

God our creator

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] Welcome this morning to this pre-recorded meeting for Calvary Church in Brighton for the 5th July 2020.

! We're just emerging from the lockdown regarding the coronavirus, but there's still a lot to sort out before we can safely and properly meet together in the way that we used to.

We'll keep people updated on that, but that's the current situation. We are a church of people who live in the area of Brighton, which is on the south coast of England.

We are believers in Jesus Christ. We're a church of 80 or so people meeting together on Sunday mornings in normal times, and we're just ordinary people from different nations and different backgrounds.

But we believe that God has brought us together to love him and to serve him, to know his grace and his forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

[1:02] And we're going to do our best to express that as best we can in this time together just now. So a particular welcome to you if you've just dropped in.

The things that we're going to do are the normal things that Christians do. We're going to sing and pray and read the Bible and have a talk, meditation on what the Bible says and as it applies to us. And we'll just take you through that as we go along. My name is Philip Wells. I'm one of the elders, one of the team of elders here at Calvary, and I'll be leading this morning.

Other notices are either on the screen or have been sent out by email. This morning we're beginning a series, a new series of studies and meditations based on a book in the New Testament. It's called The Letter to the Hebrews, or at least that's what we call it. It doesn't have that title itself. But it is a letter to Jewish people written just shortly after the time of Jesus and more of that later.

[2:15] There are going to be several quotations from the Bible, so as always it would be great if you could have a Bible with you to follow along with, or perhaps the app on your phone.

So let's begin with prayer. O Lord, whoever we are and wherever we are, may we be found drawing near to you and will you draw near to us.

May we find living contact with you, the living God, by your word, by your spirit, by your grace.

We pray through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. For the first part of our time, we're going to think about the glory and wonder of God as our Creator.

The Bible roots everything in the fact that God is the personal maker and sustainer of all things. By him, they have their being.

[3:23] He spoke and it was. Created things are an expression of the hugeness, greatness, wisdom, complexity, glory and beauty of God.

And we as human beings stand in a particular relationship to God, unlike rocks and stars and plants or animals. We're made in God's image and therefore cannot be fully understood without reference to him.

And we also have a part to play in reflecting his glory back to him, in displaying his wonder as we are conscious of it, perceive it and can express it ourselves.

So I'm going to read a little bit from Psalm 104. Psalm 104. I won't read all of it. But it is a psalm which describes creation and the human place in creation.

One of the commentators on this talks about the world that we're in. And it says it is something that God delights in, charged with his energy and alive with his presence.

[4:39] If only we have eyes to see that. Psalm 104. Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, you are very great.

You are clothed with splendour and majesty. He wraps himself in light as with a garment. He stretches out the heavens like a tent. He lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers. Flames of fire his servants.

He set the earth on its foundations. It can never be moved. And then going down to verse 14. He makes the grass grow for the cattle and plants for man to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth, wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.

The trees of the Lord are well watered. The cedars of Lebanon that he planted. There the storks make their nests. Sorry, the birds make their nests.

[5:52] The stork has its home in the pine trees. The high mountains belong to the wild goats. The crags are a refuge for conies. And then in verse 19.

The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

Verse 24. How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both large and small.

And verse 31. May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in his works. Verse 33.

I will sing to the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him as I rejoice in the Lord.

[6:58] But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Praise the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord. It's a song which invites us to praise.

It says you've got two responses to the God who made us. We can either sing or we can sing. Let's opt to sing, shall we? And we're going to sing the song In Majesty and Splendour.

