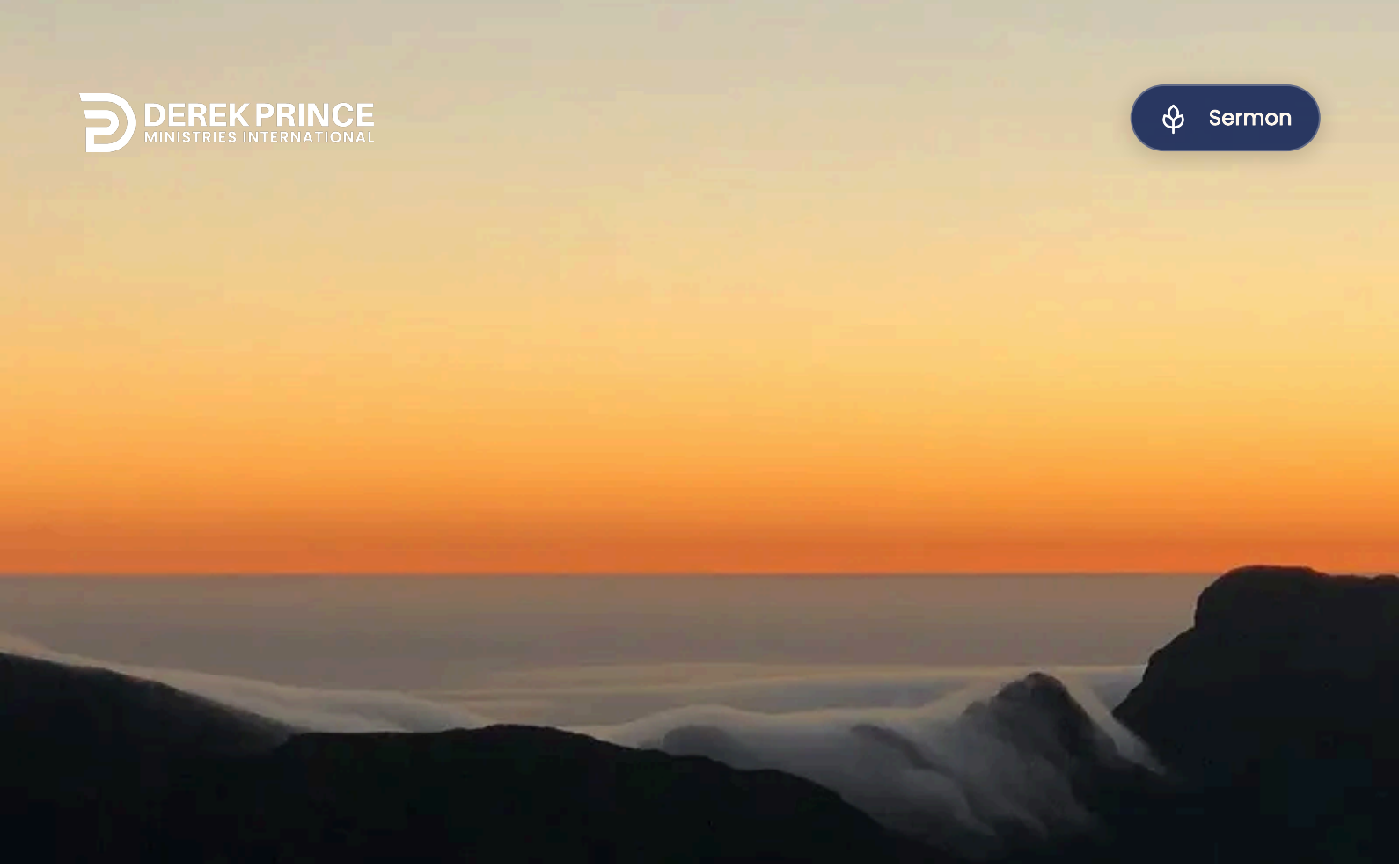

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 3



Part 5/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

We have arrived at Page 3/1. We'll look very briefly at the outline before we go on. This first verse of chapter 3 focuses on Jesus in two aspects: apostle and high priest. As apostle He was sent forth to perform the task of redemption. Having performed it He returned to God as high priest to represent those who had received redemption.

In that first verse is the first account of the word confession, meaning literally "to say the same as." We pointed out—we will not go through it again—how confession links us to the ministry of our high priest. He is the high priest of our confession. No confession, no high priest.

In the second verse we saw the first accounts of the words in the category of faith and faithfulness and so on. Believe. And it's in a context which indicates character rather than creed. This is contrary to the kind of thinking that has been inculcated in us if we come from any kind of Evangelical or Pentecostal or even, I would say, Lutheran background. Basically Protestant. The Protestant Reformation laid a special emphasis on being right in your doctrine. There is a good side to that and there's a disastrous side to that. And we have interpreted faith as "believing the right things." That really isn't where faith begins. Faith is primarily in the character, not in the intellect. And both in Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New, the words for believing and for faith indicate loyalty and commitment first and foremost. The intellectual doctrines that you hold are secondary. I believe one of the things the Holy Spirit is impressing upon us is if we don't adjust our thinking, we'll miss the real purposes of God.

There is intellectual content to faith, but it's secondary. It's not primary. That I'm talking about linguistically, the meaning of the word is better represented by faithfulness than by faith. It's really a contradiction in terms to talk about a believer who is unfaithful, whereas our churches are filled with, quote, "believers" like that. You can't rely on them, they're not dependable, they don't know the meaning of commitment, but they call themselves believers. It's actually an incorrect use of that word by biblical standards.

