

"Our Great High Priest"

Part 15

Hebrews 4:14-8:5

**Introduction:** Tonight as we continue in our study of the book of Hebrews I am reminded of the privilege we have as we study this letter. This letter was written to Hebrew believers who were suffering because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the letter is an instruction manual as to how they were to live to honor God in the midst of the persecution.

As I think about the context of the letter I am reminded of the direction which our Nation is going today. It is moving toward a position that is completely Godless and along with that movement will be hatred toward those who stand for Jesus Christ, which we are already seeing today. This takes my mind back to the book of Judges and what was recorded there.

**Judges 2:7-14**

<sup>7</sup> *And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.*

<sup>8</sup> *And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.*

<sup>9</sup> *And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.*

<sup>10</sup> *And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: **and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD,** nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.*

<sup>11</sup> *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:*

<sup>12</sup> *And **they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.***

<sup>13</sup> *And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.*

<sup>14</sup> *And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and **he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.***

I show you these verses because we now have a generation that knows not the Lord. They have forgotten the Biblical principles which this country was founded upon and therefore

we are a Nation which God has given over. Piece by piece our freedoms are being taken away and there is coming a time when standing for Jesus Christ will be very costly.

This is exactly the situation the Hebrew believers were facing in the book of Hebrews. Therefore, the instruction given to them is exactly what we need as we continue to live out our earthly lives here in America.

The Hebrews who received this letter were thinking of stepping back into Judaism because of the pressure they were under so the temptation which they faced was to take the "path of least resistance" through this life.

There may come a day when we too will be faced with pressure and possibly persecution because we are believers. It certainly seems as though it is not far from coming to the church. If and when that occurs there may be the temptation to "blend in" with society so as to have a life of less resistance. Let me just say that according to what is written in the book of Hebrews and elsewhere in the Bible that is not even an option for you and me. This thought reminds me of something John wrote in Revelation to the Church of Smyrna.

#### **Revelation 2:10**

<sup>10</sup> **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**

Let us now get back to the book of Hebrews where we were last week.

#### **I. Encouragement for the Hebrew Believers**

##### **Part 2**

#### **Notice Hebrews 6:9-10**

We look at these verses last week in our study and in these verses we saw the encouragement for these believers.

##### **1. They were loved by the writer.**

The writer warned them of the danger they faced if they went back to the Old Covenant and he also pointed to the positives which he was able to see in their lives. He was persuaded they would manifest that which accompanied salvation.

##### **a. Perseverance**

b. **Obedience**

2. **God was aware of their work and labor.**

a. **Their motive was love.**

b. **They labored to honor the name of the Lord.**

This now brings us to where we stopped last week.

c. **They ministered to one another.**

### **Notice Hebrews 6:10**

The writer here tells them that God was aware of their ministry toward one another. It is also important that at the time this letter was written they were STILL ministering.

This tells us that they were functioning as the body of Christ. It helps us to understand that they were exercising their spiritual gifts. They cared for one another and therefore they ministered to the needs of one another. This by the way was the responsibility of the body of Christ. This compliments what Paul wrote in Ephesians.

### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

<sup>12</sup> *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

Believers are to gather under the teaching of the Word to be equipped for the ministry. James also knew that it was the responsibility of the believers to minister to one another.

### **James 1:27**

<sup>27</sup> *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

Jesus tells us in the Olivet Discourse that one of the marks of a TRUE believer is ministering to one another.

### **Matthew 25:34-40**

<sup>34</sup> *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

<sup>35</sup> *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:*

<sup>36</sup> *Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

<sup>37</sup> *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

<sup>38</sup> *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?*

<sup>39</sup> *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

<sup>40</sup> *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Let me show you how the early church responded when there were needs within the church.

#### **Acts 2:44-47**

<sup>44</sup> *And all that believed were together, and had all things common;*

<sup>45</sup> *And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

<sup>46</sup> *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

<sup>47</sup> *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

The point is that one of the characteristics of the TRUE church is that the believers minister to the needs of one another.

