

No.
40(e)

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

H E B R E W S 12.

An Address (revised) at

FOREST GATE.

6th April, 1912.

by

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H E B R E W S 1 2 A N D 1 3.

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

At Forest Gate, E.

6th April, 1912.

We have seen by God's grace that we are surrounded with a great cloud of those to whom God bears witness, a witness that they have been faithful to Him in the midst of a wicked world, and we, saved by grace, have not yet been compelled to endure the strain through which they went, that whatever strain God has been pleased to bring upon us is a chastening with a purpose. Now "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous", yet there is an "afterward". The present is but a preparation. The trials of the present day are with a view to the glories of a future day. Therefore God's people should not only individually but collectively "lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees". It is easy to be feeble, but God desires that His people should be strong. He does not wish that they should be turned out of the way, but rather that there should be a healing. Moreover, you recollect how we saw in verse 14 that they should not merely follow peace but holiness. The peace without holiness is not true peace, and "without holiness none shall see the Lord". And then we feel the force of that exhortation to beware of falling short in verse 15, to beware of failing as to the grace of God. The grace of God does not fall or fail, but we may fall

from it in experience, and fall out with it. A root of bitterness may spring up where there should be a root that is "fruitfulness", and a root of bitterness bearing wormwood and gall may bring dishonour unto the Lord, so we are to take heed lest many be defiled by that which commences with a tiny ^{sin} ~~sin~~. Verse 16 brought before us that we have to beware lest there be any Esau or any Esau-like spirit. Esau thought more of the present than of the future. Esau thought more of earth's food than of God's blessings, and he sold his birthright. It was a poor bargain. God overruled it, even as God overruled the crime of man on Calvary to bring salvation to the lost. But God's overruling of Esau's sin to bring Jacob's blessing in no way diminishes that sin. Esau chose, instead of the birthright, the mess of pottage. This was entirely foolishness, and God tells us afterwards he wept for it, and he wished he could get the blessing, but he had done the action, and God held him to the consequences. When Israel made a covenant with the Gibeonites God held them to the consequences, and though between four and five hundred years had passed, and more than that, if we count the time when Israel were in subjection to foreign nations, though more than that period had passed, in the reign of David we find that because of a failure to keep to the arrangements with the Gibeonites, God smote the nation of Israel.

We now come to verse 18, "For we are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto the blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound

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of a trumpet and the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more, for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart, and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake". Exodus 24 shows us something of the glory of God on mount Sinai, intensifying the view that we have in Exodus 19 and 20. Terrible indeed was the sight. It burnt with fire. ^{For} God has clouds and darkness round about Him and a flame goes forth before Him. The added words here emphasized by the repeated "and's" become peculiarly emphatic "The mount that might be touched and burned with fire AND to blackness AND darkness AND tempest AND the sound of a trumpet AND the voice of words". The word for a tempest implies a most violent tempest, a hurricane as it were. Clouds, darkness, fire, waters, winds - all these mighty powers of nature are suggestive of the mightier power of God, only in measure revealed, for it is immeasurable. But, dear friends, if God is so great, how reverent we ought to be; if God is so great, how humble we ought to be; if God is so great, how thankful we ought to be that He has saved us, that the God of the fire has made us His beloved children, that the God of the tempest has brought us out from the tempest, and the God of the storm has removed the storm and become Himself an asylum to keep from the storm. HEREIN IS LOVE. Every background we have of sin, and every background we have of judgment, only displays the

more wondrously the fulness of the Gospel of the grace of God.

The "sound of the trumpet" reminds us of the words of Ex. 19 where "the trumpet sounded long". And when the Lord Himself shall return there will not be only the voice of the archangel, but the "trump of God", just as we have the "voice" and "trumpet" here, and there will be a trumpet sounding long as Rev. 10 and 11 show us. God's revelation at Sinai was a prophecy of His revelation in the future, when He shall come, first to the air, and then, not only to Sinai but to all the earth. The "voice of words" was not merely the voice of a man's word, it was the voice of God's word, and those who heard it begged to be permitted not to hear those words any more. The expression "intreated" brings out just the idea of intense pleading. They asked not to be allowed to hear those words for a moment more, so terrible were the words of God. The ungodly sometimes think that they would rejoice to be in the Lord's presence in the future. But this would be misery to them. It needs a saved soul to enjoy the Lord's presence: it needs a deliverance from sin to enjoy the Lord's presence. Heaven would be misery for the ungodly. If there is not a delight in God now, how would the ungodly delight in Him in the future? God is so great and glorious and His ways of thinking are so different from man's that an unsaved man would feel ill at ease in the presence of God, but those who are brought near by grace delight to hear what God the Lord shall speak. May we be among them!