We're going on now to chapter 3:2–6. We come here to the second comparison. You'll find that there were, I believe,

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seven comparisons that we noted initially. This is the second. The first was between what and what? Who can remember? Jesus and the angels, that's right. This one is between Jesus and Moses. The reason why they are given is because there was a real danger that these particular believers would begin to see Jesus as not really greatly different from angels or from Moses.

One of the remarkable things about God's dealings with Moses, which has become very real to me, is that God told Moses he would perform such signs and wonders that Israel would forever fear him and respect him. And really, it's worked that way. You can meet Jewish people who are atheists but they have a respect for Moses. These people were in danger of almost bringing Jesus down to the level of Moses. So the second comparison is to show the uniqueness of Jesus in relationship to Moses and the supremacy of Jesus.

I think I'll read the words, translating them from the Greek. Verses 2–6. Talking about Jesus it says:

> "He who was faithful to the one who appointed Him, as also Moses in all His house. For this one has been considered worthy of greater glory than Moses, in the proportion that the one who has built a house has greater honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the one who built [or prepared] all things is God. And Moses on the one hand was faithful [you have to put in was] in all His house as a servant, to provide a testimony for what was to be said later [in future]; but Christ was a Son over His house ..."

I think we'll stop there for a moment. We need to see that this is quoted from Numbers 12:7. It's another example of how a short passage in the Old Testament is made the basis of something very important in the New. Numbers 12:7. We need to know the background. Miriam and Aaron had been criticizing Moses because he'd married a dark-skinned, non-Israelite wife. As a result, Miriam got struck with leprosy—which is a really serious warning about criticizing the Lord's servants. And a person who belittles the Lord's attitude is still precisely the same today.

> "So the Lord came down in a pillar to speak to Aaron and Miriam and in verse 6 He said this: 'Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses, he is faithful in all My household ...'"

That's the Lord's own testimony of Moses. He's in a different category than the rest of the leaders of Israel in his time. He's faithful in all God's house.

You know, it's a little questionable whether one really wishes to be singled out by God for commendation because a lot of things go with it. Can you think of another man who was singled out for special commendation by the Lord? Job, that's right. And a whole lot of things happened to Job from that moment onwards. I learned as a missionary working overseas that if you give a glowing report about what God has done in the life of some person who's come to the Lord, all Satan's forces will be multiplied against that person. It's almost unfair to do it. In fact, I think some people were exposed to such pressure by missionaries writing reports about their star converts that they lost the convert. So I just mention that. I told the Lord that I would like His approval but I'm not sure that I could stand all that goes with it.

So that's the sentence, I want you to see it. "Moses is faithful in all My household." But, the writer of Hebrews says Moses was faithful but he was a servant in the house. The difference is that Christ is the Son whose family it is. And you have to bear in mind that the word house, both in Hebrew and in Greek tends to mean primarily a family, then the place where the family lived. We've changed it around and we think of a house as a place where people live. Biblically, the house is the people who live in the place. A house is made up of human beings, it's a family. Both uses are found, but the family use is primary. So that's the essence of this rather brief comparison between Jesus and Moses.

Now we come to a very remarkable and important verse. Hebrews 3:6, the second part of the verse, which I want to look at in some detail. It's one of those short sentences that you could rather easily pass by and not see its significance. Speaking about Christ as a Son over His house (or family), the writer goes on:

> "... whose house we are, if we are ..."

And the word for if is a kind of underlined if.

> "... if we hold our confidence [or freedom of speech] and the boasting of our hope firm unto the end."

In your outline you'll see that we have the first occurrence of another word: confidence. Then I've got in parentheses, Greek: parrhesia. Are you with me down at the bottom of 3/1? Originally that word was a political word. It's used particularly in classical Greek about the city of Athens. The city of Athens prided itself on having what is guaranteed by the United States Constitution, which is freedom of speech. Nobody could stop you saying what you wanted to say, provided it didn't transgress certain basic rules. That's the word that's used here. I think it's very important you see that though we have to translate it probably as confidence, it's confidence expressed in speech. When you lose your freedom of speech you're losing your rights as a child of God and a citizen of heaven.

You see the other words that go with it all indicate that. "The boastfulness of the hope." Is it wrong to boast? It depends. David said, "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD." That kind of boasting is very right and there's not nearly enough of it. As Christians, I believe we have an obligation to boast much more about the Lord than we do, because the devil's servants are boasting all the time. The atmosphere is filled with godless boasts of the servants of the devil.

Our remaining God's family is conditional upon our maintaining our boasting and our freedom of speech. That's a very solemn thought. If the devil silences you and prevents you expressing confidently your faith and your hope, you're really beginning to lose your rights and your inheritance as a child of God. I think some of you will begin to understand why you sometimes have such a struggle to be bold in the expression of your faith. If the devil can prevent that, he's cheated you out of your inheritance. You're losing your rights.

Notice also a phrase which occurs several times "until the end." This emphasizes also the need for perseverance or endurance. So, our holding our position in the family of God demands that we maintain our confidence, our boasting in God, firm unto the end. There's a Scripture there that I'd like you to turn to in James 5:11.

> "Behold, we count those blessed who endured. [afterwards] You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings..."

But where it says outcome, the Greek word is simply "end." What I want to emphasize is that for the Lord, the end is what matters. And God does a lot of things that we don't appreciate or understand until we come to the end. But until we come to the end, we have to hold on to our boastfulness, our confidence: the free, unfettered expression of our faith. It's a very key verse. So that's the condition for maintaining our position as God's family.

