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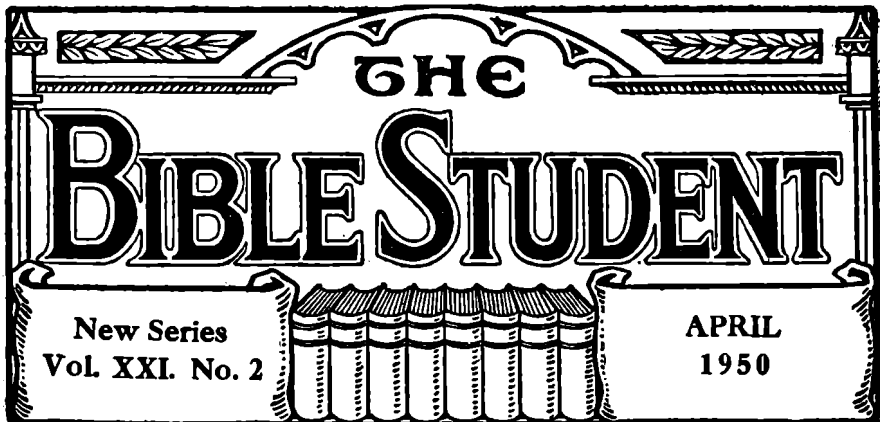
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“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”

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NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Notes on Chap. 6: 9-20

Verse 9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.—Those who are now addressed again are not to be identified with those who have been described in vs. 4 to 8. It is now “you,” not “those.” The latter had never become believers, born of God, possessed of eternal life. These now spoken to had been truly converted. They are set in sharp contrast to the mere professors. They are addressed as “beloved;” they inspire confidence as giving evidence of “better things” and things “that accompany salvation,” such things as are mentioned in verse 10. The things mentioned in vs. 4 to 6 do not necessarily “accompany salvation” *though* or even if *we thus speak*;—This refers especially to what has been said in vs. 4 to 8 and implies that it really serves to set in all the greater contrast these true converts. There was need of progress in the Christian life, however, and hence the exhortations in vs. 11 and 12.

Verse 10—for God is not unrighteous to forget: The emphasis is upon “not” and then upon “unrighteous;” and the negative way of making the statement really constitutes a positive statement to the effect that He is righteous to remember. It is not a case of His being righteous in bestowing a reward, but of His faithfulness to His promises (see v. 12).

your work and the love which ye shewed toward His Name,—Their “work” sums up all their activities as believers, and this is all a matter not of service, however earnest and faithful, but of love to God’s Name, that is towards Himself, as His Name reveals Him. The Name of God in Scripture stands for what He is in His attributes, His character and His doings. Love to Him as such gives the true value to all that we do in our Christian activities. What we engage in is never to be a mere matter of service; it should always be a matter of love to Him personally, a love which responds to His love.

The most authentic texts have not got the word for “labour” before “of love.” Possibly it was interpolated from 1 Thess. 1:3. The word for “shewed” is in the Greek middle voice, indicating the special interest taken by them in shewing this love, as being a matter of heart response to Him in His doings on their behalf.

in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.—This ministry to God's needy one is among "the things that accompany salvation." The verb *diakoneō* is used only here in this Epistle, and the corresponding noun *diakonia*, "service," only in 1:14. All that is wrought for God's people is remembered and valued by Him.

Verse 11—And we desire that each one of your may shew the same diligence. The verb *epithumeō* means to desire earnestly; compare its use in Matt. 13:17; Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Peter 1:12. This is not simply a plea for continuance in the work of loving ministry to the saints, but that they should show the same spirit and earnestness in the matter of this hope and confidence, and not merely be content with foundation doctrines.

unto the fulness of hope even to the end:—The word *plērophoria*, rendered "fulness," denotes entire confidence. In 1 Thess. 1:5 it describes the willingness and freedom of spirit enjoyed by the missionaries who brought the gospel to Thessalonica; in Col. 2:2 the confidence resulting from an understanding in Christ; in Heb. 10:22 the character of the faith by which we are to draw near to God. The wish of the author was that in unwavering assurance of hope they should be as full of zeal as they had been in their loving ministry in material things, and that to the end of their course on earth; see 3:6, 14.

Verse 12.—that ye be not sluggish,—For *nōthros* see 5:11: there it was set in contrast to increasing knowledge; here it is contrasted with confident, unwavering hope. Sluggishness, a tardy disinclination to do what is right in God's sight, is a sure way to wander into direct evil.

but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.—This exhortation is set in contrast to the way of the apostate professors who were returning to Judaism. Such were characterized by the very opposite to faith and patience. Faith relies upon God; patience (*makrothumia*, longsuffering) endures opposition and persecution. We are to imitate those who thus have already entered on the inheritance. The order "faith and patience" is significant. Faith that keeps the eye on God and the heart trusting in Him, inspires the patience that endures trials and afflictions with steadfastness, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible. But there is more than this. Faith and patience enable the steadfast believer even now to enjoy God's promises, and inspire him with confident hope in their future fulfilment.

