

Consider Jesus

a sermon in the series
Hebrews: An Epistle of Encouragement

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Hebrews 3:1-6

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. 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 firm unto the end.

Today, we get to the heart and soul of the book of Hebrews, as it is found in just two words, “consider Jesus.” If succinctness is a virtue, then virtue is found in the wellspring of these two words. For in these two words we have the refreshment of soul, the cool drink of life, the eternal stream of heaven itself. Books have been written by the thousands to encourage believers in how to live the Christian life. Libraries could be filled to the ceilings with these volumes of advice. Christian bookstores dot the land with ample material on how you and I can be successful in our walk of faith. But with two words, the writer of Hebrews renders all the books written superfluous.

The whole of Christian living is in these two words, “consider Jesus.” These words tell us the source of this life and the sustainer of this life. If you want to know how to reject sin and how to be reconciled to God, “consider Jesus.” If you want to know how to grow in grace and power, then “consider Jesus.” If you want to know how to be faithful in obedience to God, then “consider Jesus.” The sum total and the whole of it all is Christ Jesus the Lord. For whatever reasons, we seem to miss this grand cornerstone in the constructing of our religion. When it comes to our faith in Christ, we seem to like to build on the soft-shell sandstone of our own power. We formulate theories and construct methodologies in order to be successful in the Christian life. In so doing, we condemn ourselves to a constant struggle and repeated failure. I am absolutely persuaded of this. I know because I have done it. If we would only follow the instructions of these two words, “consider Jesus,” then I do believe that we would soar as God intends us so to do.

We often think that considering Jesus is something that unbelievers should do. The sinner ought to consider Jesus, but the book of Hebrews is written for Christians. It is devoted to helping Christians consider Jesus. He says, “Holy brethren . . . consider Jesus.” But don’t holy brethren consistently and always consider Jesus? No, we don’t. Remember the warning in Hebrews chap-

ter two and verse one, “we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at anytime we should let them slip.” “Let them slip.” literally means to, “drift away from them.” The ever-present danger is that we will stop considering Jesus and become more interested in other things and drift away from the word of God, perhaps never returning, proving we were never truly “partakers of the heavenly calling.” So Hebrews calls us Christians again and again to “consider Jesus.” So I pray, Lord help us to find the power of those words. Help us to fix our eyes upon Him who was and is and forever shall be, keep our eyes from wandering as they are seemingly cursed to do. Amen.

The apostle of encouragement in the book of Hebrews gives four considerations about Jesus. The beginning of the text is the conjunction “therefore” meaning his words now are linked to what he has previously said. He has said many deep things about Jesus in the first two chapters. With that in mind, he goes further to give us four important considerations, four things he wants you and me to concentrate on this morning. You must muster pure powers of concentration. That is the command. You and I are being told to assemble our powers of attention and focus them, not on me, the preacher. Oh, God forbid that you would do so, but rather you would focus your attention upon the Word of God, who is Christ the Lord. Focus on Him!

Why does the writer speak as he does? It is the same reason that week after week I encourage you to meditate on the word. The strength of the Christian life is not your own. Neither is it to be found in some formula or methodology for successful Christian living. It is none of these things. It is the simplicity of meditating, considering, pondering the glory, the excellence, the majesty, the magnitude of Jesus. That is all the Christian life is about, being totally enthralled and in love with Him so that your mind is preoccupied with Him to the point you begin to think, talk and act like Jesus. The preacher to the Hebrews did exactly what any good gospel preacher is going to ask you to do---think about Jesus. Sermons should not be works of art that cause you to marvel at the preacher’s craft. They should be the means to excite your mind to consider Jesus. This is the whole structure of the Christian life. It is not how we do church, or how we serve God, or how we structure programs to facilitate Christian growth. It is simply allowing the mind and heart to be enthralled in the contemplation, meditation, and the thinking about Jesus.

