

## “Our Ultimate Example”

(Part 2)

Heb. 3:1-6

- INTRO. - The Book of Hebrews is an incredible book, but it is one that is often misunderstood and misapplied. There is often a great tendency (in the church) to focus on one part of Scripture to the exclusion of other parts of Scripture. Everyone has their proof texts for their particular understanding of theology.

- Some people emphasize human responsibility over God’s sovereignty in salvation (or vice versa). So we end up with the Arminians battling with the Calvinists.

- Others want to focus on the Law to the exclusion of grace, and (on the other side) there are those who take grace to the point of denying obedience or Lordship.

- Some have focused on the deity of Christ to the exclusion of His humanity – while others have focused on His humanity to the exclusion of His deity.

- And (of course) what we must learn, is that every major doctrine in Scripture needs to be kept in balance with *all* that Scripture teaches. This is why the systematic teaching of the Bible is so important. Through the faithful exposition of Scripture (verse by verse) we are exposed to the “whole counsel of God” – thereby avoiding the dangers and perils of getting things out of balance.

- There are some key places in this book where this is especially needful – and we find one of those in the passage we are dealing with today. We are returning to 3:1-6, and the very last part of v. 6 is often misunderstood and misapplied.

- In fact, if you couple that with v. 14, we find phrases that are often used as “proof texts” for teaching that believers can lose their salvation. On the other hand, there is the danger of giving false assurance to those who have never really experienced the salvation of God.

- And again, the problem stems, *not* from the Bible itself, but from the tendency to focus only on one aspect of what the Bible teaches to the neglect of another. So we’ll wrestle with this when we get to v. 6.

- But (as we saw last week) in Heb. 3:1-6 we see the first mention in this book of a great OT hero. We see a reference to Moses – who was seen by most Jews of that day as the greatest man in the history of God’s people.

- Even though this passage is about the superiority of Christ above Moses, we *do* see where Moses was faithful in his God-assigned role. Men like this are important as examples of true heroism in the faith.

- And (of course) Jesus Christ is the ultimate example we need to focus on. In fact, that is the message of this passage: “consider Jesus.” Although there are many

examples of godly faith in Scripture, our ultimate example is the Lord Jesus Christ.

- We started in this passage last week, and the first thing we saw was:

## I. THE COMMAND (v. 1)

- Look with me at v. 1, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”

- This section is clearly addressed to believers. The phrase “holy brethren” cannot be taken in any other way. These are fellow Christians – those who are true brothers in Christ.

- These are those who are “partakers of a heavenly calling.” That refers to the effectual calling of God unto salvation. However, we can understand (from this larger exhortation) that these are believers that are beginning to waver in their commitment to Christ.

- As Jewish Christians, they are glancing back at Judaism – and that is *why* they are being admonished to “consider Jesus.” Once they are fully convinced of the vast superiority of Jesus, they will no longer be tempted to turn back to Judaism.

- And in essence, what they are being asked (here) is, “Why would you want to hang on to the earthly rituals (the earthly symbols and ceremonies) when you now have the real thing? You now have the heavenly reality.”

- He says, “For Christians to hang on to earthly religious trappings *not only* is unnecessary and pointless but also spiritually harmful. To do so keeps us from experiencing the fullness of our new relationship with God and from being able to follow Him as faithfully as we ought.”

- The word “therefore” (in v. 1) refers back to what had been said previously. This is the author’s way of saying, “In light of all I have said, consider Jesus (first and foremost).”

- The word “consider” means more than to merely look at something. It means to “fix your mind on.” It is a word that implies continual action. The idea is, “Put your mind on Jesus and keep it there.”

- Keep your focus on Christ alone.” He alone is the ultimate example. We are to fix our eyes on the One who is the supreme example of faithfulness. On the basis of Who He is and what He has done, we are to “consider Him.” He is all we will ever need.

- He is our perfect Apostle (our perfect “sent One”) and our perfect High Priest. He has *not only* made it possible for us to *know* God, but to ultimately (one day) live forever in the *presence* of God. As the Bible says, no one

can go to the Father except through Christ. (That's John 14:6) Secondly, we saw:

## II. THE COMPARISON (v. 2)

- Go with me to v. 2, "He [that is Christ] was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house." At this point, the author of Hebrews is *not* making a *contrast* but a *comparison*. Both were faithful.

- Before showing Jesus' superiority over Moses, he talks about the resemblance between the two. Like Jesus, Moses was faithful. He was faithful "in all His (God's) house."

