hebrews is thinking of another kind of shaking - the shaking of his judgement, when there will be **'the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.'** We must also consider what God will do on the last day when he will shake the heavens and the earth, and when men will run into the caves and the caverns and the mountains, and beg them to fall on them to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb. (Revelation 6:15-17) But we look instead to Jesus, and refuse to go back. When we look to Jesus, we are sure to make progress in our faith. We cannot fail. So verse 27 is an implied rebuke to those who had become forgetful of eternal matters, and regarded the things of the world as most important. **'Yet once more'** refers back to the previously quoted verse from Haggai 2:6.

Finally, verses 28-29 exhort the readers to put the things of God's kingdom first, for they cannot be shaken. Service to God comes not as a duty, but as an outworking of God's saving work in his grace — **'...let us have grace, by which we may serve God'**. And what a God! A God who is like a fire, judging the spiritually lost, and exposing the worthless deeds of his servants. (See 1 Corinthians 3:12-15) Yet the last words in this passage are full of hope - **'... he himself will be saved yet so as through fire.'** Even the backslider who repents. This is the Christian's great hope.

## A. QUESTIONS ON THE VERSE QUOTED

### **Read Ephesians 2:12**

1. According to Paul, what was man's greatest deprivation?
2. Who were 'aliens from the commonwealth'?
3. What does being without God bring?

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13**

4. Why were these Christians 'without hope'?
5. What did Paul reply to this problem? (See verse 16)

### **Read Hebrews 6:19**

6. What is the Christian's 'anchor of the soul'?
7. What has Christ done in bringing 'this hope'? (See 19-20)

### **Read Matthew 14:26-31**

8. What were the disciples afraid of?
9. Why were they mistaken?
10. Why did Peter become afraid? (See verse 30)
11. What was Peter's weakness?

### **Read Colossians 3:2**

12. What do some Christians think about the most?
13. What should fill their minds?
14. What is the connection between suffering and glory? (See verses 3-4)
15. What makes smaller our suffering for Christ?

### **Read Matthew 26:37-39**

16. What two effects did the thought of his death have on Christ?
17. What did Jesus place before his sufferings on the Cross?

### **Read Matthew 6:10**

18. What great event should be prayed for?
19. How is this a prayer of submission?

### **Read John 21:16-17**

20. What did Jesus ask Peter three times?
21. What did Peter reply three times?
22. What significance was there in Jesus' three-fold question?

### **Read Psalm 34:4-6**

23. What did the Psalmist do?
24. How did God answer his prayer?

### **Read Luke 10:41**

25. What was Martha's complaint?
26. What two things did Martha need to do?

### **Read 1 John 3:2**

27. What is the true nature of all believers?
28. Note the phrase, 'When he is revealed...' Who is the 'he'?
29. What do believers look forward to?

### **Read Proverbs 3:11-12**

30. What is 'chastening'?

31. Whom does God correct?
32. Why does he do that?

**Read Philippians 3:9-10**

33. What do believers receive through faith?
34. Which three things did Paul wish to experience?

**Read Romans 12:15**

35. Is it possible for a Christian to be at peace with everybody?
36. Should a Christian work hard at living peaceably?
37. What rule did Paul give for living peaceably? (See verse 17)
38. What should a peaceable Christian avoid? (See verse 19)

**Read Haggai 2:5-8**

39. Why should Zerubbabel and Joshua not fear?
40. Who is the 'Desire of the Nations'?
41. What would the glory of the latter temple bring?
42. Describe how the writer to the Hebrews interpreted the 'shaking'.

**Read 1 Corinthians 3:12-15**

43. What will the fire of God's judgement reveal?
44. What will happen to the works of 'wood' and 'hay'?
45. What will happen to believers whose will lose their works of 'wood' and 'hay'?
46. How is this a message of hope?

**B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

1. Write in no more than 200 words about the Christian view of hope, commenting on the verses about hope quoted in the exposition.
2.
  - (a) Explain what hope there is for Christians who come under the discipline of the Lord.
  - (b) Carefully comment on Proverbs 3:11-12 on this subject of discipline.

