

The Heavenly Calling - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The letter to the Hebrews is an appeal for companions of Christ, emphasizing God's purpose and speech in Christ and the transition from an earthly historic Israel to a heavenly spiritual Israel.

Duration: 54:35

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 2:1-3, Hebrews 2:10, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 5:8, Hebrews 12:26-27

Topics: "Heavenly Calling"

Description

This sermon transcript is about the letter to the Hebrew Christians during a time of crisis when the Old Testament system was about to pass away. The letter emphasizes that God is speaking in fullness through his son, Jesus, and urges the readers to take this message seriously. The letter also highlights the different ways in which God spoke in the past, but now speaks in one way through the training of sons. The transcript emphasizes that everything in the letter is from God's standpoint and should not be viewed from a human or worldly perspective.

Transcript

We turn again to the letter to the Hebrews. With one word as our key to the whole letter. In verse one.

Holy brethren, companions of a heavenly calling. Verse one of chapter three. Verse fourteen.

We are become companions of Christ if we hold fast the beginning firm unto the end. Companions of Christ and of a heavenly calling. As a subject we have pointed out that this is the key to the whole of this letter.

This letter is an appeal for companions of Christ. An appeal for companions of a heavenly calling. And we have also said that this letter is a summary of the whole of the New Testament.

In making that statement of course we provide you with a very large field of consideration. We simply have to say that all that is in the New Testament is gathered in some way into this letter to the Hebrews. Therefore all that is in the New Testament is gathered up into this one thought.

God is seeking companions for his son in a heavenly calling. God is seeking companions for his son in a heavenly calling. Now this morning we are going to dig more deeply into this letter to the Hebrews.

Always with this one thought in mind. It is companions of Christ which are in view. Let us say one brief word about the point of view taken by this letter.

We understand that this letter was written and given to the Hebrew Christians at a time of very serious crisis. It was at the time when a whole system which had existed for many centuries was about to pass away. The whole system of the Old Testament from Moses onward was about to pass away.

After the writer had put down all that is in this letter he put over it a quotation from the Old Testament. Yet once more I will shake the heavens and the earth. And the things which can be shaken shall be shaken.

And that the things which cannot be shaken shall abide. And in quoting that scripture and putting it at the end of this letter he indicated that that was just about to take place. And he proved to be right.

It is evident that this letter was written just before the year A.D. 70. It may have been that already the Roman legions were gathering round Jerusalem. And we know from history what happened.

Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. Not one stone of the temple was left standing upon another. The whole land was desolated.

The priestly service ceased. All the functions of the temple came to an end. The whole country was put into a state of utter desolation.

And from that day onward even till now that system ceased to be. Because the Lord knew what was going to happen. And because in the divine plan the time had come for it to happen.

This letter was written. Always read this letter in the light of that great historic crisis. That was the dark side of the story.

But you notice that the letter is just full of that better thing that was going to take the place of the earth. We shall be dwelling upon that better thing as we go along. As the people of an earthly calling were being set aside.

This great letter of a heavenly calling was presented to them. Now before we go further with the letter let us remember that its message abides for us. It would be a very blind person today who could not see that another such event is very near.

There has been built up on this earth another great system of Christianity. It is very earthly as a system. And just as with the Jews in this case their hearts were very very much bound up with their system.

So in our time multitudes of Christians are just bound up with this historic Christianity. I do not claim to be a prophet but there is much in the word of God that points to the time when this whole system will go. It is very impressive that in our lifetime we have seen this in a small way.

When the churches have been destroyed. The congregations have been scattered. It has not been possible to go on with the old forms.

And people have had to find the Lord for themselves without any earthly help. They have had to get their help from heaven and not from earth. In a comparatively small way we have seen this happen at least on two occasions.

Of course you people in Switzerland do not know much about that. But the Lord has smitten the earth on two terrible occasions. With not so many years between them.

And it is not difficult to see that that would happen on a very much bigger scale. And that event may not be very far off. Of course we Christians speak of the coming of the Lord.