- This comes from Num. 12:7-8, where it says, "...My servant Moses...is faithful in all My household...with him I speak face to face..." The Word of God tells us that Moses was faithful in all God called him to do. That is confirmed by the fact that God spoke to him face to face.

- There is no one else in the OT that can be said of. God spoke to His prophets through dreams and visions, but with Moses He spoke to him as a close friend.

- And we need to remember how highly the Jews of that day regarded Moses. It is difficult for us (Gentiles) today to fully comprehend this, but nearly *everything* connected with God (for them) was also connected with Moses.

- So the Spirit of God (through the human author of Hebrews) is beginning with this positive affirmation of Moses' faithfulness. He was faithful to do all God called him to do.

- And in the same way, Jesus was faithful to the One who appointed him as well. As God's supreme Apostle (God's supreme sent-One) He was completely faithful to the will of the Father. Now, all that is review, but we move (now) to a third element, which is:

## III. THE CONTRAST (vv. 3-6a)

- In vv. 3-6a we see the *contrast* between Christ and Moses. The author is going to (now) go on and show that Christ is *superior* to Moses. He began by showing how they are alike, but now he is going to show how they are different.

- As great as Moses was, Christ is even greater! And by showing that Christ is greater than Moses, the author of Hebrews is also showing that the new covenant established by Christ is greater than the old covenant established by Moses.

- There are two ways in which Christ is greater than Moses. First of all:

### A. In Regard to Praise (vv. 3-4)

- Look with me at v. 3, “For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.”

- Notice the key word “house.” This was introduced at the end of v. 2. It is the Greek word “oikos” and it really means “household.” It is referring to people – *not* a building.

- And the concept of stewardship is clearly connected with this. A steward was one who did *not* own the house, but was responsible to manage it.

- In this particular case, God was the owner of the household of Israel, but Moses managed God’s household for a while. He was a steward of God’s household – and he was a faithful steward. He managed God’s household well.

- But in contrast to that, Jesus (as God) was the builder of the house. This is why He is worthy of more glory than Moses. The builder of the house deserves more glory than the one who manages it.

- The author of Hebrews uses architectural imagery here to show the superiority of Christ over Moses. As George Guthrie puts it, “To look at a beautiful, artfully crafted building may inspire appreciation or wonder, but praise

belongs to the craftsman rather than the craft.” The builder is superior to the house that he builds.

- In this way, Jesus is superior to Moses. In fact, we can really say that Moses was part of the “house” that Jesus built. Jesus *not only* made Israel, but Jesus also made Moses. As Creator God, He created them both.

- We’ve already been told (in 1:2) that Jesus made the world. In John 1:3 we’re told that “All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” It has already been established that Christ is the Creator of all things – and that includes people – that includes Moses.

- And we all know that the Creator is greater than the creature – the Creator is worthy of more honor than the one created. So this clearly points to Jesus as God, and as the One who is the Creator of the “house.”

- Notice the phrase “counted worthy” (in v. 3). This Greek verb contains the idea of “weights.” Of course, this is pointing to an old scale, where you put weights on one side and weights on the other side to see if one outweighs the other.

- In this case, you put the weights of Moses’ glory on one side, and the weights of Christ’s glory on the other. The testimony of the Spirit of God (through the human author of Hebrews) is that the glory of Christ far outweighs the

glory of Moses. Moses was faithful, but he was merely a part of the “house” that Christ was building.

- Jesus (as God) is the builder of the house, and therefore is worthy of greater honor. And the application for the original hearers, was that they should *not* cling to the covenant Moses came to bring, but to embrace the new covenant Christ came to bring.

- As John MacArthur puts it, “To hold on to the forms of Judaism or to its greatest leader is to hold on only to the symbol of reality or to an instrument of reality. To hold on to Jesus is to hold on to reality itself.”

- Why would you want to hang on to the shadow when you have the real thing? And we need to bring that up to our day and time. Why would anyone today embrace mere symbols and rituals instead of Christ Himself?

- A lot of people think they are OK because they go to church and participate in the symbols and rituals of religion – but you’d better make sure you have Christ Himself. You’d better make sure you know Him as Lord and Savior.

- So Christ is greater than Moses in regard to praise. But there is a second way He is greater, and that is:

## B. In Regard to Position (vv. 5-6a)

- Look at v. 5, “Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house...” (Stop right there.)

