

Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2017 8:45 PM
Subject: Closing MOB Session on Hebrews Study

We were again privileged this past Tuesday nite to have Pastor Jesse Johnson give us a "brief word of exhortation" on the book of Hebrews--as an appropriate "finale" to our study--just as he gave us an "overview" of the book, kicking off our study on September 20th, and preparing us for what we would learn in more depth! You could tell Jesse really enjoys talking about Hebrews! In fact, he called it one of the most incredible books of the Bible--and he told us back in September that it was one of his favorite books to teach!

We found out through our study over the past nine months--just as Jesse had noted in September--that the book points, first and foremost, to the person of Jesus Christ and, in doing so, fulfills all the expectations of the Old Testament! The "incompleteness" of the Old Testament is now gone!

As we now know, Hebrews was written to Jewish believers, or would-be, maybe might-be, believers who were just beginning to experience persecution for their faith, or their association with the faith, probably during the 60's A.D. with Emperor Nero on the throne! Some of them were contemplating a return to Judaism, which they could "safely" practice! And so, the author of Hebrews--which Jesse strongly believes was the apostle Paul (contrary to doubts of Hagner and others) --makes a strong case that his readers (including those who "professed" but may not as yet have "possessed" salvation) needed to "stand firm in their faith"! And "run the race," and "keep their eyes fixed" on Jesus!

According to Jesse, Paul (the author!) "just couldn't believe that Jewish believers would even think of going back to Judaism"--back to the Levitical system that could never take away sin! Especially after having heard and understood how Jesus had died on the cross, offering up Himself "once and for all" to take away the "sin of the people"! And so, Paul makes the case for Jesus as God's supreme revelation to the world! That He was, in fact, God's Son--the "heir of all things, through whom also He made the world...the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...(who) when He made purification of sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they!" (Hebrews 1:1-4)

Jesse left us with four "takeaways"--which he characterized as "thinking like Paul"!

1--Train yourself to think that Jesus Christ is better than anyone or anything (fill in the blank!) in every way! He went through the litany of people and things the Jewish people held in their highest esteem--in each of the 13 chapters of Hebrews! Angels! Moses! Abraham! Melchizedek! A better covenant! A better sacrifice! A greater High Priest! Etc. etc.! So why would anyone want to go back and "neglect so great a salvation"?

Jesse urged us to recognize who Jesus Christ is and, specifically, every day and in everything to identify how Jesus is so much better!

2--Understand that apostasy is real! While we know that Jesse believes in, and teaches about, the "security of the saints," and made this clear in his talk, he emphasized that we still need to "take care of our hearts"--and be sure that we never have an "evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God"! That we not allow a "root of bitterness" to spring up in our lives! That we "run the race set before us"! And that we be reminded that it's still a "terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" (Hebrews 10:31)

3--Think in Biblical categories! He noted that everything in our lives should be "saturated in Scripture"--and always be viewed in a "Biblical framework"! Just like Paul! And Jesse!

4--Treasure and honor the church! See ourselves as part of the "body of Christ"! Having a "corporate view"! Meeting together! Exhorting and encouraging one another in the faith! Jesse noted how hard it is for someone to "follow the Lord and not go to church"!

Jesse also noted that all the imperatives (exhortations) in chapter 13, and elsewhere throughout the book of Hebrews--concerning Christian living--"flow out of the doctrinal foundation that has been established" in the book! We strive to live righteously because of the "confidence" we have that we've been "sanctified by the blood of Christ;" we've "strengthened by His grace;" we have something "better;" and we can enjoy the "security" we have in Christ"!

How "better" to end this study than with the closing benediction from Hebrews 13:20-21:

"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever! Amen!"

Grace be with you all!

Lowell