

**HEBREWS
CONSIDER CHRIST
By Ron Harvey**

Text: Hebrews 3:1

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

We saw in Hebrews 1:1,2 that there is a great difference between the way God spoke in times past (the Old Testament) and the way God spoke in the last days (the New Testament).

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . .*

God spoke in bits and pieces and he spoke in different manners in times past. And in times past God spoke through human instruments called prophets. And God also spoke through angels in times past.

But in these last days, God has spoken through his Son.

And we have spent several weeks now considering how much greater Christ is than the prophets and how much better Christ is than the angels. He is so much better that there can be no reasonable comparison. Prophets were merely human servants sent with a word from God to the people. Christ, on the other hand is the one who made the worlds (v.2) He is the one who is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person. (v.3)

Angels were the ministers of the law of God. When God gave the law to Israel, it was angels that mediated that law from God to man. But, Christ is the mediator of a better covenant – that is, the covenant of grace. And he is so much better than angels by nature and by his mediatorial work which was so excellent that in his humanity he was exalted into the heavens and he sat down on the right hand of God on a throne where no angels will ever sit. (v.3)

And that brings us to Chapter 3 and verse one where it says,

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

Now this verse is a transitional verse. We are now leaving our consideration of angels behind. The writer has thoroughly proven that Christ is superior to angels. And angels will not be mentioned again in Hebrews until Hebrews 12 and 13.

Our text this morning in some ways serves as a theme verse for the book of Hebrews. Remember, the writer of Hebrews is specifically addressing Hebrew Christians who might be considering forsaking Christ and returning to the rituals of Judaism. They are considering going back to the time of prophets and angels. They are considering returning to the rituals of Judaism rather than holding on to the excellencies of Christ.

And so, the writer says, *Wherefore*. That is, because I have proven to you that Christ is far superior to those old prophets and superior to those angels who mediated the law, *consider Christ Jesus*.

Now from our text this morning we will see three things. We will see:

- I. The description of the people of Christ
- II. The description of Christ himself
- III. Our duty to Christ

And we begin by looking at,

- I. The Description of the people of Christ

Now notice in our text how the people of Christ are described. They are called, *Holy Brethren*.

Now we don't usually use this word to describe ourselves do we?

Example: What if my wife went away on a trip and I wrote her a letter and at the end of the letter I signed off, Your Holy Husband, Ron. Why, she would laugh herself to sleep because she lives with me and she knows I don't measure up to that standard.

And that is why we don't think of ourselves in this way. We sort of cringe at putting a tag in front of our name that says "Holy" because we know there is a certain moral corruption inside of us. Even when we have been born again and made a new creature, there is that old principle of sin in us that is not eradicated. It is called that old nature. Sometimes it is called the flesh in the Scriptures. And it wars against our new nature. And even though we have believed in Christ and we have become a Christian, we are not totally comfortable with that tag "holy," are we?

Now what if we referred to our deacons as, "Holy Dana" and "Holy Jack" and "Holy Mark?" I am quite sure that they would not feel very comfortable with that. And we don't call our pastors "Holy Pastor." Now some churches call their pastors Reverend and that is another designation that makes most of us uncomfortable. We don't dress our pastors up in robes and collars here because it makes us uncomfortable. And that is because we know there is yet unholiness in us.

That is what Paul was talking about when he said,

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.
(Romans 7:18)

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:22, 23)

And yet, in spite of that old nature that is still in us, the writer of Hebrews says,

Wherefore, holy brethren.

Now when we see this word holy, we generally think about moral goodness. And for someone to be holy, we think that he must be morally perfect. Everything he does must meet the high standards of God's law. And for that reason, if someone told you they were holy you would snicker at them and probably think they were very self-righteous because you know what is in the heart of every man.

But when the Bible uses the word holy, its principal meaning is that something is "set apart" or "separated" for a particular use. It means that

something is distinguished from something else. It does not necessarily carry with it the idea of moral purity. Let me give you an example.

