

CHAPTER VI THE SECOND EXHORTATION AND WARNING (Hebrews 3:1:-- 4:13)

*“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession,
even Jesus.”*

THE FAITHFUL APOSTLE.

i. ver. i. *Those addressed.* Notice again the triple statement as to the kind of persons addressed.

(1) “holy”: set apart unto God, and therefore, as in 1 Cor. 1:2, “called to be saints,” to be holy persons in fact as in standing.

(2) “brethren”: members of the divine family, born of God called to walk in love with all others of the family.

(3) “partakers of a heavenly calling.” Israelites were sharers in high privileges connected with this earth, privileges associated, as to their enjoyment, with the land of Canaan. Christians are citizens of a realm above this earth (Phil. 3:20); our portion is in the heavens.

It is only by persons of whom these three things are *actually* true that the ensuing exhortations can be obeyed, only in such can the warnings bear fruit.

ii. *The Apostle of our Confession.* What Moses was of old to Israel that, and very much more, Jesus is to the people of God to-day. The children of God’s covenant with Abraham their father had sunk in Egypt into heathen darkness (Josh. 24:14). They did not know even the name of the God of their ancestors (Ex. 3:13). The religion, vices, and tyranny of Egypt enslaved them. Moses became God’s commissioned messenger (apostle) to enlighten, redeem, and emancipate them.

He enlightened them by his words, redeemed them from the capital punishment due to sin by means of the blood of the passover lamb, and led them into freedom by the passage through the Red Sea, their baptism (1 Cor. 10:2) into companionship with him in his separation from Egypt. Thus under his leadership they became partakers of the earthly calling and earthly privileges of their ancestors.

All this, only in deeper and higher measure, Jesus is to us to-day. He brings a fuller knowledge of God, making known to us the name of God as Father (John 17:6, 26). He has wrought a fuller, even an eternal redemption (9:12); with introduction to the richer blessings of the new covenant, both for the inner life now, and with nobler prospects, even the heavenly, for the future. And as it was necessary for each Israelite to trust, follow, and obey Moses if he would enjoy in fact the advantages of the new position into which the grace of God had called him, and which the power of God could

assure to him, so must we set our undivided attention on Jesus. For just as through failure to trust and obey Moses many Israelites, though redeemed by blood, and set apart to God through their baptism, failed to enjoy the advantages of that position, even so must we give all heed lest we fall away and lose our heavenly privileges. If this is not the argument of these chapters they seem to have no definite meaning or force.

Yet as failure to enjoy the blessings possible in the wilderness, or to secure possession of the land of promise, did not undo the redemption by blood from temporal death in Egypt, so neither does failure to attain to the heavenly prospects forfeit the redemption from eternal death secured by the precious blood of Christ.

iii. *The High Priest of our Confession.* Israel needed not only a God-given Leader to regulate their affairs for God, but also a God-given Priest to regulate their affairs with God. Two lawyers were discussing whether man needs a priest in relation to God; the Catholic said Yes, the Protestant No. A well-known Q.C. offered the opinion that the Catholic had the best of the argument, that man does need a priest; but, he added, that where he differed was that the Catholic had the wrong priest. He said that many years before he had committed his soul's affairs to the Lord Jesus Christ as his priest, and he needed no human priest.

It has been usual to view Moses as the type of Christ as God's Messenger (Apostle) and Aaron as the type of the High Priest, and in ch. 5 Aaron is thus used. Yet it may be well to recall that Moses was the priest, and the chief priest, in Israel before ever Aaron was appointed. It was Moses who instructed the people as to the offering of the Passover sacrifice (Exod. 12:21). It was he who led the priestly worship and praise for deliverance at the Sea (Exod. 15:1). It was he who built the altar that celebrated the victory over Amalek (Exod. 17:15, 16). Moses announced to the whole people that, upon condition of obedience, God would regard them as a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:5, 6). It was Moses who sanctified the people to be ready to meet their God (Exod. 19:14).

At Sinai it was Moses, and Moses alone, who drew near unto God as representing the nation; who again built an altar; who directed younger men in the priestly work of offering sacrifices at the foot of Sinai, thus acting as being himself in some sort chief priest; and he it was who sprinkled the blood of the covenant upon the book and the people (Exod. 24:1-8). There were priests before the law was given, and Moses directed them (Exod. 19:22), as their chief.

It was Moses who rendered to the people the priestly service of bringing to them the laws of their God and teaching them His statutes. This was priestly work, even as it is written: "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts" (Mal. 2:7).

It was Moses who had access to that earlier tent of meeting which preceded the Tabernacle (Exod. 33:7-11), and who also became so striking a type of Christ ascended by drawing near to God on the top of the mount. On different occasions of awful peril he interceded for the sinning people and secured their pardon (Exod. 32:30-35; Num. 14:13-35). This pardon, however, did but exempt them from the capital sentence, but left them subject to needed chastisement. Comp. David's case, 2 Sam. 12:13, 14. In this also Moses and his intercession were an exact parallel to our great Priest; for He interceded for Peter, but did not seek his exemption from severe sifting by Satan (Luke 22:31, 32); nor did his work on high preserve Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), or the evil living believers in Corinth, from death or lesser chastisement (1 Cor. 11:30); and our epistle (12:1-13) will emphasize that those who are the sons of God, and so subjects of the priestly ministry of the Son, must nevertheless expect the Father's scourging so that they may partake of His holiness.

And very striking it is, as showing Moses' rank as the true chief priest, that it was he who inducted Aaron and his sons into the office, offering the sacrifices on their behalf, when the time came for one family to exercise the priestly office because the people as a nation proved unfit for so sacred a service (Lev. 8).

