

Hebrews Chapter 13 'Let Us'

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of faith and holiness, and encourages listeners to 'let us' do various things, such as fear, enter into His rest, hold fast, come boldly, go on, draw nigh, hold fast without wavering, help others to enter in, run the race, receive a kingdom, go forth, and praise and serve.

Scripture: Hebrews 4:1-6

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the practical applications found in Hebrews Chapter 13, focusing on the exhortations that begin with 'Let us.' He highlights twelve key appeals that encourage believers to fear missing God's best, enter His rest, hold fast to their faith, seek timely aid, and progress in their spiritual journey. Simpson urges the congregation to draw near to God, help others, run the race of faith, receive grace, go forth bearing Christ's reproach, and continually offer praise and service. Each 'Let us' serves as a call to deeper commitment and action in the Christian life, reminding believers of their covenant relationship with God.

Transcript

In the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews our attention has been chiefly confined to the unfolding of the great doctrinal plan of the writer, the revelation of Jesus Christ, as our Apostle, our Great High Priest, and the Author and Finisher of our faith. But there is no portion of the New Testament more intensely practical and whose argument is more frequently broken up with brief and pungent interjections of exhortation and appeal addressed to the conscience and the heart. These are mostly expressed in a uniform phrase commencing with the two little words, "Let us." There are no less than twelve of these appeals in the course of the epistle, and they constitute together a very complete series of practical homiletics and personal application. The number twelve is particularly appropriate to this great epistle, which is based on the connection between the Old and New Testaments, and it is scarcely necessary to say that twelve is the symbolical number of God's covenant people suggested by the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

I. "LET US FEAR"

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4: 1).

The point of his appeal lies in the phrase "come short," or still finer, "seem to come short." In fact the very feature of the whole epistle consists not in emphasizing the more common qualities of the Christian character, but in bringing out the finer points of the life of faith and holiness. It is not faith that the writer emphasizes as much as the boldness of faith, the confidence of trust. So it is not salvation that is presented to us so much as the "great salvation," the deeper fullness of Christ, the test of faith and the Land of Promise. Here we are exhorted not so much to fear lest we should lose our souls, as that we should miss something of God's best and come short of the fullness of our inheritance, or even seem to come short of it. A single degree in the physical world constitutes the boiling or the freezing point, and one step less or more marks the line of demarcation between the life of failure and the life of victory. It is so sad to be almost there and yet to lose our victory and our crown. We may well fear the faintest seeming and symptom of it, and be on our guard lest we seem to come short of all that God has so abundantly provided at such cost, and so jealously guards from our indifference and neglect.

II. "LET US ENTER INTO HIS REST"

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4: 11).

The word "labor" literally means, "let us make speed to enter into that rest." Here again the point lies not so much in entering into that rest as in entering at once and making it the supreme business of life to enter in now. In the ancient story on which this appeal is based, we read that they were willing a little later to enter in, but they were too late. The opportunity had passed and the Lord would not allow them to renew it. For a whole night He waited while they parleyed and questioned, and then the irrevocable sentence went forth that sent them back to traverse the sands of the desert for forty years until all the unbelieving generation had passed away. And so we may come too late. There are souls along the path of life who reach the crisis hour of some great decision. Every leading of God's providence has converged to that point, and at last the Holy Ghost, with solemn urgency, is pleading, "While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," and, beloved, tomorrow will not do. Oh, if God is speaking through these lines to any undecided soul, make speed this moment to say, "Yes, Lord, forever yes."

III. "LET US HOLD FAST"

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4: 14).