That is our hope. That is our salvation. But we must remember that the coming of the Lord is going to be accompanied by this terrible judgment upon this earth.

When everything that is not heavenly is going to be shaken. So shaken that it will just collapse. And so this letter has a real message for us.

As it said to the Jewish Christians at that time. Your whole system in which you are so bound up is going to pass away. So this letter says to us today all the earthly system is going to be shaken.

And stricken out of its place. But there is a better one coming. God has some better things.

God has something better. I am sure we can see that it is very applicable to our time. We are not just studying a book of the Bible which relates to many centuries ago.

God is the eternal God. God is the eternal God. And he speaks to all time.

But the message is intensified as we get nearer the end. Well that as I have said is the standpoint from which the letter was written. Now we are going to see further this transition from the earthly to the heavenly.

In the terms of the New Testament and this letter in particular. It is the transition from an earthly historic Israel to a heavenly spiritual Israel. Heavenly spiritual Israel.

And so we are going to look at the beginnings of Israel in both cases. Do you notice how the letter begins? It begins with one word. God.

Put a big ring around that word. God. Over the whole content of this letter stands God.

In the beginning, God. Everything in this letter must be viewed from God's standpoint. It is not to be viewed from man's standpoint.

It is not to be viewed from the world's standpoint. From the earthly standpoint. It is God who is speaking.

And all that is here is what God is saying. God stands over all that this letter contains. And no one is allowed to say that this thing is of man.

As we move through the letter we have to constantly say to ourselves, God is saying that. This is not the interpretation of man. This is God speaking.

This great transition which is marked by this letter is God moving forward. God is going on. God is in charge of everything.

And the letter says the companions of the heavenly calling are those who are moving on with God. So the appeal of the letter is repeatedly this, let us go on. Because God is going on.

Now the whole of the old Jewish system was something that had settled down. And in a very real sense it had gone to sleep. Our brother said to us at prayer time this morning, God doesn't come down to us when we go to sleep.

Of course he meant spiritually, not naturally. No, God is not the God of the spiritually asleep. The appeal to Israel was awake thou that sleepest.

That system had gone to sleep, it had settled down. It had become an end in itself. It was not moving on with God.

That was the trouble in the days of the prophets. And this letter says God is going on. The companions are those who are going on with God.

Do remember this, dear friends, that a true living Christianity is a going on Christianity. It will never stop going on, neither in this life nor in eternity. It says that of his kingdom there shall be no end.

So we begin with God and we move on with God. Now this letter is God expressing himself. That is in the very first statement in the letter.

God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his son. Here then we meet with a God who is expressing himself. He is here declared to be a speaking God.

He is a God who speaks. He is not a dumb God. He is not a silent God.

He is a God who has always been speaking and is speaking now. So this letter right at the beginning declares God to be a God who speaks. And then, to analyze it further, God is spoken of as being a God who speaks with a purpose.

He is a God of purpose. And he is speaking concerning his purpose. He spoke in times past in the prophets by divers portions.

He speaks now in his son. And here are two very important things to note. In times past he spoke in many parts by many prophets.

He spoke in many parts. He said this thing through one prophet and this thing through another. All the prophets were parts of God speaking.

No one prophet said everything. You can look into the prophets and see that every one of them had a specific aspect of God's message. In many parts is the way.

Now his final speech in Christ is the gathering up of all the parts into completeness. God's son is the complete speech of God. God's son is the complete speech of God.

All the parts are brought together in him. He is the full speech of God. That gives this letter a very, very big place, doesn't it? This letter says that now, here, God is speaking in fullness in his son.

And alongside of that the appeal is to give them all earnest heed. Because this is so much fuller than anything that God had ever said before. And then it says in times past God spoke in many ways.

Not only in different portions but in different manners. Well it would take too long for us to go back to the Old Testament and see all the manners in which God spoke. He spoke by a thousand different means.

Sometimes by words and sometimes by acts. The manners were indeed diverse. But the statement here is that at the end he speaks in one way.

One all-inclusive way. And that is in his son. His son is God's one inclusive way of speaking at the end.