**C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

- (1) Ask the members of your congregation for testimonies of how God disciplined them in difficult periods of their lives, and how it became a blessing and not a source of bitterness.
- (2) Select five of these testimonies, write them down, and send them in.

## STUDY 27

### GOD'S HELP IN TROUBLE

#### HEBREWS 13:1-8

### EXPOSITION

We now see Hebrews 12 from a slightly different angle from Chapter 13. In our last study, we considered the Christian hope in times of trouble. There is even more encouragement in this chapter concerning this subject. Indeed, it is sad that Christians get so bound up in their thinking about their problems, their trials and difficulties, that they forget to look beyond them all to the sovereign God who has them all well in hand.

**God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.**

**Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up his bright designs,  
And works his sovereign will.**

**You fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.**

**Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.'**

(William Cowper (pronounced COOPER, 1731-1800)

Let us, then, seek the smiling face of God. Let us take some encouragement from the nature, the character, and the protection of the Lord our God; particularly God who is our Father, the Son who is our Saviour, and the power of the Holy Spirit in every believer.

### A PRECIOUS PROMISE

We come first to the promise that God our Father fulfils in every believer. This is found in Hebrews 13:5, and is a comforting and strengthening promise - '**For he himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."** So we may boldly say, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?**' We find here two quotations from the Old Testament concerning God's promise and man's response. (See Deuteronomy 31:6 and Joshua 1:5; Psalm 118:6) These testimonies are the response of faithful men who knew God, and trusted him in all circumstances. Indeed, it was in the worst of circumstances that their faith was put to the test. There are two circumstances described here:

## THOSE IN PRISON

Firstly, some of them were in prison - **'Remember the prisoners as if chained with them.'** (3) There was only one reason why Christians were in prison: their faith. In the world today there are many Christians suffering in prison, standing firm in their faith.

If Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, then it came at a time when Christians were severely tested. To some extent, this came about due to the activities of Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 9:1-2) However, that period of persecution ended when he was converted to Christ. There then came a period of peace and expansion for the Church. Later, the Roman Emperor tried to suppress those Christians whom he saw as heretical Jews. This period produced a great deal of suffering amongst the Christian communities in the Roman Empire, and many were persecuted and put in prison. Try and imagine what that meant for families: for the mother and children with father in prison; for congregations with their pastor or leaders in prison. How could they carry on? The families of the prisoners experienced great hardships.

Imagine the prisoners cut off from their families and congregations. Consider their state of mind. Think of the depression they felt, and their loneliness. They would go through great turmoil of mind as well as all their physical sufferings and deprivations. **'Remember'**, he wrote, **'the prisoners as if chained with them.'** 'Try', he said, 'to imagine what it was like, so that you may enter into sympathy with them, and attempt to do something for them.'

Paul experienced the utmost rigours of prison in Rome, and was delighted to receive support from various churches and individuals. We have a revealing passage on his state of mind in his letter to the Philippians, after they had written to him and sent him some aid. He was overjoyed - **'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again ... Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.'** (Philippians 4:10, 14) Certainly Paul grew spiritually in his adversity in prison. Paul comments - **'I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.'** (11) Whatever extremity came, he found contentment. What was the secret of his contentment? Was it not that the things the world regarded as important found no place in Paul's mind? Instead, Christ was at the centre of his thoughts. The result is found in Philippians 4:13 - **'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'** Now, that is the secret of a Christian who knows how to cope with affliction.

Paul also knew what it was to receive comfort in his adversity. In a very striking way, our Lord Jesus showed the importance of helping prisoners in Matthew 25:36, 39-40 - **'I was in prison and you came to me...'** The astonished reply came, **"Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it unto me."**

There was one man who knew these words of the Lord Jesus, and did exactly that. His name was Onesiphorus, and he is mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:16 - **'The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me.'** Consider the effect that this had on Paul. Onesiphorus was not ashamed to visit Paul in his Roman jail. What an impact it made on Paul when he realised that he was still thought of, and that he was not deserted by God or by his fellow-Christians. It was a gracious ministry, and Paul never forgot it.