If you need encouragement today, here is what you are to do. You stop and think about Jesus. You ponder upon Him and meditate upon Him. Thankfully, for some of us who are not so good when it comes to thinking deeply, the apostle gives us four things to think about. Each of these four considerations of Jesus is an exhortation to be faithful. The question is how do they provoke such? Let’s look at each one of them.

The first consideration is Jesus’ apostleship. The writer says, “I want you to consider this Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” Jesus is called an apostle. There are two reasons why He is called an apostle. First, it is because Jesus is the revelation of God. The fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelt in Christ. We have already studied this in the first two chapters, especially in chapter one, in the very prologue of this book, where we are told that Jesus is “the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person.” When a man saw Jesus, he could say he saw God. I don’t

understand the trinity, I must confess my ignorance. I really don't understand it, but I accept it by faith. I do not mean to insinuate the throwing out of reason, but my statement is to show the limitation of human reasoning. Human reasoning can't comprehend the infinite vastness of God. I am not asking you to throw away intelligence as some might think the Christian faith does. Some have interpreted becoming a Christian as the beginning of rejecting reason. In other words, you have to take blind leaps into the dark if you are to be a follower of Christ. Hardly so! Those who prescribe as much are not asking you to believe by faith, but to believe by presumption. The true Christian faith does not ask anyone to be presumptuous. The Christian life advocates the use of reason. The powers of logic and thinking are certainly one of the characteristics of the image of God in us. The image is greatly marred but it yet remains. However, there are some aspects of God's great character that simply cannot be understood by human logic and powers of reasoning. These things cannot be known without the grace of divine illumination.

Now, when we say that Jesus is the express image of God, and that when you saw Jesus, you saw God, I don't want you to be confused. We are not preaching some type of Unitarian doctrine or "Jesus only" heresy. But, on the other hand, you must know that God in three persons is and was manifested in Christ. Therefore, He is an apostle because it is the primary responsibility of an apostle to give forth revelation. The apostles' ministry was to give revelation of who God was and what God's purpose with us was. Christ Himself preached the revelation of God by the Spirit. Therefore, we say Christ is an apostle of the revelation of God, and it was for this mission that Christ came, to reveal God to us.

Secondly, Jesus is an apostle because He had the authority of God. There are certain things about the apostles' ministry that have confused many. But we can say with assurance that God simply gave them a blessing, an anointing, an authority that was apostolic, and it ends with them. I do not believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased. I still believe that God does miracles. Miracles have not ceased. For miracles to cease then God would have to cease; He is the God of the miraculous.

But there is a certain thing the apostles had the authority to do that I don't have. I don't have the authority to reveal new truth about God. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament did. No man today has that authority. Neither I nor any other man has the type of authority that can be said to be foundational for the church. Only the apostles had that kind of ministry.

But Jesus Christ being the Apostle of God said, "I have all authority." He has the authority to tell us what to do, for He established the law upon which the New Covenant would operate. And if He is our apostle, we ought to listen to Him. The writer of Hebrews is admonishing you and me to take heed and listen to the Chief of Apostles who is the highest of all. He is the revelation of God sent as an ambassador by God. He has the authority of God, so you had better listen.

Dear friend, this is the bedrock of the Christian faith. That is why we exalt Jesus Christ. That is why we bless the name of Jesus. Everything God the Father has ever done is to exalt His Son. In the exaltation of His Son, He glorifies Himself. Consider our Lord's apostleship, for He is the revelator and authority of God to us.

The second thing He wants us to consider is Jesus' priesthood. He is not only an apostle, but He is also a high priest. Now, here again, there are two reasons why he wants us to consider this in order for you to be encouraged. If you need encouragement today, you should pay close attention to this.

