

“TAKE HEED, BRETHREN”

NO. 2552

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 16, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1884.

“Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”
Hebrews 3:12.

THIS message is not addressed to strangers far away, but to “brethren.” Paul wrote it to the Hebrews, who were his brethren according to the flesh. It was kind of him to call them by that name. He also writes it to all of us who are Believers in Christ, and we ought to receive his word with all the greater intensity of attention because he writes to us as his brethren. The term applies to all who are Brothers and Sisters in Christ—really so—those who are quickened by the one Spirit, made children of the one Father and going to the one heavenly Home. The Apostle would not have us begrudge this title to any genuine member of our Lord Jesus Christ’s true Church. It is not for us to read men’s hearts—we have not the Lamb’s Book of Life in our possession, so we cannot discover whether such-and-such a man’s name is really written in it, or not, but, in the judgment of Christian charity, all those who have joined themselves to Christ’s Church are our brethren—and the more we recognize that relationship, the better. To all of you, therefore, who bear the Christian name, this message comes with power, “Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

There are other persons who are associated with us in our congregations who do not profess, as yet, to have passed from death unto life, although they come up with us to the House of the Lord. They swell the chorus of our praise, they bow their heads with us in prayer, they are, in many respects, our fellow worshippers and they have, apparently, a warm heart towards good things, though not yet fully one with us in the highest *spiritual* sense. We will not exclude them from this message of the Apostle, for they are our brethren as men, even if they are not our brethren as Christians, and the Word of God comes to them as well as to us who are avowedly on the Lord’s side, “Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”

You see, then, that we are, all of us, called upon to “take heed.” The word means that we are to be careful, to be watchful. True religion is not a thing that can be acquired by carelessness or neglect—we must take heed or we shall never be found in the narrow way. You may go to Hell heedlessly, but you cannot so go to Heaven. Many stumble into the bottomless Pit with their eyes shut, but no man ever yet entered into Heaven by a leap in the dark. “Take heed, brethren.” If ever there was a matter that needed all your thought, all your prudence and all your care, it is the matter of your soul’s salvation. If you trifle with anything, let it be with your wealth, or with your health, but certainly not with your eternal interests. I recommend all men to take heed to everything that has to do with this life, as well as with that which is to come, for in the little the great may be concealed—and the neglect of our estate may end in mischief to our immortal spirit. Certainly, the neglect of the body might lead to great injury to the soul, but if ever neglect deserves condemnation, it is when it concerns our higher nature! If we do not carefully see to it, that which is our greatest glory may become our most tremendous curse.

Brothers and Sisters, the watchword for every one of us is, “Take heed.” You are an old Christian, but “take heed.” You are a minister of the Gospel and there are many who look up to you with veneration—“take heed.” You have learned the Doctrines of Grace and you know them well—there is little that any human being can teach you, for you have been well instructed in the things of the Kingdom of God—but still, “take heed.” Yes, and if you were so near to

Heaven that you could hear the songs within, I would still whisper in your ear, “Take heed.” Horses fall most often at the bottom of the hill when we think that we need not hold them up any longer. And there is no condition in life which is more dangerous than that feeling of perfect security which precludes watchfulness and care. He who is quite sure of his strength to resist temptation may be also equally certain of his weakness in the hour of trial. God grant us Grace, whatever sort of “brethren” we may be, to listen to the admonition of the Apostle, “Take heed.”

Paul means not only take heed for yourself—though that is the first duty of each one of us, for every man must bear his own burden and it becomes every prudent man to look well to the matter of his own salvation—but the Apostle says, “Take heed, brethren, lest there is *in any of you* an evil heart of unbelief.” You are to watch over your brethren, to exhort one another daily, especially you who are officers of the Church, or who are elderly and experienced. Be upon the watch lest any of your brethren in the Church should gradually backslide, or lest any in the congregation should harden into a condition of settled unbelief and perish in their sin. He who bids you take heed to yourself would not have you settle down into a selfish care for yourself, alone, lest you should become like Cain who even dared to say to the Lord, Himself, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Nothing can be more horrible than the state of mind of a man whose talk is like that of Cain, who slew his brother. “Take heed,” therefore, you who are in the Church of God, not only to yourselves, but to those who are round about you, especially to such as are of your own family!