Thus was Moses at the first both Prophet, and Priest, as also King in Jeshurun (Deut. 33:5), and was thus as full a type as possible of the Son of God. It may be, therefore, that in our passage it is Moses alone who is in view as apostle and high priest, and that later, in ch. 5, Aaron is brought in as type when the duties of the priest are to be considered in detail.

iv. *Fidelity Indispensable.* The supreme feature of Moses and of Christ in these offices was *fidelity*. God laid on Moses extraordinary responsibilities and burdens. No other man ever undertook so severe a task. But God had reared him in Egypt and disciplined and tempered him in the desert. In the royal palace he had learned to govern men, in the desert to govern himself. The former developed strength and confidence, the latter weakness and dependence. The benefit of the earlier years remained, sanctified and safeguarded by humility gained in the desert, and he was found faithful in all God's affairs.

Jesus, the Man, is also faithful. From eternity dwelling in the eternal glory of God, the Doer of all the works of God, the Ruler of all creation, He learned by experience on earth what it is to obey and suffer. He was tested at all points by all means, and was proved faithful in all things.

It is this that we are called to ponder. We too are destined to rule; we too must be trained to obey. We are, and are yet to be, stewards of God, and it is required in stewards that one be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). "The fruit of the Spirit is (not faith, as A.V., but) faithfulness", dependability (see *pistis* in LXX, Lam. 3:23; Jer. 5:1). I watched a managing director write a letter of commendation for a clerk who was leaving. It

concluded: “Mr. X. can be relied upon to carry out anything he undertakes to carry out.” The Christians here addressed were being hard-pressed by the Devil to show themselves undependable toward God. Let them therefore consider the faithfulness of Jesus under all the mighty trials of His pathway in the same desert, as well as in His present patience and service; and then the Lord would direct their hearts into His love and into the patience of Christ (2 Thess. 3: 5). Thus by the very patience of Christ filling them, they will wait steadfastly for His and their day, even as He is patiently waiting for it, and will not be “moved away from the *hope* of the gospel” (Col. 1:23).

v. *The House of God.* A house is a building where a person dwells and can be found. God being spirit dwells in a spirit dwelling, and especially in and among living persons, manifesting Himself to and in their spirits, causing them to display His own glory, His holiness. A material dwelling is not essential to such a dwelling of God on earth (Acts 7:47-50). Such a structure as tabernacle or temple is simply condescension to man’s limited ability to recognize God as at hand in spirit. In the finally perfected conditions of heaven there will be no temple (Rev. 21:22).

It was intended at the first that it should be thus with Israel. “When Israel went forth out of Egypt . . . *Judah* became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion” (Ps. 114:1, 2). The earthly building was but a visible exhibition of the existing spiritual reality, the presence of God: it did not create the latter but merely displayed it to the eye.

The church of God is now to be such a structure: “that thou mayest know how it behooves to behave in the house of God, [the] church of [the] living God, pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15); *i.e.* it is the office of God’s people, singly and unitedly, to exhibit and maintain before men the truth concerning God and His Son, and to demonstrate His presence among His people. One instance of this dwelling of God with His church is that, when Christians are together, and their worship and teaching are ordered and energized by the Spirit of God, the unbeliever will be constrained to exclaim *God is among you indeed*” (1 Cor. 14:24, 25). A severe test this of the actual spiritual state of a church.

This figure of a house is the first and chief figure to teach the privileges attaching to association with the Son of God; as He said: “On this the rock [the truth of His own Messiah-ship and Deity confessed] I will *build* My church” (Matt. 16:18). It was employed frequently by Christ and the apostles (Luke 12:35-48 Matt. 24:45—51. Eph. 2:19-21; etc.). It is a loss when this first and principal figure of a building is neglected and the figure of the “body” is overstressed, as if it expresses *all* truth as to relationship with Christ.

It is to be observed that “house” often merges into and means “household,” the inhabitants rather than the structure. Thus Nathan said to David, “Jehovah will make thee a house” (2 Sam. 7:11); and so in Eph. 2 cited: “ye are of the household of God.” Over this household the Son of God is the sole Ruler (ver. 6). In this sphere He alone

holds rights direct from the Father of the family: all lesser authority (as, e.g. of elders) is derived from the Son, and is to be exercised strictly according to His directions, without variation caused by human opinion or preference (see 8:5). Here is one chief matter in which faithfulness is required from His servants, and far too seldom has it been found. Man's desires and ideas have largely ousted the rule of the Son as Head over God's house, wronging Him and ruining the house.

Of old Moses acted for God in the capacity of chief servant, but Jesus acts as Son over the Father's household. Moses dealt with things then present as indications in advance of nobler things to follow (3:5): Christ has now introduced those higher and heavenly arrangements, and will duly bring them to eternal completion. How blessed to be dutiful and faithful and to walk in this divine sphere, rather than to turn back to the earthly, imperfect, and transitory foreshadowings of it. Yet Christendom has largely done this, by its resumption of the visible and fleshly in worship, and in the arrangements for what it calls God's house. Stately edifices, elaborate ceremonies, splendid vestments, a caste of priests or ministers, altars, sacrifices, incense, music—what is all this but a lapse back from the heavenly and spiritual to the elements and weakness of the Mosaic and external which Christ abrogated (John 4:19-24)? It was against this that the Writer uttered his warnings and appeals: would that they had been generally heeded, and that the household had held fast to the *Head* of the house.