Jesus is a high priest because a high priest provides atonement for the people. Jesus is the high priest of a better covenant, a covenant that is built on better promises and a better sacrifice. The sacrifice that High Priest Jesus makes on our behalf is His very own self. When I am discouraged, when I find little to rejoice in, if I will do what the author of Hebrews is reminding us to do and that is, consider our Lord's high priestly role of offering the sacrifice, I will find hope and rejoicing will return. Oh, I do not think I can keep from singing right now as I consider that He died for me. He paid my debt! Constrained only by love for me, for He did not have to do it. What ever your problem, dear child of God, look to Christ your high priest and watch Him commit the sacrifice that will atone for your sin. Watch Him deliver Himself to the wooden altar of Calvary. See Him bleed the Lamb of God that He might present His blood a living atonement. Oh, whatever the problem might be, it doesn't look as bad, it doesn't look as important as you first thought it to be. When you put everything into the perspective of the atoning death of Christ, you can see much more clearly. When you see that in the death of Christ, God was demonstrating His wisdom, how pale and puny your wisdom appears. What wisdom do we have to change our lives and problems? How weak a wisdom is ours; it is very insufficient for whatever the situation. The dear author of this blessed book was writing to people who were being persecuted and he wanted so to encourage them, and thus he reminded them to remember that Christ died for them.

As a high priest not only did Jesus provide the atonement, but also He provides aid. Every good high priest provides aid to his people. Not only has Christ Jesus died for you, but also, dear friend, He lives for you. Later in the seventh chapter the writer of Hebrews will tell us that our Lord "ever liveth to make intercession for" us. As you think about the problems of your life, whether they are financial, physical, emotional or spiritual, you have a High Priest that provides the aid you need. At the conclusion of the second chapter of our Epistle the writer said that Christ was able to "succour." The word "succour" in the King James Version simply means "to aid." Christ is able to give aid to those of us who are tempted and tested. We must consider that our Lord is not just our Apostle but our High Priest, who can offer what we need precisely when we need it.

The third consideration is, Jesus is faithful. Can't you see the care that this writer has for his intended audience. He says to them in effect, "I know you are wearied from tribulation. I have no remedy for you, no methodology by which to empower you. There are no secret formulas. There is only looking to Jesus and seeing His faithfulness."

Verse two says, "Who was faithful to him that appointed him." Jesus was faithful to God. Now why does he mention Jesus being faithful to God? How will this help to serve the needed encouragement? Well, it should encourage you in this way; it should encourage you to be faithful to God. I believe that Jesus' faithfulness is an example to us and for us. As Christ was faithful, so you and I can be faithful. "But wait a minute," you say, "Jesus is God. He couldn't help but to be faithful. I am not God. I am flesh and bone and I am weak."

Dear friend, have you already forgotten the second chapter of Hebrews that we have just finished? Don't you remember it says in the seventeenth verse, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."? Do not forget either the fourteenth verse that says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Christ became a man. This is intrinsic to the good news of the Gospel. God was in Christ and Christ is God, but He was also a man. And as a man He was faithful! Jesus the man, and oh, I get so scared when I start trying to separate His deity from His humanity. I feel like I am on the precipice of falling into deep, deep heresy. But I cannot leave it alone. Our author does not fear to pick up Christ's humanity and wield as a mighty weapon against the enemy and against discouragement.

Jesus was made in the womb of Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was not conceived to be anything but a man. He is the seed of the woman foretold by God when He pronounced the curse upon mankind and the serpent after the fall in the garden. Oh yes, He is veiled deity, but He is also naked humanity needing to be robed in Holy Spirit power. Our Lord, as does any man among us, needed the anointing of the Spirit of God, and as a man he relied upon the Spirit, who filled Him above measure. He needed this to walk faithfully before His God. He is our example. Dare we think that we need not to be clothed with divine enduement? Will you walk faithfully before God without such anointing of the Holy Spirit? Neither you nor I can be faithful to God without the very Spirit that infused our Lord.