The text naturally divides itself into an exhortation. “Take heed, brethren”—a warning—“lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” And a description of the danger which would follow from a neglect of this warning—“in departing from the living God.” Lay up those three things in your memory and heart and may God cause them to work there for the effectual blessing of your spiritual life.

I purpose, as I may be helped of God’s Spirit, to take the text and apply it to the three classes of persons whom I indicated at the outset of my discourse—first, *to the inner Church*, the true elect, redeemed, regenerated, called, sanctified people of God. The message of the text is for you, my Brothers and Sisters! Secondly, *to the visible Church*, to all who are, I trust, as truly saved and regenerated as the first class are, but yet I have a fear that there is a mixture in the nominal Church—that there is chaff mingled with the wheat upon Christ’s floor and bad fish caught in the Gospel net along with the good ones. To all these persons I speak with great earnestness and say, “Take heed, brethren.” Then I am going to take *the whole congregation* and address the message of the text to all without exception—“Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

I. First, then, **TO THE INNER CHURCH**, God’s own chosen people—to you who are really His—the Apostle says, “Take heed, brethren.” If you dare to put yourself among that privileged company and say, “Yes, by God’s Holy Spirit I have been quickened, renewed, sealed, preserved—and I have the witness of the Spirit, Himself, within my own spirit, that I am, indeed, born of God—then to you comes the Apostolic watchword, “Take heed.”

For, first, dear Friend, *even you may fall into unbelief*. Are you not aware of that fact? Have you not been already tormented with it? I daresay, like myself, you did, at one time, indulge the idea that old Incredulity would soon die. You took him by the heels and you put him in the stocks and said to yourself, “He will never trouble me again! I shall never doubt the promise of God, anymore, as long as I live. I have had such a wonderful experience of God’s faithfulness—He has been so exceedingly gracious to me that I cannot doubt Him any more.” You remember how Mr. Bunyan says, in *The Holy War*, that, after the enemies of King Shaddai had been sentenced to death, “One of the prisoners, Incredulity by name, in the interim between the sentence and time of execution, broke prison, made his escape and got out of the town of Mansoul and lay lurking in such places and holds as he might, until he should again have opportunity to do the town of Mansoul a mischief for their thus handling of him as they did.”

Incredulity will work his wicked will upon you if he can and you must always remember that it is possible, even, for *you* to fall into unbelief—you who are rejoicing, you who have hung out all your flags and are keeping high festival—oh, tell it not in Gath! Yes, even *you* may yet be found doubting your God! May the Lord grant that you may be delivered from this evil! But it is only Almighty Grace which can keep you with faith pure and simple and free from any tincture of doubt and unbelief. Pressure of circumstances may drive you into an unbelieving state of mind. Depression of soul, due to physical causes, may do it—the spirit often truly is willing and believing, but the flesh is weak—and it may pull you down. Association with doubters may have a similar effect. Conflict for the Truth of God may make you familiar with the poisoned arrows of skeptics and, in attempting to do them good, you may imbibe mischief from them. The Lord

will preserve you from the positive, stark, black Egyptian darkness of unbelief, but there are other grades and degrees of it which you may have to endure. It is bad for a Christian to have *any* mixture of darkness with his light and to have *any* measure of doubt mingled with his faith. Yet it may be so and, therefore, the Spirit of God says to the people of God, “Take heed, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

Note, next, that *in proportion as unbelief gets into your heart, you will begin to depart from the living God.* I am not speaking, now, of open glaring sin—you have not fallen into that and I pray God that you never may. But, Beloved, we may have all the decencies of morality, all the proprieties of Christian conduct and yet we may be, all the while, “departing from the living God.” The moment we begin to trust in man and to make flesh our arm, we have, to that extent, forgotten Jehovah and departed from the living God. The moment our heart’s deepest affections twine about the dearest creature—be it husband, or wife, or child—we are, to that degree, “departing from the living God.” To the true Believer, in his best estate, the sweetest line that he can ever sing is that which we sang just now—

“Yes, mine own God is He.”