On the one side no one is going to get anything from God apart from Jesus Christ now. God will absolutely refuse to speak other than in his son. If you want to know what God wants to say to you, you've got to come to his son.

On the other side we've got all that ever God wants to say in Jesus Christ. Now I want to say that especially to young Christians. You know when we are young Christians we can get very conflicted spiritually.

I was no exception to this. After I had been a Christian for a little while. Everything was so wonderful.

The Bible was so wonderful. The Lord was so wonderful. I went along and I didn't realize what I was doing but I was saying quietly Hallelujah.

I remember that my sister was walking at my side one day. I forgot she was there. I was having such a good time with the Lord inside.

I said Hallelujah. And she looked up at me. She said it does do me good to hear you say Hallelujah.

Now of course that's alright. But there was a foolish side to it. I thought I knew everything that was in the Bible.

I would almost say that. I was in danger of becoming unteachable. I thought I'd got it all.

And that I knew it all. Of course that's a mark of youth. Someone said about some words of David.

David said as you know I have more knowledge than all my teachers. I have more knowledge than all my teachers. Someone said David must have been a very young man when he said that.

Well now I'm not a young man any longer. Good many years since those days. I've been reading and studying my Bible all through the years.

And I tell you quite honestly friends that today this book is altogether beyond me. I would never come back to this letter to the Hebrews if that were not true. I have preached and I have lectured on this letter for years.

But today it is far far beyond me. Should I say this letter to the Hebrews? I would be more correct in saying the Lord Jesus that is revealed in this letter. Yes we have far far more of God speaking in his son than yet we have come to understand.

We have nothing apart from Jesus Christ and we need nothing apart from Jesus Christ. And we said this letter presents God as a God of purpose. And it goes on to show that God's purpose is centered and summed up in his son.

And that at the beginning of the letter is said before us in three ways. Firstly in the person of his son. Just look at this.

At the end of these days hath spoken unto us in his son. Whom he appointed heir of all things. Through whom also he made the ages.

Whom being the effulgence of his glory. The very image of his substance and so on. You notice that that whole first chapter is occupied with presenting the son.

God is speaking concerning his son as to who his son is. What a great son this is. And then it presents the son in terms of redemption.

Having made purification of sin. That is just one phrase. But many chapters follow to explain what that redemption is.

All these chapters on priesthood and sacrifice have to do with that one clause. Having made purification of sin. God is speaking in his son concerning redemption.

And in the third place he is speaking in his son concerning glory. The son is the very effulgence of his glory. And this son is going to bring many sons to glory.

Because this son having made purification of sin. Has sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. He speaks in a son whom he has now glorified.

And sat at his own right hand. The right hand of the majesty in the heaven. But God does not cease to speak in his son concerning the son only.

You will notice that in chapter two he brings man into this. And this letter has this wonderful message for man. That all that God has put in his son is for man.

God speaks in this letter of the finished work of Christ. The work which is made complete for man. Now here is something that you and I must dwell upon.

Personally I am constantly brought to this. I have not yet learned thoroughly to believe what I believe in. I believe in the finished work of Christ.

And yet sometimes I am just as miserable about myself as any man could be. And I am often almost at the point of giving up because of what a wretched kind of thing I am. If there is anything in this world that would cause me to give up the Christian ministry, it is myself.

Do you understand what I mean? Oh, how we are discouraged by what we find in ourselves. And so we don't believe what we believe in. We believe in the finished work of Christ.

And that God puts all the finished work of Christ to our account. And God does not see us in ourselves, he sees us in Christ. He does not see us, he sees Christ in us.

We don't believe that. If we really believed that we would be delivered from ourselves, we would indeed be triumphant Christians. Of course that does not mean that we can just behave anyhow.

We may speak wrongly and act wrongly. But there is for every true Christian a refuge. There is a mercy seat.

It has not got to be made. It is there. There is the precious blood.

The blood has not to be shed, it is shed. There is a high priest making intercession for us. There is everything that we need.

The work is finished. It is completed. Oh we Christians have got to believe our beliefs.

