

# Hebrews

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     The words I have felt on my mind for this service you may find in the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews the thirteenth chapter the fourteenth and fifteenth 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 epistle to the Hebrews the thirteenth chapter the fourteenth and fifteenth 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 past die 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 gird up the loins of your mind be sober and again

Jesus said watch and be sober and many other exhortations to the same end direct us to the futility 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 consideration upon our minds we should admit them into our minds we should think that they should have that effect upon us that 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 realised and felt in their nature and in their blessedness there is a state of mind in which with the Lord's blessings they can be felt and that state of mind is a state of soberness soberness now I have 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 cities we need to be reminded of that that there is nothing here that can possibly constitute a continuance to us so we will begin our meditation with that thought that here we have no continuing cities 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 seeking that city which is to come and then there is this direction concerning our passing day 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 a city implies something permanent as distinct from a continual moving state and condition as you read in the film 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 not everything change and decay in all around

[ 9 : 08 ] 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 are 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 ground we've no continuing city because we're not continuing oh how brief life is the days of our years are three score years and ten and if by reason of strength they be 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 beside these that I have mentioned for even if there was anything continuing in this world if this world were a continuing state if we were continuing in it what a gloomy prospect that would be to a child of 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 city polluted is not a prospect that would give much comfort to the mind of a child of God this is not your rest it is polluted and besides there are so many conditions permitted to come upon us in this wilderness that wean that tend 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 his people is that they should not become unduly attached to anything in this world sin and sorrow trials and affliction

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 hearts to that end through them I know that nothing can have a profitable effect upon our hearts otherwise than if the grace of God acts upon our hearts in and through it but when the grace of God acts upon our hearts through trying and sorrowful things it makes us long for that state where sin and sorrow 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 defile it neither whatsoever worketh or maketh alive 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 time can move weaned it's better to be weaned than dragged from this world for the hand of death to 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 fear 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 heart and perhaps those of us who are getting into the evening of life feel it more and it 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 flood 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 heart how they make us feel oh heaven is better than earth far better for here then have we no continuing pity no permanent rest no abiding dwelling no lasting habitation but we seek one to come

I want to 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 heart the ungodly of no continuing city here however much they may try to build their babel but they've 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 : 22 ] John saw in the revelation the holy city coming down from heaven from God out of heaven a perfect city four squares 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 characteristic 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 its 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 its very atmosphere is heavenly and what constitutes a heavenly atmosphere holiness love union peace joy these are features of that city holiness 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 a 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 said holiness happiness and heaven are three words for the same place and the same state we seek we seek that which is to come where all is pure where there shall in no wise enter into it anything that be silent and because holy all the feelings and affection 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 sins 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 record 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 life 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 to light in it nor the moon to shine in it nor of any candle to light in it 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 servants in their ministry a means of light the light of proof in the church of

[ 24 : 49 ] 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 oh and 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 lighten it and that glory shines in the land the land Jesus is the light there of from that blessed person there shines in this city a never ceasing light 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 blessed 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 or ever blessed it might be if it could end there will be a dark shadow over it 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 eat it oh blessed abode of life and love where pilgrims freed from toil are blessed had I the pinions of a dove

I'd 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's not service with toil it's a rest that is service his servant shall serve him and they shall see his face and his name shall be in their forehead that they rest from their labors 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 heart 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 all the natural desires of the carnal unregenerate man are necessarily earthward 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 think back to it again so the desires and feelings and aspirations 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 relieved 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 affection all that easily rise rise 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 is 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 and heavenly but the

[ 32 : 50 ] 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 heart 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 art whether it's of 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 well now my friends if our faith is real if what we believe we do genuinely believe then our hearts will be seeking after it because that which is believed to 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 grace 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 is God well why did he go out not knowing where he went why did he leave her the chaldees for the wilderness why was thy faith thy faith Abraham when he was called went out faith in his heart and God word those were the two things and it's exactly the same with seeking this heavenly city God's word that declares there is such a city and faith in the heart to believe it and to seek it 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 nature 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 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 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 principles in our souls for this hope it is like an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast and it enters into that which is within the veil of the world to hope it will be well at the last if the storm rages to hope we shall reach the heavenly harbour if the way is rough to hope that we shall reach that at the end of the way that we make amends for all if it means as

[ 40 : 11 ] Rutherford said pressing on towards heaven against wind and storm and tide but all to hope we shall reach heaven at the last 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 you would 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 but 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 if 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 the best what

I can give you well now if we have a good hope like this of this city which is to come what an encouragement there is to be speaking speak and eat shall sign now there's another thing that comes into this speaking of this city which is to come and that is when we really seek to be fitted and prepared for it and that should be a continual exercise in our heart prepare me gracious God for this if there shall in no wise enter into it or that is silent gracious God cleanse me oh cleanse me from every defiling 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 that hath not on the wedding garment of

Christ's righteousness gracious God help me so to believe that that righteousness shall be imputed to me and clothe me are you praying to be prepared for this city to enter into it that all that is essentially 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 it 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 whate'er 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 heart just one more thought before I leave this afternoon before I leave the subject this afternoon for here have we no continuing city but we seek one to come now if we seek one to come we shall seek it practically and you will say well 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 : 40 ] Jesus Christ by going the way he has 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 won't find Jesus in this world you won't find him in all the vain practices and the like and worse of this world to go to him means to go without the camp and to go without the camp means to turn our back on the camp to be separate to walk the path of spiritual Christ following separation this is a name 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 seek it there must be a hope for it with a 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 confirmed in us and there is such a thing as following Jesus Christ going forth unto him without the camp or you see it so connected for here we have no continuing city the Lord bless this word to us and commend that which is commendable to our heart and may the word reside in us this speaking praying hoping believing exercise

Amen