Now we're going to go on to chapter 3:7 and as I point out in your outline, we're now coming to the second passage of solemn warning. It's a very long one, it extends from verse 7 to the 13th verse of chapter 4. In other words, it is about 26 verses, which is a large portion of this epistle. I've said already but I just want to confirm it, there are more solemn warnings in this epistle than in any other writing of the Bible that I know of. This is a warning against unbelief. I personally don't believe that there's anybody here who doesn't stand in need of that warning. I know I do.

Some little while back Ruth and I were ministering somewhere and—it was in England. I didn't plan this, but I commenced my teaching by leading everybody and joining them in a confession of the sin of unbelief and renouncing it and asking forgiveness and affirming faith. I personally believe that there is probably at least as much unbelief in the church today as there was in Israel at the time that this describes. If I had to choose, I'd say there's more in the church today than there was in Israel then but that's just a subjective opinion.

Now, this warning is based also on a passage from the Old Testament and the passage is Psalm 95:7–11.

Since they are quoted in Hebrews, we will not turn to the Old Testament but I will proceed to translate that quotation. That's through 11 of chapter 3. It begins with the word wherefore, which is not very modern English, but it's hard to find another word that says it. I think people today don't say wherefore as much as they used to say it. People are less logical, they just come out with sentences without considering how they relate to one another.

Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit says ...

That's very important because all we have is a psalm. Maybe we better turn there for a moment. It doesn't say anything about the Holy Spirit. Just keep your finger in Hebrews 3 and turn to Psalm 95. Verse 6 is where this really begins.

> "Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts..."

Notice it doesn't say anything about the Holy Spirit. What's the lesson? The lesson is the Holy Spirit is the author of all Scripture. It's a very clear statement from a New Testament writer that indicates they recognized the Holy Spirit as the author of Old Testament Scripture.

I'll give you another rather good example which you might wish to turn to. You can close Psalm 95, spare yourself that finger and turn to Matthew 22:31–32. Jesus is dealing with the Sadducees and they were the people who, in essence, had ruled out the supernatural. They didn't believe in angels, spirits or the resurrection of the dead. They made their religion a purely naturalistic type of morality. Jesus refutes them out of the Scriptures, out of the five books of Moses, the Torah, which was the undisputed authority for the Jewish people in that time.

> "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead but of the living."

You have to turn back to that passage, I'm sorry. You'll need another finger. That's Exodus 3:6. How many of you are doing a little finger drill in your spare time just to keep supple! This is where the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush. Verse 5, He said:

> "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet. [Verse 6:] He said also, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'"

To whom was the Lord speaking? To Moses. But, when Jesus quoted it He said to the people in His day fifteen centuries later, "Have you not read that which was spoken to you by God?" So you see, as far as Jesus was concerned, that wasn't just a historical incident, that was the living Word of God which still spoke with authority to God's people fifteen centuries later. We see in both these passages, in the words of Jesus and the words of the writer of Hebrews, that Jesus Himself and the New Testament writers regarded the Old Testament as the product of the Holy Spirit. It had in it the authority of God the Holy Spirit. There are many other Scriptures that could be quoted to confirm that, but it's important when we're confronted by not a few people who say the New Testament is inspired, the Old Testament isn't. My conviction is, you cannot believe the New Testament without believing the Old because the New Testament requires the Old to be true. That is a very important issue.

Now we're going back to Hebrews 3 and we're going to get the authorized translation. Verse 7:

> "As the Holy Spirit says, [now we get the quotation] 'Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the [I think provocation is the best word] day of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and put Me to the test [or tried Me], and saw My works forty years [saw what I did]. Wherefore, I was angry with this generation [that's the generation that came out of Egypt as adults under Moses], and I said, 'They always go astray in their heart; and they have not known [or they didn't know] My ways'; so I swore in My wrath, 'They will never enter My rest.'"

Let's analyze for a moment the mistakes of Israel because we're warned not to make the same mistakes. We're also reminded it's the Holy Spirit saying this. I listed in your outline—which I think you'll find easy to follow—the five successive mistakes of Israel. First of all, they didn't hear God's voice. Not hearing God's voice, they hardened their hearts. Third, they put God to the test. Fourth, they were continually going astray in their heart. And fifth, they did not know God's ways. You need to turn for a moment to Psalm 103:7:

> "He [the Lord] made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. There's a very important difference between seeing

> God's acts and knowing His ways. The only one that came to know the ways of God referred to there is Moses. All the Israelites saw His acts, only Moses understood His ways. The ones that didn't understand His ways perished."

I'm really not desirous to be severe. You'd be quite surprised if you knew what's going on inside me because I don't intend to be severe. But everything that gets pressured out of me comes out more severe than I intend it. And I think it's the Holy Spirit. I hope it is. I don't intend it to be me. But I would like to ask you a question and nobody is required to answer it. Do you think that there might be multitudes of people in the Charismatic movement who've seen God's acts but never understood His ways? What category would they be in? Same as these people.

See, it seems to me there's something about Charismatics that's very interested to see dramatic things happen. I am, too. I love to see dramatic things happen. But, it's not enough. If that's all, you're going to miss it. You can be sure of one thing: You will never get into God's rest.

I want to point out something that has become of paramount importance to me personally, which is the real key to being part of God's people is hearing God's voice. Those who do not hear God's voice will inevitably miss it. I want to take just a few Scriptures, they're in your outline, all of which point out that this is the basic requirement and it does not change from dispensation to dispensation. It's the same all the way through the Bible. We'll start with Exodus 15:26. The Lord is speaking to Moses.

