

Hebrews

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 0 0] The words I have held on my mind for this service you may find in the Epiphonate Paul to the Hebrews the 13th chapter, 14th and 15th verses For here have we no continuing city but we seek one to come By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name The Epiphonate Hebrews the 13th chapter, 14th and 15th verses

For here have we no continuing city but we seek one to come By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name I've spoken on these words before but they seem to adhere to my mind as this service is approached and give me the feeling that this is the word for us today And as you will see the subject opens with a very serious and very solemn consideration Here have we no continuing city

And in some sense the returning occasions these returning occasions tend to bring that thought and feeling upon one's mind how rapidly the years pass by how soon with us they will be gone It is very true we have here no continuing city It is a sobering thought and it should have a sobering effect upon our minds There is nothing at all incompatible between such a thought and consideration as this with the occasion of our services today because the two are joined together in these verses Sobering considerations are good for us

They are profitable They are necessary There are so many exhortations in the scripture to us with regard to soberness of mind And again, Jesus said Watch and be sober And many other exhortations to the same end direct us to the suitability of soberness of mind And nothing as far as I can see and feel is more conducive to soberness of mind than the influence of sobering considerations upon our minds We should admit them into our minds We should see that they should have that effect upon us that it belongs to such considerations to have

And there is nothing either incompatible with a gracious comfort and happiness of mind nor rejoicing in the Lord nor thankfulness for his goodness in this frame of mind In fact, a sober frame of mind is far more suitable for spiritual and gracious enjoyment in the mind and in the heart than a light and trivial and foolish state of mind There is a state of mind in which spiritual things simply cannot be realized and felt in their nature and in their blessedness There is a state of mind in which with the Lord's blessing they can be felt and that state of mind is a state of soberness Soberness

[5 : 2 1] Now I've just commenced with this Soberness is not morbidity introspection melancholia or any of those words that are sometimes misapplied to it that's something quite different Now here is a sobering consideration Here have we no continuing city We need to be reminded of that That there's nothing here that can possibly constitute a continuance to us So we will begin our meditation with that thought that here that here we have no continuing city But then it doesn't end at that Here is a blessed anticipation for those who have such a hope in them We seek one to come

There is an abiding city and that city is to come And if we live a life of faith and hope and prayer we shall be speaking that city which is to come And then there is this direction concerning our passing days And that is that we should seek to honour and glorify God in them Meanwhile while we seek that city which is to come let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually That is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name We will dwell then on this for a few moments Here we have no continuing city

And that's very true Very Because for one thing there is nothing continuing here at all There's nothing you can put your mind to or rest your mind in that's continuing Everything in this time state is in a continual passing and changing condition A city implies something permanent as distinct from a continual moving state and condition As you read in the sound They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way They found no city to dwell in Nothing that could constitute to them an abiding permanent enduring home

They were continually on the move Well my friends it is so It's impossible that there could be a continuing city where there's nothing continuing at all Everything had its beginning in creation Everything will have its period until the end And all the time between the beginning and the end Everything is in a state of continual movement changes Mark everything Change and decay in all around I see Now it's impossible to have a continuing city where everything is changing and passing on to its final dissolution And apart from that consideration If it were not so

If the things of this world were permanent in their nature still we're not continuing ourselves However long the world may continue we don't know That is only known to God But if the world should continue and the things in it we shall not be here very long If the place that knows us now continues it won't know us forever the time approaches and it's approaching rapidly when we must have done with everything in this world And as I said it's a sobering thought but we should admit it into our minds there is still too strong a tendency in us to cling to the things of this present world but we cling to what we must soon forever leave ever tightly if we were left to that we may hold to anything here death will loosen our grasp we know continuing city because we're not continuing oh how brief life is the days of our years are three score years and tens and if by reason of strength maybe four score years but still it's soon cut off and we fly away how can we have a continuing city where we must soon leave all behind here have we no continuing city but then there's another consideration which I have mentioned for even if there was anything continuing in this world if this world were a continuing space if we were continuing in it what a gloomy prospect has it been to a child with

[11 : 46] God for this is not our rest and it's not our rest for this reason above others that it's a polluted world and to have a continuing city in a polluted world and that big polluted is not a prospect that would give much comfort to the mind of a child of God it is not your rest it is polluted and this time there are so many conditions permitted to come upon us in this wilderness wean that came to wean our hearts and our minds from it and it is my view of this matter that one reason why the Lord permits so many trying and distressing things to befall to his people is that they should not become unduly attached to anything in this world sin and sorrows trials and afflictions disappointments and frustrations all serve this one purpose they wean our hearts from this world that is to say they do if the grace of

