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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Morning
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Text Hebrews 3 verse 1

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

The obligation, the sweet obligation laid on "the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" to consider Christ Jesus, is laid in what has preceded the text. Who Christ is, what He is made, and what He did, these things come into the matter. Why should you consider what He did, and what He is, why should you consider Him? Because He is, "the brightness of His (Father's) glory, and the express image of His Person," (Hebrews 1 verse 3), and also because He put away sin, purged and removed it, and is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Further because He is superior to all angels, these heavenly messengers are not divine persons. But this Messenger of the Covenant is a divine Person, the Person of the Son of God. Angels were created spirits, the Son was Eternally Begotten, "And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." (Hebrews 1 verse 7). The Son is the Sent One emphatically, angels surround the camps, Jesus is in the midst of it, angels do what they are bidden, He, the Son of God, of His own will is the Saviour, according to the will of His Father.

Angels could not become man, the Son became the Son of the Virgin, He took a perfect nature as man, which was begotten of the Holy Ghost, into union with His Divine Person. And so, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2 verse 14). And this incarnate One is Captain of our Salvation, and is engaged to bring the many sons given to Him, to glory. And these holy brethren are the church of the Living God, in the midst of this church. This Divine Person Incarnate, declares, the will, the name and the words of the Father. He declares the righteousness of His Father, He is the Prince of Preachers, The Preacher of all preachers, as He Himself said, in the prophecy of Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isaiah 61 verse 1).

And because He was "made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people". (Hebrews 2 verse 17). "For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2 verse 18). In these things lies the foundation of the exhortation in the text. The obligation laid on the "holy brethren" who are "partakers of the heavenly calling" to "consider" Him. It is satisfying to a religious person, not one of the holy brethren, to take perhaps a cursory glance or to read the scripture in a superficial manner. But it cannot satisfy a child of God, so to look and so to read. All the never dying interests of your of your immortal souls, all the peace with God which we would have, and every movement felt, all the happiness of a passified conscience. All the standing with God without condemnation, all the perseverance in the narrow way, the sanctification of affliction, and the holding up of the soul in life. All its renewings, all the fructifying influences that will make a disciple bear fruit. All these things are in Him, of whom, this word is said, "consider Him."

All your best interests, and your inferior interests are here in Him. Everything that a man is, the Christian man is everything that he would be, and every good thing that he would do, every right step that he would take, all as to their life and their power, and their glorifying of God, you will find in this Person. What a mercy it is to have a heart to consider Jesus Christ. He said Himself in the days of His flesh, "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not," (Luke 12 verse 27). do not just look at them, as you pass by, and perhaps falsely tread on some of them. Consider they are a part of God's creation, they are brought, derived from Him, their life is given to them from Him. Consider them, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them." (Luke 12 verse 24). Consider their dependence and consider His Beneficence. Consider all things connected with them, and if we are called upon to consider these things, it will relieve our minds from that undue anxiety which is natural to us. If we are called upon to consider creatures, to relieve us from that corroding care, that so often comes upon us. Much more are we to consider Him, who is set before us in, this wonderful, this divine Epistle. Its one object, its main subject, is the Person and Priesthood of the Lord Jesus. O brethren, may God give you grace to follow this exhortation. But the first word of it may be a stumbling block to some of you, Holy Brethren. And some here who know their own soul's answer to it, may in their judgement, and their present feelings, be far from the holiness ascribed to the saints.

And this confusion may arise from a lack of proper understanding of what the word holy in the scripture means. Much may be read into it, by an exercised person that is not in it. You may think it means, what it does not mean. You may think it means an improvement of nature, and that you are to become better and better, that the sins which trouble you are to be removed. But look at the scripture as it speaks of this word. It is from Him, and the meaning is, to be set apart. Either a person, or a piece of land, or similar things, as the snuffer, the dish or all sorts of things set apart for a particular use, and not to things ordinarily or commonly used for any purpose. Moses was told "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exodus 3 verse 5). The ground was holy because God was there, He had set it apart for the time being while He was there. The holy anointing ointment, made up of all those things which existed before, and existed now, as appointed by the Lord that there was not to be any ointment made like it by any creature. If any one should presume to make ointment like it then he should be cut off. Does this apply to persons? Yes, every saint of God is a person set apart, sanctified as Jude speaks, "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."(verse 1). A person set apart for a particular use, a particular purpose, for the glory of God, made a vessel to be filled with glory. A vessel of mercy, set apart before the world began, and blessed by "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1 verse 3).