That's the song we're going to sing now. In Majesty and Splendour, And rose of light and gout, His God who spreads the heavens And rise upon the cloud With flame and fire His servants His messages the wind O honour Him With worship O praise your Lord mankind The earth you said She could live And cloud With a cloud Of waters Over mountains Which ties your Building road And from the voice of God Down rivers Spread the rain To where by your provision The waters Shall remain To where by your provision To where you give the harvest Give are they most in feed To every sovereign creature The graces that we need

The woodland tree Is water Where birds May build their nest While high upon The mountains Wild creatures Lying their rest You spread the shade Of darkness You watch the daytime heat You teach the moon The seasons The sun To rise and set For peace To make the night Time Till dawn To hunt And pray Dawn And the light Till evening To labor Through the day

[10:30] The bounds Of your creation They cannot be apprised And countless Are the wonders Your wisdom Has devised Yet what are we Without you You hide Your face We die So while At last We worship And praise To God Most High Let's continue our response to God's word by praying We thank you that you are the mighty God who has made all things and we want to come as glad worshippers of our creator and heavenly father

We want to come giving you glory giving you thanks honouring you in your vastness and greatness in your wisdom in the beauty and splendour that belong to you we come to ask the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ and your good hand upon us we pray for our nations at this time where there is still this virus we pray that our nations may heed the wake up call you are sending but also that in mercy you oh lord would protect and save life we also pray that you would give wisdom humble wisdom to all our leaders may they learn the lessons of humility before the almighty God we also pray for particular individuals perhaps some known to us who are getting worn down and weary weary you lord are the one who sustains the weary you are the one who leads the lambs and carries them close to your heart please do that for your worn down and weary people and here in Brighton we pray for our church and we pray for the Christians seen in Brighton and Hove we pray for the larger gospel churches that you would bless them and we pray for the smaller gospel churches too we particularly pray for New Life Moolscum

Ebenezer Reformed Baptist Church Park Hill Evangelical Church and the Grace Baptist Association Initiative into Brighton please guide us and we particularly pray for our own church that at this time you would be particularly sustaining of us enabling us to work things through and to know your leading please show us that you are the God of the future just as you have led us and provided in the past that you would do so again for the future we offer our prayers in Jesus name Amen we're going to continue our thoughts with another beautiful and majestic psalm which is also about God our creator it's psalm 8 this also thinks about the glory of God and the place of humanity in God's world and this time

I'll read the whole thing psalm 8 it says it's for the director of music according to Gittith which nobody knows what that means I think it's a psalm of David O Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth you have set your glory above the heavens from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger when I consider the work of your heavens the work of your fingers the moon and the stars which you have set in place what is man that you are mindful of him the son of man that you care for him you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honour you made him ruler over the works of your hands you put everything under his feet all flocks and herds all the beasts of the field the birds of the air the fish of the sea all that swim the paths of the sea

O Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth that's the glorious and wonderful psalm eight and I want to propose that we sing this psalm also the version that I found in our music book it's number eight because the first songs in the book are numbered after the psalms that they are paraphrases of psalm and I've had a go of producing this musically for us to sing to the words are from scottish psalms and the tune has a celtic lilt it's not a tune I think that we know so there's one instrumental verse to give us a chance to learn the tune so I hope this will work for you it's a bit unfamiliar but we'll do our best to sing the version of psalm 8 this splendid psalm psalm 8 in all the earth oh lord oh lord how glorious is your name for you have set above the hands your glory found your fame from heaven's earth on children's lips you would have praise to sound to silence all your enemies you are awake till you come down when

[17:50] I regard the hands you made your fingers wax by trace I see the star and shining stars with you are set in place I asked myself what there is now that you should give him thought hope!

the son of man that you to him so gracious can have thought you said in jars in all the ones who went in heaven above and you have crowned and honored him with glory and with love you gave in charge of all the works created by your hand and everything that you have made you gave him to command all clots and birds and birds and fish for he he is both wild and tame!

In all the earth O Lord our Lord how glorious is your name!

So having sung Psalm 8 as best we can we're now going to have more scripture and Ray is going to read to us the passage that we're going to be looking at this morning Hebrews chapter 1 and read into chapter 2 Ray thank you very much for reading to us Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1 through chapter 2 verse 5 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets many times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe the sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful word!

After he had provided purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty! in heaven so that he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs for to which of the angels did God ever say you are my son today I have become your father or again I will be his father and he will be my son and again when God brings his firstborn into the world he says let all God's angels worship him in speaking of the angels he says he makes his angels winds his servants flames of fire but about the son he says your throne oh God will last forever and ever and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness therefore

[22:12] God your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy he also says in the beginning oh Lord you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands they will perish but you remain they will all wear out like a garment you will roll them up like a robe like a garment they will be changed but you

remain the same and your years will never end to which of the angels did God ever say sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation!