## ILL-TREATED CHRISTIANS

Secondly, not only should they remember their fellow-believers in prison but also those who

were ill-treated. Now, this word 'ill-treated' is used twice in Hebrews. The other two occasions are found in chapter 11:25, 37. Verse 25 refers to Moses, who was willing to give up the whole world to follow God's call. He **'refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.'** Instead of being the king's son by adoption, he identified with the Hebrew slaves and was rejected. Thus he was ill-treated.

The second reference is found in verse 37 — **'They wandered about ... being destitute, afflicted, tormented'**. These un-named saints endured great suffering — **'They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins'**.

However great their faithfulness, our writer speaks of something they lacked — **'And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.'** (11:39-40) And in chapter 12:1, they are called a **'...great cloud of witnesses'**. If they endured, so can we.

'Now', continues our writer, 'why should you be so concerned about your fellow-Christians in prison and those who are badly treated? Why should you care for them?' Well, the last phrase in verse 3 holds the key to that question - **'...since you yourselves are in the body also.'** The body is a high theme in Paul's letters, and it is taken up here also. **'The body'**. What does that mean? It is the body of Christ, the Church.

Paul says, **'And if one member [of the body] suffers, all the members suffer with it'**. (1 Corinthians 12:26) Christians are bound up with one another. If one suffers, the others feel it, and respond, and desire to do something about it. When a Christian goes through a time of affliction and trial, he needs other Christians to help him. And how gracious is God when he sends other believers to come and help us in our distress!

Verse 5 takes us in a different direction, for we read, **'Let your conduct be without covetousness [free from the love of money], and be content with such things as you have'**. This indicates that they were poor and needy. They must be content with what they had, even though they were poor. 'Be content with what the Lord has given you.' They were poor and struggling.

So what is the cure for covetousness? Putting Christ at the centre of our lives. Our writer adds, **'For he himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."** We should be content with what we have. We need to be reminded of this from time to time. We can get so caught up with our own personal problems that we forget what our real needs are. Our first need is contentment. What the writer is saying here is this: that we will be content when we have a true knowledge and experience of God because we know that whatever God gives us is because we need it, not because we want it. God knows our needs, and he provides for our needs, and whatever he gives will be suitable. Therefore, we should be content because we trust him to meet our needs.

Secondly, we need never be content with anything except the Lord's immediate presence. Our writer says, **'He himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."** How we need God's presence! How we need to mature in it! How we need to come close to the Lord.

What a precious promise there is here! - **'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'** It is repeated on just two other occasions in the Bible, first appearing in Deuteronomy 31:1-3, 6. This chapter speaks of Moses coming to the end of his long ministry, and his leadership of the nation. He was preparing the people for his departure to the Lord. He told them that he would not live for ever. The Lord would take him soon, and provide them with other

leadership. But he wanted to encourage them. So this is what Moses said in introduction:

**'I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, "You shall not cross over this Jordan." The Lord your God himself crosses over before you; he will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said. And the Lord will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when he destroyed them. The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you.'**

The people questioned this, and wondered how they would manage without Moses. Without him, how could they enter the Promised Land? Moses knew his people well, so he said, **'Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, he is the one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.'** (6) This was really the secret of Moses' success, despite the fact that Moses failed many times. Yet, on every occasion when he came into the very presence of God, the situation changed. He knew that this was the Lord's work and not his. That was his testimony. God never let him down, and would never leave him or forsake him.

It was this personal testimony of Moses that impressed Joshua, who knew Moses more than anyone else because, for nearly forty years, he had been Moses' personal minister. He knew that there was no hypocrisy in Moses. He knew Moses well as a servant of God. So he repeated to the people exactly what Moses had said to him - **'No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you.'** (Joshua 1:5)

God never changes, and he says to us today, **'I will not fail you nor desert you.'** What he said to Moses, he repeated to Joshua in the next generation. And what he said to Joshua, he says to all generations right down to the present day.

