

HEBREWS 3:1-6 "Partakers of the Heavenly Calling"

As we begin this new chapter we see how the writer of Hebrews builds, block by block, the foundation which is designed to increase our faith, to equip us for the work of God and to encourage us in our walk with Christ.

Up to this point we've seen how Jesus is none other than the Almighty Creator, the author of a new covenant. He is seen as infinitely higher than the angels because they are His creation to serve and love Him.

And now as we come to our text our writer wants us to put these things together in our minds and hearts and form some conclusions based on this knowledge of Christ. This seeking of the knowledge of Christ is essential to our growth as Paul points out to the Ephesian church.

EPH 4:11-13 "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Peter tells us in his second epistle.... 2PE 1:3 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

2PE 3:18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

Our knowledge of Christ is to be growing day by day. But, by this we can't limit it to simply head knowledge. It must be a working knowledge which acts by faith in His faithfulness. And so the more we desire to know Him, the closer we will draw to Him and know His love and grace. But to exclude the knowledge we learn by studying His word is to short-circuit Christ's intent of how we learn more of Him.

Some will say they only want to learn of Christ experientially. And we must learn of Christ in this way as we experience His love and grace by faith. But we must also learn of Christ in an investigative way through study of His word which He gave to

reveal Himself. We need both. But the experiential must always conform to the revealed Word of God.

And so as we consider Christ we must do so with the express purpose of learning of Him and His will and drawing closer to Him in the process. And in this process we grow and mature in Him. This is known as sanctification, a work of the Spirit in our lives as we submit to Him.

As we begin chapter three we see that we are given the command to consider Jesus or, as the NIV puts it, "fix your thoughts on Jesus."

HEB 3:1 "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."

If we are going to grow in Christ we must fix our thoughts or consider Him who gave us life. But before we go to that let's first look at what God thinks of you as a believer in Christ according to the beginning of our text this morning.

"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling..."

God considers us holy. The Greek word is *hagios* and it means that which is sacred, pure, blameless or consecrated. But this word is followed by brothers or brethren. Christ regards us as His brethren.

We read in HEB 2:11-12 "Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12 He says, "I will declare your name (the Father's name) to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

Christ identifies with us as His brethren primarily because He became one of us, a man. But we're not just any brethren. We're holy brethren. We have come into a personal relationship with the Father because of Christ's righteousness.

He has made us holy before the Father by taking our penalty and nailing it to the cross. But there is a personal outworking of that relationship which shows holiness in our lives as we demonstrate that we are consecrated to God; that we are set apart for His glory.

And so in calling us holy brethren God is calling us out as a people for His own possession that we may proclaim the excellencies of

Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We are a holy people because God declared us holy in Christ.

But we must show His holiness in us as we love and obey our Lord, following Him day by day and growing in the knowledge and grace of Christ. Don't ever forget that. God sees you as holy, set apart for Himself, consecrated to Him for service. However, the question is, how does the world see us? Do they see His holiness in us or do they see our attempt at self-righteousness as we boast of holiness as though it weren't a gift?

That's the difference between living in the Spirit and living in the flesh. One depends on God's grace and gives Him the glory in all things, the other depends in our own abilities and puffs ourselves up.

Be holy, even as your heavenly Father is holy. And that is done as we seek Him, love Him, depend on Him by faith in every area of life. But we as holy brethren must never forget what it is that allows us to be called holy. According to verse one we share in the heavenly calling..."

The word share can also be translated partakers. You and I are partakers. To partake is to be part of the plan. We are not on the outside looking in, but we're in the game, if you will. To participate or to be partakers of God's heavenly call is to be in the very middle of His plan and will for our lives and His glory.

And to be in the middle of His plan He must be the One who is always in the huddle with us as He calls the plays, if I can borrow a football image. If God has made us to be partakers or sharers in His Kingdom then it would be impossible for Him to be far off away from us, leaving us on our own even for a moment.

That's the point God was making when He said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." This is clearly seen in DEU 31:6,8 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Arthur W. Pink puts it this way. "We are partakers of the heavenly calling because (Jesus Christ), in wondrous condescension, partook of our earthly lot. What He has, we have; where He is, we are. He

is the holy One of God, therefore we are holy. He has been made higher than the heavens, therefore are we partakers of the heavenly calling! Just so far as our hearts really lay hold of this, shall we walk as strangers and pilgrims here. Where our treasure is (Christ), there will our hearts be also."

You and I must understand why God has called us. This heavenly call is personal. The Lord approached you personally to be a part of His Heavenly Kingdom and as such we are to represent Him in that Kingdom with the understanding that we no longer belong to ourselves.

