

Called Heavenward

Hebrews 3:1-6

Listen to the word of the LORD from the book of Romans 12:1-2.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Those familiar verses tell us the importance of our minds as believers.

It tells us that the pattern of our thinking is vitally important to how we live.

Most of us have likely heard the saying, "You are what you eat."

What people mean by that is that what we put into our mouths has a great effect upon our bodies.

What is also true about that is that the longer we follow a particular pattern of eating the more it affects us.

I've eaten too much cake and felt the results.

I've eaten too much fast food and felt the results.

While it is different for different people the pattern applies to us all.

What we eat affects our health.

While I think it is important to care about our physical health, it is more important to care about our spiritual health.

Just like what we fill our stomach with has an effect upon our bodies, so too what we fill our minds with has a powerful effect upon our souls.

So the bible calls us to be '*transformed by the renewing*' of our '*minds*.'

That is not to say that Christianity is merely an intellectual pursuit.

It is possible to fill our minds with all kinds of good information and have it mean very little in our lives in a practical sense.

That is not a renewed mind. That is a mind still caught in the grip of rebellion against God with more information.

[A truly renewed mind is something much more than that. That is what our text this morning in Hebrews shows us. We are in desperate need of this today brothers and sisters. Never before has so much intellectual garbage been available to people as it is today. So all of us need to hear well what **Hebrews 3:1-6** has to say. Here is a sentence that summarizes today's sermon. If you have this sentence you have the sermon. Here it is, "**As those called by God to an eternal dwelling we must in this present age set our minds upon Jesus, Who makes God known, Who acts on the behalf of those who rightly believe, Who is most faithful, worthy**

of the highest honour, and the head of the church to which we belong by unshakable faith.” Let’s walk through this text together and see this truth. First we must see that...”

Point #1 – Believers are called by God to an eternal dwelling (verse 1a).

At present we live in this world, but every Christian should know that this world as it is today is not our home.

That is how believers are referred to in the first part of verse 1a.

Just as in chapter 2:11 believers here are called ‘holy’.

That means God has made of distinction in regards to us who know Christ as their saviour.

He has set us apart as belonging to Him. That distinguishes the relationship we have with each other from every other relationship we have.

Listen, you have more in common with your brother or sister in Christ that you do with anyone else including your biological family.

It is a grave mistake for people who attend a church together to make the basis of their relationship the same as unbelievers.

Belonging to a church is not like belonging to a baseball team or a social club. If that is all a church is then I say to you it is doomed, because it is far too easy to walk away from such things.

We must see ourselves as bound together by the work of the cross of Christ for that is what makes us holy.

Look again at what it says we share in as ‘holy brothers.’

It says here that we “share in the heavenly calling.”

One commentator explains the word calling like this. He says the word calling suggests an invitation to heaven and from heaven.

Every picture we have in the Bible of heaven is one where God meets the needs, is visibly present to, and exalted by those who are with Him.

To share in the ‘heavenly calling’ then means that we are called to be partakers in that reality.

Christians have been called by God to enjoy His visible presence and provision forever.

[Many times Jesus likens this to a banquet. Invitations go out and people come sit at a table and enjoy the company of the host. As a Christian you have an invitation to heaven to sit at God’s table and enjoy Him forever.]

Now if that is true of us, if we have been called heavenward, if that is what we are looking forward to, if that is what we are longing for, then that means that this world has lost its grip on us.

No longer should the things of this world consume us.

No longer should they be what we long for.

It is true that we must live in the world and it is true that it is right to rejoice and be thankful for all of God's blessings in this life, but we must see everything that is before us in the light of eternity.

[Where does that begin? We are told here in the command that comes at the end of verse 1. It is a command directed at our minds. If you 'share in the heavenly calling' then this has to be true in your life...]

Point #2 – Believers must set their minds on Jesus (1b-6a).

To look to heaven is not primarily about looking to a place, but rather it is to look to a person.

That is what it says here verse 1.

The idea of the phrase "fix your thoughts" is to carefully consider something.

That is we must weigh in our minds the reality of what is before us.

[Anyone who has ever studied in school has done this to at least some degree. What do we have to do to learn a subject in school? We have to focus our attention to take in information so that we come to understand to a greater degree what we are learning about. Do you know what I find interesting about most subjects? There is always something more to learn.]

How much more is that true of turning our minds towards Jesus?

We can always go deeper in our thinking with regards to the person of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews gives us a glimpse of that here as he directs our minds towards five things to consider about Jesus.

First he calls Jesus 'the apostle'.

The word 'apostle' simply means 'one sent under authority.'

Jesus says in John 20:21 that He is 'sent' by the Father.

That's what the beginning of the book of Hebrews is driving at when it says that "in these last days [God] has spoken to us by His Son."

Why should we 'fix our thoughts on Jesus'? Because that is how we come to truly know God.

It also says that He is 'high priest'.

As we see a number of times in Hebrews the role of high priest is to stand in between people and God for the purpose of dealing with the wrongdoing of the people so that they can be right with God.

Only Jesus can do that for us. Only He has died in our place. Only He has conquered death and so only faith in Him can save us from God's wrath.

The greatness of Jesus to do that on behalf of every believer should grip our minds with awe.

Now notice it says here that Jesus is the 'high priest whom we confess.'

That word confess means words that are spoken. I agree with commentators who think this refers to something that was regularly spoken during worship services in the early church.

In the early church believers would speak aloud to one another deep and true things about Jesus.

Let me ask a hard question, "When we speak of Jesus, do we speak rightly of Him? Is what we say of Him rooted in His word?"

Believing in a Jesus of your imagination does nothing for you, it is when we believe in Jesus as He truly is that He acts on our behalf.

