

So, where were we?
Hebrews

Galatians 5:1-18
Romans 8: 1-18
Responsive Psalm 146

Before we start this morning, I just want to take a moment to thank everyone for their prayer, and generosity toward me and my family over these past few months. It has been an interesting journey for sure, with many ups and downs, but through it all, God has been there each step of the way and he has used the prayer, the encouragement, and the generosity of family, friends and even strangers to remind me constantly that he has been with me each step of the way. God promises that he will keep us, and I was constantly reminded of Christ's words in Matthew chapter 6, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you of more value than they? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things, sufficient for the day is its own trouble. We have witnessed God's provision, removing the stress and worry of physical needs while I have been out of work, God has worked through each of you, and through perfect strangers to accomplish his provision for us, and it is something that has left me in awe of how God works.

Diana told the kids while I was in the hospital, not to worry about things, to just wait, and watch and see how God works. I think those are wise words that we can all learn from for we each have had such moments of doubt, or despair, or maybe you're young enough that hasn't happened yet but either way the lesson is the same. God will provide. He may not remove the affliction, like with the Apostle Paul who prayed to have his thorn in the flesh removed, but God's response is that his grace is sufficient for him. God provided what Paul needed to deal with whatever the issue was, the thorn in the flesh became a tool for God to show his mercy and grace, and also was a tool used to humble Paul, to increase his faith, and to rely upon God for the strength and mercy needed daily. We don't know why God allows things to happen to us, but honestly that statement isn't entirely true. For as James says, Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing.

There is also the element of ministry through misery. By that I mean, the suffering that one may endure if endured through faith and trust in Christ and his provision and grace stands as a ministry to others. We are not always aware of how God will use us, or our situation to minister to others. How a strong stance and understanding in God's sovereign provision, as with Paul and his affliction can be an encouragement to others who are also afflicted. Throughout these past few months I have been a time of many lessons, but I don't mean that really in a learning something new way, but rather it has been seeing what I know being put into practice. I know, and believe that God is sovereign over his creation, I know, and believe that I am one of his adopted children, I know and believe in God's love toward his children, and I know and believe his promises toward us to never leave nor forsake us, to care and provide. Yet, none of that has become more true, or more real to me than over the last few months, as we have done as Diana said, wait, and watch to see how the Lord will work.

So I want to just thank everyone again for their love and generosity toward myself, and my family as we have been going through this very tough time, and I praise God for his love that has shown through each and every one of you, through your prayers, your care, and concern.

Ok, enough of that, let's move on with today's message. So, today I just want to spend this time sort of bringing us back up to speed before we continue on here in chapter 5. I needed to go back and go through what we have studied to sort of reestablish a flow, so I thought that it would just be a good idea for that to be our focus today, to remind us where we left off. So today is going to be a sort of summary of what we have covered so far in the book of Hebrews. We must remember that the author is writing to this group of Hebrews, who not unlike the Galatians, were under some risk of turning away, or leaving the faith, of being deceived and lead astray from the faith which they have been taught. So he has spent these past 5 chapters instructing them on the basics of the faith again, on the nature of God, to bring them back to the faith and away from the idea of angel worship which they had fallen into. Reminding them that worship, and praise to anything other than the sovereign Lord is apostasy, and is idolatry. He spends the first chapter showing how Christ is superior to the Angels, being the Son of God, the one whom the promises were made, and in whom salvation is provided. To summarize quickly, the author is telling these Hebrews that God is the only one worthy of worship, even the angels bow before him, do not worship that which are also subjects to the sovereign Lord, but worship the Lord, do not worship the messengers but worship the one who sends the message of salvation that has provided reconciliation, and salvation.