2. *The Warnings.*

Let us give most earnest attention to these. They are four, based upon the conditions for sharing in i. the house of God; ii. companionship with the Messiah; iii. for reaching Canaan; iv. for sharing in God's sabbath rest.

i. *"Whose house are we IF" (3:6).*

(1) *Judah God's Sanctuary.* Writing from the distance of many centuries the psalmist here cited could say that it was "when Israel went forth out of Egypt" that "Judah became His sanctuary." Yet in the fact this was not so till a whole year after they left Egypt (Exod. 40:17). It was not till the first day in the second year that the tabernacle was reared up and God descended to dwell among them. This is seen in three further particulars: (a) that to meet God Moses had to ascend the mount (Exod. 19:20, etc.): (b) that the earlier tent, where Moses alone met God face to face, was beyond the limits of the camp (Exod. 33:7-11). These audiences were occasional, and the cloud, the sign of the presence of God, descended on those occasions. (c) It was on the summit of Sinai that God said to Moses "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8).

(2) *Redemption and Baptism necessary but inadequate.*

Thus redemption and baptism (of both of which Israel had partaken in type) do not of themselves assure the indwelling of God in a believer. The first disciples were sincere believers in Christ, devoted to Him, and used in service, long before Pentecost. Comp. also Acts 8:4-17; 19:1-6. The case of Cornelius and his friends shows that the indwelling may take place at the very moment of first faith in Christ (Acts 10:44-48); the other instances show that it may come later. But until that indwelling at Pentecost the first Christians, though regenerate, were not yet a house unto God, and until an individual believer is so indwelled neither is he.

(3) *Israel nearly missed this honour.*

Israel only narrowly escaped the entire forfeiture of the dignity of becoming a house unto God. Because of their sin in making the golden calf God said (Exod. 33:2), I will send *an angel* before thee... for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way." But Moses felt that no angel could afford him sufficient support for his heavy responsibilities, and he argued the case before God until the promise was given, "My presence shall go [*i.e.* in the midst of the people, see ver. 3], and I will give thee rest" (Exod. 33:12-16), that is, while still carrying his load.

(4) *Israel twice lost the honour.*

God continued to dwell with Israel until they in their blindness and carnality trusted in the symbol of His local presence, the ark of the covenant, and not in Himself; whereupon, suffering them to take their own course, "He delivered His strength into captivity" by the Philistines, and "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh" (1 Sam. 4; Ps. 78:60-62; Jer. 7:12). Thenceforth He was not in their midst, and consequently they ceased to be to Him a house. It was so for just over a hundred years until He graciously descended in glory to Solomon's temple. Here He dwelled until the wickedness of His people caused Him to abandon that house also and give it up to destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 10:18, 19; 11:23). Never since has God dwelled among Israel or have they been His house, for the Glory did not return to the second temple.

(5) *Applications to ourselves.*

Thus the type shows that the indwelling of God may be withdrawn. It had not been possible for the Chaldeans to destroy the temple while the God of glory was there. It had not been possible for Satan to destroy the bodies of the wicked brethren at Corinth while the Spirit of God was indwelling them as His sanctuary (1 Cor. 5:3-5; 11:30). An assembly also may corporately forfeit the presence of the Lord and cease to be His sanctuary. Thus the Lord declared Himself to be outside of the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:20).

Surely it cannot be fairly doubted that this corresponds to patent facts and explains them. There are men once owned much by God as His servants, once so filled with His Spirit that men came into contact with God in them, but upon whom for long years “Ichabod” has been plainly written, The glory is departed! There are Sardian churches of whom it is sadly true that they have a name to live and are really dead (Rev. 3:3:1). But if they are dead then the Spirit of life cannot be in them. It is spiritual folly to maintain a theory against facts. Wisdom admits the facts and accepts the remedies (Rev. 3:3, 18, 20).

Every believer might be indwelled by the Spirit of God, but not every believer is; every believer might know this indwelling to the end of life, but not every believer does. And hence the powerful warning before us: “Whose house are we [emphatic] IF the boldness and the boasting of the hope [of sharing the glory of God; see Rom. 5:2] steadfast unto the end we should hold fast.” The aorist subjunctive used *kataschomen* regards the holding fast as one continuous act completed at the end of each life, and the verb takes emphasis at the close of the sentence. “If” with the subjunctive declares a condition. Being to God as a dwelling place depends upon steadfastness of hope and of witness to that hope. Similarly does Col. 1:22, 23 lay down that our being “presented before” the Lord, “holy and without blemish and unreprouvable,” depends upon the same steadfastness: “*if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the good tidings which ye heard.*”

By the third century the *hope* of the gospel had been too generally abandoned, though they still professed *the faith*; they avowed salvation to come through Christ and His death, but had given up His return as the true hope of the Christian. In consequence the many who named the Name readily accepted the proposal of the world to become the official State religion, and the presence and power of God in the churches that did so soon ceased. Thenceforth it has been the minority that have confessed the hope and walked in Abraham’s path as a stranger among the peoples, and always it has been among such that the spiritual glory of God has been displayed.

Israel and we may remain the people of God—they beloved still for the fathers’ sake and we for Christ’s sake—yet cease to be to God for a house, a dwelling place. As we have seen, the tabernacle and temple are used in the New Testament as types of the believer and the church; but it is for us to benefit by the *whole* typical history, its course and conclusion, not only its glorious commencement, and to profit by its warnings as well as its comfort.