Romans chapter eight and verse one is a blessed truth. Today, those of you who are struggling to do your very absolute best to make God happy with you need to remember that your very absolute best cannot bring happiness to the heart of God. If you will know this truth beyond just the intellect and let it burn in your heart and swell it with joy, you will know the freedom of justification and the resulting liberty of the Spirit of Christ. You will be able to have, as our text says, "rejoicing of the hope." You need a heart set on fire, and this verse is the spark. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The concept of flesh in this verse is not sin but living by the power of the flesh. Paul is talking about living in the domain of the flesh. This domain of flesh can manifest itself as evil deeds but can also be seen as good works of religion. In other words, if you try to serve God and keep His commandments by your own resources then you are living by the power of the flesh. God has made it powerfully clear that the flesh in no respect can please Him. Romans 8:8 is His verdict on living by the power source of the flesh, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

The answer to the flesh is being in Christ Jesus. "There is no condemnation" if you are in Christ Jesus. If you are in Christ you are not walking according to the power of the flesh to please God, you are walking by the power of the Spirit of Christ. Let's continue with verses two and three of Romans eight, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The flesh was

the problem not the Law of God. The flesh will never submit to God or His law, for the flesh always wants the control.

Paul in verse four shows us the purpose of Christ coming as a man, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Jesus was able to be faithful to God as an example of how we can be faithful. It is not by us keeping the commandments. It is by us being submissive to the Holy Spirit, following His leadership, and being filled constantly with His influence. When you are walking in the Spirit as Christ walked, then you will fulfill the commandments of God.

Let me share a second reason I believe that the writer of Hebrews cites the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus. It's a reminder of His faithfulness to us. As faithful as He was to His Father, so He will be faithful to us. He has made us certain promises, and we can be encouraged that He is faithful to His word.

We talk a lot about the weakness of man and man's corruption. We subscribe wholeheartedly to the doctrine of total depravity. It is true, God doesn't need us, but yet, He incorporates us into His Master plan. He is so gracious to say to puny man, "I am looking for men who will believe me and trust in me that I might show myself strong towards them and on their behalf." Now you can never, ever get away from the fact that ultimately everything that God does, He does for His own glory. But neither can we or should we forget He also does certain things because He loves us.

We who are very strong in the doctrines of grace miss this I think. We get so theologically minded that we are of no earthly good. I didn't say "heavenly minded", I said, "theologically minded." We forget that although He does do everything for His glory, He gets glorified in loving you and me. He gets glory when we respond to His love and reciprocate love with love. Everything that Jesus did on this earth ultimately glorified the Father and glorified Himself, but never forget His life, lived and died, was also an act of His love for His people. Every blind eye that He opened was a loving gesture of faithfulness to lost and weak humanity. Every lame foot that was made whole was an act of His faithful love to people. Every kind word, every act of charity and benevolence that He gave from His heart was an act of faithfulness to a people who will never be wholly faithful to Him.

Today, the apostle says, "I want you to consider Him. I want you to think for a moment and thereby be encouraged that when even you're faithless, He is faithful. When you're unfaithful, He remains steadfast in His commitment to you." His loving ministry toward us is not a product of our works or our deserving; it is the product of His grace. He is faithful!

The last consideration we are given by the author to meditate on is Jesus' superiority over Moses. Again verse two, "Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." He begins a comparison between Jesus and Moses. Why does he do that? Well, he is writing to Jewish Christians who revered Moses, just as we look to Abraham Lincoln or George Washington as the heroes of our culture and society. We esteem certain men in our past

and revere them. Moses was so revered that some Jews preached that Moses was superior to angels, because Moses spoke with God face to face. They argued God must have loved Moses in order to have revealed Himself face to face to Moses. God superintended Moses' own burial and funeral. From the burning bush to his death, Moses had the voice of God with Him. He was allowed the mercy to see God's glory. He was given the Ten Commandments written with God's own finger. He communed with God on two forty-day fasts, and when he came down from the mountain his own face shone with the glory of God. To say the least, Moses is a very important character in the Jewish religion.