#### **Application:**

In order for you and me to minister to those who have needs in their lives that means that we are going to have to make an effort to get to know the believers that are around us.

We cannot just come to the services and then go back to our own lives. We must make an effort to get to know people. That means that we are going to have to step outside of our comfort zones at times. It means visiting people in the hospital or in rehab or in a nursing home. It means calling people on the phone or visiting them in their homes. The bottom line is that if we do not get to know people we will not be aware of their needs. I am thankful here at our church that I see more and more people stepping out of their comfort zones as you all reach out to one another. Too many churches believe that all the ministering is the responsibility of the Pastor and too many believe that ministering just happens within

the walls of the building they meet in. Both of those thoughts are wrong. It is the responsibility of the body to minister to one another and ministering happens more outside these walls than it does within the walls of this building.

## II. The Desire of the Writer.

### Notice Hebrews 6:11

This verse has within it an exhortation that every believer needs to hear.

The writer is saying that EVERY believer should show the full assurance of their hope unto the end. The key Word here is the "shew" which helps us to know that what he is exhorting them to do is part of their testimony. Let me explain what the writer desires to see within the lives of the Hebrews. He is calling for every one of them to live their lives in a way that those around them can clearly see the hope that they have in a better life that is yet to come.

He does not desire for them to go back to the Old Covenant where they can relax into a life of less pressure. He desires for them to continue to press ahead in their faith and as they do he desires for them to live so that others can clearly see the hope that they have in Jesus Christ. He desired for them to live in a way that others would know that this world was not their home but heaven was their home. This is the same idea which Peter had when he wrote to those who were being persecuted under Nero.

### 1 Peter 3:8-15

<sup>8</sup> *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

<sup>9</sup> *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

<sup>10</sup> *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:*

<sup>11</sup> *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

<sup>12</sup> *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

<sup>13</sup> *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

<sup>14</sup> *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*

<sup>15</sup> But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of **the hope that is in you** with meekness and fear:

So they were to live in the light of their hope in Jesus Christ right down to the end. The end would be the return of Jesus or their death on earth.

**Application:**

Why is it so important that we live in the light of our hope in Christ right to the end?

One reason is that it is a big part of our testimony to others. The darker it gets around us the brighter our hope shines through. But there is another reason. This hope purifies our lives.

**1 John 3:1-3**

*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

<sup>2</sup> *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, **when he shall appear**, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

<sup>3</sup> **And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.**

The idea is that when we live in the light of our eternal hope which becomes reality at the return of Jesus then that causes us as believers to live in a way that we do not ever want to be found out of fellowship with our Lord when He returns.

**Notice Hebrews 6:12a**

Here the writer exhorts his readers not to be "slothful". This is such an important statement. The idea that the writer has here is "Don't let the pressure and the persecution discourage you and make you sluggish in your walk. If you lose your desire to press on then you will lose your desire to go on."

**Conclusion:**

Have you ever been in a situation where you just felt like giving up? Have you ever been in a situation where you desired to just throw in the towel and walk away? We have all been there at one time or another. So what do we do when the situation is so difficult that we are losing our desire to press on? How do we keep from losing our desire to go on?

Let me show you what David did when he was in that situation. The scene is 1 Samuel 30 where David and his men returned to Ziklag and found the Amalekites had taken captive their families. It was then that David's men blamed him.

**1 Samuel 30:6**

*<sup>6</sup> And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*

David encouraged himself in the Lord. How did he do this?

**1 Samuel 30:7-8**

*<sup>7</sup> And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.*

*<sup>8</sup> And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*

The ephod was how David communicated with God. So David went to the Lord in prayer and was encouraged. He then pressed on and recovered all that had been taken.

When we are discouraged we can find encouragement in the Lord. We go to His Word and we find His promises and we hold tight to them knowing that God is faithful to His Word. This we shall see next week.