If you are in need of physical healing I want to suggest to you that here is the primary requirement for receiving healing from God. I spent one year on end in military hospitals in Egypt in World War II and I came to the point where if anybody was going to heal me I knew it would have to be God. I believed the Bible. I somehow felt that if I could understand it there was healing there for me. I studied the Bible to find out how I could receive healing and one conclusion that I emerged with after one year in hospital was that the basic scriptural requirement for being healed by God is hearing His voice. Exodus 15:26:

> "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer."

Or, "I am the LORD, your healer,: or "I am the LORD, your doctor. What's the first primary requirement? If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord. Many of you have heard me say in Hebrew it uses the word listening twice. If listening, you will listen to the voice of the Lord.

And when I was in the hospital and discovered that, I asked the Lord, What does it mean to listen listening? I felt the Lord gave me this answer: "You have two ears, a right and a left. To listen listening is to listen to Me with both ears." I commend that to you. So many times we listen to God with one ear and some other voice with the other. It requires our undivided attention.

Then when we listen, we have to do what is right in His sight. Notice the next requirement goes back to the ear. And will give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes. Out of the four conditions, two relate to the ear. The ear is the gate of healing for the human personality. What you do with your ear is probably going to decide what you experience in the area of healing and health.

Exodus 19:5. This is what the Lord commanded Moses to lay out before the children of Israel when they had arrived at Mount Sinai. Verse 5:

> "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples."

It's very simple. What did God say? Two things. "Obey My voice and keep My covenant." And you see, without hearing God's voice you cannot do any of the other things because you don't know what to do.

We'll go on for a moment to Deuteronomy 28. Unfortunately, both the NASB and the NIV don't translate the same Hebrew phrase the same way—which irritates me, frankly. It's the same phrase that's used in Exodus 15:26 here in Deuteronomy 28:1 and they change the translation. They say here:

> "Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the LORD your God ..."

But if you look in the margin, if you have one with a margin it says "Listen to the voice of" the LORD. That's the key. If

you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, verse 2:

> "All these blessings shall come upon you ..., if you will listen to the voice of the LORD."

He says it twice. It seems he attaches importance to it.

That's the key to all the blessings. If you go through the blessings, you are lacking in discernment if you don't want them. That is an understatement.

What's the cause of the curses which start in verse 15?

> "But it shall come about, if you will not obey [but it says listen] to the voice of the LORD ... all these curses will come upon you."

There is the watershed. On the one side, countless blessings. On the other side, endless curses. What's the line of division? Listening or not listening to the voice of the Lord.

I want you to go to a very interesting passage still dealing with this theme in Jeremiah 7:22–23. The Lord is speaking again to Israel:

> "For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Which is true. That didn't come for about two months after they were delivered out of Egypt. They were not delivered out of Egypt by the law, it's very important to see that.

> "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people.'"

If you want a simple statement of what it means to belong to God, you'll never find one better than that. "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be Ny people." Without that first requirement, that relationship cannot exist. "Obey My voice, and I will be your God."

> "And then in the New Testament just one Scripture in John 10:27. Jesus is speaking and says: 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.'"

To me, that's the simplest statement of what it is to be a Christian. It's to hear His voice and follow Him. If you don't hear His voice you can't follow Him. It's not a question of denomination; it's not a question of being a Catholic or Protestant, Baptist or Presbyterian. "My sheep continually hear My voice." It's a continuing or repeated present tense. "My sheep regularly hear My voice and, hearing My voice, they follow Me."

I would venture to suggest to you that if you are having spiritual or maybe physical problems or financial problems, probably in at least fifty percent of the cases your real problem is not hearing God's voice. And God is probably going to keep you in your problems until you do hear His voice. So it might be good to stop worrying about your problem and start listening to God.

There's another vitally important fact about hearing God's voice in Romans 10. I'm going to quote to you the King James Version although it could possibly be—this is good enough. Romans 10:17, the NASB.

> "So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

The King James says "word of God," but it comes to the same thing—there's no significant difference. How does faith come? By hearing God's word. The word in Greek for word is rhema. You've probably heard a lot of teaching. That means "the living, personal, direct word of God." It's not just knowing the Bible, it's hearing God's voice.

When I was there in that military hospital for one year on end—and believe me, I don't know if any of you have ever spent one year on end in the hospital, but it seems a very long time—as I lay there, as a believer, I said to myself, I know if I had faith God could heal me. But the next thing I said was, "I don't have faith!" Every time I said that I was in what John Bunyan calls "the Slough of Despond," or the dark valley of despair.

One day as I was sitting up propped against the pillows in the bed saying to myself I don't have faith, I didn't know where my Bible was open but it was open at Romans 10 and my eye fell on verse 17: "So then faith cometh ..." And it was like electricity, it was like a ray of light in the darkness. Faith cometh. If you don't have it, you can get it. It comes. How does it come? By hearing the word of God. I made up my mind that I would hear God's word until faith came. I'm here

tonight to testify I did and it did. About eight months later I walked out of that hospital having declined any further medical treatment saying, "I'm going to trust God only." You try that, especially when you're a hospital attendant in a medical unit in the British Army—that's not an easy thing to say. They almost put me in a psychiatric hospital! Really! I only just narrowly escaped. But, I listened to God's voice, faith came, and I was healed.

If you look now in your outline, Page 3/2, you'll see that this is the first occurrence of the word rest. And between this verse and chapter 4, verse 13, this word occurs 12 times. Without any question, a major theme of this particular section is the theme of rest.