It is all a matter, not of merit and reward, but of the fact that God is true to His word. This will now be illustrated.

Verse 13.—*For when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself,*—While it is true that God made promise to Abraham on different occasions before what is recorded in Gen. 22, what is here referred to is the fact that both the promise and the oath were given on the one great occasion, as recorded in Gen. 22:16 to 18. That promise was more solemn than any that had preceded. Never before does Scripture tell of God's taking an oath. There on Mount Moriah God gave Himself as the security for the fulfilment of His promise. The oath did not make the fulfilment of the promise more certain for God's promises are sure in themselves, but what the oath did was to deepen the impression made upon Abraham of the solemnity and majesty of the import of the promise and of its very nature.

Verse 14.—*saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.*—The "Surely" corresponds to the statement in the Genesis narrative, "By Myself have I sworn." The wording of the promise is a literal rendering of the Hebrew idiomatic usage in expressing a very strong assurance. The meaning is 'I will positively and abundantly bless thee, and I will positively and abundantly multiply thee.' There would be both benediction and benefaction. The oath and the promise were indissociable. The Septuagint in Genesis has, "I will multiply thy seed," and this is what the writer of the Epistle means in his shortened rendering, "I will multiply thee."

Verse 15.—*And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promises.*—As to his patient endurance, the many difficulties he had to face and the trials he experienced did not cause his faith to waver. He went on patiently relying upon God for the fulfilment of His word. As to his obtaining the promise, the 39th verse of chapter 11 makes clear that Abraham did not come into the actual possession of all that the promise assured. What he did was, in the joyous confidence of the hope, to embrace the promise in the present realisation of all that would be fulfilled and will yet come to pass. As the Lord Himself said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56), the coming day of the manifested glory of Christ. His faith enabled him to see what is yet future as if it were already an accomplished fact.

*Verse 16.—For men swear by the greater:—*In ordinary procedure in this respect, no one would take an oath by anyone inferior to himself or even equal to his own status.

*and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation.—*In any ordinary case of contradiction (*antilogia*, lit., gain-saying), men have recourse to an oath for putting an end to everything of that sort. It establishes the assurance and certainty of an assertion and the genuineness of a promise. If so among men, how much more on the part of God!

*Verse 17.—Wherein—*That is, 'in which condition of things,' or 'this being so.'

God, being minded—boulomai means to be willing, or to be determined, said of Christ in Matt. 11:27, and of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 12:11.

*to shew more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel interposed with an oath:—*The Apostle Paul, quoting from this same passage in Gen. 22, shows that Abraham's seed includes his spiritual heirs, Gentiles who believe, and says, "They which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. And this Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all the nations be blessed . . . Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto . . . and if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:7, 8, 15, 29). Therefore, "the heirs of the promise," here in Heb. 1:17, include all who in any way are the seed of Abraham.

His "counsel" is mentioned instead of His will, so as to stress that which is the effect of His wisdom. He determined to make known its unchangeableness, and for this purpose He "interposed" (not "confirmed," as in the A.V.) with an oath. The stability of His counsel did not need confirming. What He did was to interpose or intervene; that is the meaning of *mesiteuō*. While He was intervening with His oath between Himself and the recipient of the promise, giving him strong assurance, the fact that He swore by Himself implies that, so to speak, He took Himself to witness, condescending in this way to make Himself the Guarantee of the accomplishment of His word.

*Verse 18.—that by two immutable things,—*that is, by the promise and the oath. He could not break His promise, nor

could He invalidate His oath. The word *pragmata*, rendered "things," here signifies matters or "facts;" see 10:1 and 11:1.

in which it is impossible for God to lie,—an additional testimony as to His very nature, the purpose being to give the utmost assurance to the believer.

we may have a strong encouragement,—not "consolation" (as in the A.V.); there is nothing in the whole passage to suggest this meaning of the word *paraklēsis* (its meaning, *e.g.*, in Luke 2:25). Nor is "exhortation" quite suitable (as in Acts 4:36, R.V.). The subject is that of hope, and "encouragement" is appropriate.

who have fled for refuge—The construction in the original (the article with the participle of the verb) makes this not a statement to the effect that we have fled, but a *designation* of believers as a class; they are those who flee to Christ because of the dangers of their unregenerate condition, and have a sure hope in Him.

to lay hold of the hope set before us:—This is preferable to the interpretation which connects the laying hold of the hope with the word "encouragement" (as if it was an exhortation to lay hold). The aorist tense of the verb *krateō* gives it the meaning to lay hold, and not to hold fast, which would translate a present continuous tense, as in ch. 4:14. The hope stands for the *object* of the hope; that is to say, all the glorious things of the future which the coming of the Christ will bring (cp. Gal. 5:5; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:19); but the present realisation of the power of this hope is especially in view here. The verb *prokeimai* rather means to lie before, *i.e.*, to lie in view. The power of the hope is that we appropriate it to ourselves in all that it means as mentioned in what follows.