Now if this is the meaning of the word holy, as it is used in the scripture, then we have a clue to the way in which this word is to be used, Holy Brethren. Like all others born in sin and shapen in iniquity, living after the course of this world, under the power of that usurper Satan, but born again. They are brought from the world, brought out of it, set on the side of God, and for Him, and this brings one to say this, that each person bearing this name, whatever his present experience may be respecting himself, has this given to him. There is, that is to say, infused into his soul, what is called the divine nature, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (1 Peter 1 verse 4). A new heart is given, a right spirit is breathed into the soul. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."(2 Corinthians 5 verse 17. The Ephesians cried great is Diana of the Ephesians, and God came and quickened some of them, who cried to Him, and received from Him Spiritual blessings, and thus they were holy, and they received the forgiveness of their sins.

And it was said to the Colossians, "you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Colossians 2 verse 13). And thus made them holy. The priests under the old dispensation, had their own priestly garments made, and these garments were holy, as they were kept for the service of God. The priests thus clothed were holy, a royal holy priesthood, and this is applied to all the people of God, for they are blessed with grace, and they are forgiven all their sins, and they are clothed in the spotless robe of the Saviours righteousness. And thus sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God they are holy brethren. And there is an observation that may be made here, namely that they are holy in God's account. He inspired Paul to write this word, because it was the judgement of God concerning them. With no exercise, no pain, no shame, you may say you are not holy, but if He says you are, you are. And when His Spirit bears witness with your spirit, that you are the children of God, then you will know that you are holy.

"Thou art all fair, my love; (my sister my spouse) there is no spot in thee." (Song of Solomon 4 verse 7). She said, she was black, He said, she was comely, who sees judgement in these things shall stand. Seek God's testimony in your consciences. Partakers of the heavenly calling. There came a moment when a vital change took place. That moment comes to all the people of God, a vital change takes place. When and how, some may not be able to say, but there it is, a new heart with new feelings, and so it has been with us. A right spirit has a right direction, so has it been with us, and so it is. What are the new feelings? feelings about God, that He is great and holy, awful and glorious. That He has claims on a man, which claims have never been met. What solemn things these are.

Feelings about the man himself, that he is a sinner. He becomes the publican, and sympathises with Mary out of whom seven devils were cast. Infested as he is, he feels it would be an honour to be ranked with the dying thief. And a right spirit has a right direction, if you are right I can say this, your heart is after God, and sometimes you will be able to say to Him, "My soul followeth hard after Thee:" (Psalm 63 verse 8). The heavenly calling, The Lord Jesus called His disciples, and they followed Him. They left their father, they left their ships, they left their nets, they went after Him. And the call of God to a sinner has that efficacy in it, that the sinner obeys it, and goes to Him, he must go. He is glad to be allowed, to be enabled and be led to go. Oh the honour that is put on a sinner, who is drawn to the throne of God's heavenly grace.

The favour that comes to him, in the forgiveness, yea, in the sight that it can be forgiven, that sin is separable from the sinner, that it is no essential part of his nature. I think that sight to one who sees his sins, who feels that he is full of evil, is a very remarkable sight. Did you ever see that your sins might be separated from you, taken away from you, and you be the same person in another state? Bless God that sin will be for ever separated from us, when we reach eternity, as some of us hope. Called to be saints, this is the same thing as holiness. Called to be saints, set apart for God, that He might dwell among them. "In whom" says the Apostle, "ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2 verse 22). Set apart for God's deliverance, He is indeed the Host but He also is the guest. If you get this call, and are called into union with Jesus Christ, into fellowship with Him, you will understand with some joy in your soul, what it is to be called a saint. And this people are exhorted, you who are the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, are here spoken to.

You are not your own, your thoughts are not your own thoughts, you are not to do as you will, not to speak your own words, nor do your own pleasure, but to keep the Sabbath holy, which spiritually means, you are to be for the Lord. A very solemn consideration, for us who are so carnal, so carnally minded at times, so gadding after wrong things, so occupied with the things that perish. It is very solemn for us thus to be spoken to, in the scriptures, and when the Spirit presses such a word on the froward conscience, then it is indeed a serious thing. Serious to us, that are very much opposed to this word, although you have a hope that you are interested in it. Serious to us, that you are very much opposed to this word, whose time is occupied about the things that perish. "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (Matthew 6 verse 31). That scripture may be speaking to some of us at times, and it is very serious. A shadow is occupying the attention, and the body not looked at, the body is Christ, consider Him. Let your minds be occupied in this word, consider what is said of Him. First He is the Apostle of our profession, He is sent, and that brings us to see, to consider His Person. God is pleased with Him, Are you? He is ever before God His Father, is He often before you? His fulness is from His Father, is He often before you? His fulness is from His Father, is it before you? His mission, His authority, His word, are all from His Father. How little do some of us consider this Person, who sent Him? His Father, then He is the Father's servant, behold His Father's word concerning Him. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgement unto the gentiles."(Isaiah 42 verse 1).