In my introductory talk I explained that in essence, there are three words describing the goal or the objective of our lives in Hebrews: rest, inheritance, perfection. I've also pointed out from time to time that the whole thrust of Hebrews is forward and upward so that we're continually being pointed toward an objective which God intends us to attain and three of the main words used to describe that objective are rest, inheritance and perfection (or maturity or completeness).

We also have here the first use of the word to swear, which in the form of a noun is "oath." I count them as one. When God wants to attach special emphasis on something He particularly wants us to know He means it, He not merely says it but He confirms it with an oath. Later in the epistle this is explained, we won't turn there now.

A brother that I was talking with a little while back introduced to me a rather interesting thought that if God finds it appropriate to emphasize some things that He says — (and after all, if God says it, that's it whether He emphasize it or not. So, in a sense, it's not for His sake but for our sake.) —then it could be appropriate for us in dealing with God at times to emphasize something to which we want to attach particular importance and want to commit ourselves. This brother pointed out to me, and it was really illuminating to me and I share it with you, that a scriptural way to do this is to make a vow. There is much in the Scripture about making vows to God. The essence of much of the teaching is "make a vow and keep it." Don't go back on your vow.

In a sense, when you make a vow, you've tied yourself. There's just no way out from that moment onward. I'm not suggesting that you start immediately to make vows, but I saw in an altogether new light one reason why God leaves open a way for us to make vows. It's a way for us to kind of make an extra commitment from which there's no going back. God's extra commitment, if you could phrase it that way, is in His oath when He swears. And He was so angry with these people and that's what the Scripture says. "He swore in His wrath."

We need to bear in mind that God is capable of anger and that it's very frightening to encounter the anger of God. Hebrews has quite a lot to say about the anger of God. Here, He gets so angry with these people, they provoked Him so long. They failed to come up to His standards so many times that He not merely says, "You're not going to enter My rest," He swears, "You'll never enter My rest."

Let's go on then in the application of this passage from Psalm 95. Verse 12:

> "Watch, brothers, lest there should be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in turning away from the living God."

I think the New American Standard says "falling away," but it's not a good choice of a word in my opinion because the word in Greek indicates something you do of your will. You fall away by accident, but you turn away by choice. That's what it's speaking about. Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in turning away from the living God.

> "But exalt [encourage or stir up] one another [or yourselves] each day, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

I would direct you there to the comments in the outline. One essential lesson: Unbelief is evil. It's not a weakness to be excused, but a sin to be repented of. The word used for evil is a rather powerful word. I think that's one of our basic problems. We tend to condone our own unbelief. We kind of think it's natural not to have all the faith, and if I don't believe, that's not too serious. But that's not what the Bible says. An unbelieving heart is an evil heart. It's going to get us into serious trouble.

There's here a double protection against this mistake of yielding to unbelief. One is the personal in verse 12, "Watch." Watch out for yourself. The other is the collective in verse 13, "Exhort yourselves." And this is so important that it's to be done every day.

I wonder whether we really even begin to take that seriously. It implies a way of life among Christians that we

can exhort one another every day. There must be some kind of relationship that makes that possible. I discovered that a lot of people don't like to be exhorted. You've never found that perhaps. But, it's a commandment of Scripture. The issues, in a sense, are life and death. I have to say again it's possible that I'm merely expressing my personality, but I don't think so. I think I am expressing something from the Holy Spirit when I say God is taking this very seriously. More seriously than most of us would be disposed to do.

Then we continue in verse 14. Notice, please, before we read verse 14 that sin is very deceitful. If you read Romans 7—which I don't want you to turn there now—Paul speaks about sin there as almost as if it were something personal. It deceives us, it takes advantage of us and it kills us. Here the writer of Hebrews again emphasizes that sin is deceitful. You think you're all right, you don't see any harm in what you're doing. Let me suggest to you that if you ignore or resist the exhortation of sincere and qualified fellow Christians, you are not all right. That's one sure evidence by itself. You may think you're all right, you may feel all right, but if you have that attitude, you're not all right.

Going on in verse 14:

> "For we have become partakers of the Christ [always bearing in mind that it's also "the Messiah"], if [a very strong if] we hold the beginning of our confidence firm to the end ..."

What does it say here? "Hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." Well, that's good enough. Notice again the phrase the end. See how always it's looking toward the end? And notice again that we have to hold it fast. And notice that it's not the word "freedom of speech" there, it's the word that is used at the beginning of Hebrews for the Father's substance. You remember that? Maybe we'd better turn there. Hebrews 1:3 speaking about the Son of God.

> "Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the express image of His substance..."

Do you see the word substance there? Maybe it isn't translated substance. It means "that which underlies something else." We went through that when we were dealing with that passage. And the same word is used in Hebrews 11:1:

> "Faith is the substance of things hoped for ..."

That which underlies what we hope is our faith; it's the basis. So, it means the basis, the assurance, the confidence. But it's not the word that we've been talking about that means freedom of speech. Have you got that? I hope I'm not confusing you. But they're all, in a sense, interrelated.

One of the strong emphases of Hebrews is you've got to have confidence. It's no good being timid or halfhearted or almost believing. The emphasis is on strong, asserted confidence.

Going on in verse 15:

> "... while it is said, 'Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation.'"

I need to go back, excuse me. Because, we've come to a very important passage here. Don't go on beyond verse 14 for the time being, okay?

> "For we have become partakers of the Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence [assurance] firm until the end."