In the subsequent chapters the Author continues this line of argumentation showing the Christ is superior to all things, and superior to all who came before, or after him. Much like the argument against the worship of angels, he points to other hero's of the faith who many have elevated to at least on some levels to be equal to Christ. In chapter 3 he mentions Moses. Chapter 3:1 "Therefor Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all his house." Here the author is setting up a comparison between Christ, whom God has sent as the quote, "head of the house." Just as Moses is seen as the leader or head of Israel during the freedom from Egyptian captivity, and the 40 years of wandering through the wilderness. God used Moses to establish Israel as a nation, through Moses they were given laws, traditions, that set them apart from the other nations, they were to be a holy nation unto God. But as we know, Israel seemed to rebel, and buck up against God's commands each step of the way, and each step of the way suffered for it. Throughout the account there is a pattern, of God's people failing to follow God's commands, God's punishment, then repentance. So we can see this "house" that was established under Moses was not a perfect house, but it served God's perfect purpose. That is, to point to the fact that we can not gain righteousness on our own. Our sinful nature into which we are born into because of the curse upon Adam and his seed as separated us from God, to the point that even when given a clear cut list, and set of rules and ordinances directly from God for his righteous requirements we are unable in our natural state to adhere to them.

So, this house that was established under Moses, was never God's salvation plan for Israel, this is not a God's plan failed to reconcile his people to himself so he had to do something different type thing, for we all know that God can not fail, yet it must all fit with in his perfect sovereign plan. So this house established under Moses, was not the end, but rather a type, it pointed to the perfect house that was coming, the one who was established and built by Christ. Continuing on here in verse 3. "For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who built the house has more honor than the house.

For every house is built by someone, but he who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

And there is the difference, Moses house was not his house, but he was a servant, using a new testament metaphor, or parable, Moses was the servant who was left to lead, or keep the house while the master of the house was away, and in this Moses was faithful as this passage says. But now that the master, now that Christ has arrived, the one who built the house, there is no longer a need for the servant to be the leader for the one who built the house is greater than the one who was appointed to manage it. It is for this reason, which is just one of many that we reject the idea of the old covenant laws given to Moses and the house of Israel at that time to be binding whatsoever upon the Christian today who is not living in the house lead by Moses, but is living in the house under the Master Jesus Christ. The old covenant laws were given to Moses by God, by the builder, by the master of the house sort of like how one would leave a list of things for someone to do who was house sitting for you. To insure order, to make sure that things are done in good order so that the house remains when the master returns.

Even though we here already know this, I still think that it is always important to make these distinctions, for we need to be able to rightly explain our beliefs and understanding as we engage not just this world in ministry, but also our other brothers and sisters in Christ. For we do not have to be long in the conversation about the bible before these distinctions come up, especially when someone begins inquiring about our church and what makes us different than any other church in the area. The relationship between the house under the watch care of Moses, and the house after the Master has returned is the hinge pin, it sets us up to be completely different than both our baptist, and our reformed brethren. The distinction between the new covenant established by Christ at the last supper, and the old covenant established by God through Moses at mount Sinai has massive implications into the life of the believer, their faith, and their walk with God. This here, in Hebrews is just one of the many places throughout the New Testament showing that the old has passed away, now that the master has returned, now that Christ has come there is no longer this need for the old rules given to the servants to manage the house.

We must be careful here that we as Christians do not fall into the same fault that these Hebrews were, which is elevating anything to the level, or even higher than Christ. As I had made mention, while none of our reformed brethren would claim that they elevate Moses to be even with Christ, and I know they honestly believe that, it is in the practice of what is believed by remaining tied to the old testament even after Christ has come and has already established, and accomplished and fulfilled it. Christ did not come and die on the cross so that we may return back to the old ways, under laws, and traditions. Christ came to free us from such, while the laws given to Moses were holy, just, and righteous, they did not stir up holiness, and righteousness, but rather rebellion. The laws given were not flawed, but man in his sinful nature is unable to adhere to God's law. So, man's nature needs to be changed, through Christ, on the cross, offering salvation and the new birth, wiping clean the slate of God's judgment against us, for we are no longer lost sheep, or at the very best, servants in the house, but we are adopted children through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must be careful not to return to that which has already been accomplished, we must not elevate that which was given to condemn to be equal to whom was given to us to free us from such bondage.