Example: My wife has some fine china at home. And her fine china is kept in a separate cabinet from all of our other cups and plates. And when I get me something to eat I am not allowed to use that fine china. And I am not allowed to use it because it is set aside for important people. I am allowed to eat off of some high quality paper plates, but the china – that is set aside for others. So, you might say that her china is “holy” china. It is sanctified or set apart for a particular use.

Example: Now in the Old Testament, in the tabernacle, there were certain pots and pans that were used in religious service. Now they were no different than any other pots and pans except that they selected from all the other pots and pans and were “set aside” for a special use. There was nothing moral about the pots and pans at all - they were just pots and pans. But when they were taken from the other pots and pans and designated for a religious purpose, they became “holy” pots and pans.

But the writer of Hebrews calls Christians holy. And he says this not primarily because we are so morally pure on the inside, not because we are immune to sin ourselves, but because we are set apart from others for a particular use. You might say we are just ordinary pots and pans that have been chosen from all the other pots and pans and set aside for His use. And that’s why the writer can call us holy.

Now I must qualify that by saying that when we are set apart from others in the world, we are set apart from the masses of very unholy people for use by a very holy God. And this would suggest that once he sets us apart he is going to clean us up a little bit. If he has set us apart to commune with Him, then he will engage in a cleaning up process. We call this sanctification. He is going to clean us up from the filth of sin. He is going to clean us up from the filth of the world. He is going to clean us up on the inside so that we are fit to walk with Him.

And He has many cleaning-up devices. He cleanses us by dipping us in the blood of Christ. He cleanses us by indwelling us with the Holy Spirit. He cleanses us by bringing our spirit alive wherein he imparts a new

nature. He cleanses us daily by renewing our minds with the Word of God.

And so, in actuality, we do become very different people than we were before. And this is necessary because we are set aside for the purpose of communion with a holy God. And yet, in this life, our old natures continue to harass us so that our experience is that we do not consider ourselves holy.

The Bible says God is holy. And He is set apart from us by his moral perfections. You see, he is perfectly righteous and he is completely good and he is impeccably truthful and he is relentlessly just. And he is infinitely merciful and gracious and longsuffering. And all of the moral attributes of God set Him apart from all others so that He is very holy in his very essence. And very unholy instruments like us are pulled out from an unholy world and are set aside for a lifelong walk with a holy God. In his wonderful mercy and according to his marvelous grace, and by his sovereign purpose without regard to our works or anything else in us, he simply chose us and took us out from the masses of other unholy sinners and set us apart.

And so, the writer of Hebrews rightfully calls us holy.

How did we get holy? Did we do better? Did we reform our ways? Did we find some way to subdue our old sin nature and live in perfect conformity to God's law?

And the answer is obviously no. We didn't do any of those things. If you can be counted among the holy this morning, it is solely because God set you apart and made you holy. He sanctified you by pulling you out and by setting you apart for his use and for his pleasure.

This idea is set forth in chapter 2 and verse 11.

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.
Hebrews 2:11

There is a Sanctifier and there are those who are sanctified. And this verse says that Christ is the Sanctifier. You will notice that the action is done by the Sanctifier. He sanctifies. And the result is that his objects are sanctified. By his action, He sets certain human utensils aside for spiritual

use and this is called sanctifying them. It is not so much that he has made them morally perfect as yet, but he has set them aside for that purpose. There will be a refining process in this life and then a total removal of sin in the day of our glorification, but he has set us apart for that purpose and once he has set us apart from the world and for his purposes, then he calls us holy.

Now Jesus is the Sanctifier. And when he does this sanctifying, that is, when he sets us apart for a special use, he brings us into a family. We are set apart from all others and we become a part of another family.

I want to show you terms in our text that are used to describe those who have been drawn out and set apart. First of all, these set-apart ones are called brethren.

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. (1:11)

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren . . . (1:12)

And they are called children.

Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me. (1:13)

Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood. (1:14)

And they are called sons.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory . . . (1:10)

So, it is clear that we are set apart and placed into a family – and not just any family, we are placed in the family of God himself. And it says,

“All of one.” (1:11)

This is the nature of families. It is one for all and all for one. And when God sets us apart unto him, we are knit together with God and with each other by sanctification.