That is the circle which surrounds all his joy! It is the center of his soul’s highest delight. He has God for his very own! On his God he relies and towards Him he sends out the full streams of his earnest affection. Remember what the Lord wrote by the pen of the Prophet Jeremiah—*“Cursed is the man that trusts in man: and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”*

Brothers and Sisters, it is easy to depart from the living God spiritually—gradually to lose that serene and heavenly frame which is our highest privilege, to forget Him who ought to always be before our eyes as the chief factor in our entire life, the great All-in-All, compared with whom everything else is but as a dream, a fleeting shadow. I bear my witness that to walk with the living God is life—but to get away from Him is death! And that in proportion as we begin to depart and put a distance between ourselves and the great Invisible—in that proportion our life ebbs away and we get to be sickly and scarcely alive! Then doubts arise as to whether we are the people of God at all—and it is sad that such a question as that should ever be possible! We ought to live like the angel whom Milton pictures as living in the sun—in the very center of the orb of light—so near to God that we do not merely *sometimes* enjoy His Presence, but that in Him we live altogether and never depart from Him!

I remember a minister calling upon a poor old saint and before coming away he said he hoped that the Divine Father would constantly visit the sick man. But he replied, “O Sir, I do not want you to ask that the Father should merely visit me, for by these many months together He has been living with me and I have been living in Him.” So may it be with each one of you, my Brothers and Sisters! And that it may be so, give attention to the message of the text, “Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing”—in any measure or degree—“from the living God.”

“But,” you say, “why should we take such heed about that matter? We are Believers and, therefore, we are saved.” Are you Believers? They who can trifle with heavenly things are not true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if ever it becomes a thing of small importance to you whether you dwell with the living God, or not, the question may well arise in your heart, “Am I truly a Believer in Jesus Christ with the faith of God’s elect—the faith that really saves the soul?”

But, my Brothers and Sisters, if you do not continue steadfast and firm in your faith in its simplicity—if your evil heart of unbelief begins to prevail and you are turned aside from your confidence in Christ, and so begin to get away from God—you *will be great losers thereby* even if you do manage to get to Heaven, “saved, yet so as by fire.” For, first, you will lose your joy. That is no small thing. “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” The joy of the Lord is one of the means by which you are to be made useful. The joy of the Lord sweetens trial, lightens care and turns service into delight. But if you lose that joy, you are as one who travels alone in the dark and who stumbles and falls. I pray you, do not depart from the living God in any degree, for if you do so, your joy will begin to get clouded, the brightness and the warmth of it will be taken from you—and you will become faint-hearted, trembling, timorous and sad. If the evil heart of unbelief shall prevail against you, depend upon it, you will lose your joy.

Then you may be certain, also, that you will lose your assurance. Full assurance cannot exist with unholiness. One has well said, “If your assurance does not make you leave off sinning, your sinning will make you leave off enjoying assurance.” And I am sure that it is so. If we begin to look to second causes and do not trust in God, we shall then put forth our hand to some one sin or another. And when we do that, we cannot be certain that we are children of God at all! That man who feels sure of his safety and yet can play with sin and find pleasure in it, may be assured of his own damnation! I remember, in my boyhood, one who never talked so religiously as when he was the worse for drink. And in public, before ungodly men, he used to boast of his full assurance of salvation—when he was much too far gone to be assured that he would get home in safety that night! That kind of conduct is atrocious and no one would excuse it for a moment! We know that men who talk so only proclaim their own shame to their own eternal disgrace. But do not let any of us indulge even in a measure of that kind of sin. That evil heart of unbelief will not only lead us away from a holy walk with God, but it will also take from us our assurance if it is an assurance that is worth having.

Then, next, it will take from us our fruitfulness. Dear child of God, I am sure that you do not wish to live here without doing good to others. But how can you do good if you are not, yourself, good? You cannot bring forth fruit unto holiness unless you are watered with the dew of Heaven and the sunlight of God shines upon you. And you will not have either of those blessings if you live carelessly and if you fall into an unbelieving state of mind and get away from contact with the ever-living God. If any of you have tried this kind of life, you must have become painfully aware what it is to have all the sap and juice, out of which the clusters ought to come, dried up within the tree and everything turned to barrenness because you have yourself departed from God!

These are all serious losses to a child of God. It is no light matter for you to lose joy, assurance and fruitfulness. But the evil heart of unbelief will cause you, also, to lose purity. There is a delicate bloom upon the fruit that grows in Christ’s garden, where He, as the Gardener, cultivates it with tender care. But sin comes and rubs away that bloom and spoils the fruit. If you and I fall into sin, we shall have to weep bitterly over it. We shall not be able to enjoy the high privilege which belongs to those who keep their garments unspotted from the world. Of these the Savior says, “They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.” I believe that, of all fortes of spiritual loss, one of the worst is to lose tenderness of conscience, quickness of apprehension when sin is near—to lose a sense of cleanness of heart and of sanctification by the Spirit of God. When those are gone, we are something like Adam when he lost Paradise, and we turn our faces back again toward that purity and cry to the Lord to restore it, as we moan rather than sing—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”*

Take care that you do not lose it, for it will hardly be likely to be restored to you in the same degree as you had it at the first.