As regards the church of this age and its testimony, it began with Pentecost, it will end with apostasy (Matt. 24:12; 2 Thess. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). The grave peril is that we may “fall from our own steadfastness” (2I Pet. 3:17). Whether one will reach the glory and rule the nations depends upon whether he overcomes and keeps the Lord’s works *unto the end* (Matt. 24:13; Rev. 2:26). Salvation from perdition is definitely without works (Rom. 4:1-8), and to teach otherwise is to falsify the gospel: but equally definitely

ruling with Christ depends on works, as Rev. 2:26 states, and to teach otherwise is to falsify our hope, by putting it on a false basis. Here it is *fidelity* that matters, in us as in Moses and in Christ.

ii. *Messiah's Companions.* (3:14). Moses had his personal attendant, Joshua. David had the "king's friend," Hushai (1 Chron. 27:33). Rehoboam had "the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him" (2 Chron. 10:8). The Lord in His kingdom will have those who "walk about with Him in white," arrayed thus in white garments then because they overcame now in the battle with sin and did not defile their garments here (Rev. 3:4, 5). They are "the called and chosen and *faithful*" (Rev. 17:14). *It is faithfulness that matters.*

To the little band who, in spite of failings and failures, had gone through with their Teacher and Lord *to the end*, He said: "I come again, and will receive you *unto Myself*, that *where I am* [at any time] ye may be also" (John 14:3). He had said before "If *Me* any one serve, *Me* let him follow; and *where I am* there shall also My *servant* be: if any one serve *Me*, him will the Father honour" (John 12:26). Complacency makes this to read, If any one believes on Christ as Saviour, he shall be with Christ and be honored by the Father. But the Lord said that companionship with Himself, and being honored by the Father, results from serving and following. And the context is that following Christ involves being a corn of wheat that dies to itself that it may live in others. Therefore let the believer ask: Whose interests am I serving: Christ's or my own, Christ's or those of this world? Whose maxims, whose example, whose ambitions and ends do I follow: those of Christ or of others? In the nature of the case only one who does literally follow the steps of another can arrive where that other arrives. Another path will lead to another place.

The summit of the Christian's true ambition is the immediate presence and continual company of the Son of God in glory. The honour and the bliss of this is otherwise pictured as the mutual joy of bridegroom and bride.

"He and I in that bright glory
One great joy shall share;
Mine to be for ever with Him,
His that I am there."

Elsewhere this dignity is set forth as sitting with the King on the royal dais at a banquet (Luke 22:30), and again, as sharing His throne (Rev. 3:21). In all such relationships the dominant thought is that of sharing habitually the personal company of the Lord. And this is the distinctive element in the word *companions*, *i.e.* being habitually in the company of one another; and it is equally the distinctive thought of the word thus translated *metochos*.

To his translation of Heb. 3:1, where this word is found (“*partakers* of a heavenly calling”) Darby adds the note: “Here *metochoi*, who have been made, called to be, partakers of it. They had been *koinonoi* of Israel’s rights.” These two words are indeed so similar in meaning as both to be rendered *partakers* and *partners*. But one may be a “sleeping” partner, and never be seen at the business; but the *metochoi* would be habitually together conducting affairs in common. The word is used in the LXX at Eccles. 4:10, and Ps. 45:7 before considered.

Too many Christians are content to have a share in the “common salvation,” and show little desire or care to enjoy the company of the Lord or of their fellow-partners. How shall such indifference here lead to intimacy there? No; ch. 1:9, using the same word, speaks of the Lord having *companions*; our present verse (3:14) declares that “*companions* [emphatic] of the Christ [the Messiah] we have become *if at least [eanper]* the beginning of the assurance unto the end steadfast we may hold.” We “*have become*” such companions as regards the calling and purpose of God, and we may enjoy this privilege already in heart fellowship with Christ: we *shall* become such in outward and visible and glorified reality IF we are steadfast unto the end of our course. It is reaching well *the end* of the race that matters as to gaining the prize. He who fails in staying power, and does not reach the goal, does not lose his *life*, but he *does* lose the prize. It will be much to be in the kingdom of the saved: it will be far, far more to be a companion of the King. Ponder this second IF!

Note on ean per, if. It comes here and at 6: 3 only in the New Testament. It is not found in LXX, but Grimm-Thayer here is wrong in stating it is not in the Old Testament Apocrypha. It is in 2 Macc. 3:38, and the passage distinctly shows its emphatic sense. Heliodorous had been sent by the king of Syria to rob the temple at Jerusalem. Angels had appeared and flogged him nearly to death, his life being spared only at the intercession of the high priest. Upon the king asking him who should next be sent on the errand he answered: “If thou hast any enemy or conspirator against the State, send him thither, and thou shalt receive him back well scourged, *if* he even escape with his life” (*ean per kai diasotheie*).

iii. *Reaching Canaan. “they were not able to enter in” (3:19).*

Nothing is clearer than that every redeemed Israelite that left Egypt had a right to enter Canaan. The purpose and promise of God were universal to them as sons of Abraham. Their title was beyond question. Yet nothing is plainer than that of the 600,000 adult men who left Egypt only two, Joshua and Caleb, did in fact enter Canaan. The histories of this failure are narrated with significant fullness (Num. 13 and 14). The grounds of failure and of success are stated with unmistakable distinctness. The later references to it are striking and solemn. Ps. 95 impressed it upon Israel; Heb. 3 and 4 impress it upon us; and the detail use of the failure in 1 Cor. 10 emphasizes that the warning is as fully applicable to Gentile Christians as to converts from Judaism.

That Canaan must be *won* is as certain as that it may be lost. That the promised power of God was adequate and available to enable them all to take possession was no guarantee that they would get possession. In the cases of the few who did so the praise belonged to their God of grace Who gave them the victory (Ps. 44:3). That the majority did not reach the land was, as we are here told, because of unbelief and disobedience.