Here is the thrust of this passage. Christ has set us apart from the world and has placed us in his family and we are called sons. We are called children. And, we are called his brethren. And the ultimate destination for God's family is glory.

We were formerly in Egypt. But God has sent to us a great deliverer. God has sent us our very own Moses to deliver us. And he is an even greater than Moses. It is Christ himself who has come to deliver us. And he has come down into Egypt where we were in bondage to sin and to the evil one. And he has set us apart from the Egyptians. And he said to the evil one, "*Let my people go.*" And by a very strong hand, Christ brought us out and sanctified us and set us apart and freed us from bondage. And he is taking us to that promised land – not that earthly land of Canaan, but that heavenly land that is much better. And he is taking many sons to glory.

Now we have seen that we are called "holy brethren." And the question might be, "How has Christ made us holy?"

And in our text it says,

Partakers of the heavenly calling.

Now often, when we talk about being saved, we talk about that moment of conversion. And we talk about what the sinner has done. Why, he has repented of his sins and he has believed the gospel and he has been baptized and he has joined a church. And he has begun to do good works. And we can go on and on describing what changes have come over him.

But our text says that he is holy because he is a partaker of a heavenly calling – sanctified and made holy, by a heavenly calling.

There are many parts to salvation. Salvation is a long and glorious process by which God redeems men and takes them to glory for all eternity. It is much more than just that moment of conversion. It is much more than just the act of repentance or the act of placing faith in Christ.

Salvation is an eternal process. That is, it began in the eternal past and continues into the eternal future.

Now we are not going to dwell on the eternal processes of salvation much this morning. But just to take a brief look, see Epesians 1:4.

According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world.

There was a choosing that occurred before the world was ever created. And look, it was a choosing for the purpose of making men holy.

Salvation is a master plan devised in the mind of God and carried out by his great power. And he has chosen to redeem a people for his name.

And as a part of this great plan, his son Christ was to be the redeemer. And his son became a man so that he could be a substitute for those whom God has chosen to set aside unto holiness. And Jesus performed all the work that was necessary to atone for their sins.

But still, those people had to be set apart from the rest of mankind. They had to be drawn out from the masses of sinful men and made holy.

And Hebrews 3:1 says this is done by a heavenly calling.

Now men don't make themselves holy. But God makes men holy. And he does this with a heavenly calling.

In our passage for today, it says we are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Now notice that it says a heavenly calling. This is to show that salvation is first and foremost a work of God. You are a partaker of a heavenly calling. The sanctifying work is a work of God. Any work that we do is merely a response to his work and a result of his work. We are set apart by a heavenly calling.

As we have seen there are works related to our salvation that God did before the foundation of the world. And of course, these are works of God that are outside the realm of human experience. We simply believe them because God has revealed them to us. We would never have known them except God told us. We don't experience God's election, but we reap the wonderful benefits of it. There are wonderful works of God that he does

outside of us that formulate the basis of salvation and then there are things that he does in us that actually bring about our salvation.

And it says that we are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Now this heavenly calling is something that God does in us that calls us out and sets us apart. It is called “the heavenly calling.”

Example: Now when the children are outside playing with the other neighborhood kids, Mom might go to the door and call her children out of the group and tell them to come to lunch. And that is a calling. She lifts up her voice and she calls them. And her children know her voice and they come running.

And this is very much how God’s heavenly call works.

God’s calling is referenced in many places in the Scriptures and let’s just look at a few.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

There is a certain group of people for whom all things work together for good and they are described as those whom God has called.

The same idea is found in John’s gospel. Jesus is speaking and he says,

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

Example: I am told that when they shear sheep out in Wyoming, or wherever it is that they raise sheep, many different sheep owners will bring their sheep to be sheered. And there are thousands of sheep and they set up trailers out in the middle of nowhere. And all of these sheep are herded in one big group into the trailers and they go in with a nice coat of wool and they come out bare and shorn. And all of these sheep are thrown together in one great mass. And you would think they could never be separated. But when the shepherd gets ready to go, he merely calls out and all of his sheep come to him. And when another shepherd calls out, they don’t come to him. They only

come to their own shepherd.