God also testified to it by signs wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will it is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come about which we are speaking thank you for the reading Ray there's a great deal to think about in that reading and we're only going to nibble at the edges of it this morning I don't know whether you noticed that the writer quoted from a number of sources in the Bible including a number of Psalms and including the ones that we've been singing there are more that we're not going to sing this morning but there are a number of Psalms quoted it's crucial that we understand that as he quotes the Psalms he is actually focusing attention on Jesus the person with whom he begins his letter he's saying that the Psalms are like lenses which reflect or focus light into the distance and the Psalms focus their light forward onto the Messiah onto Jesus and they do this in various ways well we're going to focus our thoughts on Jesus his person that's who he is and his work that's what he's done and we'll focus that in the devotion of our hearts as we sing thank you Jesus thank you the mystery of the cross I cannot comprehend the agonies of Calvary you the perfect one crushed your son he drank the bitter cup reserved for me Jesus thank you that's what we're going to sing the mystery of the cross I cannot comprehend the agonies of Calvary you the perfect holy one crushed your son who drank the bitter cup reserved for me your blood has washed away my sin Jesus thank you the father's wrath completely satisfied Jesus thank you once your enemy now seated at your table Jesus thank you by your perfect sacrifice

I've been brought near your enemy you've made your friend pouring out the riches of your glorious grace your mercy and your kindness knows no end your blood has washed away my sin Jesus thank you the father's wrath completely satisfied Jesus thank you once your enemy now seated at your table Jesus thank you lover of my soul

[27:54] I want to live for you lover of my soul I want to live for you lover of my soul I want to live for you your blood has washed away my sin Jesus thank you the father's wrath completely satisfied Jesus thank you once your enemy now seated at your table

Jesus thank you thank you and now we're going to pray that God would help us as we hear his word Lord you have written all things for our instruction our edification you choose to bring life through your word just as you spoke the word to create the world so now will you speak so as to create and revive life and holiness in us who listen so help speaker and hearers alike amen amen we're going to think about this letter to the Hebrews and let me introduce it by asking you what's the best thing in your life is it your good looks life is it your retirement plan is it your lovely beautiful wife husband is it your home is it your youthful strength and potential well if you're a Christian and it didn't come to your mind that Jesus is the best thing in your life then you need to kick yourself and wake up and that's exactly what the writers of the Hebrews is going to do so let's look at it together let me first tell you a few things about this letter it was written by a well taught and wise Christian writer we know that because he knows his Bible very well he quotes Psalms prophets Lord Moses all sorts of places he knows his Bible very well and this letter is Christian scripture not only does it quote the Hebrew scriptures but it comes to us as the word of God it was written to Christians or people who professed to be Christians said they were Christians they were from a Jewish background hence the name that got added to it later on they had believed in Jesus the writer refers them back to the early days in 1032 remember those earlier days after you had received the light when you stood your ground he says and they suffered for their faith 1033 sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated so they suffered for their faith but as he writes to them they're somehow losing their way they're going back to the

Jewish synagogue going back to the temple and he uses words like drift chapter 2 verse 1 we must be careful we do not drift away and in chapter 6 verse 12 he uses expressions to do with laziness or sluggishness 612 we don't want you to become lazy sluggish to imitate but rather to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what was promised so it's a letter to get Christians moving and stop them slipping back that's something very necessary for us we know in our own city places

that used to be churches but they somehow declined slipped away and stopped being churches and there are people who used to be Christians they somehow seem to have stopped they've lost the plot they've forgotten they've gone adrift and this letter is to say don't do that what else do we know about the letter it contains then promises and warnings and I remember hearing Dick Lucas very helpfully saying the mark of the elect is that they believe the promises and heed the warnings they joyfully believe the promises and they tremblingly take notice of the warnings that's what God's people authentically do so if you're not doing both of those you need to so it has promises and warnings it says things like this in chapter 4 verse 14 since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold firmly to the faith we profess so he says we've got wonderful benefits now let's hang on to those so it both shows us a great view of Jesus and his benefits and is very blunt about the need to keep on believing and to keep on obeying he says rather startling and frightening things like he does in 6 verse 8 land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and in the end is in danger of being cursed in the end it will be burned so he's saying fruitlessness is a very dangerous situation for professing

[34:30] Christians to be in it's a very dangerous situation so that's of relevance to us to keep us walking with the Lord and if anybody thinks they don't need that well they're wrong and that includes ministers I remember hearing a course of lectures on Hebrews and wondering what the speaker was speaking of when he said the importance not just of starting but of keeping going and finishing and since that time well how many of my ministerial colleagues have fallen away one very famous one and others perhaps less famous but to keep us walking with the Lord and how does the writer to the Hebrews do this well he certainly argues for the superiority of Christian faith and he's going to pick up on various themes and take them through themes like the invisibility of Jesus people are going to say well what use is it having faith in somebody whom you can't see and he's going to say well actually there's a huge amount of positiveness about the fact that you can't see Jesus he's gone into heaven other faiths pin your hope on something visible and the writer of the

Hebrews says no that's not where you want to pin your hope you want to pin your hope on something invisible he's going to talk about Jesus is humanity and people are going to say well what good is it having a human saviour he was made like us he understands us and the writer's going to say that's far from a disadvantage that is a wonderful positive about Christian faith and he's going to talk about Jesus being better the word has a root meaning something like more advantageous more forceful and he's going to say that although the Hebrew scriptures are definitely the word of God they have a function of foretelling something that gets fulfilled in the new covenant and 12 times he uses the word better he doesn't use it always in the same sense but in 1 verse 4 he's going to say Jesus is superior of having a better name than the angels in 7 19 he's going to say we have a better hope something better to look forward to 722 he's going to talk about Jesus the guarantee of a better covenant and in 8 verse 6 he's going to say that the ministry that Jesus has is superior because it's founded on better promises so that's a little idea of the sort of things that the letter is going to cover and as God helps us and we pray that God will help us hopefully we can get a sense of the power and glory and goodness of those things as we go through and we don't want to pray that God will help us with that let's come to the very beginning why does he start here well obviously everybody starts at the beginning but why does he start in this particular way well let me just say it's not because he wants them to become Christians it's not in that sense an evangelistic letter he's not trying to prove that they ought to become Christians they've already accepted Christianity and its claims that Jesus is the Christ the son of God but I think he starts in this way rather because they've lost the sense of the value of what they've believed it's become rather indifferent to them and they've lost the sense of the specialness of this and they're saying is it really so good to be a

Christian and they're saying can't we get similar benefits some other way and they're saying are we missing so much if we go back to the synagogue and the temple and the priesthood I mean it's in the Bible isn't it and you can imagine these Jewish believers with a granny or auntie who goes to the synagogue saying oh come on you're breaking my heart why do you go to that Christian thing

there's nothing going on there you want to come where the action really is back in the temple back to your heritage so with that in mind he begins with a blast of a statement which knocks these questions out of the water water so I like to look at the first few verses with those questions in mind going to take them actually in reverse order which is a little bit unhelpful of me isn't it but we'll start with question three and then question two and question one are we missing so much if we go back to the synagogue can't we get similar benefits in some other ways is it really so good well let's take these questions like this then number one are we missing so much if we go back to the synagogue and the temple and the priesthood

I mean it's in the bible isn't it so he answers this in verses one and two in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at various times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son he spoke to our forefathers through the prophets but now he has spoken to us through his son so he doesn't deny or dismiss the Hebrew scriptures and the Moses revelation he doesn't say that's nothing he has a huge respect for all this tradition a huge respect for it but he says the way to honour it is not to stay there in it but to see what it's pointing to God spoke to our forefathers he says so God spoke but he contrasts in the past with the now in these last days times have changed a mark a boundary has been passed and the whereas the

[40:48] Hebrew scriptures look forward to a day which is to come he says that day has in principle arrived the final chapter of history before the very future end that has arrived we are now in these last days the high water mark of God's work in this world before the next and in chapter 2 verse 5 he says it is not to angels that he subjected the world to come about which we are speaking and that's very much his the content of what he's saying that the the essence of what God wants us to do is look forward to the world to come on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ so you see he's contrasting in the prophets he uses the word in with in and he doesn't say in the son he just says in son son wise he spoke to us in the prophets in all sorts of different ways but now in son in the son and he's referring to the unrivaled capacity of the son to reveal the father there's a little example of this which comes to my mind you might have read the narnia stories in prince caspian there's an example of the likeness of the son to the father prince caspian has gone off in the dawn treader to various islands across the sea to meet up with lords and noblemen that his father had sent on a mission and he meets a shipwreck nobleman the lord burn presumably comes from

Switzerland and he's found by prince caspian who now has to prove his identity as heir to his late father the king and how does he do it well he actually does it just by being himself and the shipwreck nobleman says this by him it is his father's very voice and trick of speech my liege your majesty and he recognises the son by the unmistakable likeness to the father and it's that father son thing that the bible beautifully emphasises about Jesus and his father and that's what the writers of the Hebrews is picking up on here he's spoken to us how could he speak any better way through his son it's the same sort of thing that Jesus himself remarked!

No sorry John's gospel remarks on no one has ever seen God but God the one and only who is at the father's side has made him known no one has access to God not even the prophets not even Moses but the son who is in the very company of the father he makes him known he tells the full story of the father so are we missing something if we stick with the old testament with its foretastes and promises we certainly are if we just stick with the Hebrew scriptures so in the Downton Abbey film if I remember it correctly they have the opportunity of meeting the king and queen and invitations come through and imagine how foolish it would be to take that wonderful invitation and to cherish it so much that you want the invitation rather than seeing the king and queen themselves in the flesh the invitation is in order to draw people to that personal encounter and here Jesus is as it were the very face of God in the flesh and surely we're not going to go backwards and prefer that paper invitation to the person himself so the Old Testament is the Bible but we don't just stick with that we are missing something very much if we don't go forward to what God has revealed in his son so second thing is Christianity that good it's akin to the question aren't all religions! much the same people would say that sort of thing they're all much the same they're all faith groups they all have holy places and holy books and some devotional activities they're all very much the

same now are they well in case his readers were beginning to think that the writer to the Hebrews answers this in verses 2 and 3

[47:14] Jude Jude It's all headed for him.

He's the goal of what it's all about. And it goes on to say, through whom he made the universe. The Son is the one through whom everything was made.

John's Gospel says the same thing. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. So you could ask the question, how many things were made without them being made through the word, through the Son?

And the answer is going to be zero. I got ahead of myself. How does the one God creatively express himself? Through his Son. He makes things through his Son. And how many things did God make without doing it through his Son?

The answer is zero. So Jesus is in the central flow of all things divine in terms of creation. And here's the very revelation of God.

[48:25] Just putting it in very loosely so that we can grasp it a bit with our imaginations. How do you express yourself? Well, very much through your face. Your face is you.

I suppose one of the advantages of doing something like this on YouTube is you can see the face of the speaker. And you have that privilege this morning, seeing my face. So you can see if I'm smiling or frowning or whatever.

And I express myself through my face as you do through yours. And we express ourselves in very subtle ways like that. And that's analogous. It's like, how does God express himself?

Well, through his Son. And only through his Son. He is the outbeaming of God's glory. And he is the exact representation of his being.

It's not like God is wearing a mask so that you can't see who he is. But Jesus exactly portrays everything about the Father.

[49:24] So in John's Gospel, when Philip asked Jesus, show us the Father and it will be enough. Jesus replied, do you not know me, Philip, even after I've been with you such a long time?

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. And so we've talked about Revelation. And the sentence goes on to say, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

He is the one through whom all things are held in being. He upholds all things through his powerful word or through the word of his power.

As God made everything by his word. So he upholds all things by his word. We want to have an example of this. We went in Preston Park the other day and some very clever gentleman was juggling, throwing up clubs and balls and things like that.

And it was a wonder to behold. And as this, as the minutes go by and the balls and clubs are constantly in motion, they're up there in the air, not by themselves, but due to his constant input of skill.

[50:37] And effort and muscle power. And so too, our universe, with all its movements and comings and goings and actions and activities, it doesn't uphold itself.

It is upheld by God constantly. And as we're told here, God upholds by his strong word. God is the function that the sun has in the Godhead.

This too is done in no other way than through the sun. So here's the sun, as we shall just see in a moment. And I'm going to ask, is Christianity that good, isn't it?

Pretty much on a level with Islam or Hinduism or humanism or Buddhism or what other ism you want to say. Is it? Well, the answer is look at the person on which Christianity is built, the sun.

He is the goal and end of all things. The technical word for that is eschatology. Where the world is heading. It's heading to the sun. He was the means of creation.

[51:46] So that brings us under the heading of creation. All things were made through him. He is, as it were, the outshining of God's glory, as I put it in a rather simplified way, the face of God.

He is the revelation of God. And he is the upholder of the universe right now. And the theological word for that is providence, God's upholding of all things.

So I ask again, are all religions the same? And what prophet or philosopher or guru or seer can possibly say this about themselves apart from Jesus?

A prophet with a two? No, that person can't be the end of all things. A prophet who got ill? No, that isn't the sustainer of all things.

One who lived a brief life, whether it's 70 years, 100 years or whatever. No, that isn't the one who is there from the beginning to the end. And surely, surely, no founder of any religion, no leader of mankind can touch this one described here, the sun.

[53:04] Unrivaled. Is Christianity that good? It is without rival. It is one of a kind. It is the revelation of God.

There's nothing like it, nothing to compare with it. So my third question then. Can we get similar benefits some other way?

Can we get similar benefits some other way? I mean, you try your way. I'll try my way. I was a Christian, but I actually find this very helpful or that very helpful.

What's the problem there? A little bit like saying, you know, get such and such. Well, hold on. Let's look on eBay and see if we can find it cheaper from China or something like that. Can't we get the benefit some other way?

That doesn't actually expose us to the persecution and the difficulties that Christianity has done. So let me take two benefits, if I may, which I think are fair to the text.

[54:05] Forgiveness and security. Getting forgiveness. Now, methods of getting forgiveness are some other way. Well, many religions offer forgiveness by achieving, as it were, a good percentage in religious observances.

Now, in the heart of hearts, people know we're supposed to get 100% in our religious observances. But maybe, well, if we try our best, won't that obtain forgiveness for us?

And in the Hebrews situation, well, they have a very obvious candidate for this, to getting these benefits. They are surrounded, they've been brought up with food laws, sacrificial system, systems of prayer, systems of devotion.

Surely that will give us the same thing, won't it? And my second heading was that of security, which you might sort of say inner peace.

A sense that everything is all right, that things are OK, that my situation is in hand. And, well, there are many techniques, surely, for this. Meditation techniques.

[55:18] Techniques of altering one's consciousness. Perhaps even by therapy or by drugs. Control of emotions. Surely these will give us security.

Well, I know there are helpful methods of thought and there are helpful things that we can think. But my question here is whether ultimate security can be got some other way.

Well, the sentence that he says is, After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he inherited is superior to theirs. So he provided purification for sins and he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on heaven.

The purification is a reference to his sacrifice on the cross. One act which he finished, then he sat down in the sense of Psalm 110, which was read, that's there in verse 13.

[56:23] Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. So he sat down having finished his work. Now, when you have work to do, you finish it before you sit down, don't you?

You wouldn't get halfway through digging the garden and stop and have a cup of tea and have a nice sit down. Well, actually, you might. But Jesus, the fact of his sitting down is much more significant because he sits down because he's finished the work.

And he sat down at the right hand of God, the place of kingly power. So let's just look at those two benefits. Forgiveness. He, it says, provided purification for sins.

Or if you want, he made cleansing for sins. It's the word that we get cathartic from, to clean, to cleanse, to clean the conscience.

And the important point here is it's not a manufacture by us, but an achievement by him. Something that he finished. That's why he sat down.