God acts upon our heart to that end through them I know that nothing can have a profitable effect upon our hearts otherwise and as the grace of God acts upon our hearts in and through it but when the grace of God acts upon our hearts through times and sorrowful things it makes us long for that state where sin and sorrows are unknown it would not be a good prospect for child of God to have a continuing city where everything was defiled with sin and one reason amongst others that tends to draw our hearts and minds to that city which is to come is because there shall in no wise enter into it or that desire it neither whatsoever worketh or maketh align my friends it's good to have our hearts and our affections and our desires weaned from a passing world and a world from which we are passing has passed as times and new weaned it's better to be weaned than dragged from this world for the hand of death will tear us away from what we look longingly back to like lost wife look longingly back to

Sodom it's better to be weaned away than dragged away to feel well let it go let Sodom go let the world go we have something better to look for a better hope a brighter prospect a continuing city for here have we no continuing city there's two things I feel as they act upon our hearts and perhaps those of us who are getting into the evening of life feel it more and it's all the more suitable that we should that tend to this end one is the grace of God that's always heavenly in its tendency and its desires gracious desires find no rest in this world how can they any more than

Noah's dove could find a rest on the face of the earth where all was the death and corruption that was left by the flag no and sometimes what sweetens everything is that heavenly influences come upon our spirit like the breath of another world another state and oh how sweet they are oh how sweet are heavenly influences that act upon our hearts how they make us feel oh heaven is better than earth far better for here then have we no continuing city no permanent rest no abiding dwelling no lasting habitation but we seek one to come

I won't come to that now for the rest of the afternoon but we seek one to come this is only applicable to the children of God and that good hope that they have through the grace of God in their hearts the ungodly of no continuing city here however much they may try to build their table so they have no continuing city but what is before them oh what is before them they do not seek one that is to come we do we seek one that is to come so now to enlarge upon this we will speak first a little of this city which is to come how it is to come and what it is to seek it for we seek one to come now what can this city be but that which the apostle

[18 : 20] John saw in the revelation the holy city coming down from heaven from God out of heaven a perfect city four square the length and the height and the breadth of it are equal in indicating of course its perfection and its completeness not one stone lacking to the perfect equality of all parts of that city for this city which is to come I understand to be the perfect and glorified state of the church of God that is the city which is to come and the apostle John in revelation saw that city he saw that city coming down from heaven from God out of heaven and there were various features of it characteristics blessedly characteristics that he records

I wouldn't pretend to understand of course all that is meant in the symbolism of that chapter in the revelation but there's some features of it so very clear and one is it's heavenliness it cometh down from heaven there's something very blessed about that it isn't something built up out of the earth it's something that cometh down from heaven everything is heavenly in that city that is to come his very atmosphere is heavenly and what constitutes a heavenly atmosphere holiness love union peace joy these are the features of that city holiness i saw said john the holy city holy why what could be wider of the mark than to call any city in this world the holy city there's no holy city here anywhere neither rome nor jerusalem nor anywhere else there's no holy city in the world but this city that is to come is perfect in its holiness everyone constituting a part of it as such and enjoying the blessedness of it is perfectly holy there's something about this that is beautiful to a spiritual mind for as has been so truly saved holiness happiness and heaven are three words for the same place and the same state we seek that which is to come where all is pure where there shall in no wise enter into it anything that desires and because holy all the feelings and affections of those who enjoy that city are perfectly sanctified sin is our greatest trouble isn't it sin is our greatest trouble

I know we have other troubles if we hadn't any sin our greatest burden would be taken from us that sin burdens us distresses us defiles us to this day is one of our perhaps the most the deepest of all our spiritual trials and distresses anyway we seek a city where all is holiness and another feature of this city that the apostle observed and records and so very expressive is the light of it this city John said was at a light a light most precious for the glory of

God doth lighten it and the lamb is the light thereof the unveiled diffusion of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ the lamb that was slain fills that city with heavenly glory so that it is no need of any secondary sources of light the city of no need of the sun the light nor the moon to shine in it nor of any candle the light there are certain subordinate means of light to the church of God on earth the gospel is the chief that's the sun the gospel all the light that we can ever know and can ever shine into our hearts or that can ever shine in the church of God shines in and through the gospel there's a ministry the

