

There Is A Better Hope 1

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Date: 14 September 1986

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[0 : 0 0] You are indeed the Almighty God who knows all our hearts. You know the rebellion of our hearts. You know the frustration of our hearts.

You know the secrets which we dare not confess. As we come together into your presence, we ask that we may not hide ourselves from you, and that you will not hide yourself from us.

Amen. I want to speak from the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews in the 19th verse, and it's found in the Pew Bible, and I'd like you to turn to it, as it would be some considerable help to me if you had your eye focused on it.

It's on page 206, very near to the end of the Bible, page 206, and it's Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 19.

19. And it reads, first in parenthesis, for the law made nothing perfect.

[1 : 3 2] On the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God. when we were in Jerusalem earlier this year, and that's a sort of one-upmanship statement I want you to know, and perhaps gives a little authority which I don't otherwise have.

We met a young lady in her mid-30s probably, a very devout Jew, who had been brought up in the British Commonwealth, had not discovered that her father was a Jew until she was 19, nor that her mother was a Jew until she was 26.

They tried very hard to hide it from her, and only as an adult did she find out that she was in fact Jewish. This led through a peculiar series of circumstances to her very serious commitment to the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ, to her return to her own land, Israel, where she lives as a Messianic Jew, and is a wonderful disciple of Jesus Christ, and for that reason, a wonderful person to meet.

Well, I tell you her story because my first job this morning is to tell you that perhaps unknown to you, you too are Jewish.

not by reason perhaps of the blood flowing in your veins, but by reason of that faith, which was the faith of Abraham, and which I think you have probably, in the Western world, absorbed with your mother's milk, so that you are Jewish, your thinking is Jewish, your understanding is Jewish, your way of relating is Jewish, you are so profoundly Jewish, that I think it would surprise you.

[4 : 0 7] And I want to tell you this because this letter is to Jews, to Hebrews, and I want to contend that for that reason, it is to you, that you must hear it, because you too are very Jewish.

For present purposes, I will show you why you're Jewish. If I was to ask you, are you a Christian?

Many of you would answer by saying, I believe that God created the world. So do the Jews. You might go on to say, I believe my behavior is to run within the pattern prescribed by the Ten Commandments.

So do the Jews. You might say to me further, I occasionally break those commandments and find it appropriate to say to whoever is there, I'm sorry.

At least once a year. So do the Jews. You would perhaps say to me, I find it a happy condition of my life from time to time to dance and have a great party and to say thank you.

[5 : 37] The Jews are very good at that. I expect some of you are very good at it too. You might say to me, I think it appropriate to bring my children at birth or close to birth to be marked with the sign of the covenant.

Probably most of you have been brought as children to be marked with the sign of the covenant. Indeed, some of you are bringing your children this morning to be marked with the sign of the covenant.

Which covenant I will come to later. you might say to me, I take the Bible to be the source book of history.

In poetry, law, meditation, prophecy. That it underlies the marketplace in which I spend my days. It underlies the law courts in which I seek justice.

justice. It underlies the hospitals to which we bring the sick and afflicted to find healing. This book is full of shepherds and wells and human valor and human struggle with which I can identify.

[7 : 02] It speaks of Samson and Samuel and Elijah and Jeremiah, David and Solomon, Isaac and Rebecca, Ruth and Esther.

These are my people. From the earliest of days, I remember hearing the stories of them over and over again.

What a heritage you deny yourself if you don't acknowledge that you are profoundly Jewish.

Perhaps not in the structure of your anatomy, but at least in the whole mindset by which you relate to the world in which you live.

You are profoundly Jewish. Well, this spiritual heritage of being Jewish in thought and in understanding is shared by Muslims and Christians, Baptists, Catholics, Orthodox, Pentecostals, Brethren, whoever you are.

[8 : 18] You are profoundly Jewish in the whole orientation of your life to the world in which you live. All the kings of Scotland for a thousand years and kings of England and emperors of the British Empire all have been crowned sitting on the stone of scone which I was believed to be the stone on which Jacob slept at Bethel.

Sort of to tie the very fiber of our whole culture and way of life into the Old Testament the Old Covenant the people of God who were appointed to reflect the glory of God.

Well, I tell you all this in order that you might know that this epistle to the Hebrews is directed to you because you too are Hebrews.

That's the way you think. And the very rooting of your thinking you will find being drawn out from this epistle to the Hebrews. And that's why I want to summarize for you chapter 7 in verse 19 in order that you will see the background out of which it speaks and into which it speaks.

Your background. Verse 19 For the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.

[10 : 24] It says the law made nothing perfect. difficultly with the law and if the law represents for you a speed trap on Granville Street the only purpose it's there for is to tell you when you're exceeding the limit.

This is a basic biblical principle. The purpose of the law is to tell you when you're breaking it. the reading of the Ten Commandments is not that you might preen yourself and say I too have not stolen and I too have not killed and I too have not borne false witness and I too have not committed adultery.

That's not what it's for. It's to tell you you have. To help you understand that you have. To help you understand that there is no way in which you could come to faith in God through this law.

There's no way in which you could stand in his presence because as it says the law made nothing perfect and if you choose to stand in the presence of God or to come into the presence of God you must be perfect.

That's why most of us give up that particular pursuit in our lives and turn to other things because you come to the stage very early in life where you know that ain't what I am and it ain't what I'm gonna be the way things are going now.

[12 : 18] So the law made nothing perfect and your adherence to the law doesn't make you perfect. It can't.

All it can tell you is where you break down. So that the most basic religion in our society is made up and that's right here in Vancouver I mean is made up of those who think they are perfect having never broken the law in a serious way and we all know what we think of them.

And if that's what you think of them then you probably belong to the other great religion and that is in our society that those who having broken the law have discovered themselves to be superior to the law and the law is not for them and you fit into one category or the other fairly generally and both of them are roundly despised by the other one.

So you have to come back to what our text says. It says that the purpose of our life is that we may be made perfect and the purpose of being made perfect is that we might stand in the presence of God because God demands that you be perfect.

Now let me qualify a little by telling you what perfect means. It means a whole lot of things. It means fulfilled. It means that you have achieved what you set out to achieve.

[14 : 03] It means that you have matured. It means that your potential has been realized. Now most of us can't make it.

I mean not most of us. None of us can. Let's be honest about this whole thing. It's why they send you glossy magazines full of advertisements that will tell you how you can get one step closer to being perfect by owning this car, drinking this wine, wearing these clothes.

Being a tourist in this country, you will come close to perfection. And always the agonizing reality that we don't in fact come closer, but it's fun trying, is the reality we have to live with.

you can play around with the rules and regulations forever. And all that you will have at the end of the day is a record of your failure.

Now, I'm not asking you to compare yourself with one another when I say that, because all of you know that you're probably the best person in your pew, if not in the whole church.

[15 : 23] Though this isn't generally recognized, you know it to be true. And, but that's just playing around. That has no truth or reality to it.

The reality is that the perfection which God demands, and that you in your heart somehow secretly aspire to, is denied you.

Well, that's why this verse goes on to say, that though the law made nothing perfect, verse 19, on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.

There is something better, better than the frustration of the cycle which I've just described to you. And this epistle is full of things that are better.

There is a better covenant, a better promise, a better sacrifice, a better possession. There is something better than this old covenant.

- [16 : 33] It was good because it highlighted what the problem is, but there is and needs to be something better. the old covenant makes it impossible to draw near to God.
- If you're serious about the Ten Commandments, you will give up trying to draw near to God, and many people have, under the impact of that kind of thinking.
- I was reading the Jerusalem Post a couple of weeks ago. That's another one out in Ship State. But I, there's a wonderful editorial in it, which says the first and great commandment for the modern Jew is to learn to shoot a gun.
- Everything else won't count if you don't know how to shoot a gun. Now that's a somewhat different answer than when a certain rabbi was asked what is the greatest commandment in the law.
- He suggested it was to love your neighbor. For practical, hard reasons, the great commandment now is learn to shoot a gun.
- [17 : 45] Because if you don't, there's no future anymore. Now that is not what you call spiritual thinking. It's widely subscribed to in the United States that, well, you know, one of my favorite bumper stickers is from California, I have to tell you, is God, guts, and guns made this country.
- Let's keep it that way. So it's a widely held philosophy. Not, not everybody subscribes to it, but it's widely known and very widely understood.
- The, the old covenant makes it impossible to draw near to God. The new covenant makes it possible for you to come into the presence of God.
- God. And this, this word, which is right here in verse 19 about drawing near, we draw near to God. It's sort of like if you owe your bank manager a million dollars and you see him on the street, you don't draw near.
- You move quietly in the other direction. And that's what this means. A holy God that demands of you perfection is not a God to which you want to draw near.
- [19 : 15] You want to move the other way. If you get a notice from him saying that somebody has left you a million dollars and it's in your account and at your disposal, then you draw near very quickly.
- But you see the whole basis of your relationship has changed. And when Hebrews talks about two covenants, it talks about one covenant which will never make you perfect and a new covenant by which you are made perfect.
- And that new covenant has as its central focus the person of Jesus Christ. What I want you to see is that you are meant to live in terms of this verse, with a public hope.
- It says, on the other hand, a better hope is introduced. That better hope is that we don't draw near to God in terms of who we are and whom we aspire to be.
- Because we will never do it. It will never happen. have a hope. But we can draw near to God through a better hope. And that hope is given to us in Jesus Christ.
- [20 : 42] Christ. Do you know that when Christ hung on the cross and they lifted to him in a sponge on a reed some vinegar and he tasted the vinegar and then he said it's finished and he died.
- the work which he came to do was finished at that moment.
- It's the same root word as to be made perfect. Through Christ's death on the cross you are made perfect.
- And because of that death there is a new covenant a better covenant. You see what happens to us frankly is this.