"They could not bear (or endure) that which was commanded". The words, the ten/words, the ten commandments, lay every man low. The two-edged sword of the two tables must kill everyone. Not only did God speak of a stoning if there was a touching, but He gave tables of stone that there might be before man's eyes the thought of a stoning if there was not. God gave commandments that cut to the very root of sin. "Thou shalt not have a desire" was the last one. And when Saul of Tarsus saw that with all his religion he was selfish, his selfishness showing itself in Pharisaism and pride and self-satisfaction, he realised that the SELFISHNESS, and the SELF-CENTRING, linked with pride because brought up at Gamaliel's feet, and the SELF-GLORIFYING, were enough to condemn him with an eternal destruction. Then Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus FELT, not merely in body but in soul, the power of the ten words which God spake (as they have often been called by Israel), those words which unite to bring a man down. The law worketh wrath. They could not endure that which was commanded. But here the thought goes yet further. It is not only that they could not endure those ten commandments, but they could not endure the WAY in which God warned them, for we have the added statement here "If a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart" - if a BEAST touch it, not merely if a MAN but "if a beast". God would show how holy He was, and this it was that brought men down. We want to testify before men at the present day the greatness of

God. They think He is altogether such an one as themselves, but God is so glorious that no man can draw near to Him without danger, unless he draws near covered by Christ and His precious work. The TOUCHINGS of Scripture are striking. In the law of Moses if there was a touching it meant DEATH: if there was a touching of a dead body or of a grave, UNCLEANNESS. The Lord's people in the present time are warned not to touch an unclean thing, not to have any contact or fellowship with it. But they are beautifully brought by grace to realise that they have received the Lord's touch of grace as it were, that they are brought like the leper who was cleansed, into touch with Himself. His hand was laid upon them, and they are able to feel His hand, brought near by precious grace.

"And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake". This is not a quotation from the earlier Scriptures. It is a quotation, if I may so put it, from the still larger Scriptures, which we have not - THE SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH, of which the earthly Scripture is a partial transcript. You know that the prophet Daniel was told that he should be instructed as to what was noted in the Scripture of Truth. Before he put it down it was already noted in the Scripture of Truth, that is, in God's heavenly Scripture. And the Holy Spirit was pleased to bring before God's servant Paul some words that Moses had said, which I expect we shall all acknowledge are in the "Book of Remembrance for those that feared the Lord and that thought

upon His Name". Yes, these are words quoted from the heavenly Book of Remembrance that Moses feared with holy trembling. As when on Mount Horeb at the first he had removed his shoes from his feet, so on Horeb again, worshipping God, he was in fear and trembling. The two words are intensified forms of those employed by Paul where he spoke of "fear and trembling" at Corinth. So, whether we think of Moses or of Paul, i.e. of a servant of God of the old dispensation who went especially near to the Lord, or a servant of God in the present dispensation who went especially near unto the Lord, we find they had FEAR AND TREMBLING, nor can we ever get beyond the importance of holy fear and trembling while we are in this body of humiliation¹/₂. We need to realise even if we are brought as John, into closest communion with the Lord, that there is a need for being brought down before Him Who is so great and glorious that all man's conceptions of Him fall short, Who is so great and glorious that His grace is more than we can understand (Rev. 1).