Lord's servant in their ministry a means of light the light of truth in the church of God there are the scriptures the blessed scriptures there's light in the scriptures but the city of no need of the gospel that is to say as we need it now that the blessings of the gospel are enjoyed in heaven I wouldn't question but how I don't know only instead of the light shining through the gospel in the scriptures and the ministry it shines direct from Jesus Christ the glory of God does light and that glory shines in the land the land Jesus is the light there are from that blessed person there shines in this city a never ceasing night penetrating every heart filling every mind so that there is no darkness there this is a city my friends that is to come and then again in this city which is to come it is noted that it is immortal there is no death there there is no death there for death and mortality of course are one where there is no mortality there can be no death there is no mortality in the city of God there shall be no more death and because no more death no more of those conditions that lead up to it and bear something of its character neither sorrow nor crying nor tears oh what a blessed city where there is no sin but all holiness no darkness but all light and that light most blessing where there is no death but all immortality and as someone has said immortality adds bliss to bliss that is that the bliss is immortal adds so much to it forever blessed it might be if it could end there are a bit dark shadows but immortality adds bliss to bliss but my friends we can say no more heaven is inexpressible to us really only these representations of it are set before us in the scripture that we should know that there is such a city to come and that we should see it oh bless the boat of life and love we are pilgrims freed from toil are blessed and I the pinions of a dove

[28 : 17] I fly to thee and be at rest for it is a city of endless rest and endless service they rest they serve it is not a rest it is not a rest without service it is not service with toil it is a rest that is service his servant shall serve him and they shall see his face and his name shall be in their forest that they rest from their labor my friends this is the city of my text here have we no continuing city but we seek one to come now I must speak a little of what it is to seek this city which is to come and there are these things in it that operate in it and constitute this seeking of this city first of all of course there must of necessity be a spiritual nature in our hearts to give us any desire at all for that which is so purely and so eternally spiritual that which is of the flesh is flesh for the natural desires of the carnal unregenerate man are necessarily earthworm just as water never rises above its level never that is to say not naturally so you may force it above its level but it will sink back to it again so the desires and feelings and aspirations of nature in men will never rise above their level i know that sometimes perhaps under some kind of pressure the mind of an unregenerate man may rise somewhat above earthly things but when the pressure is released back again his mind falls to this earthly sphere his affection his desires never rise from an internal spring of spiritual life to that which is heavenly i know that with regard to a child of god it isn't that his affections all that easily arise to things that are heavenly i know that it seems sometimes very very hard for us to get our thoughts and our feelings above an earthly level but perhaps i might put what i've just said to you on the other side of the matter now just as the affections and desires of an earthly minded man will never rise of themselves go anything higher unless there's some pressure put on them so on the other hand brethren the thoughts and desires and affections of a child of god will rise higher unless there's some pressure on them to keep them down and that

there's so much with us from within ourselves being still carnal in our fallen nature and there's so much influence from this world that acts upon our minds that like a pressure seems to keep down our affections that would from their nature arise to things that are higher than heavenly but the holy spirit does help our infirmities in this does assist so that though there is so much that holds our affections down we still are unable to seek that city which is to come having a spiritual nature in our hearts given then this is the first and vital and absolutely essential principle other things operate first there is faith now it is because faith is given to believe that there is this city which is to come with some understanding of its nature that the heart seeks it and this is one proof and evidence as to whether faith is real some

I think are much concerned about this point and it is a point to be concerned about whether their faith is real whether it's the faith of God's elect whether it's that faith which is God's gift and honor whether it's a saving character for we know that all faith isn't there's a nominal faith a traditional faith and the like in which people believe certain things and yet believe nothing to any real purpose savingly one am I saying if our faith is real if what we believe we do genuinely believe then our heart will be seeking after it because that which is believed could be very blessed in itself very precious very desirable that which is believed to be that will cause the heart to be seeking after it if you believe in

Jesus Christ really you believe because he is set before you as being a most blessed a most precious person and then you will want to know him and enjoy his love experience the virtue of his grave be cleansed through the merit of his blood because you believe it you see you believe it you believe he is precious so you want to enjoy him you believe there is such a thing as his love being shed abroad in the heart so you want it shed abroad in yours you believe that his precious blood speaketh those good things so much better things than that of Abel therefore you want him you want to hear you want to hear that voice of his precious blood speaking in your soul if you don't well brethren if anyone doesn't feel like that their faith is only nominal traditional it has no root in their heart it has no life nor power in them now try this by the word of God in the 11th chapter of the