How can God make such a great promise? Because God's word is law. He can never break it. God's promises are firm and secure because if God cannot change, his word cannot change; and if God's word cannot change then his promises can never be broken. Consider the words of Hebrews 10:23 - **'... for he who promised is faithful.'** God's promises are certain. If he were to break even the smallest of his promises, he could not be God, for he would be committing a sin. God must keep his word. He is faithful, so his word is sure, and his promises are sure.

If God said to Moses and to Joshua, **'I will not leave you nor forsake you'**, then the writer to the Hebrews is correct in commending the same words to those who were suffering adversity. In their circumstances, there was need for them to be content in trusting God.

### **OUR HELPER IS THE LORD**

**'So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"'** (6) It is interesting to know that many Christians in deep distress, with a deep feeling of helplessness, have cried out, 'I will get through this, the Lord being my helper.' And that is a true mark of faith. This verse is a quotation from Psalm 118:5-6, where we read - **'I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'** Verse 8 concludes - **'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.'**

That is the principle that the Psalmist discovered. If he were to make any spiritual progress, he must trust in the Lord and not in man. What sort of circumstance was the Psalmist

experiencing? Well, distressing - **'I called on the Lord in distress'**. (5) It is sad to think that it takes time of distress to cause us to call on the Lord when we are desperate. Yet the Lord is gracious to answer such prayers, even when we are forgetful at other times. We notice the effect of such a prayer - **'The Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.'** The Lord is a constant source of amazement, for we never know what he will do for us. However, whatever he does is always extensive, always more than we can think or ask. Verse 6 is quoted in Hebrews - **'What can man do to me?'** It is the same instinct that caused Paul to cry out in Romans 8:31- **'What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?'** This is the same conclusion as the Psalmist.

The Lord is our **'helper'**. That is a rare word, used only twice in the New Testament. Literally, it means, 'The Lord is our help.' There is a story told of a woman martyr who was converted under the preaching of Paul in Iconium, in his first missionary journey. She suffered greatly for her faith, and on several occasions she was brought to trial, was put in prison, and on one occasion set on fire. But the Lord preserved her wonderfully. She returned to Iconium, to her house, and prayed in the hearing of someone who wrote the prayer down: 'O Lord, the God of this house in which I was first enlightened by you! O Jesus! Son of the Living God, who was my helper before the governor, my helper in the fire, and my helper among the beasts. You alone are God for ever and ever. Amen.' What a faithful testimony, based on the help of the Lord! May we so find God to be our helper in all our circumstances!

### THE PROMISE OF HELP

What can we say about this promise of Jesus' help? Well, Jesus is able to make it because he has fully experienced the human condition. He knows what it is to suffer. And of course, he felt fully the agony of the Cross, the experience of which none of us can ever fully enter. He is the ideal helper in times of suffering for he is always with us.

Jesus commissioned the Church to make disciples of the nations, and baptise them, and teach them his commands. What a task! I suppose the disciples, at that point, must have been dismayed at such a large task. Then the Lord gave the same promise he gave to Moses and Joshua - **'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'** (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus was indicating that he would be doing his work through the Church.' How precious is the promise in verse 5 - **'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'**

Consider verse 8 — **'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.'** Here is a verse that shows the eternity of the Son. Jesus is always the same. What he did in the first century, he is able to do in all the following centuries. If he could save a thief on a cross in the first century, he is able to save a criminal today. If he was able to heal the broken-hearted in the first century, he is able to bind up the broken-hearted today. If he was able to release from the burden and guilt of sin in the first century, so today he is able to cleanse the sinner and clear the guilty conscience today. He is always the same. At the same time, there is nothing that can separate the Christian from the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider Romans 8:35, 38-39 -

**'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'**

It is the Lord Jesus who brings triumph into unbearable and oppressive circumstances.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 27

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE VERSES QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### **Read Deuteronomy 31:6**

1. What three commands are given here?
2. Who was with Israel?
3. What great promise is given here?

#### **Read Joshua 1:5**

4. To who were these words spoken?
5. What connection did he have with Moses? (See verse 1)
6. What happened to the battles he led?

