

## JESUS, THE FAITHFUL APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 3:1 - 4:16

Key verse 3:1

"Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest."

In the previous lesson we learned that Jesus is the final and complete revelation of God. Thanks and praise be to Jesus, to whom we may listen and experience the great salvation. Let us pay close attention to the Lord's preaching, and by writing a deep, personal and penitential testimony, let us not miss the mark, but grasp the great salvation of Jesus.

In today's text, the author exhorts us to look to Jesus. He wants to help us fix our eyes and hearts on Jesus alone and be led into true rest. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews admonishes Christians for not looking to Jesus, but for allowing themselves to be deceived by sin and by outward circumstances and conditions. At this time, humanism and liberal theology seduce people to want to find rest in improved conditions or in a supposed freedom. But the consequence is that they could not come to the rest of God at all. Meanwhile, we see in history that numerous people who struggled spiritually by faith, looking to Jesus alone, came into God's rest. Not only were they allowed to attain true rest, but they were also used as history makers. God lead each of us today to fix our eyes and hearts on Jesus, who is the Apostle and High Priest, and with the rest of God faithfully serve His disciple-making ministry and be used as history makers.

### I. Fix your eyes on Jesus (3:1-19)

Let's look at verse 1: "Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly

calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest." The author addresses his readers as the "holy brothers" who share "in the heavenly calling." The holy brothers were the Jewish Christians. They were holy because God called them as a "kingdom of priests" and as "a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). We are also the "holy brothers" (and sisters) because Jesus called us as "the royal priesthood" and "the holy people" (1 Peter 2:9). The heavenly calling of God makes us holy. Therefore, the heavenly calling of God is the grace of God and a privilege.

The author encouraged the holy brothers to fix their eyes on Jesus. Fixing the eyes on Jesus does not mean only visually looking at Jesus. Then what does it mean to fix the eyes on Jesus?

(1) Many Jews still struggled with looking at Jesus as a prophet or as a rebel. Nowadays, many people may still look at Jesus as a teacher or a social revolutionary. But to fix the eyes on Jesus is to look to Jesus as the "apostle and high priest."

The word "apostle" comes from the Greek and means "messenger." Jesus was sent by God to this world to do the work of salvation. To be an "apostle," Jesus gave up all His glory as God and became a man and dwelt among men.

Jesus is also the "high priest." The word "high priest" is a central concept from the Old Testament. The high priest taught the word of God. Finally, he offered the sacrifice for the sins of the people in the Holy of Holies. Jesus, the true high priest, taught and fulfilled the word of God. Finally, he offered himself as a holy sacrifice for the sins of the people.

Those who look to Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest will be saved, as John 3:16 says, "...that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

(2) "Fixing" here means holding fast to Jesus and following him. Modern people would probably say "liken" and "follow." Also in our time it is important on whom we fix our spiritual gaze. Are we looking at idols or at sinful people or at ourselves or at false teachings? Those who follow sinful people will be put to shame. But we may look to Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest, "liken" Him and follow Him!

But the Jews looked to Moses. Therefore, in verses 2-6, the author illuminates the relationship between Jesus and Moses. Their common characteristic is remarkable. Moses and Jesus were both faithful over God's house. Moses was faithful over the whole house of Israel. God's people, on the other hand, the Israelites, were so unfaithful that God wanted to destroy the people of Israel several times. But because of Moses' faithfulness, the people of Israel were finally able to get to the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Let's look at verse 6: "But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory." Christ was faithful as the Son of God over God's house. What does this mean? People were so unfaithful by rejecting Jesus, the Son of God. Finally, they condemned him by crying out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They also tempted him to abandon the work of God, "Come down from the cross!" But Christ resisted the temptation to come down from

the cross. Christ was faithful to the will of His Father, even to death on the cross. By doing so, he accomplished the work of redemption and won the eternal victory.

Then as now, God is doing His work of salvation through the servants of God who are faithful over God's house. M. Peter and M. Sarah Chang are faithful over all God's house despite their age. Instead of retiring or giving up God's mission because of persecution, they are faithfully struggling to take care of co-workers, sheep and the Next Generation spiritually. They struggle to raise them not as mere churchgoers but as the global spiritual leaders. We may also be faithful over God's house of pioneering or missionary work. In this time of pandemic and digitalization, many have withdrawn or have only online contacts. But we may remain faithful to the work of God's house by faithfully serving the work of 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams, life fellowship, early morning prayer, meetings, making disciples and world mission. In this way, the spiritual dead bones of young people are brought back to life and raised up into an exceedingly great army of God.

Let us look at verses 7-19. In these verses, the writer warns against hardening one's heart and losing the rest of God. Let's read verses 7 and 8: "So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness." The writer recalls the people of Israel, who for 40 years had repeatedly seen the wonderful works of God and experienced the grace of God. But still they hardened and embittered their hearts toward the word of God. As a result of the hardening and bitterness, the Israelites could not enter into rest. They had to wander in the wilderness for forty years until their bodies disintegrated in the desert.

The example of the Israelites is a serious warning. That is why the writer concludes in verse 13: "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that

none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." The greatest hindrance is the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is the love of evil and unbelief and disobedience to God. But through spiritual admonition and repentance, we can overcome the deception of sin and be saved from the wrath of God. It is important to listen to the word of Jesus 'Today', not tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

God's word and God's servants admonish us incessantly so that we do not miss the rest of God. A young woman wanted to leave the house of God as soon as possible. But through her baptism, she heard God's admonition from 1 Peter 4:13: "Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ." She decided to stay in the house of God and be faithful over the house of God. She lives with great joy as a mother of faith of the Next Generation.