Hebrews you have this recorded of Abraham that he went out not knowing whither he went that he sought a city which had foundation who was builder and maker of God well why did he go out not knowing where he went why did he leave her the Chaldees for the wilderness why it was by faith by faith Abraham when he was called went out faith in his heart and God's word those are the two things and it's exactly the same with seeking this heavenly city God's word to declare there is such a city and faith in the heart to believe it time to seek for faith is a very influential principle in the heart not only saving in its nature but it's very influential in the way it works and operates in the heart who would seek this city which is to come if they didn't believe there was such a city to come why should they faith in the heart and the veracity of the word of truth in the scripture that's the foundation of this matter but then there's something else we seek one to come now if we seek one to come we seek it not only because we believe there is one to come and believe it in such a way as causes us to seek it but we seek it because there is every encouragement to hope we shall by the grace of God finally enter into it hope hope is a very encouraging principle in the heart in fact that is very much the nature and purpose of hope to encourage us to see for what a man cannot hope for however much he might believe it believe it believe in this city believe in its blessedness its glory its holiness its happiness its joy its eternity but if he could never hope to enter into it why should he seek it a good hope through grace of that which is to come the very blessed principle in our soul for this hope it is like an anchor of the soul sure and tempest and its entrance into that which is within the veil more my friends to hope it will be well at the last if the storm rages to hope we shall reach the heavenly harbor if the way is rough to hope that we shall reach that at the end of the way that will make amends for all if it means as

[40 : 19] Rutherford said pressing on toward heaven gains wind and storm and tide for those hoping to reach heaven at the last end they seek this city which is to come because they hope to reach it to enter into it to participate in it to be part of it and remember that if we have a hope we should be ready to give a reason for it and if we say well then what is the reason that one could give would you ask me what is the reason for the hope that is in me with regard to this well it's twofold if I were to give a reason for the hope that is in me and one reason is this that Jesus died for sinners saved if it hadn't been for that

I couldn't give any reason for any hope in me at all that Jesus died for sinners saved his precious blood shed for sin his perfect righteousness in salvation his power to save his heavenly intercession that Jesus died and rose again and ascended into heaven that's one reason for my hope and it hadn't been for that if it wasn't for that I should have no reason for hope at all and the other reason is because I believe God the Holy Ghost has made Jesus Christ known in my soul made him precious to me and raised up faith to believe in his dear name in my heart you say what about your experience well I hope that confirms the hope that is in me but if you ask me for a reason that's what

I can give you hope that I can do it well now if we have a good hope like this of this pity which is to come what an encouragement there is to be speaking seek and eat or sign now there is another thing that comes into this speaking of this pity which is to come and that is when we really seek to be pitied and prepared for it and that should be a continual exercise in our hearts prepare me gracious God for this if there shall in no wise enter into it or that is highly gracious God cleanse me oh cleanse me from every dishyrene pain if to enter into it one must have that holiness without which no man can see the Lord then Lord impart to me and work in me that true inward holiness that new that clean heart that right spirit if there shall no one enter into it but hath not on the wedding garment of

Christ's righteousness gracious God help me so to believe that that righteousness will be imputed to me and clothe me are you praying to be prepared for this city to enter into it that all this is substantially necessary the Lord would work in you that he would perfect in you in this particular all his holy will well then you're seeking you seek it when you seek to be prepared for it fitted for it and another thing we seek this city which is to come when we seek to have our interest in it confirmed in us from time to time by the holy spirit joy for here my humble lot below this this my soul desires to know when you seek to have it made clear to you and confirmed in you that you have an interest personally a participating interest that you have it now in anticipation that you will have it at the last in full enjoyment when you're praying that the

Lord would make that clear to you your interest there you're seeking this city which is to come for to what purpose should we seek it unless we are prepared to enter into it holy joy and unless our interest in it is confirmed in our hearts just one more thought before I leave this afternoon before I leave the subject this afternoon for here have we no continuing city that we seek one to come now if we seek one to come we shall seek it practically and you so and how seek it practically here you have it let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach if you seek this city you must seek it by following

[46 : 50] Jesus Christ by going away he is gone you haven't got his cross to bear but you have yours and there's no really following of the Lord Jesus Christ unless it is as he has said if any man will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me let us go forth unto him without the camp you Lord find Jesus in this world you Lord find him in all the vain practices and the life and worth of this world to go to him means to go without the camp and to go without the camp means to turn out back on the camp to be separate to walk the path of spiritual

Christ following separation it's vain for anyone to say they seek this city which is to come when there's no going out of the camp to Jesus Christ bearing his reproach well if I set this before you soberly and scripturally I hope it's commended to you as being sound doctrine to seek this city which is to come that glorious city there must be faith to believe it and the faith that causes us to speak it there must be a hope for it for the good reason there must be a preparation for it which we must seek to be wrought in us there is such a thing as an interest in it which we should seek to be concerned in us and there is such a thing as following

Jesus Christ going forth unto him to him without the camp for here we have no continuing to see Lord bless this word to us and commend that which is commendable to our hearts and may the word reside in us this speaking praying hoping believing exercise Amen amen Thank you.