The child of God who wanders away also loses peace and many other attainments of the spiritual life. He is like a boy who is sent down from the top of the class—it may take him a long time to get up again. Or he is like the soldier who has risen from the ranks, but who has misbehaved himself and is, therefore, made a Private again. He who once could lead the people of God has to be very thankful that he is permitted to go into the rear rank and to follow where others lead. He who could talk for God boldly now has to sing very small and let others speak. He who used to encourage others, now needs to be encouraged, himself. He was once strong in faith and a mighty man of valor, but now he has to use Mr. Ready-to-Halt’s crutches and to go along with the feeble ones among the pilgrims because an evil heart of unbelief has made him depart from the living God!

This brings, of course, a loss of influence with the people of God and with worldlings, too, for when a man has injured his reputation, it is not soon repaired. If he has slipped and fallen, brethren weep over him and love him, and seek to restore him, but they do not trust him as they used to do. They are some little while before they dare to follow where he leads the way. I have seen a man whose judgment was like that of Solomon, whose position in the midst of his brethren was that of a hero inciting them to daring deeds—but he has fallen and all Israel has wept over him! Perhaps there has been no shameful sin, but yet there has been an evident decline in spirituality and in force and power. The Lord has left him and great Samson, though he shakes himself as before, is fast bound in chains and his eyes have been put out. Happy will he be if, at some future day, when the locks of his hair have grown back, he shall be able to pull down the temple of

the Philistine lords upon them. But so far as his brethren are concerned, he will have to be the object of loving pity rather than of joyful confidence.

Do not tell me, then, that you do not lose anything by getting into a state of unbelief and departing from God, for, in addition to all this, such a child of God loses power in prayer. It is “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man” that “avails much.” Our Lord Jesus told His disciples, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” But disobedient children will find that the Father will turn a deaf ear to their supplication. “No,” He will say, “you would not listen to Me—neither will I listen to you,” for God has a way of walking contrary to them that walk contrary to Him.

Then there very often follows at the back of that, chastisements, heavy and multiplied. Take heed, my Brothers and Sisters, as you remember the history of David. What a blessed life, what a glorious life, is that of David until the unhappy day when kings went forth to battle, but the king of Israel went not! He tarried in inglorious ease at home and, as he walked upon the top of his palace, he saw that which tempted him to evil desire. To that ill desire he fell a prey and the man after God’s own heart became an adulterer and a murderer! Alas! Alas! All the rest of his life he travels on toward Heaven with broken bones and sorrowful spirit. At every step he limps—his prayers are sighs, his Psalms lack the jubilant notes that once made them ascend joyously unto the Lord! He is still a true man of God and, in his deep repentance, he becomes a pattern to us all in repenting of sin, but the brave joyous David is not there! And at the last, though he pleads the Covenant, he has to say, “Although my house is not so with God.” There was a great mass of heart-break packed away in those few words, more than we need to explain just now.

What a dreadful family David had! None of us have had a family like his—that was his chastisement—his own children! What a mercy it was for him that Sovereign Grace did not cast him away, for after he had uttered that deep bass note, “Although my house is not so with God,” then came the sweet assurance of faith, “Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, although He make it not to grow.” There came in again the note of deep sorrow mingled with his holy faith in God. O Brothers and Sisters, I have heard men say that a broken leg, when it is mended, is sometimes stronger than it was before. It may be so, but I am not going to break my leg to try the experiment! I know one who says that his arm was broken when he was a boy and that he believes it is stronger than the other one. So it may be, but I will not break my arm if I can help it! May the Lord rather keep me in His hands lest I dash my foot against a stone! There is a great deal of experience which I hope you will never have—and that is the kind of experience which comes of an evil heart of unbelief—in departing from the living God. Take heed that you never come to know that sorrow!

