

Consider the Faithfulness of Jesus (Heb. 3.1-6)

WestminsterReformedChurch.org

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3-2-2008

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ² who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³ For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses- as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴ (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵ Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Introduction

Based on the purposes of the incarnation (2.14-18), the Hebrews' preacher presents a concluding exhortation in 3.1-6 as the reasoning indicator shows (**therefore**, 3.1). The heart of the exhortation is to consider Jesus (3.1). The preacher now calls the church to pointed consideration of Jesus.

The writer compresses all the goals of the incarnation together as a premise. Because He attained all these goals (to destroy the devil and his works, to deliver his people and help the offspring of Abraham, to become a merciful and faithful high priest, especially to help those who are tempted, that is, His children, the true children of Abraham bound certainly for glory), the church is to focus their thoughts on Jesus. The exhortation now before us specifically is to consider His faithfulness: **consider Jesus...²who was faithful...⁶Christ is faithful** (3.1, 2, and 6). The combination of reasoning indicators ("Therefore," 3.1 and "for," 3.3) shows us that this preacher grounds this exhortation in the purposes of the incarnation with a new ingredient, a comparison with Moses. Thus, he is telling us to consider the faithfulness of Jesus that exceeds the faithfulness of Moses. To do this he reaches back in summary to His covenant faithfulness and he expands on that faithfulness by comparing Jesus with Moses. That gives us two points in the outline for today: consider Jesus in His covenant faithfulness, and consider Jesus in His glorious faithfulness.

1A. Consider Jesus in His covenant faithfulness

Addressing the church (holy brothers and called ones), the writer directs the church (them and us) to consider the one who was faithful and the one to whom He was faithful. Both of these things reveal His covenant faithfulness and they have the quality of reaching back in thought to the purpose of the incarnation in order to ground the exhortation now on the table.

1B. Who was faithful?

The faithful one is apostle and high priest: **consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession** (3.1). Jesus became incarnate with the covenant purpose of becoming our great high priest. Because the children God gave to Him were human beings, Jesus partook of flesh and blood that through death He would secure the death of death for them. He also became incarnate as an apostle, a "sent one." The Father sent Jesus into the sinful world and Jesus willingly came into the sinful world. Now, we should not miss the fact that "sending" is covenant language. All the passages in the Gospels that speak of the Father sending Jesus, of Jesus coming to do the will of God, and of Jesus sending the Holy Spirit are passages that reveal core elements of the eternal covenant of salvation. Here, Jesus is the missionary *par excellence*. He is the Sower sowing seed who gathers in the sure harvest (Mat. 13). As an apostle, God sent Him with a prophetic message and that is why He is the apostle **of our confession** (3.1). What we confess in a subjective sense comes from the confession that Jesus gave us in an objective sense: the confession as a body of prophetic truth that Jesus gave us as our Apostle through the apostles. Because He is our apostle-prophet, God the Father tells us to "**listen to Him**" (Mat. 17.5). He is the prophet like Moses that

was to come and to whom the people of God are to listen. This is what God promised through Moses: **The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen** (Deut. 18.15).

2B. To whom was He faithful?

Thus, the text states the faithfulness of Jesus and puts it in the context of the pre-time covenant of salvation. Jesus was **faithful to him who appointed him** (3.2a). He was covenantally faithful *to the Father* who appointed Him to become incarnate, to become our mediator, to make propitiation for our sins, to endure immeasurable suffering in our place, and to give us the apostolic gospel-good-news. Thus, *we have the gospel because of His faithfulness* in His work as the high priest and as the Apostle that gave us the good news we confess.

2A. Consider Jesus in His glorious faithfulness

We can never tire of reflecting on the obedience of the Lord Jesus for it is a marvelous humiliation of covenant faithfulness. Also marvelous is the fact that though He was obedient and suffered in His humiliation, His faithfulness was at the same time glorious. This idea of glory comes to the surface in relation to Moses who was the greatest prophet-mediator of the OT.