What is the antitype of Canaan for the Christian? Whatever it is will have three dominant features. (1) It will be a gift of covenant grace, and therefore undeserved. (2) It must be won by conflict. No more is possessed than the warrior sets his foot upon Josh. 1:3). (3) It may be lost by distrust of God and disobedience to His commands.

The two last particulars show that neither justification nor eternal life is in view, for these are described plainly as free gifts (Rom. 3: 24; 6:23). "Free" (*dorean, charisma*) means free of conditions, what is termed in law an absolute gift, as distinct from a conditional gift; a gift which therefore can neither be withdrawn by the donor nor forfeited by the receiver. See *Note A* after ch. XIII, p. 196.

What, then, does Canaan represent to-day? A careful examination of the records will show that the whole national history of Israel, from redemption in Egypt to Solomon, is one continuous type. Parts of this type have been treated helpfully, especially the tabernacle; but it needs an Andrew Jukes to expound this subject as comprehensively, as spiritually, as profitably as in his *Types of Genesis* he dealt with the long history from Adam to Joseph.

Slavery in Egypt is Rom. 1 and 2: redemption by blood is Rom. 3 to 5: freedom from Egypt, by passing through the Red Sea, is Rom. 6, baptism into fellowship with Christ in His death and risen life: the wilderness is Rom. 7: the crossing the Jordan is Rom. 8:1-17, experimental transference from being "in flesh" (the wilderness) to being "in spirit" (the land of promise), and thus becoming free from bondage and its fear, even as Israel lost the reproach of having been a slave race by being circumcised at Gilgal, at the entrance of the land. This leads to Rom. 8:15, 16, the joy of adoption and communion, so as to become heirs of the goodly land thus reached. This in turn involves suffering with Christ (Rom. 8:17, 18), as Israel in the land shared with Joshua the sufferings of the wars of possession. The history of *Judges* pictures the groaning and travailing of the church of God not yet perfected (Rom. 8:22, 23), in which experiences there develop the still remaining weaknesses and failures of our mortal state, and in which the power of the hope of perfect possession and rest supports the godly (Rom. 8:24, 25).

For the Christian this hope is to be realized at the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23). Thus the sequence of thought has reached the Second Coming of our Lord. Now His own final word as to that His advent is that He will come as "the root and offspring of *David*" (Rev. 22:16); that is to say, that David in his rejection, hardships, and wars was a type of Christ, now rejected and hidden, but whose public appearing will secure victory

over Satan, with liberation for the earth, and glory for those who fought and suffered with Him. Thus did David's return to public life free Palestine from the Philistine oppression and bring to glory in his kingdom the men who had shared his rejection.

But Rom. 8:19-21 adds the material feature that at that revelation of our now absent Lord, with the many sons who by then will have been brought unto glory, there is to be a releasing of creation itself from its pains and groans. Previous prophecies had foretold this, as Ps. 72:16; Isa. 11:6-9; 30:23-26; 55:12, 13; etc. In other words the period we have now reached in this line of thought is the millennial reign of Christ, the Prince of peace, the foreshadowing of which was the earlier part of Solomon's reign of peace and glory. But failure marked the close of that period, and failure will mark the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-10); whereupon will follow a final judgment and final reconstruction of heaven and earth, a new and eternal order.

Thus Canaan as a type does not extend beyond the days of Solomon, and therefore is not a picture of things eternal, but of two things: (i) of the present era of spiritual conflict as in *Joshua* and *Judges* and in Eph. 6. In this experience rich knowledge is gained of the power and goodness of God, but it is accompanied with groaning: but (2), and more fully, Canaan prefigured that millennial period, the era upon which hope is called to fix itself, even upon "the favor that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13).

Seeing that failure and sorrow marked Canaan through the whole past it cannot be a type of the eternal ages, for these will never be marred by failure. It follows that it is the millennial glory, which must be won and may be lost, won by faith that obeys, lost by distrust and disobedience. To this there is no alternative except the forfeiture of eternal life and salvation entire, which meaning has been based upon our present chapters but which we think unscriptural.

This urgent theme will come again in ch. VI, where Israel's fearful failure will be stated in detail and be applied to us of this age.

iv. *The Rest of God.* "There remaineth therefore a sabbatism to the people of God." (4:9).

(1) Restfulness of nature is an essential quality of God. A restless, anxious being could not be God. This eternal quietness of spirit results from omnipotence. The consciousness of possessing entirely adequate resources prevents fear of contingencies; indeed, foreknowledge allows of no contingencies.

(2) But rest of spirit is compatible with activity. When sin had disturbed the original order of creation (Gen. 1:2), God *acted*, became active, "the Spirit of God *moved*," and "God *said*," and thus set His energy in motion, and the reconditioning of heaven and earth was effected (Gen. 1).

(3) That was accomplished in the six days, and on the seventh day “God rested from all His work” done in those six days (Gen. 2:2).

(4) But again sin wrought ruin (Gen. 3), and again God resumed activity to restore order through redemption and regeneration. This activity of God is still proceeding, even as the Son said when here, “My Father worketh even until now, and [therefore] I work” (John 5:17). This working of God will continue until that day when the Son will take over the active government of heaven and earth. Until then the Father acts, even as He said to the Son, “*Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool*” (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; and in Heb. 1:13). This is another key word to the plans of God.