Verse 19.—which we have as an anchor of the soul,—An anchor, cast from the ship, keeps the vessel secure whatever the weather may be. The natural anchor is cast downwards; the spiritual anchor of our hope is directed upwards. The simile lends force to the present realisation of the power and joy of the hope. Some think the anchor here is not one laid out to enable the vessel to ride the storm, but, while the vessel is still outside the harbour, is an anchor carried within it by a boat enabling the vessel to be hauled in by pulling on the rope attached to the anchor held fast within the harbour.

a hope both sure and steadfast,—These describe *the hope*, not the anchor; hence the value of the italicised insertion in the R.V.

Asphalēs denotes 'safe' (as in Phil. 3:1), or 'certain' (as in Acts 25:26). For *bebaios*, steadfast, see 2:2 and 3:14. The hope cannot be disappointed or frustrated, for it takes fast hold of that which is heavenly. It is as sure as the promise of God, which has been mentioned in the preceding context.

and entering into that which is within the veil;—This is not said of the anchor but of the hope. The hope it is which, in its powerful reality, enters into the very presence of God. "That which is within the veil" is, lit., 'the inner (side) of the veil,' that is to say, the holy of holies within the veil. The *katapetasma* (see 9:3 also) is in the N.T. always used of the veil which hung before the innermost part of the Tabernacle, the sanctuary, into which the high priest entered on the day of atonement (Lev. 16: 2, 12, 13). The outer veil is called the *kalumma* (that which 'covers'); it hung before the holy place. Our hope enters constantly into the very presence of God, where Christ is. There is no veil there. The language of type has been used, but that now passes, and in the next verse our thoughts are fixed upon the Person of Christ, who is Himself our Hope.

Verse 20.—whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us,—*Prodromos*, a forerunner, is that which marks Him out as distinct from the Levitical high priest. The high priest entered into the holy of holies for the people, and Jesus has entered into the heavenly sanctuary for us in the efficacy of His precious blood; but He has also gone to prepare a place for us, that where He is we may be. In that respect He goes beyond anything in connection with the high priest of the Tabernacle. This going in to prepare for our coming also, is just where the significance of His being our Forerunner comes in.

But He is not merely our Forerunner, He is this "on behalf of us," and this marks a distinction from us. The simple fact of His being our Forerunner makes certain our coming after Him; but we shall not enter in *that* capacity. Accordingly the phrase "on behalf of us" leads at once to the mention of the unique capacity of His High-Priesthood. The simple title "Jesus", characteristic of this Epistle, is especially appropriate in a message given to Hebrew believers.

having become a high priest for ever after the order Melchizedek.—That He is a high priest "for ever", signifies two things: firstly, that He surpasses all earthly priests; secondly, that He has no successor. Moreover, like Melchizedek, He represents all the

Lord's saints. He secures all heavenly blessings for us, and His power and ministry give us the joy of experiencing them.

CHRIST UNIQUE

BY DR. JAMES H. BROOKES

Those who do not bow without doubting and without reasoning, to the Word of God, are always perplexed about the person of Christ. In the early church it was the source of constant and sharp dispute. The Ebionites denied His deity. The Gnostics denied His humanity. The Appollinarians held that He had a true body, but not a rational spirit or mind, His divinity taking the place of human intelligence. The Nestorians affirmed that He had two persons, as well as two natures, or a two-fold personality. The Eutychians, on the other hand, taught that He had but one nature, the human being merged into the divine.

But it was the Arian controversy that became the fiercest, the hottest, the hardest to die, and the most disastrous. It rent the church asunder, and often led to scenes of violence and blood. The conflict ranged around the difference between similar and same, *homoiusion* and *homoousion*. Arius believed, no doubt very sincerely, that Christ is the highest of all creatures, the Divine Logos, through whom all things were made, but not equal with God, and not God in the true and proper meaning of the word. It speaks much for the conscience and intelligence of the first Christians, and for their loyalty to the Lord Jesus, that this distinction did not and could not satisfy them.

Accordingly the Council of Nice was called, A.D. 325, to settle definitely the vexed question. It was a council composed of the most distinguished divines of the day, as Dean Stanley has shown in his interesting history, men covered with the scars of suffering for the Master, and thoroughly earnest in their purpose to maintain His honour at all hazards. After long and careful deliberation they adopted a Creed which, as slightly amended, A.D. 381, is as follows: "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made; Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."