Consider this dear friends, the Father's equal is now His servant. The Father's Fellow, is sent to do the Father's bidding, He flies on wings of everlasting love, from the bosom of the Father to the virgin, to take into union with His Person, that body prepared, spotless, innocent and pure, so that He should be Immanuel, God with us. The highest possible expression, of the wisdom and the love, and power of God is the Person of Immanuel. And yet, O what carelessness there is about Him, in some of us. What indifference to the Father who sent Him. How little have I ever thanked the Father for sending His eternal Son. How little have any of us apprehended, the grace of the Holy Ghost, to act in descending in His mighty operations upon the virgin, begetting that holy thing, that the Son was to take up and assume. How little of the grace of Jesus, have we considered? Paul says "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians 8 verse 9. My brethren, it is this Person, and this Person alone, in this word that we are to speak about, think of, consider and dwell upon.

Carnal thoughts come, and drive gracious thoughts away, well might Paul say, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7 verse 14. For he knew painfully what disadvantage it was not to be able to do the good that he would, and what it was to be driven into the evil he would not, and so it is with some of us. "For the good that I would I do not;" (Romans 7 verse 19). This good thing this meditation, considering. The dwelling upon and seeking to hold, and have near to us, even in our hearts, thoughts of this Person. The Psalmist said "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." (Psalm 104 verse 34). Paul considered Him greatly and narrowly, and so considering Him, He found himself able to say that, with all his privileges as a Jew. His attainments as a scholar, and self-righteousness in the law, his blamelessness, these were as loss and dung and dross to him, what for? That He might win Christ. I think he must have had a more or less perpetual meditation upon Christ, who He was and what He came to be and do. And the perfection of Christ, in His work as well as in His Person, and the beauty and sufficiency of Christ as to His righteousness, thus beamed upon him.

He had such a high view of Him, and His works, that he put aside and renounced, and so to say trampled under his feet, the things which were, so much to him as a man. May the Lord grant that we may have grace to follow the Apostle in that particular manner. Not a passing thought without affection, attraction, solemnity or sobriety, but a thought or thoughts that by grace shall dwell in the mind.

Hang upon the Saviour, love the consideration of Him sent, there were two things that he was sent for, the first was to speak, and the second was to act. To speak the words that He had heard His Father speak, and to do the things that He had seen His father do. And this should be well considered by us, for in the first place, how can we know God, unless He be revealed? But you say, He has revealed Himself in creation. This is true, "For the invisible things of Him (God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse". (Romans 1 verse 20). And they that do not see them, are willfully blind. The evolutionists say no, we have come from something of which we know nothing, and they ask us to believe a greater miracle than creation is, but we are told, we are to consider Him. That this blessed Jesus came to declare God's name, things which God had spoken in eternity, which the Trinity had decided upon in counsels and in communion. What the Father had spoken to the Son, as if He should say, now Thou must go to a ruined world and declare that there is in that world a Church. Take My name and declare it there, My righteousness and show it there, He came from Heaven to declare God's words. "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that He Himself doeth." (John 5 verses 19 & 20). "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." (John 12 verse 49).

O what a revelation Christ has made, creation makes a great revelation of God, providence also makes a great revelation of God, but these two together, with all their beauty and all their glory, and all the mystery of them can never, never stand by the side of this Sent One, this "Apostle of our profession, Christ Jesus." For He brings news, good news from a far country, the gospel. He purchased the blessed gospel of God, the glorious gospel of Christ, the good news. By good news to us, what would be good news to some of us this morning? why, that the Father gave His Son a commandment to die, to lay down His life, and Christ spake this, He said, "No man taketh it (my life) from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father." (John 10 verse 18). "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again." (John 10 verse 17). O what a word for the Saviour of sinners, and should He speak to any conscience here that is burdened with sin and death, should He say by His Holy Spirit.