(5) When this end shall have been achieved, and the enemies of God and His Son have been subdued, then will God return unto His rest, as it is written: “*lie will rest in His love*” (Zeph. 3:17). Now the time contemplated in this scripture is when Jerusalem is to be saved, Israel’s captivity to be ended, and that people to be a joy unto Jehovah (vers. 14 to 20), and He Himself be dwelling in their midst. This supremacy of Christ and restoration of Israel is the beginning of the Millennium, which therefore is the era of God’s rest, His sabbatism.

This is necessitated by the very word itself, for a *sabbath* rest is a rest that follows labour, and therefore cannot be that original, eternal rest of God mentioned in (1) above, for *that* rest *preceded* God’s activities, is never disturbed, and is not a *sabbatismos*. Neither can the word intend the final epoch of new heavens and earth. That will indeed be a rest after labour, but it will not be the hour when the Son will cease to sit at the right hand of the Father or the day when Israel will be restored nationally. These events usher in the millennial rest, not the eternal. God will rest when He shall have installed the Son as again the active Agent of the Godhead (Rev. 4 and 5). Thenceforth, throughout the Millennium, the Son will carry forward the purposes of the Father, and at its close will complete them by establishing new heavens and earth.

(6) It is evident that Joshua and Israel did not reach *this* rest. “The land had rest from war” (Josh. 2:23), but that rest was incomplete and was temporary, for the conquest of the land was incomplete (Judges 1). If that rest had been the rest of God spoken of in Num. 14, argues our Writer, God would not have been heard several centuries later speaking again of His rest and offering it to men, as in Ps. 95. The conclusion is that therefore there still remains a sabbath rest for the people of God.

(7) But it is vital to recognize that this rest is future to present age. It is not that rest of conscience toward God which the soul gains by reposing on the sacrifice of Christ, nor is it that peace of mind which is promised concerning the trials of the desert way and which trust on God confers (Isa. 26:3, 4; Phil. 4:4-7). These are a blessed foretaste of the other, but are not the sabbath rest of God. For these are *our* rest in God, the other God calls His own rest, “My rest.” This cannot intend rest of conscience or

freedom from fear of foes or of to-morrow, such distresses being wholly impossible to God.

The English Versions greatly obscure the meaning here by inserting a very small word, reading “we who have believed *do* enter into that rest” (ver. 3). The Greek says: “For enter into the rest we (or those) having believed.” This last verb is an *aorist* participle, which shows, as the context here indicates, that the whole course of faith is viewed as a completed act of faith. The course is finished, the goal is reached, and faith has characterized the runner to the end.

This is the more abundantly clear from ver. 10: “For the one entering into His [God’s] rest, also himself rested from his works as God did from His own works,” “Rested” is again an *aorist*, and signifies that the believer has laboured and has reached once for all his rest. But this is precisely what no saint does while life on earth lasts. Now is our period of toil and conflict, and to us who are afflicted rest comes “at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven” (2 Thess. 1:7).

(8) It appears therefore that the full intent of God’s solemn words to Israel in the wilderness meant more than that they should not enter Canaan at that time, but also that they should not share in that larger and more glorious era to which God was looking forward as to be His own rest, that is, the time and rule of Messiah. This need cause no surprise, for it is certain that both Abraham and Moses had been instructed as to that future era, even as Christ said: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56); Now the period of the Lord’s humiliation was not “His day but part of man’s day. The day of the Lord is the chief Old Testament term for His second coming and rule in glory.

Likewise with Moses it was the prospect of reward in Messiah’s day that strengthened him to bear the loss and reproach of espousing the cause of Messiah’s people (11:25, 26); and the close of his final prophecies shows how much he had been taught as to that era and that he passed on this knowledge to Israel (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 32:35-43. 33:26-29).

It is clear that Israelites of like faith with Abraham were governed by like faith as to Messiah’s day. This our Writer will display in ch. 11. It is the great theme of all the prophets, and of them all Christ has said that they shall share in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also many from all lands; while many of the “sons of the kingdom,” the natural heirs to it, shall forfeit that era through lack of faith (Matt. 8:10-12; Luke 13:28, 29). Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel are promised a share in that day as their reward for fidelity here (Zech. 3:6-10; Hag. 2:23). Daniel also (Dan. 12:13), as well as all who, like Abraham, have foregone this present world to lay up treasure in heaven (Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:22; and contexts), and have so acted as to secure their recompense at the resurrection of the righteous, the first resurrection (Luke 14:14).

(9) To the line of thought here being developed, concerning sharing or not sharing in the millennial kingdom, it will be objected that it will put the Christian under law as regards this prospect, and will negative grace. This is a misconception. The fact that Abraham and Moses lived in the light and power of Christ's day before the law had been given at Sinai shows the true grounds of their hope to have been independent of that law. The argument of Gal. 3:15-4:31 applies here. The law came in later for certain needful ends, but it did not affect the preceding covenant with Abraham. This latter included, not only justification but the promise of being "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) and so of sharing in the day of Messiah, for only then will all the families of the earth be blessed under the covenant of God with Abraham (Gen. 12:3).

Again, it was before Sinai that Moses accepted the reproach of Christ, looking on to His day for the reward.