And Jesus said, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

Christ calls his sheep with a heavenly calling.

Example: We live in a world where many don't respond to the call of the gospel. The gospel is preached universally. All men are invited with a general call. But the masses don't respond because they are not sheep with a heavenly calling. The Shepherd calls out with the gospel message and they don't hear.

But we are called holy brethren because thankfully, as the song says, we have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves, Jesus saves. The gospel call rang out and we had a heavenly calling and we heard it.

Acts 2:38-39 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

The gospel of Christ is essentially the good news about the cross of Christ. And the cross of Christ is not a palatable message to the world. That message is utterly rejected by the masses.

I Corinthians 1:18, 23, 24 *18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Here you have the two great groups of mankind: Those that perish (v.18) and those who are called (v.24).

And the writer of Hebrews says, you are *“holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.”*

Now look very closely. This heavenly calling is no general call. This is

“the heavenly calling.” This is that very calling that draws you out and makes you holy.

I Peter 2:9 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Moses walked into Egypt and called an earthly people out of the darkness of slavery and they wandered in the wilderness for a time before entering an earthly rest in Canaan.

And in the New Testament, Jesus came and called a spiritual people out of slavery and they wander for a time in the wilderness of this life before entering that heavenly rest in glory.

Now when the gospel is preached a general call goes out to all men. Whosoever will may come. But this general call is scorned by all but God’s sheep. And those sheep have the heavenly call. This is an effectual call that draws them effectively and surely to Christ and sets them apart so that they can be called Holy Brethren.

John 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:*

That is the heavenly call.

Now we have seen the description of the people of Christ. They are called “holy brethren.” But now, we see the description of Christ himself.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST

We have already seen a most excellent description of Christ in the first two chapters.

- He is the heir of all things (v.2)
- He is the creator of the worlds. (v.2)
- He is the brightness of his glory. (v.3)
- He is the express image of his person. (v.3)
- He upholds all things by the word of his power. (v.3)

- He has sat down in glory. (v.3)
- He is the captain of our salvation. (v.10)

A. He is the Apostle of our profession.

This is the only place in the Bible where Christ is called Apostle. Usually when we think of an apostle, we think of Peter and Andrew and John and Paul. But rarely do we use the word to apply to Jesus.

But notice, Jesus is not an apostle, but he is the Apostle. This shows his absolute uniqueness. There is none like him. Though others may be apostles, he is the Apostle.

Of course, the word apostle means one who is “sent out.” Now the twelve apostles were ones who were sent out by Jesus. Jesus packed them up and sent them out to preach the gospel.

But here it says that Jesus is “the Apostle. Jesus was the one who was sent to us.

Now in John’s gospel, Jesus makes it clear that he is sent by God.

But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

And it says that Jesus is the Apostle of our profession. He is the one whom God has sent to secure our salvation.

Now when it says that Jesus is the Apostle of our profession, it implies at least a couple of things:

1. It implies that Jesus had authority to perform his work. They would always ask Jesus, by what authority he did these things. And he would say he came from God – that he was sent by God. And of course, whoever God sends for a task has great authority.

Example: When God told Moses to go deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses asked God, “What shall I say to the children of Israel?” And God told him to tell them that I AM had sent him.

You see, that is the greatest credential that one can have - to be sent

by God. Moses was sent by God and therefore he had great authority. He had authority to become the leader of Israel. And he had the authority to march right up to Pharoah and demand that Pharoah let his people go.

And Jesus was sent by God And he came by the authority of God himself.

But since he is called The Apostle which means sent One,

2. It implies that there was a plan behind his sending.

Example: Occasionally I am sent to the store. And I am instructed what I am to get. Now get milk, bread and dog food. And stop by the gas station and get gas. And the fact that I am sent out, implies that there was a plan behind the sending. There are always very specific tasks that I am to do. And I am not to come home until those tasks are completed.