#### **Read Psalm 118:5-6**

7. In what state was the Psalmist?
8. How do we know that he prayed?
9. What was the answer to his prayer?
10. What do these words mean - 'The Lord is for me'?

#### **Read Philippians 4:10-14**

11. What did the church show to Paul? (See also verse 14)
12. How did Paul react to need?
13. What does 'abase' and 'abound' mean'?
14. Who gave him strength?

#### **Read Matthew 25:36, 39-40**

15. Who made this statement?
16. Which three distressing personal conditions did he describe?
17. Who is the King in verses 34 and 40.
18. With whom did Jesus identify himself?

#### **Read 2 Timothy 1:16-17**

19. Whose household did Paul bless?
20. What do you think 'mercy' means?
21. What two commendations did Paul make in verse 16?
22. What was the first thing Paul's comforter did in Rome?

#### **Read 1 Corinthians 12:26-27**

23. What is the 'body of Christ'?
24. What are the members?
25. What happens when one member suffers?

#### **Read Deuteronomy 31:1-3, 6**

26. What three things did Moses testify to? (See verse 2)
27. What two things would God do to the Canaanites?
28. When Moses dies, who went before them?

#### **Read Romans 8:31, 35-39**

29. What sustains us when we feel powerless? (31)
30. What seven things can never separate us from Christ?
31. Which Psalm does this quotation come from in verse 36?

32. What is it that we can never be separated from?

**Read Matthew 28:19-20**

33. What great task did Jesus entrust to the Church?

34. What promise did he make them for this task?

## **B. QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION**

(a) In the words of William Cowper in the hymn quoted in the exposition, what do you think is the meaning of these two lines?

**'Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.'**

(b) It has rightly been said that Christian behaviour depends largely upon a knowledge and experience of God.

(1) Make a list of the five areas of conduct that are mentioned here in verses 1-6.

(2) Explain how a knowledge and experience of God affects these various aspects of the believer's moral conduct.

## **C. PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

1. **Preach a sermon with the following objectives:**

**(1) To enlarge the congregation's knowledge of God who helps us.**

**(2) To encourage the congregation to trust the Lord in difficult times.**

**(3) To so present Jesus Christ that those who are suffering will seek him to be their helper.**

**YOUR TEXT WILL BE HEBREWS 13 : 5b - 6.**

2. **Send in your main points together with Bible verses quoted and illustrations used.**

3. **Write out in full your evangelistic appeal.**

## STUDY 28

### THE REALM OF LOVE

#### HEBREWS 13:9-25

### EXPOSITION

With this study, we come at last to the end of the Letter to the Hebrews.

We have learned in this letter that the Christian faith is a true revelation of God. It must be, for it is so different from what people usually think and expect. Christianity is based on love: a love that overcomes, a love that conquers, and a love that is a true revelation of the character of God.

However, in our last study, we thought not so much of God's love for us, but our love for God shown in the way we treat other Christians. A true soldier is one who is actively engaged in his profession, and a Christian is one who not only professes his faith, but is actively engaged in his calling. His love for God is proved in the way he acts towards other Christians.

In its way, Hebrews 13 presents an ideal picture of the Church. Now, we know that in a sinful world that is impossible, for there will never be a perfect church this side of the glory. But there are various ways in which we, as the Church, should act. That is what Hebrews 13 is about - our loving relationships. Our love is proved by the way we act towards one another. And, when Christians do that, they grow in their faith, and become more resistant to backsliding. They are less tempted to lose their first love. (Revelation 2:4)

### AN OUTLINE OF HEBREWS 13

As we first looked at Hebrews 13, we saw that it was divided up into four parts, the first of which we considered in the last study.

**(1)** Our writer described how we should act towards one another in various circumstances (1-7) - to Christians in general, to visitors in our homes, towards those who are suffering, and particularly, where love should count the most, in the home between husband and wife. Our writer tells us that we should avoid what destroys our love for Christ - love for the world and money. In verse 7, he concludes by saying that our love should be shown in the Church to those who lead us - **'Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.'**

**(2)** He then goes on to give his seventh and final warning to those who are tempted to fall away from their faith. (9-15)

**(3)** Then he takes up again the theme of practical love. (16-21) We should love the fellowship of God's people. We should love our spiritual leaders. And we need to express our love by praying for other Christians who are in need.