Again, Joshua and Caleb reached that typical promised land, not because they were punctilious observers of the Levitical law, but on quite independent grounds. These were as follows (Num. 14:7-9; 13:30):

(a) They set a just value upon their inheritance: "The land is an exceeding good land." (b) They had a just confidence in God: "If Jehovah delight in us, then He will bring us into this land." (c) They had a just fear of the sin of rebelling against God: "only rebel not against Jehovah." (d) They had a just disregard of enemies and obstacles: "neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is removed from over them [that is, their demon gods will prove powerless], and Jehovah is with us: fear them not.. Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

By contrast, the rest of the men of war (a) "despised the pleasant land," (b) believed not God's word of promise to give them that land (Ps. 106:24), and "believed not in His wondrous works" (Ps. 78:32; Num. 14:11). (c) They were rebellious from the Red Sea and onwards (Ps. 106:7), and at Kadesh Barnea they "hearkened not unto the voice of Jehovah" when He bade them to go up to the land (Ps. 106:7, 25): and (d) in consequence of this lack of faith in God they were fearfully afraid of their foes. The question, therefore, as to getting their inheritance was their heart attitude to that inheritance and to God Who had opened the way to it. And we see that through *that* disobedience, and through unbelief as to *that* promise, they were not able to enter in (3:18, 19).

(10) An all-inclusive fact and principle are stated in the inspired words: "So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham" . . . and if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:9, 29). All blessings, earthly and heavenly, to all men, Jews and Gentiles, flow through the covenant of grace God made with Abraham. But each who would inherit must exercise the faith of the faithful Abraham (Rom. 4:12, 13), even the kind of faith that made him a pilgrim and alien as to this scene where men distrust his God.

This covenant is revocable as against the distrustful and rebellious of the children of Abraham. God had ratified that covenant with an oath; but upon the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea God cancelled that oath by another oath to the contrary (Num. 14:23, 28; Ezek. 20:5, 6, 15). There is here no inconsistency on the part of God. To the covenant with Abraham that his seed should possess the land God had added a condition that they should be circumcised (Gen. 17). Now Rom. 2:28, 29 shows that circumcision to be valid and effective must include circumcision of the heart, not merely of the flesh, and be shown by a man keeping the law of God in spirit, not merely in the letter. These men who came out of Egypt did not fulfil this condition. Their rejection of Moses showed they were uncircumcised in heart, as were their later descendants who similarly crucified their Messiah (Acts 7:51). Ezek. 20 shows this at length. And therefore Moses said to the following generation: "Circumcise therefore . . . your heart, and be no more stiff-necked" (Deut. 10:16). It were immoral in God to grant favors in disregard of morality in man. He cannot thus encourage sin in His people. God will gladly circumcise the heart, and so make possible love and obedience; but if we will not consent to this it cannot be done, and then there will not be found in us the indispensable condition for inheriting the blessing.

"The righteousness of Christ is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven, personal holiness to *qualify* us for it. Without the former we could have no *claim* to glory; without the latter we could have no *fitness* for it" (Wesley: *Wesley Studies*, p. 205).

In consequence, God said to the 600,000 "ye shall know My alienation," *i.e.* as the margin, "the revoking of My promise," for though that promise was confirmed by an oath, it was limited by a condition (Num. 14:34). The word *alienation* is noteworthy. It comes elsewhere only in Job 33:10, where the afflicted saint expressed his misconception of God's ways by saying "He findeth against me causes of alienation, He counteth me for His enemy." In Job's case that was pure misapprehension, but as to Israel in the wilderness, some seven centuries later Isaiah said with sorrow that, in spite of God's most abundant mercy and care, "they rebelled, and grieved His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and Himself fought against them" (Isa. 63:9, 10). What Job wrongly feared was his case, was actually their case.

Thus their failure to reach both the typical rest and to secure the millennial rest is here solemnly urged upon us as a warning and an incentive. It is not at all a question of them having been under law and we being under grace, for as regards the promised land, the rest of God, the heirship of the world, they were not heirs through Sinai but through Abraham, and through grace, as we also are and on the same terms and conditions, even that we must walk in the faith of our father Abraham.

Who would share Abraham's blessing
Must Abraham's path pursue;
A pilgrim and a stranger,
Like him must journey *through*.

The foes must be encountered,
The dangers must be passed;
Only a faithful soldier
Receives the crown at last. *Paul Gerhardt.*

3. *The Practical Applications.*

i. “*Harden not your hearts*” 3:8. The call of God ran counter to their inclinations. It was a clear command; Go up! But it threatened trouble and danger, which the weakness of unbelief could not face, so they hardened their wills against it. Of this God said: “this people *despise Me . . . tempt Me murmur against Me ... reject the land . . . [they are] an evil congregation*” (Num. 14:11, 22, 27, 31, 35). This is God’s view of unbelief and disobedience.

ii. Are there not Christians who have distinctly heard the call of God to Go up! — up into a higher, richer spiritual life with Himself, and to devotion to His will and His cause among men, but for whom the cost seemed too high? It involved loss of friends, or marriage, or business prospects, and portion and honour in this world and, perhaps there threatened also overt opposition, persecution, disgrace. Have not true children of God failed at such tests? Alas, I could narrate cases from personal knowledge.

Such turning back from the holy commandment involves a deliberate decision, a deliberate hardening of the will against God: this provokes Him to holy wrath, it greatly displeases Him (3:8-10); it is described in ver. 12 as “apostasy from God, the living.” Apostasy is to take up a different position from that formerly occupied. Faith adopts the attitude of obedience to God; rebellion is apostasy, the reverse attitude to faith, the contrary attitude to that of Abraham, Moses, and Christ, each of whom is described as *faithful*.

iii. This hardening of the heart results from the deceitfulness of sin (13). At such crises of apostasy the believer may beguile himself by most deceitful reasonings in his heart. He may say: I am saved from hell; other things are not of great consequence! Or, I am a subject of sovereign grace; these fearful warnings *cannot* apply to me, but must refer to the unregenerate! Or, I belong to the body of Christ, and I *must* share in the first resurrection or His body would be incomplete! Or, God is not a stern taskmaster, but a loving Father; He will not think too hardly of His child for loving the pleasant things of time: indeed, are they not His own gifts for my enjoyment? Or, the letter kills, it is the spirit that matters, so I need not pay too strict obedience to the letter of Scripture! Or, quite good people act as I propose to do: indeed, Joshua and Caleb are a negligible minority! Or, if I take the course I wish—if I marry an unconverted partner, or if I enter a business partnership with such, I may win him or her for Christ! Or, if I make money and grow rich, I can do much good with it! Or, I can use a high position in this world to promote morality!