I laid down My life for you, that you might live eternally, I gave Myself a ransom for you, now to be manifested and testified in your conscience. I put away your sins, by the sacrifice of Myself, when I offered Myself to God without spot. Would not that be good news? What earthly news can be compared with this, what good news is there to be compared with this, that Jesus died for sinners sake. O behold brethren,

Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place; (Gadsby's 536 verse 1).

Consider Him, in the things that He has preached, this is one thing. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10 verse 10). "I am the way, the truth, and the life:" (John 14 verse 6). Christ has spoken these things, He was sent to speak them, "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," (Hebrews 3 verse 5 & 6), was faithful. He faithfully spoke things that He was given to speak. The tongue of the learned was given to Him, (Isaiah 50 verse 4) grace was poured into his lips, and therefore what He said here and what He said in the Bible is true. Every word of God is pure, infallible. When you depend on this word as made known to you, you depend on absolute verity and truth. Think of it, think of the Saviour sent from heaven, for this express purpose, to declare what His Father, Himself and His Spirit had decided upon in the eternal counsels and in communion, now He makes God known. This is My beloved Son," I have sent Him to make known to you, who I am and whom and what He Himself is. For He did declare His Sonship, and who the Spirit is, and promised to send the Holy Spirit. God sent Him to speak those things in the world, in the Church of the living God. Now only a spiritual mind can enter into these things, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8 verse 7). "But the natural mind receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2 verse 14). That is why some of you have no interest in these things, that is the reason that you wish to have, another kind of thing, even the world. The world speaks of the world, and therefore the world loves its own, but when Christ gives His word to a person and makes him a saint. Then the world, as he comes into contact with it, opposes and hates what God has given. What a mercy then for those of us, that God has enlightened, to consider Him. He is born again who considers this, the meaning of the things of the Spirit in considering Christ Jesus. Consider Him as sent of God to preach the Covenant of Grace, that God made with Him.

To preach and express this truth that He is the head of the body, the Church. That He is the true vine and that without Him we can do nothing, but that in union with Him, we can glorify God by bearing much fruit. So the subject before us is very great, and it will afford you a profitable occupation, it will be good for your souls, food for your minds, information for your understanding, it will influence your will, and ripen your affections. Everything that you can need for life and godliness will be found in this word, therefore do not say you cannot do it, for without Christ you can do nothing, but with Him you can do all things. As the Apostle says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." (Philippians 4 verse 13). Forget not, that this word is addressed to the saints of the Most High. It is not a general word for everybody, dead in trespasses and sins, but it is a gracious word that lays a divine obligation on the holy brethren who are partakers of the heavenly calling. And who can neglect this without sin? Can you occupy yourselves with this world and the things of it, and be guiltless, with respect to this exhortation? Can you be saying, "let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die", (1 Corinthians 1 verse 32) without being guilty in respect to this word?

I would press this upon your attention, because it is God's way of speaking to us holy brethren. This is what I will have you do, "Consider Him as the Apostle and High Priest of your profession." As the great authority of God, as the revealer of the being and perfection of God in the Church. As the only infallible revealer of who and what God is, "Consider Him." Moses said to Israel, "See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." (Deuteronomy 30 verse 15). These things are your life, the Holy Ghost here, as it were says the same thing, I have set before you in this Epistle, what is your life. What is your redemption, who effected it, what is your righteousness, who brought it in, and who is your Priest. Consider Him in all these things. So may you be enabled, and so may I be enabled to attend to this, so great word. Holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession. But you may object, you may say, I have so many things incumbent upon me. I have so many calls on my family, I have my business, I have my afflictions, I have a variety of things and these do claim my attention. Yes, and if you are indifferent to them, and are guilty, for the man who does not attend to the things of this life in a proper way is a guilty man. If a man will not work the Apostle says, he shall not eat. We are not to be indifferent to these things, that is not what is inculcated, what is meant is this, let this be first. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." (Matthew 6 verse 33). "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving he Lord." (Romans 12 verse 11).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12 verse 1. The Apostle speaks in another place, of the offering up of the Gentiles as a sacrifice acceptable to God, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15 verse 16). So grace in a person will enable him to do these two things. He will put first things first, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and then all the rest will come right in its own place. God will see to it, God will attend to you, as He gives you grace to walk in this blessed exhortation.

Consider the Apostle whom God the Father sent, the Apostle who was filled with the immeasurable gift of the Holy Ghost, the Apostle to whom was given the tongue of the learned, and into whose lips grace was poured, that He might make revelations of God. Such revelations that shall save the soul, sanctify the affections, and set the person to whom it is made apart or sanctified for God.

May the Lord grant us grace to observe this word.

Amen.