This may be perhaps better translated "our confession." It is not so much our faith we are to hold as the confession of our faith. After we enter into His rest and receive any deeper blessing from the Lord there is always a time of testing, and the adversary will try his best to make us abandon our confidence and give up our high claim. Even God cannot fully bless us, and make real to us what we have taken by faith, until we have been proved and tried. After Jesus received the Holy Ghost He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness forty days to be tempted of the devil. Let us not count it strange concerning the fiery trial that tests our faith, and let us remember that the weapon is, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith." But our faith must be exercised and established by our testimony. If we hide it in our heart, and are afraid to commit ourselves to it, it will die of strangulation. But if we boldly take our stand upon it and proclaim it in the face of the enemy, it will grow by the very conflict, and when we have proved true to our testimony God will make the reckoning real, and "bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

IV. LET US COME FOR TIMELY AID

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4: 16). Our struggle is not in our own strength. In our conflict we are not left to our own resources. Our Great High Priest has gone to the headquarters of the universe for the one business of succoring and sustaining us, and now the way is open, the throne of grace is accessible, and there is mercy for the sinful, grace for the helpless, and instant succor for the moment of need. We cannot only come, but come again and yet again, and keep coming for continual supply. We never can exhaust either His grace or its resources. We never can find Him too busily engaged to hear our cry and send us help. We need not wait for the long-deferred response, but before we call He will answer, and while we are yet speaking He will hear. It is grace for timely aid. He is a very present help in time of trouble. Thus let us come, and come boldly, and take His fullness to meet His highest claims upon us.

V. "LET US GO ON"

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6: 1). Having entered in, become established and found the source of all-sufficient grace, let us now advance, let us make progress, let us grow in grace, let us not be easily satisfied with present attainments, for, unless we go on we shall surely go back. It is not safe to lose an inch of ground. "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition." The faintest drawing back may land us in perdition. There is no portion of the Holy Scriptures so filled with impressive warnings against backsliding as this. In two of its leading chapters, the sixth and tenth, we are told of the peril of the soul that falls away, and the only remedy against falling away is to go forward. Are we going on? And are we going unto perfection? Is our goal the very highest? Are we aiming at nothing less than the highest possibilities of a life of faith and service for God? Nothing less is safe, and nothing less is worthy of our high calling and our exceeding great and precious promises.

VI. LET US DRAW NIGH

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10: 19-22).

This marks a still deeper nearness. Having gone on in our Christian progress, God calls us along the way at various times to still deeper fellowship and closer intimacy. There are depths and heights in the Christian life, and new stages of Christian experiences through which the Captain of our salvation loves to lead His obedient followers. Just as in the structure of the crust of this world we often find the different geological periods marked by successive strata, and these in turn separated by great masses of conglomerate rock, showing that there was for a time a regular deposit of stratified matter, and then a great upheaval and a new layer of rock, so God marks our experience by successive blessings; but there is beyond this more and more for all who will enter in. The nearness described in this passage is accomplished through the Redeemer's crucified flesh, and, of course it follows, our crucifixion with Him. As we pass through new and deeper surrenders we pass into closer fellowship with Him. As we die deeper deaths we rise to higher planes of resurrection life. But let us remember that it is neither through our dying or our efforts at rising, but through the new and living way of Jesus Himself, that we must enter in. It is by our first entering into His death, and then receiving His life to dwell within us, that we pass in where He already dwells, and our life is hid with Christ in God through Him our Living Way.

VII. "LET US HOLD FAST"

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Heb. 10: 23).

This is the second time that this language is employed and this appeal made. After deeper experience in the life of God it is necessary for us to have a new establishing, and therefore God again tests us, and settles us in the closer place into which we have entered, before He sends us forth once more to service and testimony. This time we are not only to hold fast, but we are to hold fast without wavering. We have reached a deeper, stronger place and henceforth we become "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

VIII. LET US HELP OTHERS TO ENTER IN

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10: 24, 25).