Thus, the writer tells us that Jesus was faithful in a way comparable with the faithfulness of Moses: Our Lord was faithful **just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house** (3.2b). The comparison with Moses includes contrast. They were both faithful **"in all God's house"** (3.2b). That is, both faithfully served God's people. However, it is the contrast between Jesus and Moses that specially reveals the praiseworthy faithfulness of Jesus, setting it in bold relief (setting it out in bold capital letters).

³For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses- as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

In 3.3-5, we have two points that support the glorious faithfulness of our Lord.

1) The faithfulness of Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses because He is the builder of the house and thus has more glory than the house itself (v. 3). Jesus has more honor than the house, and therefore more honor than Moses who is part of the house. Moses was part of the house of God's people as he faithfully served them, but Jesus is the builder of the house who therefore far exceeds the glory of Moses, even the glory that radiated from his face when he came down from the mountain (cf. 2 Cor. 3.7). As He said, "I will build my church," but notably, He does His building program in submission to the Father: **For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God** (3.4).

2) The faithfulness of Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses because Moses was a servant and as such he faithfully testified to things God would reveal later (OT looking ahead to the NT, the old covenant looking ahead to the new covenant), but Jesus was faithful as a son: ⁵ **Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son** (3.5-6). As such (as the Son), He faithfully testified to the things God revealed through realization in the time of fulfillment: **in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son** (1.2), and **the message ...declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard** (2.1-3).

Application

1) We need to hear the subtle warning about true faith

Part of our duty is to hear and heed the warning of this text, which is quite sharp.

In 3.6, the writer gives a conditional statement that puts the language of 3.1 into a distinct perspective **"And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."** For short, and in reverse order, he says, "If we hold fast...we are God's house." Earlier, he called his readers **"holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling"** (3.1). They are set apart or holy; they are set

apart from the fallen human family to be a holy family. They now make up God's family as people called out from darkness to light by a heavenly action of communication that made them alive and set them on the pathway to heaven. Therefore, the Hebrews' preacher considers his readers to be the covenant people for whom Jesus tasted death and for whom He removed the sting of death.

However, when we come to 3.6, we find a different emphasis. Now, he tells them that they are God's building, the church that Jesus builds (cf. Mat. 16.18) if they meet a condition, namely, the condition of holding fast (**if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope**).

Although a subject of discussion and debate, this shows that it is proper to think of the church in terms of the simple distinction between the profession and the possession of faith. Biblical writers at times address the church in an unqualified way as the people of God, as holy brothers and sisters, and as people who share in a heavenly calling that put them on the sure path to heaven's glory. In this way, this NT writer speaks to the church *in an ideal sense* and *in terms of the church's profession of faith without qualification*. Some students of Scripture call this the perspective of the visible church: thus, "you are the church" is true in the sense of what you confess, but this is a matter of outward profession regarding what is visible to human eyes. "You are the church" means "you are the confessing church, and you profess adherence to the gospel of Christ." However, you are truly, genuinely, and actually God's building if what you say is an accurate reflection of what you hold in your heart. Do not for a minute think that you are fooling God; do not think that you are a son or daughter bound for glory simply because you attach yourself outwardly to the people of God.

2) We need to note the implicit duty that goes with considering Christ

We should begin this point with the notation that the phrase "firm to the end" is a variant reading here that is not a variant in 3.14, so we will discuss this phrase when we get to 3.14 [For those interested: KJV has "firm to the end" in 3.6 and in 3.14 where there is no variant reading. The evidence indicates that the phrase was added here in 3.6 in scribal transmission because of the similarity with 3.14, but it does not fit here grammatically (the adjective "firm" does not go well in form with the noun it modifies, Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 665). The ESV does better to omit the phrase in 3.6 (but of course, both the ESV and KJV rightly include it in 3.14)].

The implicit duty is bound up with what it means to hold fast in 3.6. "Hold fast" means to hold tightly (like holding someone back by holding them, **they tried to keep him [Jesus] from leaving**, Lk. 4.42), or to hold with determination (as in **holding the truth in unrighteousness**, Rom. 1.18; that is the opposite of true faith). Thus, holding fast is a way of talking about faith (in the Sower parable, holding fast to the seed of the word is parallel with hearing, understanding, and receiving the word, Mat. 13.23, Lk. 8.15, Mk. 4.13).