- Both Moses and Christ were faithful, but Moses was faithful as a **servant**, while Christ was faithful as a **Son**. There’s a big difference between a servant and a son. The son has a much greater position.

- The word for “servant” is the Greek word “therapon,” and it refers to a high ranking servant. And yet, as high as that honor is, he was still a servant – he was *not* the son. He was a faithful steward of the house, but he was *not* the owner of the house.

- Moses administered the household of God as *part* of that household. Christ (as Son) rules over God’s household as the *owner* of the household. Not only is He the Creator of the house – He is also the owner of the house.

- Notice the prepositions “in” and “over.” Moses was faithful “**in** all His house” but Christ was faithful “**over** His house.” That’s the difference between a servant and a son.

- The sphere of Moses’ ministry was that he exerted authority and leadership in his role as a *servant* of God for the period of time that he lived. Christ (on the other

hand) has authority over God's house as the *heir*. And since He is eternal, His rule will never end.

- And the argument (here) is, "Why cling to the lesser when you can have the greater? Why cling to Moses and the old covenant when you can have the Son of God and the new covenant?"

- Notice that phrase (in v. 5) that says, "...for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later..." What is this talking about? What this is speaking of, is the fact that Moses predicted – in word and in type – the ultimate coming of the Son of God.

- In other words, the lesser predicted the greater. Even the Jews of today still do *not* fully grasp this. Moses was faithful as a servant to give testimony of the things to come in Christ.

- Judaism without Christ (or the Old Testament without the New Testament) is incomplete. It is the mere shadow without the substance.

- Later the author of Hebrews will say (in 10:1), "For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near."

- The shadow is incomplete and insufficient. It is only the substance that can bring about eternal salvation. The shadow, without the substance, is useless.

- But what was God's purpose in the giving of the Law? What is the purpose for the shadow? It is to lead His people to accept the substance when it came. Jesus told the Jews of His day (in John 5:46), "if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me."

- Moses pointed to the substance that was to come. He pointed to the coming of Christ. And the truth of the matter is, that Moses witnessed dimly of God's redemptive purposes – but Christ revealed them fully and completely.

- So we've seen the command, the comparison, and the contrast – now (finally) we see:

#### IV. THE CONFIDENCE (v. 6b)

- Look at the last part of v. 6, "...whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." The problem word is (of course) the word "if." That seems to make it conditional.

- This verse is often coupled with v. 14, which says, "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end..." The word "if" is used there as well, and this seems to imply

that there is a possibility that we might *not* hold firm to the end.

- In fact, these verses have led some to believe that it is possible for a genuine believer in Christ to lose his or her salvation. It has produced the idea that our salvation is different from what God did in the case of Noah.

- Instead of the truth that God Himself put Noah safely in the Ark and shut the door behind him – this erroneous notion has led people to believe it is like putting pegs on the outside of the Ark and telling Noah, “Hold on as long as you can, but if you can’t hang on you will perish.”

- Listen, Heb. 3:6 does *not* mean that our salvation is dependent upon our “holding on.” The Bible is very clear – we neither save ourselves nor keep ourselves saved. God is the One who does both.

- These verses cannot mean that genuine believers can lose their salvation because there are too many other passages that teach we are eternally secure. The Bible does *not* contradict itself. This has to mean something else. So how do we explain this? Here’s how. This is *not* speaking of the *retention* of our salvation, but the *possession* of it.

- That phrase, “if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end” is a phrase that points to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. This biblical doctrine teaches that those who are truly

born again **WILL** (in fact) persevere to the end. Genuine faith never fizzles.

- Another way to understand this, is to say that continuance in the faith is proof of its reality. If someone falls away from the faith, that serves as proof that they were never truly saved.

- As 1 John 2:19 says, “They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.”

- In John 6:39 Jesus testifies that there will be none of His sheep lost along the way. Every single one who belongs to Him will be brought to glory. In Rom. 8:29-30 (the “golden chain of salvation”) the Apostle Paul makes it clear that no genuine believer in Christ will be lost along the way. *All* those who are there at the beginning of the process will still be there at the end of the process.

- The Bible very clearly teaches that true believers can never lose their salvation. So what is this saying in Heb. 3:6 (and 14)? It is saying that those who are truly saved **WILL** (in fact) hold on to the end.

- This is how we know who is truly part of His house. This is how we know who is truly saved. Those who hold on to the end are those whom He has regenerated. This was a much-needed message to the original audience.