**(4)** Finally, there comes the practical outworking of our love for the Saviour. (20-21)

Then there comes a postscript (a PS) which contains an epilogue and final greetings (21-25), and where he brings up certain personal matters.

Let us now look at Hebrews 13:7-25 in more detail.

### **LOVE FOR THOSE WHO MINISTER TO US AND LEAD US (7-8)**

**'Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.'** (7) Consider how they behaved. Remember how difficult it was to provoke them, for they did not lose their tempers when they had good reason to. They did not even justify or defend themselves. They behaved with all humility. They followed the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, and left everything to him. Remember those things. And remember the outcome of their way of life, that they were fruitful in leading others to the Lord, and in building up God's people. So imitate their faith.

How were they able to persevere? Because, **'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.'** (8) And that is a wonderful truth. He remains always the same. The same Jesus we knew in our early Christian experience is the same today as we grow older. He will be just the same when he returns as when he left the earth. The angels declared, **'This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven.'** (Acts 1:11). He never changes, for he is the unchangeable God.

### **THE SEVENTH AND FINAL EXHORTATION AND WARNING (9-15)**

**'Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.'** (9) Do not go back to the old Judaism which was obsessed with 'kosher' food and the avoidance of other foods forbidden in the Law of Moses. We are not bound by these laws anymore. We live under grace, not under the Law. The division between 'unclean' and 'clean' foods has been abolished. Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile are free of such regulations and food-laws. This is what God taught Peter with the words - **'What God has cleansed you must not call uncommon.'** (Acts 10:15) Such regulations of the Old Covenant are all finished.

'Well', says our writer in effect, 'Why do you want to go back to all those obsolete laws when you have been set free under the terms of the new covenant?' Come away from the old Judaism, with its sacrifices and scrupulous observances concerning food. That is all finished. Go outside the camp, just as Jesus was taken outside the camp.'

**'We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the camp.'**  
(10-12)

Here is a reference to the taking of the carcasses and the offal of the sacrifices and burning them outside the camp. (See Exodus 29:14; Leviticus 4:11-12; 8:17, 9:11, 16:27) Jesus was taken outside Jerusalem ('the camp'), and there he was put on a cross as the sacrifice for sin. **'Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to him, outside the camp, bearing his reproach.'** (12-13) In the same way, leave behind everything represented by 'Jerusalem' (the old covenant). Come out from the old life of Judaism, and come into the light, liberty, joy, forgiveness, and cleansing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Leave the earthly Jerusalem and look for the heavenly one. **'For here we have no continuing city, but we**

**seek the one to come.'** (14) These words remind us of the lifetime pilgrimage of Abraham - **'... for he waited for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'** (Hebrews 11:10) See also 11:13-16.

As an inducement not to go back to the life, our author reminded his readers that believers are now the priests, for they no longer need the priests of the old covenant - **'Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.'** (15) As the priests offered sacrifices continually over the centuries, so believers offer their sacrifices of praise continually.

### **A PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF FAITH**

Our writer then further reminds his readers about Christian love (16-21). Fellowship is a vital element in avoiding backsliding. **'Do not forget to do good and to share'**. Why are so many Christians these days reluctant to share, to share in material things as in spiritual things? Why is it that they are so reluctant also to come together and to share many good things? It is a danger signal for spiritual backsliding. Sharing is pleasing to God, as well as doing us all good - **'... for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'** (16)

Now, what are these sacrifices? **'The sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.'** (15) Praise and sharing are two wonderful ministries, sacrifices that Christians may offer.

Then show your love for spiritual leaders — **'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give an account.'** (17) That is their duty. If they fail in that duty, they will be called to account before the Lord. It is a great responsibility. Their reward is to see believers maturing in their faith - **'Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.'**

Next comes love for all Christians everywhere - **'Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honourably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.'** (18-19) Our writer and others had been detained, probably put in prison. He is saying, 'Please pray for us, for we have always behaved in an honourable way. Pray that we may soon be released so that we will be able to come and share good spiritual things with you. Pray for us in our need.'