"But", continues verse 22, "ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel". You will notice the repeated "and's"

here. Everything is emphasized. "Ye have come to Mount Zion AND". The word "Ye have come to" reminds us of Heb. 4 "Let us come boldly TO the throne of grace". The word is that which is employed in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the stranger who came as a proselyte. The proselyte was one who came "TO" the nation of Israel, in accord with Solomon's prayer that God would bring out of other nations into His centre. But here we have "proselytes" who have come to Mount Zion. Not simply to an earthly system, and an earthly Jewish city, but to Mount Zion, the City of a Living God, that City for which Abraham looked, that City which hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is GOD, that City to which Moses belonged, for we are told that when he was born his parents saw that he belonged to a city, as the word ἀστειος indicates. The Lord's redeemed have come to a city of the living God, who is ever living, and therefore gives unto His people "everlasting" life. "A city of a living God", a heavenly Jerusalem contrasted with an earthly. "And to an innumerable company (myriads) of angels". In the description ~~we have~~ of God's glory in Dan. 7 we have millions upon millions of angels centred round the throne of God. He Who is so glorious, owning tens of thousands of His holy ones, nevertheless condescends to poor destitute heart-broken contrite and humble sinners, and saves them as individuals, because He loves them with a love that knows no beginning.

"To a general assembly and church of the firstborn

ones". The term "general assembly" implies the gathering of a complete nation. It is a word used among the Greeks for the gathering of one of their great festivals when representatives of the whole nation met - for example, the Olympic Festival - the general assembly where all classes were all gathered together. You see the force of the word. We have not merely come to a mountain which burns with fire, but a mountain which is linked with a festival army. God's people have not a law against them, but a law for them, for the law has been settled on Calvary and now the very law of God declares them to be righteous, for Christ has fully met every demand and fully satisfied every claim that His people might have a festival rejoicing. This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is at first difficult to state whether this word "festival rejoicing and gathering" is linked with the term "angels" or with the term "church". Possibly, God would have us link it with both. The angels have rejoicing - we are told so in Luke 15 - and the redeemed are rejoicing for we are bought with that precious blood. It is perhaps on this account that God has permitted that some words in Revelation 5. 9, 10 are somewhat uncertain as to the manuscripts that we may see the two-fold rejoicing of representative angels and of the redeemed. The Lord's people of earth have been bought with blood out from their sins - well may they rejoice! Elect angels needed no purchase from sin with blood, for they have not sinned, but they also rejoice in the wondrous glory, greatness and grace of the Lord. Well may the people of the Lord rejoice! and this very term "general

assembly" is from the same root as the word "angels", and from the same root as the word "gathered together". "Our gathering together unto Him". Moreover one of the words "redeemed" comes from the same root, the word for "buying". All these precious thoughts seem to bring before us the gathered people of the Lord bought by blood, called out, as the word "church" signifies, called out, that they may enter into the rejoicing of the heavenly Jerusalem. If, in the words "The city of the living God and the heavenly Jerusalem" there is a contrast with Judaism, in the "general assembly and church of the first-born" there is a contrast with Gentilism. Among the Greeks there were festival assemblies, and there were assemblies (the word "church"), the "churches" being the assemblies of the FREEMEN of the CITY. The general assembly was beyond the freemen of one city, it was composed of the people of the Greek nation met together in rejoicing, but the church was the nation. The whole assembly of the freemen of the city. The festival assembly was for united rejoicing, the local "church" or assembly of a Greek state gathered together to carry out the arrangements. This term was frequently used among them before the Lord specially applied it with a new force in connection with His redeemed ones. So we see here that in Christ we have more than Israel had in all their Judaism, and more than the Gentiles had in all their festivals and arrangements. Christ, and that which is linked with Him must become to those who are bought with precious blood more than all that the world can offer, more than all the world can suggest, more than even the types contain. Oh that we may realise this in the power of

the Holy Spirit.

"The church of the firstborn ones". This term "firstborn ones" looks back to Israel in Egypt. Believers are all bought with passover blood, we are all firstborn ones, in that our salvation now is a pledge that God will yet save the nation of Israel in the future. Not only are we the firstborn in the sense of being brought to have the inheritance. You know how the word "firstborn" is thus used, "I will make Him My firstborn, higher than the kings of earth". Yet not only is that the sense, but the firstborn here are brought before us as the pledge of that nation which shall be born at once, as Isa. 66 indicates. Remember that the apostle was writing to Hebrew believers, and those Hebrew believers felt the wrench which drew them aside from Judaism. "Oh", he said, "you have received something better than an earthly temple, you have something better than earthly festivities and festivals, you have an heavenly Jerusalem, and moreover, Israel shall yet be saved, for that covenant of which Heb. 8 speaks alluding to Jer. 31, shall yet be applied to the nation of Israel, and the types of the days of atonement be fulfilled in the blessing of that people that God formed for Himself, and of which He says "They SHALL show forth My praise". God will not alter His word, God will not alter His purpose, Jerusalem shall be a praise in the earth, and He will say to the north and to the south and east and west that they are not to hold back, but to bring His sons from afar, for He died for that nation and

that nation shall yet be brought into blessing. We are a kind of firstfruits of His creation, but Christ shall yet in all things have the preeminence in that wondrous day soon to dawn. Then shall be the manifestation of those who are ADDED to the firstborn, and the heavenly people will be united to His service. The saints of the Most High, AND the people of the saints of the Most High: heaven and earth will be joined as with a ladder, and Nathaniel and others shall see the greater things.

Yet one more thought as to the expression "church of the firstborn ones". The word "church", meaning "called out", seems peculiarly appropriate here, for as soon as Israel had perceived that they were "called out" they dare not leave Egypt till the Passover blood was poured out, but as soon as that was on the door, the next day, and ere the next day had fully dawned, they were on their way out. Beloved friends, you and I cannot be separated from sin except by the blood. Israel at the present time would seek after a holiness of their own without the blood first, they have their unleavened bread but they have no passover lamb. Their thought is "We will do our works of holiness without the blood". Those of us who are brought by grace to know our precious Saviour realise that it was not without a meaning that on entering Israel's courtyard the ALTAR was first, and the laver was next, and that when Isaiah had the live coal touch him it was on the blood-anointed altar first - this is the type - before it came to cleanse his lips - sacrifice first. When by the grace of God

we know that Christ was our Passover sacrificed for us, we are separated and called out, in order that we may be brought into a communion, blessed beyond all blessedness. And those who are the firstborn ones have been written in heaven. The expression "written in heaven" implies that they are not there themselves yet. When the apostle wrote these words, the Lord's redeemed were in wondrous church arrangement on earth. The term "church" is specially used of an organised body on earth. When the Lord's redeemed fall asleep, we read that they are still part of the family, this relation belongs to heaven and earth - but the word "church" is not as a rule employed in that connection as to the present dispensation, hence the church of the firstborn ones have been WRITTEN in heaven, not who are personally there, but who have been written there, so that not only does God write the words of His people in heaven as verse 21 shows to us. Their NAMES have been written there, and written off there, for the term implies - written off from others, stored away by the Lord - a census - never to be changed, never blotted out.

"AND TO GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL" ye have come unto Him, the very One who was on Mount Sinai, and yet He now welcomes poor, lost sinners, and grants unto them a festival assembly in His presence. but He is the Judge, there is no excusing of sin. Moreover, the festive assembly must be linked with the Judgment-seat of Christ.

"AND THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN (or righteous men) MADE

PERFECT". Here we have, not the church, but the spirits; this implies those who are no longer in the body. The saints of Heb. 11 who have fallen asleep, are righteous ones, for the righteousness of God has been imputed to them, they have been brought to a goal, even the goal of Paradise. Before Christ died they went down to Hades, but when He died and rose again He took them out from one place to another, they have been therefore brought to a goal in one sense, although there will be the full goal for their bodies. They are only spoken of here as the spirits of righteous men who have been perfected in connection with their spirits, but their bodies will be perfected in that day when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.

And now we have the climax - "And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling" as though, when we have most of the perfection of the Lord's redeemed, and of their glory, we must be reminded once more it is by the blood of the covenant. The Lord Jesus is here brought before us as the Mediator of the new covenant, the One in the midst to join sinners to God, the One in the midst of sinners who are saved by grace. "The blood of sprinkling". It is the blood which has been sprinkled that sinners may be welcomed, and the Holy Spirit makes this dear to our hearts. In the types the blood was sprinkled in the holiest of all and sprinkled on the sinner: so, before God that blood is accepted, and on our hearts it has been as it were sprinkled, and that

blood is speaking, better things beyond what Abel said by Abel's type, beyond what Abel said by Abel's death. Abel by his type preached of the coming Saviour, Abel by his death prophesied the coming Saviour, but the counterpart, the Anti-type, excels this and we have come unto that blood that never loses its power. We have come unto that blood which is here mentioned as linked with a heavenly holiest of all. Do you wonder that the Holy Spirit adds the word "See that ye refuse not"? Grace must make us ashamed of refusing. "SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT".

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