Now, it was significant that I went on too quickly because we have there a very brief phrase. "We have become partakers of Christ." Sharers in Christ, it's just a few words but they're full of meaning. Unless we understand something of what's contained in that, we will not appreciate when we come on in the next chapter to our inheritance because our rest is interwoven with our inheritance. So I want to pause for a moment and just analyze with you something of what's meant by being partakers of Christ. It's one of those phrases in the Bible of which you can never fully exhaust the meaning.

I've suggested seven things that we partake of. You'd be surprised to know I came up with seven. You could find more; I'm not suggesting that's the complete list. I'd like you just to go through them with me for a moment.

The first one partakers of His righteousness. How many of you know the first time the word charisma is used in the New Testament? I'll let you into a secret, it's in Romans 5:17. The first gift, you know the word charisma is the word for "a gift." The first gift is what? Righteousness. You would never

think that with your natural mind, but it's logical. Until we are made righteous, God can't do anything more for us. The first thing God does in helping us is to bring us to a place of righteousness. Romans 5:17:

> "For if by the transgression of the one [and that is Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

Notice righteousness is a gift received through faith in Jesus Christ. That's what we call "imputed righteousness." There's another aspect of righteousness which is what? Outworked righteousness. That's what we compare to the bride's garment that had to be woven thread by thread. That's outworked righteousness. The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints, not the righteousness received by faith in Christ that starts us off but the outworked righteousness.

However, here we're dealing with what technically is called "imputed righteousness." God reckons righteousness to us. It's a gift and it's most important to see that's where it all starts. If you don't really believe you've been reckoned righteous, you'll always be struggling with the problem of guilt of unworthiness or inadequacy. So when we're made partakers of Christ, we're made partakers of His righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21, which I have to confess is one of my favorite Scriptures, says:

> "[God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

That's the great exchange that took place. Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness that we might be made righteous with His righteousness. Not by earning it, but by believing it. It's a free gift, it cannot be earned. Then, it has to be outworked. But if you don't receive it by faith, you have nothing to outwork. You must start with the faith transaction. You have been reckoned as righteous as Jesus. Many of you have heard my definition of "justified": Made righteous, just-as-if-I'd never sinned. The righteousness I have never did sin. There's not a breath of guilt in the righteousness of Jesus. So we are made partakers of His righteousness. That's included in being partakers of Christ.

Then we're made partakers of His life. Turn back to Romans 6:23. A favorite verse for Baptists—and a good one, too.

> "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Same word, charisma. So once you've received righteousness, you qualify to receive life. The order is very important. God couldn't give life to a sinner who was still guilty. So the first thing we're partakers of is His righteousness. And because we don't adequately study the New Testament, many of us never get to that point. I think there are probably many here tonight that have never really resolved the question of being made righteous. And you're always struggling against guilt or unworthiness or inadequacy. You will struggle until you know what the gospel teaches. Your problem is ignorance.

Let's look at one other Scripture, Colossians 3:3–4:

> "For you have died..."

But the Greek says "you died." It's important. It happened at a given moment. When Jesus died, you died. It's a historical fact. You died. ... your life is hidden with Christ in God.

That's a pretty secure place, isn't it? How much can touch you there? But it's a hidden life. If you want to show off, you come out of your hiding place.

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

That's another of those unsearchable statements. Christ is our life. It's inexhaustible. It doesn't matter how much you draw out of it, you'll never exhaust it. Christ is our life. We're partakers of His life.

The next—and this is the one where everybody says Hallelujah!—we're partakers of His sufferings. If you really don't say Hallelujah! you really don't have the right perspective. I mean, we've got a wrong idea about suffering. There's a little book that I've found helpful. It came to me at a moment when I needed help. Of course, you wouldn't believe preachers need help, but I needed help at that moment. It's by the same man that wrote Destined for the Throne, Paul Bilheimer. It's called Don't Waste Your Sorrows. It's a rather arresting title and the essence of the book is sorrow, received the right way, is a blessing. It'll do things for you nothing else will do.

I don't know that I've got to the place where Paul was. I've often wondered, "That I may know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings"? I really have to say to the Lord many times, "Lord, I'm not sure that I've come to the place where I can say that. Just be patient with me."

We'll look just at the one Scripture in Romans 8:17. Here's where I see a tremendous deficiency in much contemporary preaching. There is almost nothing said about the place of suffering and self denial. It's a very unbalanced picture of the Christian life that you get without that. Verse 16 and then verse 17:

> "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."

The condition of being glorified is suffering. If we are not willing to suffer with Him, we will not be glorified with Him. The next thing that we're partakers of is His kingdom. Luke 22:28–30:

> "And you are those that have stood by Me in My trials..."

That's faith, you see. That's the real faith. It's not primarily intellectual, it's standing by the one who's going through it.

> "... and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

There's such a difference between the devil and Jesus. The devil is a dictator, he dominates. Jesus rules but He shares His kingdom. "I'm coming into My kingdom and if you stick it out, I'll share My kingdom with you." So we share His kingdom.

Then we share His glory. John 17:22. There's some amazing statements in this 17th chapter. Jesus is speaking and praying to the Father concerning His disciples and He says:

> "The glory which Thou has given Me I have given to them ..."

So He shares His glory. Isn't that beautiful?

And not only that but we partake of His relationship with the Father. Just look on a few verses in John 17:26.

> "I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known ..."

That's the name of the Father. We've looked at that earlier in these studies.

> "... that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

In other words, the love that God the Father has for Jesus Christ the Son is going to be the love that He has for us. He shares that with us.

Then one more statement, He shares the total inheritance with us. John 16:14–15, speaking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

> "He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify Me ..."

That's one good way of testifying whether the thing is of the Holy Spirit. Does it glorify Jesus?