Therefore, writing to Jewish Christians who had suffered for the cause of Christ and had seen people defect out of their assembly and go back to Judaism under the pressure of persecution, the writer knows he must deal with Moses. He realized that there were some in the congregation who were thinking that going back to Judaism might be the best thing to do; maybe then they would not have to suffer like they had done. He reminded them that Jesus is much better than Moses. He told them that Christ is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, "inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house."

When you and I look at a house or building and comment on how beautiful a construction the edifice is, we are glorifying the architect and builder. Beautiful architecture means a brilliant designer and constructor. The designer and the builder get the glory, and the text states Jesus is the builder of the house. What house is the writer referring to that Christ has built? It is the new temple of God called the redeemed.

Let's look carefully at the words of our text. Look at verse four, "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." Again the writer ascribes to Jesus deity when he declares that the builder is God. Clearly Jesus is God. Then he says in verse five, "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." Notice the preposition "in." "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house." Whose house was Moses faithful in? Verse six gives us the answer, "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 firm unto the end." The house belongs to Jesus.

Let's make some observations concerning this. Moses was in the house. He was part of the household of Christ. Moses was not a builder of any house; rather Moses was a servant in the house that Christ is building. Jesus is the Son over the house. Now there are four reasons I believe why whoever wrote the book of Hebrews states this distinction between Moses and Jesus. First, he wants to say, Jesus owns the house and that makes Him greater than Moses.

Second, Moses is an example of you and me; we too are a part of the house Jesus is building. What God is doing in redemptive history is building His house. We being lively stones are placed into His house.

Third, since Jesus owns the house, He also rules the house. Everything that goes on in this household goes on under the authority of Christ. I wish some of these “church people” would get into their minds that no church has authority in and of itself. They are just part of the house that our Lord reigns over. He has the authority over the house, and it is He that rules it.

Fourth, if Christ owns it and if He rules it, then He provides for His house. This whole concept is difficult for us to grasp because we do not practice nor endorse slavery. It is right that we have moral convictions that no man should be owned by another, but it makes the concept that the Bible is here presenting difficult to conceptualize. The Christians of the first century understood it. They could come to these conclusions readily without any assistance.

Moses was a servant. Let me use a harsher word to help you understand what this illustration in chapter three is stating. Moses was a slave in the house of Christ. Being in the house means he was in the household as a slave. As a slave, Moses had neither rights nor any authority. Moses could not decide that he was going to add an east wing to the house. Moses could not say to the Master, “Here is what we are going to do today.” He received the dictates of the Master. As a slave, Moses could not even provide for himself or his family. In other words, as a slave, his own family’s welfare was not in his power to keep. He must look to the Master who owned him and his family to give him everything that he needed. As a slave you could not provide for the well being of your wife or your children. You had no means for providing for them. Everything that your family received or did not receive was due to benevolence of the slaveholder.

Therefore the writer is telling his audience that Moses had nothing in and of himself, everything he possessed, he received by God. Thus, Jesus is better than Moses. But, dear friend, the writer does not stop with Moses. Read verse six, “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 firm unto the end.” Do you see the phrase, “whose house are we?” It is no wonder he begins verse one with the words, “Therefore holy brethren.” The implication is easily deduced, Moses and I are rubbing shoulder to shoulder this morning. I know that it is hard to believe, but believe it or not, it remains true. Moses has nothing on us; he is a fellow slave with us in the house of the Lord.

But it is better than that, we are actually brothers in this household. This house that our Lord is building is the family of God, and you are in the household “if you hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Now if you’re holding fast, you are in the house that Jesus owns, rules, and provides for. In the end it all goes back to Jesus.

Surely you didn’t come here today thinking to find something from me that will give you the edge you are looking for to live more obediently this week. It is not from either you or me. It is not mastering some set of principles or techniques. I do not have what you need to be faithful to Christ. Therefore, I pray you came here today to focus your attention upon Jesus because Jesus has everything you need to be faithful to God this coming week. It is not in you and it is not in me, it is in Him.