II. Now, in the second place, and very briefly, I want to apply my text TO ALL IN THE VISIBLE CHURCH, whether they are, indeed, God’s people or not. If you profess to belong to Christ, it is enough for my present purpose. “Take heed,” I pray you, professing Christians, “lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

For, first, many *professors have had an evil heart*. It is not every Church member who has a new heart and a right spirit. Judas was in the Church, but he had an evil heart and was a devil. It may be so with me, my Brothers and Sisters, or with you. There are some in the Church who have no real faith in Christ. Their very heart is crammed full of unbelief, though they pretend that they have believed in Christ. I know that it is so—we cannot help observing that there are unbelievers who bear the name of Christians!

Many of these have turned aside. To our sorrow, we have lived to see it in far too many cases. They were members of Churches, but they grew weary of the good way. Nothing pleased them. The preacher who used to charm them lost all his power over them. Prayer Meetings became dull and they would rather not have anything at all to do with religion. We have known some go back to the world for no reason that they dared even to tell themselves—it was because of the fickleness of their unregenerate spirits. We have seen this happen to others when they have been strongly tempted. Satan knew their particular weakness and he assailed them there. How many professors have given way to strong drink! They would have a little and who could condemn them? But when they began by taking a little, they soon took what was not little to others—and it turned out, by-and-by, not to be little to themselves—and he who should have been a pattern of self-denial to the people of God has become a victim of intoxication!

Others have fallen through the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. A man has been tempted to get gain by dishonesty. At first the bribe did not affect him—but it was doubled, or tripled—and then he fell. Many more have we seen very gradually turning aside. It was almost impossible to tell exactly when they left the line of strict integrity. It was only by a hair’s breadth that they turned aside, at first, but afterwards their apostasy was visible to all. Some have been frost-bitten—they have grown lukewarm and then, at last, ice-cold—and we have lost them. Some professors have been turned aside by pride. They were too rich to join with any but a “*respectable*” worldly church, or they were so learned—so *conceited* is the right word—that the plain Gospel was too inferior an article for their profound minds! Some, alas—and I fear, very many—have turned aside through poverty. We meet with cases where the visitor in the lowest haunts of degradation says that he has come across a woman in the depths of penury and with scarcely rags enough to cover her, yet she has produced a communion ticket, for in better days she was a member of the Church, but she could not get clothes quite good enough, as she thought. She fancied that she would be looked down upon if she came when poor—and so she ceased to attend the means of Grace and, by-and-by, gave up everything like a profession of religion. Oh, if there are any members of the Church of that sort, here, I pray you, if you ever do become very poor, do not go away from us because of that! And if your clothes should be all rags, I am sure that none of us will despise you! Or if there should be any who do so, I will bear the responsibility of *despising them*—but do not ever stay away from the House of God, or the company of your Christian Brothers and Sisters because of poverty!

Why, it seems to me that the less you have of earthly good things to comfort you, the more you need of Divine treasure and the companionship of Christ! And you should rather seek the society of your friends in Christ than for a moment to shun it. Yet it has been so and, therefore, I put it to all here who profess to be followers of Christ—“Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

III. Now I have only a very few minutes left in which to apply my text TO THOSE WHO ARE SIMPLY IN THE CONGREGATION.

There is a large number of you who come to worship with us who are only camp-followers. You are not in the regular regiments of the Lord’s Army, yet you cling to us and we cannot help regarding you with much affection as “brethren” so far as you allow that brotherhood to be true. We wish that you would make it truer, still, but we do not want any of you to perish because of your unbelief. Remember, dear Friends, that *your unbelief is an affair of your heart*. It is not an evil head of unbelief, but, “an evil *heart* of unbelief” of which the Apostle speaks. And that is what is wrong with you. You know that you believe everything that is in the Bible. You look with horror upon any heretical doctrine. You love to hear the Gospel and yet you have not received it for yourselves. I want you to give my Lord credit to think Him no liar, but a true Savior. And if He is such, then come and trust Him! You are fit to come to Him, for your fitness lies in your *need* of Him, and I am sure you need Him. Come and do Him this act of justice—trust Him! He is so strong, so true, so tender, that if you will but commit your soul to Him, He will take care of it. If you will bring your sins to Him, He will wash them away. If you will bring your weakness to Him, He will strengthen you. If you will really come to Him, He will take you as you are at this moment, for He never cast out one who came to Him—it is not like He—He could not do it! It is no more possible for Christ to reject a sinner who trusts Him than it is for God to lie! It is contrary to the Nature of God and He cannot do what is contrary to Himself!

Come, then, and do not depart from the living God by an evil heart of unbelief. Nothing will bring you near to God but believing—and nothing can shut you out from God and from the life and light and liberty that there is in God in Christ Jesus—but your unbelief. Only trust Him! That is the whole of the matter. I pray God, of His infinite mercy, to make you “take heed, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief,” which shall get such mastery over you that you shall depart, not only from the living God, but even from the ways of morality, till God shall say to you, at the last, “Depart, you cursed. You always were departing, keep on departing.”

And this shall be the punishment of your sin—you shall reap it fully developed, for Hell is sin full grown! God save us from the baby, which is sin, that we may not know the man, which is Hell! God save us from the seed, which is sin, that we may not know the harvest, which is Hell! God save us from the spark, which is sin, that we may not know the conflagration, which is eternal damnation! God save and bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 3:1-16.

Verse 1. *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.* Oh, that He had more consideration at our hands! Consider Him—you cannot know all His excellence, all His value to you, unless He is the subject of your constant meditation. Consider Him—think of His Nature, His offices, His work, His promises, His relation to you. “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

2. *Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.* See how our Lord Jesus Christ condescended to be appointed of the Father. In coming as a Mediator, taking upon Himself our humanity, He “made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant.” And being found in fashion as a Servant, we find that He was faithful—to every jot and tittle, He carried out His charge.

3. *For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house.* And Moses was but one stone in the house. Though in a certain sense he was a servant in it, yet in another and, for him, a happier sense, he was only a stone in the house which the Lord Jesus Christ had built. Let us think of our Lord as the Architect and Builder of His own Church—and let our hearts count Him worthy of more glory than Moses—let us give Him glory in the highest. However highly a Jew may think of Moses—and he ought to think highly of him, and so ought we—yet infinitely higher than Moses must ever rise the Incarnate Son of God!

4. *For every house is built by some.* By someone or other.

4. *But He that built all things is God.* And Christ is God and He is the Builder of all things in the spiritual realm—yes, and in the natural kingdom, too, for, “without Him was not anything made that was made.” So He is to have eternal honor and glory as the one great Master-Builder.

5, 6. *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firmly unto the end.* You see, then, that the Apostle had first made a distinction between Christ and Moses on the ground of the builder being greater than the house he builds. Now, in the second place, He shows Christ’s superiority to Moses on the ground that a son in his own house is greater than a servant in the house of his master. How sweetly he introduces the Truth of God that *we* are the house of Christ! Do we realize that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of us? How clean we ought to be, how holy, how heavenly! How we should seek to rise above earth and keep ourselves reserved for the Crucified! In this house, no rival should be permitted ever to dwell—the great Lord should have every chamber of it entirely to Himself! Oh, that He may take His rest within our hearts as His holy habitation! And may there be nothing in our church life that shall grieve the Son of God and cause Him, even for a moment, to be withdrawn from us—“whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firmly unto the end.” Perseverance—final perseverance—is the test of election! He whom God Has chosen holds on and holds out even to the end, while temporary professors make only a fair show in the flesh, but, by-and-by, their faith vanishes.

7. *Therefore.* Now comes a long parenthesis.

7-11. *(As the Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest).* Oh, that none of us, as professors of the faith of Christ, may be like Israel in the wilderness! I fear there is too much likeness—God grant that it may be carried no further! May we hear the voice of God as they did *not* hear it, for their ears were dull of hearing! May we never harden our hearts as they did, for they kicked against the command of God and rebelled against the thunders of Sinai! May God grant that we may never test Him, as they did, when they were continually proposing to God to do other than He willed to do—something for their gratification which would not have been right and which, therefore, He did not do! Oh, that we might never grieve Him as they did, for they grieved Him forty years! He bore with them and yet they bored Him. He forgave and overlooked their errors only to be provoked by the repetition of them, for they would not know what God made very plain. His works were such that the wayfaring men might have read them, but they did not know God’s ways and, at last,

He banished them from all participation in His rest. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness and they entered not into the land of promise. “Therefore”—

12, 13. *Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Watch over each other as well as over yourselves. Take heed lest sin hardens you before you are aware of it! Even while you fancy that you have wiped it out by repentance, petrification will remain upon your heart “through the deceitfulness of sin.”*

14-16. *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. Not all, for there were two faithful ones. See how the Spirit of God gathers up the fragments that remain! If there are but two faithful ones out of millions, He knows it and He records it.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—42 (VERSION I), 512, 621.

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