- Because some were considering going back to Judaism, the writer is presenting a test to them. Here's the test: whenever believers come under persecution, or any kind of suffering or pressure, if they hold firm in their faith until the end, they give testimony that they truly belong to Christ. This was given to assure them that they were truly saved.

- But now, what we need to understand (at this point) is that this is only one side of the equation – and this is something that needs to be kept in balance. On the one side we need to assure genuine believers that they are totally secure (eternally) in Christ; but on the other hand we need to be careful *not* to offer false assurance to those who may *not* really be born again.

- Some have emphasized the critical doctrine of grace to the point of saying that there is no need to be concerned about a life of obedience to Christ. I have actually heard people say to someone who is living in a blatantly sinful lifestyle that they are OK because they walked an aisle and prayed a prayer when they were young.

- Today there seems to be a great disconnect between making a profession of faith and living a life that gives evidence of true spiritual regeneration.

- The Apostle Paul clearly deals with this in Rom. 6:1-4. He addresses those who would pervert his doctrine of

grace into that of license to sin. He flatly declares, “That can never be!”

- Those who have a saving relationship with Christ are to consider themselves dead to sin. They are to reject sin's mastery over their mortal bodies. In other words, saving grace always means freedom from sin; *not* freedom to sin.

- The conditional clauses of Heb. 3:6 and 14 serve to emphasize the evidence of genuine salvation. In the context of Hebrews it appears that there were some who were in danger of drifting from their full commitment to Christ, and the message is, that this is how a believer gains assurance of salvation. Those who “hold fast [their] confidence and the boast of [their] hope firm until the end” can be assured that they are truly saved.

- And one key point of application (here) is to guard against the giving of false assurance to someone by pointing to some past experience instead of a life of perseverance in the faith.

- Sometimes parents, for example, are so zealous in convincing themselves (and their children) that they are truly born again, that when they express doubts about it, they point back to the time when they came forward and got baptized instead of helping them to “examine themselves and see if they are really of the faith.”

- This is dangerous. George Guthrie writes, “If we encourage individuals to anchor their assurance in any

past event, we give them an uncertain foundation and may give false assurance to those who should really be doubting the reality of their relationship to Christ.”

- We should really be cautious about giving some kind of assurance to someone who is living a lifestyle of sin, and has never really shown any evidence of a transformed life. The worst thing we can do is to say something like, “Oh, but don’t you remember when you walked down that aisle and got saved?” or “Don’t you remember when you got baptized?”

- No, we cannot look into a person’s heart and know their true spiritual condition – so it would be much better to say, “Genuine believers always show evidence of a changed life through spiritual regeneration, therefore you should examine yourself carefully and make sure you are in the faith.”

- And, by the way, even though the conditional clause of 3:6 is intended to point to the evidence of salvation, it also includes responsibility. It implies that believers *should* “hold fast [their] confidence and the boast of [their] hope firm until the end.”

- In other words, this is an admonition *not* to waver in your faith. The word for “confidence” (there) is a word that means “free speech.” The idea (here) is boldness. It is the opposite of being timid in your faith. It is the essence of Ps. 107:2, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Don’t be timid about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- And we are to hang on to our eternal hope, no matter what comes into our lives. This communicates an attitude; a disposition. This is like what Job declared when he said, “Though he [God] slay me, yet I will trust in Him.” (Job 13:15)

- This is *not* the notion that as long as He is in the boat with me, I won’t sink. It is the firm assurance that even if the boat sinks, He will still be with me, and I will still trust in Him.

- It is the determined disposition, that no matter what tragedy may come or evil I may encounter, through it all I will stand on the promise that “all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.”

- Now, the final point I want to emphasize from this verse is the fact that we are His house. Go back and notice what it says, “but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house whose house we are...”

- What is that a reference to? It is reference to the church. But it is *not* talking about church buildings – it is talking about redeemed people. In Eph. 2:19 we are told that the church is “God’s household” and in v. 22 the Bible says that we “are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

- 1 Tim. 3:15 says, “...*I write* so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.” We are God’s house.

- In the same way that Moses was over the house of God in the OT so Christ is over His house, the church. And in the same way Moses was faithful over the house of God, so Christ is always faithful over His house.

- But the Bible also tells us that we (as believers) are called to be stewards in His house. We are to be faithful to Him and we are to be investing ourselves in the service of His household.

- We’re to be using our spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ, we are to be faithful in using unrighteous mammon (our financial resources) for His eternal purposes. We are to be giving of our time and talents – and the end result is that we will one day hear Him say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER