

Hebrews As A Sermon (Part Two)

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This sermon is, I believe, the sixth one I have drawn largely from Hebrews the first and second chapters, but also combined with additional information drawn from Psalms 2 and 8. These sermons are, for the most part, given to expound various elements of what I have termed the mind-bending inheritance Jesus Christ is going to share with us when He comes into it more fully Himself when He returns.

We are going to begin not in Hebrews, but in Colossians because I feel that there is something that I should make very clear to you regarding this inheritance; that it really does exist as I have been telling you. In Colossians the first chapter, beginning in verse 9, and I am going to be reading this from the *New American Standard Bible* because it is just so clear.

Colossians 1:9-12 (NASB) For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

One more scripture and this one here is also very clear. It is in the book of Acts. It says this in other places besides the one I am giving to you, but we have before us an awesome inheritance that is going to come to us because we have already been qualified to receive it. That is what it said there in the book of Colossians. Now in the 20th chapter of Acts, the apostle Paul is speaking to the elders of the Ephesian church whom he is leaving to go on one of his journeys. And I believe that he never did get back there.

Acts 20:29-32 (NASB) I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I will tell you so that you understand it clearly that we are all going to inherit a portion of what Jesus Christ inherits whenever He receives the fullness of it. What is He going to inherit? He is going to inherit everything! Now we are not earning any part of that inheritance except by stretching the vanity of our imagination to the *n*th degree. We become a recipient of this inheritance only because of our calling by God, which the Bible clearly states in Ephesians 1 that He has directly willed and that, brethren, is an awesome truth all by itself. And if we think about it seriously, it is also very humbling.

The effect of God's action is that we have subsequently been adopted into His Family because of the Father and Son's purposes combined with Their merciful generosity. And it is only because They have also been merciful in Their judgment of our faithfulness and obedience while we have been considered in Their minds as being in Christ. Now, "in Christ" means within the boundaries of or part of, and I hope that you understand that the expression "in Christ" is a verbal illustration to impress us with the closeness of our relationship with Him.

Let us look briefly at two other such illustrations so that the point is clear. Please turn to Ephesians the second chapter. Again, the apostle Paul, the author, under Christ says,

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God [what I am beginning here is a brief explanation of our portion of this], having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together,

grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Now, let us make this very clear. Christ and the church are illustrated as a building structure. In this case, a temple more precisely. And we are verbally considered as individual parts of the whole. You have got to think this through. We are part of the whole of Jesus Christ, that we are frequently like bricks, mortar, doors, windows, girders, hedges, electrical switches, door knobs, etc., etc., and thus outfitted for an intended use and training. We have been visualized by the Father and the Son as part of Him. In this case, as part of a temple.

Ephesians 1:15-23 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and the revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him fills all in all.

This is the one that I personally believe is the highest and the greatest of these verbal illustrations. We are considered by the Father and the Son as vital and therefore necessary part of Christ's very body. Now, maybe figuratively, we are no more prominent than a skin cell or maybe a blood cell or whatever it might be. But we are alive and functional and, hopefully, very productive.

We went through chapter 1 several times in order to get a feel of how great our Savior is and our Creator is. Now we are moving on to the second chapter here.

Hebrews 2:1-4 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.

I began the way I did because I want us to be reminded by a brief overview of how the Bible describes our present position as converted, because I want us to fulfill our responsibilities as given in Hebrews 2 and as it begins with the epistle's first of five vivid and strong exhortations to not just take things for granted and revealing that attitude by merely sitting still. God is requiring of us a great deal of effort to make ourselves as best we can, molding to what God the Father want us to become so that we are prepared to receive that inheritance.

Now, this specific exhortation is a call for action on the things written in Hebrews 1 as motivations for growth, for our personal glorification of God by producing much fruit. If we are not making the sacrificial efforts necessary to fulfill our responsibilities, we will lose out on this mind-bending inheritance. So He has two things that he is proposing to us.

One, becoming like Christ by making the effort to do so in yielding to what the Father and Son want us to be. And the second thing is, there is a mind-bending inheritance that Jesus Christ is going to receive and share with us.

Next, I want us to see specifically a few but very important benefits of being "in Christ." We are going to go to the book of Romans. Remember this is attached to Hebrews 1 and because it is attached to Hebrews 1, the exhortation in Hebrews 2:2 applies to us to put to work in our lives.

Romans 8:15-17 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." [That we he is speaking of there are to church members as you are now that we have been adopted.] The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we also may be glorified together.

Did you notice that the apostle Paul calls us both sons and children? Either one is an element of a family and as members of a specific family, they can inherit what the Father decides to give them, according to both Hebrew and Roman practice. However, in this case, the Father does not have to die. He can distribute His estate as it seems fit to Him—all, part, or nothing to those to whom He is going to give it. We just read at the very beginning, we have an inheritance that is coming to us through and by the work of, and by the salvation given us through Jesus Christ.

Now before we go any further, please understand that our calling is not a reward for righteousness while being unconverted. Did you hear that? It is *not* a reward. Our calling is not a reward for righteousness while being unconverted. That calling is an outright gift too.

The next series of verses reveal what God desires regarding relationships within His Family. Back to the book of Galatians.

Galatians 3:26-28 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

These three verses that I just read, are concluding verses on a *very important teaching regarding physical distinctions when we are called and not converted very deeply*, because those distinctions are sometimes not very obvious to the person who has them. We are required to learn what they are and to overcome. Now, these physical distinctions, much of our judgment, I

think, is going to involve some of these (they may not be strong in you or whatever), but the key words that Christ gave through the apostle Paul is that we are one.

Now these distinctions are things that we have lived with all our life and that is why we may not recognize that they may be very irritating to others within the congregation. We sometimes do not realize that we are rubbing people the wrong way and we are causing hardship within them toward you and you do not even realize what is going on, but you are not treating them in a way that maybe they need to be treated and therefore we might be irritating them. So if they do not come to you, but they are distant from you in the sense of having a good relationship with you, maybe there is a reason: a distinction is being rubbed on them that they do not like.

And so those distinctions are carried with us into Christ's Body. But once we are in the Body, those distinctions are superseded by the eternal reality of the unchanging God and *His* standards.

Now, the ones that I am going to mention are actually quite obvious, but they will give you the idea. I am mentioning them because they are such obvious distinctions. In fact, they might be offensive to the mind of another at a point of vanity within the person who has the distinctiveness. Now, in God's Family, since we have become "in Christ," remember we just read we are considered by the Father and Son as part of His very Body and His Body is one. That is an important point here. Christ's Body, His literal body, we will say, is totally unified and undivided because as we become a part of it, we are to work toward becoming *one* with Jesus Christ.

I will put it picture pictorially this way: the eye is not superior to the ear, nor to the liver, nor to the kidney, or any other part of the body. Christ's body is *one*. The Bible specifically says that. Now, why is this important? The various parts of Christ's own Body are not prejudiced against or fighting each other or superior to one another. There must be—we are to work toward it—no disunity as exists as there is in America now. All parts are working together to support the whole, even as our physical body parts do, as God created them to function seamlessly with other parts. The only thing that Paul did is he said that we are part of Christ's Body. Now, it is laid upon us to be at peace with everybody within Christ's Body.

We just saw what Paul said regarding the unity of Christ's Body. Now, we are going to look at something that James said, and they are in agreement.

James 2:1-10 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves [that is, a physical distinction], and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and the heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

Boy, that is pretty stiff.

Let us go to John 17. Now remember what this sermon is: in order to become heirs of the Kingdom of God and share it or be shared of it by Jesus Christ, we have to become *one* with Jesus Christ. His body, His body parts are not fighting with one another. We have a long way to go if we are going to inherit what we just saw we are going to inherit.

John 17:20-23 "I do not pray for these alone [The person who is praying is Jesus Christ and He is not praying just for those disciples, the apostles that were before Him], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one [Christ prayed for us that we be one with Him and of course,

working towards becoming one with each other. Remember, the inheritance hangs on things like this.], as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

Well, I am not a betting man, but I wrote in my notes here that if I *were* a betting man, I would bet that the overwhelming number of you may have thought that this oneness that Jesus is praying for was limited to doctrinal belief—big things. We keep the Sabbath just like Jesus did, we keep the holy days just like He did. No! It is moving to become one with the Father and the Son the way They are one with each other! He is really setting the standard *high*. It almost seems as though it is a goal that is unreachable.

He is talking here, not just about doctrinal belief and practice, but also being one in mind, in heart, in spirit with each other.

So, it is not just limited, this section here, to doctrinal belief. It is oneness in both belief and practice; in the way we think about each other and the way we then actually deal with each other. I am telling you, brethren, when I began to really grasp this, I thought, this is unreachable because we have our feelings, we have our habits, we have our practices. We think a little bit differently than one another. Jesus Christ has really set the standard high in terms of love and relationship within His Body.

Let us go look at another scripture on this. It is in I Peter 3. Maybe you will begin to see or feel, whatever it might be, why the book of Hebrews is so exhortative. It is because the apostle Paul, when he was writing that, was writing something of almost infinite importance to our lives and our conduct within are the company of each other.

I Peter 3:7-11 [now here is one for the family] Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together [husbands and wives] of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it."

Now, the way this section opens up, "Husbands dwell with them with understanding," a man is not better than a woman. And I think you understand that in the Kingdom there is no sexual distinction whatever. Even now, in our conversion within marriage, the only possible distinctions are those of physical function within the family.

Let us go to the book of Hebrews, chapter 6, verses 13 through 20. Now, in one sense, God treats everybody in the same way. And now we are going to look at what He did with Abraham, because God was tough on that man. I kid you not.

Hebrews 6:13-20 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." [Boy, that sounds pretty good, does it not? God said that to Abraham. And so what is the next verse?] And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

I am using this group of verses primarily because Abraham, the father of the faithful, is used as an example, and because we all yearn for Jesus Christ to come quickly. Now, as much as God loved this man, Abraham, He made this man wait in hope for long periods of time for things He promised him. Let us go to Genesis 12. Abraham was blessed very greatly. But I will tell you, God put that man through the wringer!

Genesis 12:7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Now you may think that waiting for your inheritance into the Kingdom of God might be a long wait for you. We will see how it compares to what Abraham had to wait for.

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But Abram said, "Lord God, what will you give me [he had already waited a good while], seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body will be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 17:1-8 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." And then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but

your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Let us not forget that Abraham was a man like you and me in many many ways. God put him through the paces regarding things that He promised to him and Abraham had to wait patiently in hope of salvation for the fulfillment of the promises that were sustaining him.

I am going through this because I want you to think about what have you had to wait for that God has promised. Now, there is before us a great reward that is waiting for us because we are born into His Family at that time. Let us see how you compare to Abraham.

First, he had to wait 25 years until Isaac was born. And Sarah, when she gave birth to Isaac was beyond the natural ability to bring forth a baby. He not only had to wait 25 years, he had to wait until Sarah could no longer bring forth a baby. So she was beyond the age of producing a child.

Second, he then had to wait another 60 years until his first grandchild was born. That was Jacob and Esau. Sixty years! Most of us here are not 60 years old and he had to wait that long. God promised him a great multitude in his family, but it was not increasing very rapidly, was it? Seventy-five years went by before, in a sense, he really had a family, consisting of him and Sarah, children and grandchildren. I am 88 years old and that seems old to me, but he had to wait almost that long just to have children. And that 60 years was just another blip on the calendar because Abraham lived yet another 15 years until he died, with nothing notable happening regarding the promises that God made to him personally, when his life ended. And even the father of the faithful was made to wait as God continued His specific purposes.