### **THE BENEDICTION (20-21)**

And what a blessing it is!

'Here is a full outpouring of love for Jesus Christ. Jesus has done everything for us. He died on the Cross for us. He sustains us in our Christian life. He sent his Holy Spirit to empower us and keep us and help us persevere. He will be there at the end to complete our faith.

### **FINAL GREETINGS**

Verses 22-25 are our writer's final greetings. He tells us why he wrote his letter - **'I appeal to you, brothers, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.'** (22) Perhaps, after studying this Letter, you do not think that it is so brief! The whole letter is a series of sermons, a **'word of exhortation.'** It was exhorting his Jewish readers to go forward in their faith.

He then gives us some personal news of his friend Timothy - **'Know that our brother Timothy** (who was also a great friend of the Apostle Paul) **has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.'** (23) Obviously, the writer to the Hebrews knew the members of Paul's party very well.

There are a few greetings included - **'Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.'** (24) If they were in prison in Rome, then the believers in Rome had access to them, and asked to send their greetings from Italy the churches of the Jewish dispersion. A very happy touch, and part of Christian fellowship world-wide.

Then comes the final farewell - **'Grace be with you all. Amen.'** (25) **'Grace'** - what could we ask for more than that? Grace is the highest of gifts. The meaning of grace is 'gift'. So what could we say is the greatest gift? Well, in the light of Hebrews, the greatest gift our writer would have in mind for his readers would be 'confidence' (Hebrews 3:6, 14; 10:35). They needed assurance concerning their faith. They were wavering. They were losing their first love. They needed greater faith. So he says to them, 'Look, you want greater assurance. Assurance comes to those who draw near to the Lord Jesus, and who more fully understand who he is, and what he has done.' How much we need to put him at the centre of our lives and our thinking!

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY 28

### A. QUESTIONS ON THE VERSES QUOTED IN THE EXPOSITION

#### Read Revelation 2:4

1. What were the strengths of the Ephesian Church? (See verses 2-3)
2. What was wrong with the Church?
3. What three things did Jesus recommend to them?

#### Read Acts 10:9-16

4. What life-changing event was about to come to Peter?  
(See verses 1-8, 17-20)
5. What did the Jewish Peter think of Gentiles? (See 14)
6. What did Peter see in a trance?
7. What did God teach Peter about the Gentiles?
8. Can you think of any reason why the vision was repeated three times?

#### Read Exodus 29:11-14

9. Why was the bull killed? (See verse 14)
10. Why did the priests lay their hands on the bull?
11. What was the meaning of the pouring out of the blood?
12. What happened to the inward parts?
13. What happened to the skin and offal?

#### Read Hebrews 11:10; 11:13-16

14. Why was Abraham allowed only to live in tents?
15. What description of believers is used here in verse 13?
16. What do they seek?
17. What do believers desire above all things?
18. What has God prepared for them?

#### Read Hebrews 3:6, 14; 10:35

19. How long should our confidence last?
20. What two things does confidence bring?
21. What is steadfast confidence based on? (Verse 14)

22. What will happen to the one who has no confidence, in line with the purpose of the writing of this Letter?
23. What does confidence lead to? (See 10:36)
24. Which Old Testament verse did our writer quote to warn against backsliding in 10:38?
25. What does confidence bring? (Verse 35)

## **COMBINED B & C**

### **QUESTIONS ON THE EXPOSITION, AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

**(1) Hebrews 13:7-10 speaks of the responsibilities of believers towards their spiritual leaders. Write at least 100 words commenting on these verses from your point of view as one of those leaders.**

**(2) Verse 9 speaks of the responsibility of spiritual leaders to preach sound doctrine.**

**In 200 words (or more, if you wish):**

**What 'strange doctrines' have you attacked in your preaching ministry?**

**What sound doctrines have you learned from the Letter to the Hebrews, and say how they were received by your congregations when you preached them as part of your Practical Exercises.**

**THIS IS THE END OF MODULE 4**