## II. Christ, the Rest of God (4:1-16)

In chapter 4:1-11, the writer talks about the promise of God's rest. Let's look at verse 1: "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." The rest of God is a spiritual state. For example, God created the heavens and the earth in six days, working very diligently. But on the seventh day, He had rest (4). Actually, this seventh day still continues to this day (3b). But because of the sin of the people of unbelief, they cannot have rest (2b). God knew the persistent concern of the sin of the people of disobedience and unbelief, so they kept failing to enter God's rest (6). Indeed, this is the story of the people of Israel. But God did not give up. God prepared a new and definitive way to God's rest through Jesus Christ. Let's read verse 7: "God again set a certain day, calling it "Today." This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." Jesus is the new "today." We are not to miss this new "today" through a hardened heart (7).

Let's read verses 8 to 10: "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his." The Israelites thought that Joshua had finally brought them to rest by conquering the Promised Land. But that was not the case, for after that the fighting went on and on even in the Promised Land. The time of the great King David was also full of battles and wars. Even today, people are looking for true peace in material security. Many try to calm down or switch off for a short time through vacations, Netflix, computer games, romance novels and alcohol. But that is not true tranquility. There is another rest. That other rest is God's rest. The true rest of God has nothing to do with works. True rest does not come from works of material security, nor from works of pleasure or consumption, nor from religious works. The true rest comes from God and the living relationship with God.

How can we attain the true rest of God? Let's read verse 11: "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience." Coming to the rest of God is an active process. What does "strive" mean?

Let's read verses 12 and 13: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Here we learn that we may strive to word fight. The point of Bible study is not to enjoy a nice feeling. The point of Bible study is that the deceitfulness of sin is exposed and laid bare before the eyes of God (13), so that we come to the High Priest Jesus. The Word of God is able to do this because it is a living and powerful Word. The Word of God also scanned our soul and spirit, even our physical body, much more accurately than the most modern CT or MRI. Nothing is hidden from the holy Word of God.

The Word of God senses and judges even our invisible thoughts and the hidden senses of the heart, i.e. the thoughts and motives that may even be unknown to ourselves. Thus, we can detect the deceitfulness of sin and the deceitfulness of false doctrines and enter into the rest of God. Therefore, it is very fruitful not only to hear and read God's word and enjoy a nice feeling, but through writing a profound testimony, even writing the Daily Bread testimony, to come to the High Priest Jesus with repentance concerns and fight the battle of faith for practical application and practical obedience of faith.

The spirit of the age and liberal Christian theology teach that we could enter God's rest without repentance and effort by misusing God's grace to do so. This is incongruent with the teaching of the Bible and also has a dangerous example in church history.

After the Constantinian turn, the persecutions of Christians ceased. Christians now had outward peace. Christians went from being martyrs to spectators and careerists. Christianity was now accepted and socially acceptable. As a result, Christianity became very superficial. But there were some who were not swayed by this superficial Christianity. They sold everything they had, went into the desert, and sought God's rest through Bible study in seclusion, asceticism and prayer, e.g. St. Anthony. They were called the desert monks. They were joined by many outstanding young men who had been educated in the best schools of their time in Alexandria, Constantinople and Athens, e.g. Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, John of Constantinople, Jerome and Augustine of Hippo. They all came to the desert and learned from the desert monks how to "strive" for the true rest of God. They became the Church Fathers of the 3rd and 4th centuries who defeated false doctrines and were the spiritual leaders of their time.

Thanks be to God for the Next Generation co-workers who also strive to attain the rest of God through the spiritual word warfare. When five baptized people endeavored to

write a life testimony with grace and repentance, they experienced God's miraculous work in their lives. At present, our Next Generation workers are making efforts through early morning prayer, inductive Bible study, international Bible seminar, master course and various spiritual lectures. Through them, they may become the spiritual leaders and history makers like the church fathers. God continue to use the work of one-to-one Bible study and spiritual life fellowship and disciple-making to lead the outstanding young people on campus into the rest of God and raise them up as the global spiritual leaders in this era of liberal Christianity.

Let us read the leading verses 15 and 16: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." When we "strive" we are not struggling alone, but Jesus is our encouraging example and at the same time our helper. Jesus, the Son of God has previously walked God's path of faithfulness and toil. Jesus also fought the faith struggle of obeying God to the point of death on the cross (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Our Lord Jesus was tempted in all things as we are. He also knows and overcame our human weakness in His own body and finally "passed through the heavens." We may, in our weakness and sin, through repentance and the struggle of faith, come with confidence to the throne of grace and receive mercy and grace.

Today we have learned to fix our eyes on Jesus. Fixing our eyes on Jesus means fixing our eyes and hearts on Jesus, who is the Apostle and High Priest, and following Him no matter what the cost. True rest does not come from external good conditions and circumstances, but from Jesus alone, who sent by God, through obedience so humbly laid down his life as the good shepherd. Thanks and praise be to Jesus, who even in this hour ceaselessly intercedes for us and our salvation. He alone is "today" the promise of God's

true rest. Let us personally hear the spiritual exhortation of the author and with absolute trust in our Apostle and High Priest, Jesus, approach the throne of God's grace and enter into God's rest.