Christ is superior to all who came before him, and to all who come after. Upon reflecting on this passage here in chapter 3, I am reminded of 2 instances in the gospels where God not so subtly points to this truth to the disciples who wanted to worship, or follow someone other than Christ. The first is with John the baptist.

Who had as we know quite the following, people came from all over to hear his message to repent, and be baptized. Even John understood his place, for he told those who were following him, There comes one after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down to loose. I indeed baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. John understood that what he was doing was a type, a picture, pointing the the greater fulfillment to come. John's baptism did not create holy followers of God, it was the tutor, the lesson, to point to the greater baptism that was coming. Again, just like those who want to point back to the old covenant laws, there are those who put such an emphasis on baptism to equate it to salvation almost, if not to the point of the importance of Christ on the cross. But we all know what happens here next. Christ comes, and was baptized by John. Now one might ask, why, this seems weird that if John's baptism was to point to the Christ and the baptism of the holy spirit, why than would Jesus be baptized. Well I think that brings us back to our teaching in Hebrews, were he talks about Christ being the great high priest, the one who was taken from among the people, to represent the people before God, being found holy and just, who can be an advocate for us for he has suffered and shared in our experience.

Back to Hebrews 4:14”Seeing then that we have a great high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For ever high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin. HE can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself to become high priest, but it was he who said to him. You are my son, today I have begotten you, as he also said in another place you are a priest forever accffered and having been perfected he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

Not to stray away from by point here, but Christ's incarnation, his quote unquote human experience was necessary to become the great high priest, the one to mediate between God and mankind. And this I think is one of the reasons of the necessity of Jesus' baptism, he had come to fulfill all the prophets, all the promises given, all of the things which were given to point to him he has fulfilled completely. And now if we turn back to Mark, chapter 1, and this account of Jesus baptism to return to my original point, what happened after Jesus was baptized? Verse 10, And immediately, coming up from the water, he saw the heavens parting and the spirit descending upon him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Verse 14, now John after John was put in prison Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God saying the Time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.” Just as Christ is superior to Moses, so to is Christ superior to John. They both served God's holy purpose to prepared the way for the gospel, but now that the gospel has come we must remain focused upon the high priest that God has sent.

The 2nd example of this, is the transfiguration a few pages over in Mark chapter 9. verse 2. “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves, and he was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here, let us make three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” You see what is happening here?

You have Elijah, the prophet, Moses who facilitated the Law of God in Israel, and Jesus, the messiah in whom both of these pointed to. And Peter, out of ignorance, says that we should make 3 tabernacles, places of honor for them. But in verse 7, it says, “And a cloud came and overshadowed them, and a voice came from out of the cloud saying, this is my beloved Son, hear him!” Think upon this for a minute in light of what we have been studying this morning in Hebrews about Christ's superiority over all things. We have here Elijah, the great prophet, representing a time in Israel, and who at this time is revered as one of the greatest prophets being elevated as one of the pillars of Israel, yet himself being a servant, just as Moses who represents the law, being one of the pillars of Israel yet himself a servant, and God says...do not bow down to these men, in fact he says, points to Jesus and says, This is my Son, hear him! The prophets and the law is passed, the Son has come to fulfill them. Do not return to those times, but listen to the Son whom was sent. I don't know if there is a much clearer way to understand or to point out Christ's superiority than God himself in the presence of these pillars of the faith, in whom God used to foretell and guide to the coming messiah, when he says, don't listen to them.. listen to my Son. If God says this, then why do some say we must go back and listen to Moses to be once again under the yoke, or bondage of the law? Why do some spend so much time in the prophets seeking some hidden answer or meaning, the messiah has come, hear him!