And Jesus was sent by God. He had very specific things that he was to do. And all of this was determined in the purposes of God before the foundation of the world. There was a holy counsel before the world began and a great plan of salvation for men was devised. And there were very specific tasks for each person of the Godhead to accomplish. And in the course of time, God sent his Son into the world.

Time fails to tell of all the work that Jesus was to do when he was sent. Chiefly he was to fulfill all righteousness so that he could give that righteousness to his people and make them holy. And then, he was to die and suffer the penalty for sin so that he could make the Father just to forgive sins.

So Jesus is the Apostle of our profession.

B. Jesus is the High Priest of our profession.

We are sinful. And yet, we are being called out by a God who demands absolute perfection. Do you see the problem? Sinners, set aside by God to be holy. Sinners set aside to fellowship with a holy God.

But how can this be since God's wrath comes down out of heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Now the function of a priest is to represent the interests of the people to God. It is a scary thing for sinners to approach God. Actually, it is an impossible thing for sinners to approach. And so the Old Testament priest would offer sacrifices and this would temporarily satisfy God and turn away his anger and the priest would mediate between a sinful people and a holy God.

Of course, the Old Testament priests were sinners themselves and also they occupied their offices only temporarily. And they offered sacrifices over and over and over.

But Jesus is the High Priest. And based on his own merit and on the ground of his own substitutionary death, Jesus serves as a permanent High Priest. And he diverts God's anger away from his people.

Example: We are like a people in a giant lightning storm of God's wrath. And we would surely perish in God's anger. But Jesus offers himself as a lightening rod. And the wrath of God which was intended for us is diverted onto Christ. And when God's anger is fully poured out on him, then God is propitiated toward us. Now he is able to love us because his wrath is diverted to another.

And now that Jesus has paid the full penalty for sin, he boldly comes to the Father as our High Priest and he pleads for mercy on our behalf on the basis of the full atonement that he has made for our sins.

He is thus called in Hebrews 4:14 our "great High Priest."

Now we come to the final point of the message and that is:

III. Our duty to God

Now most of us think of our duty in terms of all the things that we could do for him. We should go to church. We should give our offerings. We should witness to the lost. We should pray. We should do this and do that. But all of those things are secondary.

Our duty here is summarized when it simply says:

Consider Christ.

What is your high duty toward God? It is to consider Christ. To consider something is to mind it, to pay attention to it.

What a glorious duty we have toward God. He simply asks us to consider His Son. We must think about Him. We must consider the great wonder of Him. In short, our Christian duty is to love Him.

Many a mere professor has thought himself to be a Christian without ever really considering Christ, without ever loving Him. But this is the sum of Christianity, to love the Lord thy God. Outward acts can be performed by those that perish, but only those who are called out can truly consider Christ.

What would you think if the wealthiest man in the world came to you and said I will give you all my wealth if you will do one thing? Why you would suppose that you would have to do something very costly to you. And you would say, What must I do? And he would say, simply consider me. Have respect unto me and love me.

Do you remember what Jesus wanted from Phillip? He asked him, "Do you love me?" And that was the key question. All other acts of service will flow from that. And the writer of Hebrews says, "Consider Christ."

Moses led the people out of Egypt. But there is a new exodus that is going on right now. Jesus is calling a people to himself and he is leading them to a heavenly land.

How do we get there? We consider Him. Our journey is not a physical journey like it was for Israel. They were an earthly election. But we are a spiritual election. Theirs was a physical journey to a physical land. Ours is a spiritual journey to a heavenly land.

Jesus is leading many sons to glory. But it is a journey of the heart. You must give your heart to Him. It says, "Consider Him." It might as well have said, "Love Him" for this is the meaning.

If you have never loved Christ before, today is the day of salvation. It is your duty to love Him and it will be your great honor to love Him. He has

first loved you and now you must love Him. Perhaps he has called you with a heavenly calling, and now it is your duty to consider him.

Do you feel the tug on the heart? Perhaps it is a heavenly calling that pulls on you. And if it is, you cannot resist it. It will draw you effectually to Christ and you will consider Him.