> "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He [the Spirit] takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you."

That's really a beautiful picture. The entire inheritance of the Father He shares with the Son. So everything the Father has the Son has.

But, the administrator of the whole inheritance is the Spirit. And the Spirit reveals to us our inheritance, which is the total inheritance of the Father and the Son. But without the Holy Spirit we could be living like paupers instead of like king's children. It's only the Spirit that unfolds to us our inheritance.

Then going back to Romans 8 for a moment. Romans 8:17:

> "... and if children, heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ ..."

Co-heirs, I prefer to say. And I understand according to the legal system of that time that when you were a co-heir, you

shared the entire inheritance. It wasn't that each person got a portion but that everybody had part of all. So we share the total inheritance with Jesus because we're God's children. Everything that He has is our inheritance.

Verse 32 of Romans 8:

> "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

If God was willing to give Jesus, then there is nothing He will withhold. It's freely. But it's with Him.

Without Him, nothing. With Him, everything.

And then again we noted, and we could turn back again to Hebrews 1:2 that the first statement made about Jesus as the Son of God is His inheritance.

In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things ...

So "all things" is the inheritance of Jesus. We share that inheritance. But, now going back to Hebrews 3:14, this is all conditional upon an if.

> "... if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm to the end."

So it's really all or nothing. There's nothing in between. You can't say, "I'm going to be sort of halfway a Christian and I know I won't get everything, but I'll get a little bit." No you won't. You'll either get all or you'll get nothing. In between there are no options.

Note again, as I've said—but it seems to me both the Holy Spirit and the Scripture emphasize this— it's got to be until the end. We hold fast the beginning of our assurance until the end.

Now, going on in our outline, verse 15 of chapter 3.

> "... while it is said, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me.'"

What's the emphatic word there? Today, that's right. "While it is said, 'Today.'" In other words, there's a certain period which is decisive. What's the period? Today. How long does today last? Nobody knows. Compare that—and you can keep your finger in Hebrews—2 Corinthians 6:2:

> "... for He says, 'At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you'; behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is "the day of salvation."

You are misquoting it if you say "Today is the day of salvation." It may not last the whole of today.

It's NOW. "Now is the day of salvation." Turn to Proverbs 27:1 for a moment.

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Is that true? Isn't it absolutely true? How many times we started out a day with one idea of what would happen. By the end of the day we say, "How did I ever find myself in this situation?" You have no guarantee of what will happen any given day. You have no guarantee that you will see the end of that day. But while it is called "today," be careful, don't harden your heart.

Going back to Hebrews 3:16–19. It said at the end of verse 15, "When they provoked" or "in the provocation." And then there's a series of questions.

> "For who when they heard provoked? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt through Moses? And with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose carcasses fell in the desert? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, if not to those who were disobedient?"

"Who disobeyed" is a better translation.

The word that's used there does not mean—it says disobeyed but it's really halfway between disobeyed and disbelieved. Let me wait till we get to the next chapter where we have the noun and I'll go into it in detail. It's "disobedience that's the result of disbelief"; that's what it means. So the real emphasis there is not primarily on disobedience but on disbelief. "To whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, if it was not to those [let's say] who disobeyed."

And we see that they could not enter through unbelief. That's the word plain and simple for unbelief. That's so simple, isn't it? Let's not complicate it. Let's not invent fancy

terms to cover up unbelief. If we don't make it, the reason will be the same for us as it was for them: unbelief.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul points out that all the experiences of the Israelites on their way from Egypt through the wilderness are patterns that are written for our warning and instruction. First Corinthians 10, beginning at verse 1.

> "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren ..."

The King James, you'll remember, says "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren."

> "... that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them [or went with them]; and the rock was Christ."

So Paul reminds the Christians who were not primarily Jewish—it was a Gentile church—that all our fathers went through certain experiences. He's talking about the Israelites coming out of Egypt. In other words, they become our spiritual fathers when we are grafted into the stalk of Abraham. They all were under the cloud, they all passed through the sea. Paul says that corresponds to two baptisms: baptism in the cloud is baptism in the Spirit. Baptism in water is baptism in the sea. They all had those experiences.

Furthermore, they all drank of the Spirit and they all fed upon the rock which was Christ. In other words, there were four basic experiences the Israelites had which correspond to four basic experiences of us as Christians which is: being baptized in water, baptized in the Holy Spirit, drinking of the Holy Spirit and feeding upon Christ.

But, they didn't make it. I don't like theological issues, but I have to say the fact that you've had those experiences is no guarantee you'll make it. I cannot read these words any other way. Verse 5:

> "Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. These things happened as examples for us, that we should not [do the things they did] crave evil things... Do not be idolaters ... [verse 8:] act immorally ... [verse 9:] try the Lord ... [verse 10:] grumble ..."

There are five specific things we're warned against doing. Let's look at them again for a moment. I think it's five, it may be six.

Number one, not craving evil things. Number two, not being idolaters.

Number three, not acting immorally. Number four, not testing or trying the Lord. Number five, not grumbling. Did you notice that one? I heard myself preaching just last week on the radio that God had a special punishment for people who grumbled. They just didn't get sick in the ordinary way; they were destroyed by the destroying angels. It's interesting. And we're specifically warned against grumbling. The implication is, we're in the same category as idolaters or people who act immorally.

See, all religious people have got their little list of permissible sins. Some are bad and some are not bad. There's no biblical basis for that. We all tailor the list to suit ourselves. The things that I don't want to do are bad sins. The things that I do from time to time, they're the permissible sins. Don't deceive yourself, it isn't that way.