We are baptized as infants. Our parents are full of faith and hope and our godparents try and stand behind them. But as we come into the reality of life the drift sets in and we drift further and further and further away from God.

[22 : 02] And the more people tell us that we should draw near to God the more deeply we feel our unworthiness the more deeply we feel our imperfections.

We can't do that in all honesty. We drift away. And this service this morning I hope will at least be for all of you a chance to check and see how far have you drifted from the covenant into which you came at your baptism.

How far have you gone from that? You have been probably and I suggest this to you by this talk.

You've probably been living mostly according to the terms of the old covenant. And the old covenant as we're told in this verse will never bring you into the presence of God.

But there is a new covenant. The new covenant which was established by Christ's death on the cross. And that you are to live with that better hope which belongs to you through Christ.

[23 : 21] You draw near to God through him. The gradual drifting away turns around and you come back into relationship to him.

To come to the perfection which is not in you but which is in Christ. That your life doesn't end in frustration and anger and bitterness towards God.

But your life ends with you holding on to a better hope which is yours because of Jesus Christ. I wrote a prayer to try and express what this means to me.

It's as though you and I were to kneel down and to say God you seem a long way away and try as I might I can't get any closer.

I'm not even sure that I want to come closer. I've learned to live without hope. I never expect to stand in your presence and if I do it will only be to hear your condemnation confirm my own self condemnation.

[24 : 38] Is there a better hope? Amen. Well what we're doing this morning in this baptism is to claim for these children that better hope which is ours through faith in Jesus Christ.

And you will see that better hope outlined for you line by line as you follow through the service of baptism. And as you pray for these children don't be afraid to pray for yourself that you might know where you are.

whether you are under the condemnation of the old cover by which nothing could be made perfect or whether you can hold on to a hope which is yours because of Jesus Christ and what he has done for you on the cross.

Amen. Amen. Now we sing together hymn number 350.

State. State.

[26 : 54] State. State.

State. State. State. State. State. State.

State. State. State. The service now continues on page 153 with the presentation of the candidates.

For this part of the service, I'd ask the parents and the godparents to please remain standing. The rest of you may be seated. The candidates for holy baptism will now be presented.

Anna, Katrine, Matthews. I present Jeffrey Royjohn for the sacrament of baptism.

[29 : 26] Claire Alexandra Woodbridge. Robert Jordan Tawley.

Parents and godparents, will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is nurtured in the faith and life of the Christian community?

Will you, by your prayers and witness, help your child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God? Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

[30 : 31] Do you renounce all the people who are in the faith and the Lord? Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior? Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Do you promise to obey him as your Lord? Do you promise to obey him as your Lord?

Do you promise to obey him as your Lord?

Ar Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory.

Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, your Son, may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory, who lives and reigns now and forever.

[32 : 33] Now, if you would look to the bottom of page 157. The Lord be with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water.

Over water, the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water, you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise.

In water, your Son, Jesus, received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us through his death and resurrection from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it, we are buried with Christ in his death. By it, we share in his resurrection.

[33 : 42] Through it, we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Now sanctify this water by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who are here cleansed from sin and born again may continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. Please stand.

Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

Do you believe in God the Father? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

[35 : 00] He gave in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Padre, was crucified, died, and was spared.

He descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit? I believe in God the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, feeding the saints, the religious of sins, resurrection of the Father, the life of the apostles.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? I will, my son. Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will, my son. Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ? I will, my son. Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

[36 : 23] I will, my son. Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Please be seated. Let's go. I will, my son. I will, my son. Victor, his church and daughter of God. Let's go. Thank you.