We have got to take hold with both hands of the things which are the things of our Christian faith. But I know you have problems when I say that. But what about this, this old man? Unless you are one of those people that believe that sin has been absolutely rooted out of you.

And that it is quite impossible for you to sin. Well if you believe that, the Lord bless you. I think you may be tripped up someday and find that there is an old man there after all.

But leaving that aside, most of us do know that there are two things in us. There is the new and there is the old. There is the spiritual man and there is the natural man.

And this natural man is a very troublesome fellow. What about him over against the finished work? This letter just tells you all about that. It says God dealeth with you as with sons.

And God loves sons. Are you a child of God? Has there been in your history that deep action of new birth? Have you received the Lord Jesus? The word of God says to as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God. If you have received the Lord Jesus, you are a child of God.

The spirit of sonship has come in and dwells in you. Now this letter says that God loves his sons. And because he loves them, he chastens them.

He child trains them. Now no child training, says the letter, for the present is pleasant. God's dealings with his own family are not always pleasant.

And when they are unpleasant, there is a little demon sitting on your shoulder. And he will whisper in your ear, you see God doesn't love you. He would not deal with you like that if he loved you.

The devil is always out to turn the loving works of God into evil things. Yes, God is dealing with us as with sons. It is discipline.

It goes against the flesh. The letter says it is not for the present pleasant. Im jetzigen moment nicht angenehm.

Indeed the letter might have said it is very unpleasant. What son is he, what father is he, says this letter, who does not chasten his son? Now what I'm saying is not easy to say. Because I may be exposing myself to the wrath.

You have enough experience to know that we have to say some things very carefully. Because we are very often tested on the things that we say. But here is the statement.

That it is a totally unkind father who never chastens his child. Have you seen children who are never chastened, never corrected? Those children are going to have a bad time in this world. People are not going to like them.

And they are going to discover that people don't like them. Their parents have spoiled them. And this letter says that God's love is expressed in his using the rod to his children.

God does not always put his good things, his best things into nice form. I heard the other day of a little boy who had to take some medicine. And it was not very nice.

But his father said, there are many vitamins in that. And the little boy said, father, daddy, why must all the good things be put into nasty things? Why can't they be put into ice cream? The Lord doesn't always put the good things into ice cream. Sometimes the vitamins are in the nasty medicine.

Now that is exactly what this letter says. God is not condemning us when he deals with us like that. He is working to deliver us.

God never delivers us by a sermon. If you think that these talks here are going to save you, you are making a mistake. These are only to explain what God is doing.

God never, never saves by theory. You may read everything that has ever been written on Christian doctrine and still be the same man or woman. God's ways are very practical.

And he teaches us by experience. And the experience is sometimes very difficult. It is what is called here the training of sons.

Well, we are proving again what I said about never getting to the bottom of things. I have only just begun to say what I want to say about this one matter. But it will not be in the amount that I say that the benefit is found.

We just take a little and take it to the Lord and apply it to our hearts. It will do its work. So I think that I'll just stop there for this morning.

If the Lord wills, I'll take it up there at that point again tomorrow morning. The evening will be on another particular aspect of this whole matter because there are a number of friends who can only be here in the evening. May the Lord just impress our hearts again with these things.

God is still speaking in his son. His speaking is in order to get companions of his son. Companions are this heavenly calling.

And the companions of Christ will go into the hard school and have to learn many hard lessons. But in so learning they will come to understand how great is their inheritance in the Lord Jesus. I may add this.

My experience is, dear friends, that no one really has spiritual knowledge without suffering. I'm not speaking about head knowledge. I'm speaking about real knowledge of the Lord in the inner life.

I do not know of anybody who has come into that knowledge apart from suffering. Perhaps that's a depressing thing to say. But that is, it's a law in God's word.

We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay. And how poor this vessel is, we learn through trial and affliction. But then we learn how wonderful the Lord is.

The letter says, afterward, that is after the chastening, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. What a wonderful phrase, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Those fruits come along the line of chastening by

way of suffering.

So let us ask for that grace which the apostle had to rejoice in suffering.

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