[57:36] He finished it. He did it. There is nothing more to add. There is nothing for us to do. He didn't get halfway through and say, over to you. He finished it. He did it.

And that means that Christian faith is, in essence, an act of simply receiving something that's given as a free and complete gift. And if we ask, can we get the benefits some other way?

Can we get free and full forgiveness achieved for us in completeness? Surely the answer is no. No. There's no other way. No other name.

No other way. And my second thought here was security. Meaning, as I've obviously said, a well-founded sense that all will be well.

That all is in good hands. And that there is care for us. And that caring person has power to do what is needed.

[58:35] What is needed by us. What we need, in other words. What is needed for us, perhaps I should say. And that's where a sense of peace will come from. And here we're told, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

Well, that place where he sat down is not, as we might sit down with a cup of tea in front of the telly. But he sat down at the epicenter of all power.

The throne. The right hand of the majesty in heaven. And if he's there, that means that he's there. Actually, it carries this implication.

He's there for us. That he is there arranging things for his people. The people for whom he died are the people for whom he sits at the right hand of God.

And we're told he is enthroned for the church. It's there in Ephesians chapter 2. And seeing as I've mentioned it, I might as well quote it to you properly.

[59:44] He is seated at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. Every title that can be given.

Not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body.

The fullness of him who fills everything in every way. And can we sensibly get this benefit of peace and security some other way? Surely the answer is no.

There is no one else at the right hand of God. There's no other place like being at the right hand of God. And if Jesus is there for us, there is no better way.

In fact, nothing, anything like it to give us security. So here's our summary of these first few verses that introduce the letter to the Hebrews.

[60:45] Can't we stick with the Hebrew scriptures? Well, no, they're like an invitation to the wedding. They only make sense if you go there in person to follow up on the invitation.

Is Christianity all that good? Hmm, is it? Well, just look at the founder and central personage. There is no rival to him.

The faith that rests on him is the faith to have. Is Christianity all that good? I mean, that's such a ridiculous question, isn't it?

It's surpassing, brilliant to be a Christian. Now, can't we get the same benefits some other way?

That's what they're saying. Come back to the synagogue. Come back to the temple. Well, do you get the same things as you would get in that Christianity?

Well, no, you don't. Forgiveness, he is the provider of that. And security, eternal security, he is the provider of that.

[61:45] There is no conceivable alternative. There's nothing like him, no one like him, and nothing like the benefits he brings. So, if you've lost sight of how brilliant it is to be a Christian, please take note.

And if you were thinking of turning back and of not bothering, or of giving up, or of sliding quietly away into sin, or if you had forgotten that Jesus was the best thing in your life, now is the time to give yourself a good kick.

And if I can end a talk like that, I will say, Amen. Well, we thank God for being able to hear his word.

And in a moment, I'll close with a prayer. And then we will play out with a song which goes to the heart of the message of the letter to the Hebrews, about the priesthood of Jesus, and says, This is

the way the writer to the Hebrews ends his writing.

And this is the prayer with which we'll close. May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

[63:43] Amen. Well, Amen. And we play out with, Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea.

And that's it from me. So, goodbye to you and hope to see you soon. Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye.

Before the throne of God above, I have a stronger, perfect preem.

A great, high, precious, plainest love, whoever lives and pleads for me. My name is written on His hands, My name is hidden in His throne, I know that while in heaven He stands, No power can force me to depart, No power can force me to depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair, And tells me of the guilt within, I look to him and see him there, Who made an end of all my sin.

[65:26] To close the sinners, say he adored, When sinful soul is drafted through, The death of the judge is satisfied, To look on him and pardon me, To look on him and pardon me.

Behold Him then, the risen Lamb, My perfect spotless righteousness, The great unchangeable I am, The King of glory and of grace, But with himself I cannot die, My soul is purchased by this bread, And I can sing with Christ on high, With Christ my Savior and my God, With Christ my Savior and my God.

For the Lord, His name is written on His throne, And I can sing with Christ on high, With Christ my Savior and my God.

For the Lord, His name is written on His throne,