Verse 11:

> "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

That means all this is a warning to us. Then we come to a therefore.

> "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

So if any of you were sitting there and saying, "That's all right, what he's saying, but it couldn't happen to me," you're the one verse 12 is addressed to. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

I've been a Christian over forty years and I have to say I have a greater—I don't know what word to use—I think I would use the word fear. A greater fear of careless living than I had thirty years ago. You'll see when we get to the

next chapter one of the first words is, “let us fear.” Maybe it doesn’t fit in with your theology but it’s right there in the Bible.

I think the last thing I’m going to be able to say tonight is very important. We’ve talked about entering into rest. You will never be able to apply this in your life until you understand the last statement in my outline on Page 3/3. Our rest is found only within our inheritance. There is no rest outside of our inheritance. Bearing in mind that all this is based on the pattern of the Israelites coming out of Egypt and entering the Promised Land, let’s look at three passages in the book of Deuteronomy that make this totally clear. Deuteronomy 3:20. Moses is here giving instructions to two and a half tribes: Ruben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh who decided they wanted their inheritance east of the Jordan. He said, “Okay, I’ll give you that inheritance, but you’ve got to go over first and fight with your brothers for the territory on the west. When you’ve done that, then you can go back.” So he says in verse 20:

> “Until the LORD gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God will give them beyond the Jordan.”

So rest only comes when we possess the land which is our inheritance. Then Deuteronomy 12:9:

> “For you have not as yet come to the resting place [but the Hebrew says ‘to the rest’] and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.”

Notice the rest and the inheritance go together. No inheritance, no rest. There is no rest outside of the inheritance.

I was just returned from five years in East Africa and one year in Canada and I had moved to Seattle, Washington. For the first time for about a year and a half, Lydia and I were in a little rented home, a wooden building with two bedrooms. A very humble home, which had been rented to us by the president of the Full Gospel Businessmen there. It was so good not to be living in somebody else’s home at last that I thought, “Lord, this is wonderful.” I had the Bible open in front of me, I looked down and I was looking at Deuteronomy 12:9. In the King James it says, “You have not yet come into the rest and the inheritance which the Lord has for you.” I said to the Lord, “This is such a nice place.” The Lord spoke to me again not out of the Bible but clearly. He said, “I have a much better place for you.” And everywhere I’ve gone ever since I’ve always thought to myself, “Is this the ‘much better place’?” Now that we have a home in Jerusalem I could really believe as far as this world is concerned, that’s it. But that made it very real for me. If you’re not in your inheritance, you’re not in the rest. The rest and the inheritance are coextensive.

Then one last Scripture, Deuteronomy 25:19:

> “Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD gives you as an inheritance to possess ...”

Notice the rest is in the inheritance.

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Sermon

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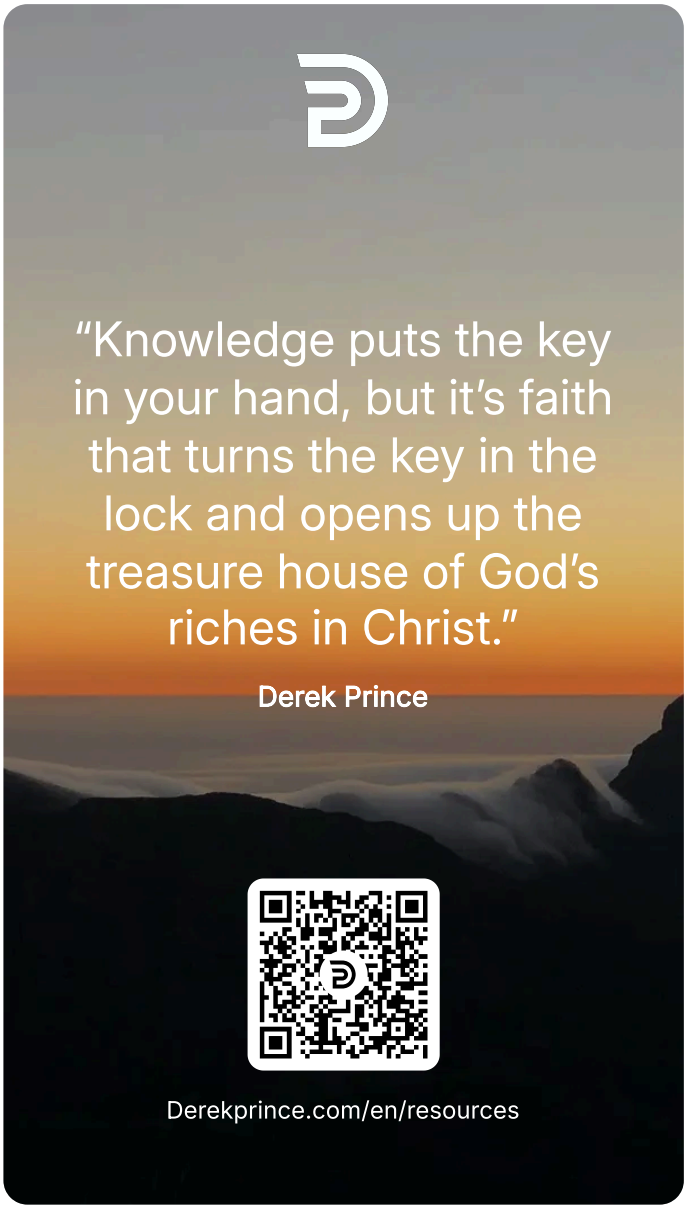

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