1PE 2:9-10 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who *called* you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

I like the way Dr. Donald Guthrie puts it when he says, "To share in a heavenly call is to become closely identified with the caller, *i.e.* God. No wonder such people are called holy. The N.T. implies that this is the norm for Christians. They are a called out people."

When we begin to meditate on this we see that our heavenly calling is a high calling from God Himself. This is what Paul tells us.

1CO 1:26-27 "Brothers, think of what you were when you were *called*. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."

We didn't accidentally stumble into this salvation, God called us. And Paul reminds us what this call entails in Ephesians.

EPH 1:18-19 "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which *he has called you*, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,"

And so this holy calling should impress upon us the need to demonstrate His love and holiness which He has given us in Christ.

2TIM 1:8-10 "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and *called us* to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

As we begin to understand and appreciate this calling from God we can begin to understand how we as believers in Christ should treat this calling. Paul put it this way.

EPH 4:1 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

And we live that life in the power of the Holy Spirit who enables us to live as people who have been called out for a holy or special purpose. All of these things are what we are to consider in our own lives as we gratefully accept this life and desire to grow in it. But the life itself is not where we spend the bulk of contemplation, as wondrous as that is.

No, the one we must be considering above all is the life-giver. And so our text continues.

HEB 3:1 "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."

We are to fix our thoughts on Jesus. We are to consider Jesus. This is the central theme of this verse, in fact this is the central theme of the entire letter, considering Jesus. A.W. Pink summed it up this way.

"To consider Christ means to behold Him, not simply by a passing glance or giving Him an occasional thought, but by the heart being fully occupied with Him. *"Set Me as a seal upon your heart"* (Song of Sol.8:7), is His call to us. And it is failure at this point which explains why we know so little about Him, why we love Him so feebly, why we trust Him so imperfectly."

If we are to be holy then we must seek the one who makes us holy and that is Jesus. But the writer of Hebrews gives us some insight

into who our Jesus is in relation to this heavenly calling He extends to us.

Jesus is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." And then our writer compares Christ to Moses as he continues.

HEB 3:2 "He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house."

Let's address this idea of being the apostle and High Priest of our confession. First you'll note that Jesus is not referred to as "an" apostle, but "the" apostle.

Now we get this word apostle from the Greek word *apostolos* and it means one sent on a mission; a messenger. And so in a broad sense we are all apostles in that we are missionaries for Christ with a message of hope.

Of course when the N.T. uses the word apostle it's usually in connection with a special messenger with special gifts as we know the apostles had in the first century. And part of their responsibility was to give us special revelation from God Himself, which is the Word of God delivered to us by them as they were inspired of the Holy Spirit.

But in our text Jesus is seen as, not as an apostle, but "the apostle". There was no greater messenger sent, than Christ Himself, and no greater mission, than to redeem men and give them life in Himself as He took our place dying for the penalty of our sin. No mere apostle could have done that, but "The Apostle" did.

An apostle also gives us knowledge into what God wants to reveal to us. And so in that sense they represent God before the people. This is identical to what a Prophet of the O.T. did. Being "the apostle" describes Christ in His role as the great Prophet. But Christ not only spoke on Gods' behalf to men, Christ also represented men before God as our High Priest.

We touched on this a little last week as we spoke of the High Priest who came to make propitiation for our sins (Heb.2:17). God demanded a perfect, holy sacrifice to be made so that His wrath against sin would be satisfied, being a just and Holy God.

As our High Priest Jesus delivered the perfect sacrifice for sin, and of course we know what that perfect sacrifice was. It was Himself. He bore God's wrath on the cross for us and then brought Himself

to the Father on our behalf, and in His resurrection we see that the Father was pleased with His sacrifice for us and gave Him the victory and the prize; you and me who are in Christ by faith.

As the Apostle and High Priest Jesus accomplished our salvation. This is what we know as our confession according to the end of Heb.3:1. The word confess or confession in our text simply means acknowledgment. We acknowledge, by faith, who Jesus is and what He has done for us. But in that acknowledgment we take action by walking in that salvation.

Confession is not confession unless we make it our own by faith and walk in that faith. The devil believes that Jesus Christ is God, he believes that He rose from the dead after dying for our sins, but he cannot call this his confession, because he cannot and would not receive it as his own.

He chose to rebel and there is no provision made for fallen angels to be reunited to God. We saw that last week in HEB 2:16 "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants."

Jesus Christ was faithful to the Father in coming into this world to bring His people back to our God. Without the Son of God becoming a man to represent mankind, as He perfectly and sinlessly represented us before the Father and then died and rose from the dead, we could not have our fellowship with God reestablished.