By all such specious deceits, the more specious that in part they are perverted truths, the heart is hardened, the rebellious spirit is confirmed and may reach permanence, until the believer risks the solemn sentence "They shall not enter into My rest," but shall die in the wilderness; they shall never pass from Rom. 7 into Rom. 8! For it is only "if so be that we suffer with Christ that we shall be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17). The spiritual desert is strewn with spiritual skeletons. The all-knowing God knows that they are those of His faithless children, and at last the Spirit of life shall breathe into them resurrection energy unto eternal life (John 5:28, 29; 6: 39, 40, "I will raise him up *at the last day*"; Rev. 20:5); but such will have missed the rest of God, to their permanent loss.

iv. Therefore the urgent word of Ps. 95, "To-day," is repeated in our passage no less than five times (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7, twice). To-day! Give immediate attention; render instant obedience to the call of God to go forward. Do this to-day "IF ye shall hear His voice" offering to you this noble prospect. Should you harden your heart perhaps He will not again give the call, or perchance you may have become dull of hearing (5:11) and may not hear His voice; but if you do hear it, oh, give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (4:11). We, as they, have had good tidings preached unto us; let each see to it that the message enters an honest and good heart, there to be mixed with faith, the faith that at once obeys the call, otherwise that word will be but as indigestible food which does not profit the receiver; yea, let it be our care to unite at once by faith with that minority who have preceded us in giving to God full obedience and confidence.

Let us be encouraged by the fact that we shall join the minority. A great teacher said: "Brethren, we have a saying, Great is the truth and will prevail: but this is never so in this age; in this age truth is always with the minority; and so convinced am I of this, that if I find myself agreeing with the majority I make haste and get over to the other side, for I know I am wrong" (Dr. A. T. Pierson). The sabbath rest remains, the offer is open still: if it should be repeated to you personally, then oh, give diligence! Comp. 2 Pet. 1:5-11, esp. 5 and 10.

v. 4:12, 13. Obedience to the Word of God is the crucial matter. God is the living God, not a dead or quiescent Being. His children cannot ignore him with impunity, not even His children. He has living energy; power to succour, power to punish. His word likewise is a living word; it is never obsolete, inoperative, ineffective, a dead letter. It is active, two-edged, pointed; it cuts, it pierces, it dissects. Blessed are they who welcome its surgery, for it promotes health; miserable is he who resists its point and edge. For if the words of a sinful mortal can be sharp as a two-edged sword (Prov. 5:4), how much more those of the sin-hating God.

This word of God enables us to distinguish between what in our thoughts and intentions is merely natural, of the soul, and what is spiritual, of the Spirit of life working in us. It is all too easy to be actuated mainly, or even only, by the instincts and notions

of the natural man. It was very natural that Israel feared to face giants and attack walls fortified up to heaven. Only faith in God gave Caleb and Joshua victory over natural fear and inspired them with conquering courage.

The joints connect the limbs together, the marrow is the vehicle of life; without the latter, joints and limbs were dead, powerless. Similarly, the soul contains and combines our various faculties; but these are dead Godward unless vitalized by the life of God acting through the regenerated spirit of man. This distinction is peculiar to the Word of God, and it is vital to a right conception of the perils and the possibilities of the believer. Therefore did Paul dwell upon it at the very outset of his letter to the carnal or the natural Christians at Corinth, so that they might learn to distinguish between soul and spirit as the divergent sources and spheres of our inward life, and might cease from the carnal, rise above the natural (the soulish), and live by the instincts and impulses of the spiritual. "Spirit" means here the new nature begotten in the believer by the new birth, by which thenceforth he is to live: "walk by spirit and desires of flesh ye shall in no wise fulfil . . . If we live by spirit, by spirit also we should walk" as our new rule of life (1 Cor. 2:10-3:3; Gal. 5:16-25; Rom. 8:1-16).

It is of the highest importance to recognize these two types of life, the soulish and the spiritual; for this distinction, and these two realms and orders of life, are manifest in His sight before Whose all-penetrating eyes all things are naked and laid open. It is with having to face such a One that we have to reckon. We may deceive ourselves, and fondly think that the soul life, because it does not indulge the viler lusts of the flesh (carnality), will pass His scrutiny. But the heavenly world, to which we are called, is spiritual, not soulish, and only that element of our present life and activity which is of the spirit is preparing us for that upper and purer realm or contributes to our fitness for it and its activities. As with the resurrection body, the outer man, so much more must it be with the inner man, that the spiritual must swallow up the soulish (1 Cor. 15:44-46). It is in the soul that our severest perils rise and work; it is in the natural heart that sin deceives us, and never more subtly and successfully than by the notion that the natural life is sufficient though not infused by the light and energy of the spiritual life.

It is our wisdom to submit always to the searching, challenging, directing, enabling action of God's words; for His life is in His words, "they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63), the life that is life indeed. "To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts," but rather, as is the design of these present pages, "exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called to-day," *i.e.* so long as the offer of the heavenly calling is open and the glory of God is still set forth for faith to attain.

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