Now, I want you to compare how long you have been in the church and the promises that God has made to you and to me; and how many of those have we actually received? Well, we have probably received a great many of them, but they go by without our giving them second thought. But remember, the goal for us is not the inheritance. The goal for us is to live the kind of life that Abraham did until he became one with God. Abraham saw Christ's day and it made him very glad. That is our goal: to become one with Jesus Christ and to become one with each other. And God will give us a passing grade if we do to be inheritors of a portion of what Christ has already inherited.

That section of my sermon is finished. I thought it would be good to put that in there to the exceedingly great gift, the inheritance that we are going to be given. But we are going to go back to what I was continuing on through before I put that part in because it is very easy for us to get impatient. It is very easy for us to get tired of the same old things all the time. But I put Abraham in there so you could see that God put the father of the faithful through the mill before He started really giving him things that he could love in the sense of one just like him.

I believe that a sermon form is the most suitable for the epistle to the Hebrews to consider as the dominant one for the epistle rather than either a letter or a treatise. Thus, I am going to give a review on what that last sermon that I gave focused on.

My choice of it being a sermon is largely because of what was going on in the way of conflict both within the church and also within the world of the Hebrew people. The epistle is written in such a manner that it can be literally understood in all three forms. The church is clearly not part of this world's conflicted systems and we are ordered to come out of it.

However, even so, the church operates within this world's systems and therefore, it does not operate in a vacuum. Its membership is affected by what is going on in both the church and the world. And I believe the world was indeed affecting their individual lives within the communities, even as Uncle Sam's systems affect ours. And therefore, the sermon form for the epistle to the Hebrews was better to help meet the needs of the members going through those stresses.

Now, the epistle's grammatical form is not a critical issue. But it is helpful to consider when the epistle was written, and the general form of it was written to get background information to more completely understand the need the epistle was fulfilling at the time it was written. This epistle needed very strong, clear exhortations because the people within the congregation and those others out away from Jerusalem were not particularly strong in the faith. We will begin to see this as we go through further, deeper into the book of Hebrews. They were actually quite weakened at the time that the epistle to the Hebrews was written.

Why does Hebrews point to our lives in the church? Because events are taking place in this nation that may impact on our obedience to the gospel in our times if the events are fairly closely similar to what was happening in the world and in the church at the time the epistle was written. In other words, we are heading into a period of time that was very like what we are in right now. And I believe that even though the Acts 15 conference was held because the church was going through its first serious doctrinal issue, but the epistle to the Hebrews context reveals that it was not written to cover all of the issues discovered at the Acts 15 conference.

However, Hebrews 1 covers that one particular issue like a blanket though. And if Hebrews was written around AD 65, which almost all researchers estimate it was, though it actually consists of elements of each form of arrangement, I believe that the sermon form dominates because it is most useful because of the turmoil that was going on in the whole Mediterranean world. And those conditions were impacting on the whole scattered church, most especially in Jerusalem and Rome.

Now, why have I gone way around the rose ring here to get this to you? Well, it is because I feel that it is very possible that the United States of America is going through the same sort of period that the Jews were going through in Jerusalem and that the Christians in Rome were going through. And so the epistle to the Hebrews was written to buck those people up. And I feel somewhat guided that I am going through the epistle to the Hebrews at the very time that it looks like this nation is beginning to fall apart! And as

has happened so many times in the past, that as a nation goes in which there are Christians in it, it is not too many years that go by before the Christians are blamed for what the nation is going through.

I do not know whether you know it, but in ^{AD} 64 Rome went through a devastating fire. Guess who got blamed for the fire? The Christians. They had nothing to do with the fire. They fled the fire and they went into the catacombs that somebody had conveniently dug over the city of Rome, in order to hide both from the public and from the government.