Third, we are told about the faithfulness of the LORD (verse 2).

The one who appointed him, is God the Father.

If you know your bibles then you know that God called many people to serve Him through the centuries, one of the most notable being Moses.

God calls Moses, "faithful in all my house" in Numbers 12:7.

God says that about Moses when his brother and sister are giving him grief about his leadership.

That is a bit of a theme in Moses' life. People are constantly giving him grief, but even with all of the grumbling and complaining against him he continues to serve the LORD among the Israelites.

Moses' isn't perfect, but he sticks with it.

In the same way Jesus is faithful to what God calls him to do, but even more so because He is completely perfect in His faithfulness.

It is clear that Jesus' faithfulness is better than Moses because of the fourth thing that is said of Him here (3-4).

It is important to point out that the writer does not try and make Jesus look good by making Moses look bad.

In fact it is quite the opposite. In these verses he has nothing but good things to say about Moses.

He has no problem showing us how good Moses is while at the same time showing us that Jesus is better.

The point is Moses is worthy of honor, but Jesus is worthy of more. He compares the two with the illustration of a builder and a building.

[Every now and again I have a somewhat good idea. A few years back I made a skating aid for my kids. One where I could skate behind them and hold them up without bending over. Whenever I used it other parents would say, "That's cool. Did you make that?" How do you think I reacted? My pride (wrongfully) welled up. Whenever we are impressed by something that has been made we are also being impressed by the one who made it.]

Right here we can see the difference between the greatness of Jesus and everyone else including someone as great as Moses.

Remember early in Hebrews 1 where we are told that Jesus is the One through whom the universe was made.

Let me ask you, what was here before anything existed? Nothing!

Think about that. As great as human beings have become at making stuff no one has ever made anything out of nothing, we always begin with something.

But Jesus made everything out of nothing! That is one of the many things that makes Him worthy of our highest honour and praise.

Here is a fifth reason we are given to 'fix our thoughts on Jesus' (verse 5-6a).

Again the Lord is compared to Moses. It is true that Moses was a 'faithful servant', but he is only a servant.

That is true of all the people we rightly admire in the Bible except Jesus.

Jesus is more than a servant, he is "faithful as a son OVER God's house.

As we will see in a moment when we get to the second half of verse six 'God's house' does not refer to a building structure with walls, doors, and windows, it refers to people.

God's people are 'God's house' and it says here that Jesus is 'over' that house.

We call Jesus 'Lord' for a reason. He is the one who is ultimately in charge of the church and make no mistake He stands ready to defend the church from everyone whether they be outside the church or they be wolves in sheep's clothing.

[All of this leads us to ask a question. What makes us a part of “God’s house”? The answer comes in the second part of verse 6. If we “share in the heavenly calling” and if “we fix our thoughts on Jesus” seeing him as the apostle and high priest, Who is faithful, worthy of highest honour, and our sovereign Lord, then I am convinced we will possess in increasing measure the means by which we belong to Him. At the end of our text this morning we see that...]

Point #3 – Believers belong to Christ through unshakeable faith (Verse 6b).

Truly knowing and believing Who Jesus is provides an immovable foundation for the Christian life.

Look at the second part of verse six with me (Verse 6b).

Those who belong to Christ by faith are “the house” of God.

As we have already seen in verses 3-4 Jesus is the builder of the house.

That is exactly what He promised to do. He said that He would build the church and ‘the gates of hell would not prevail against it.’

Much of the construction that took place in the ancient world was done with stone.

When Peter uses this exact same image in 1Peter 2:5 he refers to believers as ‘stones’ being built into a spiritual house.

[I’ve had occasion to observe stones being laid into a wall. There are a number of important factors in the strength of the wall. Two really important ones are how the stone is laid and the quality of the mortar being used to hold it together.]

Now applying that image here with Jesus as the builder we can say, with great confidence, that Jesus knows exactly how to place the stones and He uses the excellent mortar of courage and hope to keep us in the building.

There is a great deal being said about ‘courage’ these days and lots of accusations of people being cowards is being floated about.

Do not be surprised to see many who talk a lot about being courageous flee in fear when it really matters.

Courage is a matter of grace brothers and sisters. Put no confidence in your own strength for it will surely fail, but rather plead with God for the power of the Holy Spirit so that you might stand firm.

[Recently I was reading a short biography of a missionary named John Paton. He travelled to islands in the South Pacific to try and reach people known for their cannibalism. He stayed on the first island roughly 4 years with his life being in constant danger. At the end of his time there he was surrounded by the native people who clearly intended to kill both he and his companion. Paton wrote this about the moment, “My heart rose up to the Lord Jesus; I saw Him watching all the scene. My peace came back to me like a wave from God. I realized that I was immortal till my Master’s work with me was done. The assurance came to me, as if a voice

out of Heaven had spoken, that not a musket would be fired to wound us, not a club prevail to strike us, not a spear leave the hand in which it was held vibrating to be thrown, not an arrow leave the bow, or a killing stone the fingers, without the permission of Jesus Christ, whose is all power in Heaven and on Earth. He rules all Nature, animate and inanimate, and restrains even the Savage in the South Seas.”]

That is courage! That is a confident hope. And where did that come from?

The first words in that quote from Paton are “My heart rose up to the Lord Jesus”.

That is the command of our text this morning. “Fix your thoughts on Jesus”.

Courage and hope are not the cause of a heart and mind captivated by Jesus. Courage and hope are the result of a heart and mind captivated by Jesus.

“As those called by God to an eternal dwelling we must in this present age set our minds upon Jesus, Who makes God known, Who acts on the behalf of those who rightly believe, Who is most faithful, worthy of the highest honour, and the head of the church to which we belong by unshakable faith.”