Therefore, "to consider Jesus" means more than having some thoughts in our minds about Him. To consider Him involves *clinging to Him for dear life*. It is the opposite of what unbelievers do when they oppose Him and His teaching in a determined way; the Christian determines forcefully (cf. Mat. 11.12) to have Him, to hold on to Him, and to hold fast to His teachings. The implicit duty is to believe in the precise way of holding tightly to the Lord Jesus.

3) We need to focus now on the objective nature of this duty

We get this by considering the chain of phrases in 3.6 in the call to hold fast to "**our confidence and our boasting in our hope**." Essentially, the text tells us, "hold to the ground of your confidence and your glorying in the hope the gospel lays out before you."

The point here is objective not subjective. If we were to stress the subjective side of things, then the emphasis would be on our trusting, glorying, and hoping. Then, the emphasis would be on our acts of trusting, glorying, and hoping. However, that has some problems. a) First, it puts all the emphasis in the wrong place: on us. The idea would be (and wrongly) that you are to trust in your faith (your holding tightly) and in your pride in the gospel (your glorying), and in the quality of your hope (your hoping), and then you are God's building.

b) Second, this emphasis on the subjective side, on us, would not accord with the objective nature of our confession in verse one; we cannot disconnect verses 1 and 6. The point is to find our strength in what our Apostle gave us in His work as high priest (dying in our place) and as Apostle (giving us the body of truth, our confession, and our hope in an objective sense through the apostles).

Thus, he is not telling you to hold tightly to your assurance, or to trust in your trusting. Instead, the orientation here is objective: hold tightly to the gospel that grounds your assurance and gives you courage and hope.

4) Further, we need to emphasize the promise attached to this duty

If you hold tightly to the Lord Jesus, then you are God's building not just in profession with the lips, but in the possession of the heart. As God's building you are the product of His saving work, you have the faithfulness of Christ as *your sure rock* of salvation, and *you are the place of God's dwelling* because a spiritual building is not just a place to offer sacrifices and worship God. It is a place in which one lives. God builds His church through the great Apostle of our confession. Jesus is Bethel, Jacob's ladder, and the place of the presence of God. In Him we are God's dwelling place on earth now in the time of fulfillment.

Therefore, consider Jesus whom God sent to do a sure work; nothing will turn Him aside from bringing it to consummation. If He did what He did in humiliation to bring it to accomplishment in His death in your place, how much more will He bring it to full accomplished consummation in His exaltation as your Sabbath king. Jesus will build His church (Mat. 16.18). He made it to the city of God blazing a trail all the way there from earth to heaven. Therefore, you who hold tightly to the Lord Jesus will make it there too, most certainly and this grounds confidence, hope, and courage. It kicks back on your faith and strengthens it even more!

5) Finally, to properly apply this text, we need to fix our focus on Jesus

He is to be the object of your affection, thoughts, and attention. The way you consider Him is in terms of His work as the Apostle and high priest. This brings you to the work of Christ as the *Apostle* who sends the Holy Spirit to empower the *apostles* to speak in His name and to give us the infallible standard of our confession, the NT witness to His person and work in the history of redemption. Doing this, He is faithful, both covenantally faithful and gloriously faithful.

Thus, one way for you to consider Jesus and set your minds on Him is to meditate on the eternal covenant and His part in it. You consider Him like you ought to when you absorb the gospel of His person and work that He gave us through the apostles. This is another way that the Lord calls you to pay close attention to the message lest you drift away from it (2.1).

Now may we fall down before the majesty of our God in humble recognition of our sins and our need of the Lord Jesus Christ our Sabbath king; may the Holy Spirit enable us to hold tightly to the gospel that defines our confession and grounds our confidence, courage, and hope. To the triune God be all glory, now and forevermore, amen.