The epistle to the Hebrews seems as though it was written about 65 ^{AD} and the Christians in Rome were not too happy being blamed for the fire. And then what happened? In 70 ^{AD}, the Roman general in charge of the armies around Jerusalem and Judea, he attacked. He got tired, I guess you would call it, of the attacks of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem. And he attacked the city of Jerusalem, and he practically burned it down, and he destroyed the Temple. So there are two big things that were building at the time the epistle to the Hebrews was written. And I feel certain that it was written to calm the people in the church down, to let them know that they could not let down on their responsibility to become one with each other and to become one with Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ prayed to that very end; that they would not be devastated by what was happening in the Mediterranean world now.

So what was going on was beginning, at the time that the book of Hebrews was written, to affect the entire Roman world all the way from Jerusalem to Rome, and that was the part of the world, especially Rome, those two places that received the gospel to the degree where the greatest amount of growth was going to take place.

I want to go to Acts 15 because I am going to build towards something else here. Tell me something. You do not have to answer this out loud or anything but I want you to think about it. If the United States really begins to fall apart with constant, we will call it fighting, amongst the various groups within the nation, do you think it is possible for you and me to become one with each other? And especially if more and more attention turns toward us. I do not know. It is going to be hard because already it is looking as though we are in a deep pit. I mean, the nation and its citizens are in a deep pit, and distrust is very high all over the place. Who can you trust?

Back in Acts 15, verse 18. Here we are getting to the end of this conference.

Acts 15:18-29 "Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore [this is James speaking, by the way], I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no such commandment—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you do well.

I read that because I wanted you to see the decision that was handed down by Christ to James, and he read it off for the good of all of there. And then what they did in turn to spread the proper understanding of Jesus being appointed to a High Priest. So these operations that they took right here took care of the immediate need, and that need would clearly be taken care of locally, in local congregations.

Now, on the other hand, if the epistle to the Hebrews was indeed written about AD 65, the scene this action was taking place in had changed considerably. By this time, that is 65 AD, the entire Mediterranean world, encompassing both Jerusalem and Rome, was alive with the fear of warfare, and the church was indeed threatened by it. But this time, the church membership had grown considerably because if that thing took place about 35 AD, 30 years had gone by and the news does not stop for anybody. And now there were a fairly considerable number of people in a place like Rome which was alive with warfare. Remember I said, 64 AD somebody burned down a huge part of the city of Rome and the Christians got blamed for it.

Thus, the context of the epistle to the Hebrews addresses the members' situation within dangerous world events. And thus the sermon form fits neatly into this epistle very well. And I believe that that is a major reason why the epistle is so exhortative in its contents. Brethren, there was a lot at stake for the members because the two axes in the Roman Empire at that time were practically on either end of the Mediterranean, and here was Rome sitting right in the middle and Jerusalem at the other end. And they were being blamed.

Let us draw this connection to what is going on in the United States of America. We have had the most tumultuous election period of time in probably pretty close to about 75 years, with the two sides going at one another, tooth and toenail, I guess you might say, and it has not calmed down yet. Accusations are still going back and forth. "He did it." "No, he didn't do it. They did it." and so forth. That is a situation made for anger, and feeling defensive and worried about one's life, and feeling that they have to defend themselves at some point in some way. The context of the epistle to the Hebrews addresses the members' situation.

I am going to go to Acts the 13th chapter. I wanted to repeat this because I want it to be drilled into our heads as to what the apostle called this that he wrote the epistle.

Acts 13:13-15 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they

came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue said to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

The key there is what the man called a "word of exhortation." I want you to notice how everything was put in order. They were visiting within a Gentile city. It was the Sabbath. They attended services in the local synagogue. It was not until after the reading of the law within the service order that the synagogue's leadership asked them whether they had any word of exhortation. Now, that term, that word of exhortation, appears to be the normal usage one commonly used for a sermon message and it had a definite place of order within the services. It came after first hearing what God had to say directly from His Word. And then what did Paul the apostle take the opportunity to do? He preached Jesus Christ and the gospel.