Every new experience is a preparation for a higher ministry. We can only give to others the Christ that we ourselves know. After coming closer to God we shall always find some hungry heart waiting for our message and ready for our assistance. Let us go out of ourselves as soon as we can, and find our blessings in blessing one another. There is special reference in the following verse to the approaching day of the Lord's coming, and the ministry referred to has doubtless reference to the gathering out and preparation of the Bride to meet her Lord. This, indeed, seems to be the great work which the Holy Spirit has for the disciples of Christ today, not so much the conversion of sinners, although that is not to be forgotten, but the purifying and preparing of the Lord's own people to meet Him in the air. We shall find as we endeavor to give our blessing to others that it grows in the exercise, even as the traveler who found that he had saved himself from death by the warmth that came into his freezing limbs while he rubbed and chafed the limbs of a fellow-traveler, who was dying in the snow. So let us "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."

IX. LET US RUN THE RACE

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12: 1).

We are not spectators in a great amphitheater. We are competitors for a prize. For us the contest is immensely practical and solemnly real. The life of faith is a life of holy activity and yet of patient endurance. So let us run "that we may obtain."

X. LET US RECEIVE

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12 : 28).

This verse comes at the close of the splendid contrast which the writer has drawn between the Law and the Gospel. There all was darkness. Here all is light. There terror was the strong but insufficient sanction. Here love is the mighty and all constraining motive. While more is demanded than under the ancient law,

yet grace gives what it demands and the exhortation to us is not to try harder or do or suffer more, but to receive and take from Him the grace, the divine supply through which we shall be able to render the service demanded, and rise to the height of the kingdom into which we have been introduced. God is not calling upon us for more strenuous endeavors, or more severe sacrifices, but for simpler faith, for larger confidence, for the spirit that takes more that it may give it back in better service and larger love. So let us receive that we may give, and say like the Psalmist of old, "Of thine own, O Lord, have we given thee."

XI. "LET US GO FORTH"

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13: 12-14).

Here we enter upon the sufferings of Christ. We are not only to share His grace but His cross, and bear His reproach, but we are to bear it gladly because this world is not our place of recompense, but the city that is to come. Therefore we are to be willing to be misunderstood, not only by the secular world but even by the religious world. The camp outside of which He had to go was the camp of religious professors and leaders of His day. Christ was cast out by what was accounted the best society in His time. Need we wonder if in following Him in the life of faith and holiness, we, too, should be misunderstood by the public opinion of the large majority even of the people of God? We are not encouraging a spirit of rashness and criticism, but no thoughtful observer can deny that today there is a great mass of lukewarm and merely professing Christians, and inside this multitude there is a little flock of humble followers of the lowly Jesus, who are learning what it is to go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. Let us not deserve criticism by open wrong, but let us not fear reproach if it comes for the name of Jesus. Let us be content to be unpopular and stand with the minority for the fullness of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the separated life, and the religion of service and sacrifice.

XII. LET US PRAISE AND SERVE

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13: 15, 16).

Two things are here required of the soul that has entered into the fullness of Christ and passed within the veil. First, we are to come forth with shining faces, rejoicing and praising; and secondly we are to go forth and bless the world. The sacrifice of praise is a life of thanksgiving. Our first duty is to God, and that is the habit of continual worship, praise, and thanksgiving. It is more than service, more than testimony, more than any work we can do for our fellow man. It is the sweet ointment of Mary poured upon His head and His feet, while service is busy-handed Martha ministering in loving activity. He asks both, but the love and the praise have the higher place. Let us not, however, forget the other. There are two ways of doing, one by our own personal efforts, the other by the gifts of our money, supporting those who work as our substitutes. This is included in the meaning of the word "communicate." It means to give of our substance for the support of the Gospel and the sending forth of laborers, and even to give until it becomes a real sacrifice, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Beloved, let us not forget these holy ministries. It is all vain to talk of our deeper experiences, if our outward services and sacrifices do not express them. Money today is the measure of value, and tells how much we care for things and how highly we estimate them. What we give and what we sacrifice for the cause of Christ is the true test of how much we love.

The writer remembers a very rich man who on his death-bed longed to live to serve God, but although reminded of it, utterly failed to leave a penny to support a substitute to work for him when he was gone, but held on to every dollar to the last, and then left it to relatives to whom it became not a blessing but a curse. How much happier had he laid up his treasure in heaven.

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