He was faithful to the end. This is why we read in HEB 3:2 "He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house."

Here we see a comparison between Jesus and Moses. But we must be careful not to make that comparison perfectly parallel. The point here is that as Moses was faithful to his limited task, Jesus was faithful in His infinite task as both man and God.

Notice too that the Father appointed Jesus for this task and by implication Jesus accepted this task because He loved you and me, but He did it to please the Father. There was no debate in the Triune Godhead as to who would go to earth to represent mankind.

Remember, there is only one God, but in His infinite wisdom they chose to send the Son. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit each have a work in our redemption. It was the pleasure of the Son to be born to die.

One of the reasons Moses is brought into the picture is to contrast the infinite God with His finite creatures on earth. Keep in mind that those receiving this letter were primarily Jewish Christians. Moses was one who was venerated by the Jews as the one who brought them the law of God.

Compared to the priests and the Pharisees and Sadducees and the scribes of first Century Judaism, Moses was head and shoulders above them all and even they recognized this. Who could be greater than Moses, the same man who spoke to God on Mt. Sinai and came down with the glory of God shining in his face?

To a Jew Moses was the man. And the writer of Hebrews confirms that Moses was God's man who was faithful to accomplish God's desire.

NUM 12:6-8 "he (God) said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. 7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD."

A privileged man was Moses. But that's not the end of the story and in fact that's not the point of the story in bringing Moses into the picture as though he were to be the one that the writer of Hebrews wants to elevate.

HEB 3:3-4 "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. 4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."

Moses was a great saint of God and he was faithful to his duties as he served the house of God, but even Moses was imperfect, and even Moses sinned. Not so with Jesus. Plus, Christ's duties went beyond being a servant in the house of God; He built the house.

This is what it means in verse 3 that "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

When you and I look at a beautiful house and the architecture of it, we marvel at how block and mortar and wood can take the form it does. And yet our praise shouldn't be directed at the house as

much as it should be directed toward the one who engineered it and built it.

Moses did not engineer the house of God. By the way, the tabernacle and the tent of meeting is not what is meant here. The house of God are those people who were called out by God as we'll see in verse 6.

Moses couldn't construct this fleshly house of people called out by God. And so the point is, why should Moses be elevated to anything approaching the true architect and builder of the house of God? He worked in the house, Christ created the house, and as such deserves greater glory than even the house itself.

HEB 3:4 "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."

HEB 1:2 "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

God is builder of everything and Christ is that builder. Jesus Christ is our God and therefore must be counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

HEB 3:5 "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future."

Moses served a very important role in the Kingdom of God. But most of it had to do with pointing to the coming Messiah in the future. And so Moses being a type of Christ foreshadowed who this Messiah would be.

That's what the writer of Hebrews meant when he said in HEB 10:1-4 "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

Well, then what was the point Moses was trying to make to the people of God as he brought them the law of God? It was to point

them to another who would come to take their place for sin so that sacrifices would one day necessarily cease. Christ's sacrifice was more than sufficient for our sins. This is what Moses spoke of.

In fact Jesus points this out in JOH 5:46-47 "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

You might remember that on the day of Christ's resurrection there were two disciples on their way to Emmaus grieving over the death of the Master, when suddenly they were approached by a man on the road. They didn't know it at that time but it was Jesus. And as they walked they conveyed the story of how Christ died and how grieved they were.

But Jesus said in LUK 24:25-27 "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

This was the role of Moses and the prophets; pointing people to the coming Messiah and to take heart as they placed their faith in God who would deliver them from their sin. Moses was a faithful servant in the house bearing testimony of those things which were to be spoken of later, but Christ was no mere servant in the house, He is the Son over the house.

HEB 3:6 "But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."

I'm going to spend more time on this next week because there really isn't time to expound on it this morning. But let me end by saying that Jesus Christ has made you and me a house for Him to dwell in.

Jesus Christ has gone to great pains to make us a part of His household. A household which will dwell with Him forever. And as we understand that this household does not have its roots in this world we will begin to see that we are pilgrims on our way home.

EPH 2:19-20 "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's

household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

This chief cornerstone is not a piece of block which is put into place with mortar. This chief cornerstone is the living Christ. And because He lives we live in Him as part of this living house.

1PE 2:4-5 "As you come to him, the living Stone -rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him - 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Living stones, spiritual house, household of God, God's house, are all different ways of expressing the same thing; being united to the master architect of the universe who forms our lives and gives us life to be a part of His life forever.

This is our Almighty God who loves us. And instead of leaving us out in the dark He invites to come inside and abide with Him for eternity. There is safety in His house. There is warmth and love in His house. And it's a house where there's always room for more living stones.