What do we do? We do the very thing that we should not do. We try to find some inner strength; we try to find some secret. We run to the latest seminar, buy the latest tapes or books, or go through some class to find out how to finally overcome some temptation. Or we do the above to be a better witness or a better intercessor. I am not against those things, but they are not the source. They are only tools that God may use or He might not use. The key is looking to Jesus. "Consider Jesus," who has everything you need.

Let me bring this to a close. What the Spirit of God is saying through our text is not what you and I must do for our Master, which would show Him our trustworthiness. Verse six is eliminating that. Many read into this exhortation to be faithful, a performance mentality that says, "I must labor hard to believe, I must labor hard to be faithful, I must labor hard to be productive for the Lord, lest I should cease to be a Christian." That is their mindset. "If I don't do these things, then I will not 'hold fast that confidence and the rejoicing in the hope firm unto the end' and I will be lost." But that is not what the writer is suggesting. There is no doubt that what he is stating is an exhortation to be faithful. Oh yes, indeed, it is every bit of such. But it is an exhortation to be faithful that says, "The only way I can be faithful, the only way I can persevere is by looking unto Jesus, the source of my faith which is grace. As I labor by His grace working in me, He will be glorified in this house to which I belong." What is the difference between the two concepts of this exhortation to be faithful? One fosters a desperate dependency upon human ingenuity. The other fosters a desperate dependency upon Christ.

Now look at the warning again. He says, "If we hold fast the confidence," my question is, what is the confidence of the Christian? Is your confidence in your ability to be faithful to God? Anyone that has served the Lord Jesus any length of time will begin to suffer an erosion of self-confidence, because you can't serve Him as you ought. That is why I said at the beginning of this message if you believe in that mentality that says you must serve Him by your own strength, you're in for failure. If that is how you view this passage, you are doomed to a never-ending struggle and constant condemnation. What is the confidence of the Christian? The writer of Hebrews answers the question in the fourth chapter and the sixth verse. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." There is your answer. Did you know the word "boldly" is the same Greek word in Hebrews 3:6 for "confidence"? It is the exact same word. Again I ask what is our confidence? The answer is that Jesus will supply the grace and mercy that we need to be faithful and to persevere unto the very end. Our confidence is not in us to be faithful, but in God. He can make us faithful and He has promised to do so. Romans chapter fifteen and verse thirteen says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Paul knew nobody could have hope without the power of the Holy Spirit supplying it. Our hope is not in ourselves to remain hopeful, but in Him who engenders hope. Therefore, "consider Jesus."

I would say to that person today who has no hope and who has come here with a wavering, doubtful, wishful kind of hope that says, "When I die, I will hope I will make it." I say to you, "consider Jesus," who is certain and dependable. Have you tried to change your life so many times

that you don't know how many new beginnings you have had? They all have failed as they were doomed to so do. And should you hear this word today and think you must try again, you will fail again. The problem is you have been considering the wrong source. You have been looking to yourself. Consider Jesus today. Call upon Him and cry out of your inability. Cry unto Him out of your lack of resources, cry to Him out of your sin and say, "God cleanse me. For there is no fountain I know that can wash me and make me white as snow."

Dear Christian, the key to Christian living is right here in our text, and so I ask you, how much time do you spend in the contemplation, meditation and thinking of the excellent glory and beauty of Jesus. The amount of time spent doing so will correspond to the flow of Christ's life through you. Little thinking and considering Jesus . . . little victory. Much meditating, being satisfied in his excellence, glory, faithfulness . . . much victory will be the result. Glory be to God who gave us such an Apostle and High Priest, who is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. To Him be the glory forever and ever! Our confidence is not in us to be faithful to God, but it is in Him who will make us faithful. Therefore, "consider Jesus!" Amen.