

Consider Him

***“Consider him who
endured such
opposition from
sinful men, so that
you will not grow
weary and lose
heart.”***

***—Hebrews 12:3,
New International
Version***

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

begins with these words: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through prophets, ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” (Heb. 1:1,2, *NIV*) Jesus never claimed to be the origin of what he taught, but rather he said, “I do nothing of

myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.”—John 8:28

In the second chapter of Hebrews we are told: “We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.” (vs. 1, *NIV*) If, by way of example, a boat starts to drift away from where it is docked, at first it may be hardly noticeable. However, when it becomes obvious that the boat has gone away from the dock, it may be much more difficult to regain control and bring it back to its mooring.

A CORRESPONDING PRICE

During his First Advent nearly two-thousand years ago, Jesus was “made a little lower than the

angels for the suffering of death, ... that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9) The death of the perfect man Jesus provided the ransom—an exact corresponding price—for the first perfect man Adam, who had disobeyed God and was sentenced to die. In order for God’s justice to be satisfied in providing the ransom, the death of a perfect human being—Jesus—was required as payment for a perfect human life forfeited—Adam. Thus, the entire human race, which was still “in Adam” when he sinned, could be redeemed. In the Messianic kingdom which will soon come on earth, every human being that has ever lived will be raised from the dead and given an opportunity to learn and obey God’s principles of righteousness. All those who obediently follow God’s ways will be given everlasting life.

“Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.” (Heb. 2:17,18, *New Living Translation*) The suffering and testing of Jesus came to him not because he was a sinner, but because he was faithful to God, and because our Heavenly Father wanted to test and prove the loyalty of his only begotten Son, even unto death.

Next we are told: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” (Heb. 3:1) To “consider” means to “observe fully.”

Thus we are to observe and study carefully the scriptural record of Jesus' life, his actions and teachings. At first it may seem odd to consider Jesus as an Apostle. However, the word translated "Apostle" in this verse means "an ambassador of the Gospel." (*Strong's Greek Dictionary*) Indeed, Jesus was the greatest of all ambassadors of the Gospel message, which will reach all mankind in due time.

Continuing, we read: "Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:5,6) Here a comparison is made between Moses, who was a faithful servant of God, and God's only begotten Son Jesus, who was faithful and who has been given a spiritual household of footstep followers.

LEARNING OBEDIENCE FROM SUFFERING

Later in the book of Hebrews we are told that though Jesus was God's Son, "he had to prove the meaning of obedience through all that he suffered." (Heb. 5:8, *J. B. Phillips New Testament*) The sufferings of Jesus included many experiences. The subtle and deceptive temptations which came upon him while in the wilderness, the continual contradiction of sinners against himself, his earthly poverty, his loss of friends, the bitter and relentless persecutions which undeservedly came upon him, were all part of his suffering. Finally, his betrayal by Judas, and his dying agony on the cross, climaxed his life of affliction. Truly, Jesus proved the meaning of obedience by all that he suffered.

From the scriptural record we understand that divine wisdom saw the necessity for Jesus to first be tested and proven faithful during his life here on earth before God would highly exalt him to the divine nature. Likewise must all those who respond to the heavenly calling during the present Gospel Age be thoroughly proven before God will exalt them to be with their Lord and Master, Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul explains this, saying, “If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—II Tim. 2:11,12; Rom. 8:17

FAITH

Faith is described in the book of Hebrews in this way: “Now faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see.” (Heb. 11:1, *Weymouth New Testament*) By contrast, “credulity” is defined by Webster’s dictionary as “readiness or willingness to believe, especially on slight or uncertain evidence.” Often, credulity is simply believing what someone tells us, with little or no evidence for support. Faith, however, is much more than mere credulity, because it is based, as the above verse says, upon “well-grounded assurance” and “conviction” in the promises of God.

The next verse continues, stating that faith is “what the ancients were commended for.” (vs. 2, *NIV*) Throughout the rest of the of Hebrews chapter 11, various individuals from Old Testament times are listed. These not only believed in the promises

of God which they received, but also took action based upon their faith in those promises. Thus we see that faith includes taking action based upon our belief in God's promises.

THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES

In the opening verse of chapter 12 we are admonished: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."—Heb. 12:1, *NIV*

We believe that one of the sins which often "easily entangles" us is the sin of unbelief, or a lack of faith in God's promises. Hebrews chapter 3 speaks about the sin of unbelief, saying, "Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day." Although God led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt at the time of the Exodus, their unbelief and resulting disobedience were displeasing to him. As a result, "they were not able to enter" the land which God had promised to them.—Heb. 3:12-19, *New American Standard Bible*

"CONSIDER" JESUS

How very important it is that we should be "looking away to the leader and perfecter of the faith, Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) The expression "looking away" means to "consider attentively." The *NIV* translation expresses it with these words: "Let us

fix our eyes on Jesus.” The “right hand of the throne of God” refers to the position of chief favor and power next to the Heavenly Father.—Eph. 1:20-22; I Pet. 3:22

Following Hebrews 12:2, our opening text admonishes us to “consider” Jesus, who endured much opposition, so that we do not become weary and discouraged. (vs. 3) The word “consider,” in the original Greek, means “think over, ponder, contemplate.” A similar thought in the English language would be expressed by the word “analyze.”

When someone analyzes something or someone, they do not do so casually or quickly. For example, when going to a doctor for a physical checkup, usually the examination includes taking a sample of blood, which is sent to a laboratory to be analyzed. In performing such an analysis, does the laboratory just casually look at the vial filled with blood and say either “it looks good,” or “it looks like there is a problem?” Certainly not. Rather, the sample is carefully tested using numerous methods, in order to determine various aspects of the person’s health.

A person who analyzes something, whether a medical doctor, or some other type of professional, does three important things. First, he spends a great deal of time and effort gathering all available information about that which he is analyzing. Second, he examines in detail, and from all necessary perspectives, the information which has been gathered. Oftentimes this will include comparing the information with normal or abnormal measurements. Third, the one doing the analysis will draw key conclusions.

When we consider Jesus we are, in essence, analyzing his life, teachings, behavior, and motives. We

do this in order to draw important lessons and conclusions, so that we may better follow his example and strengthen our faith structure.

LEST WE BE WEARY

Our Heavenly Father knows that those whom he calls to be part of the body of Christ during the present Gospel Age may at times “grow weary and lose heart,” as our opening text states, because of various experiences and difficulties which God permits in our life. Here too, we are counseled to “consider him” who endured such great opposition from those among whom he lived. Let us reflect upon some of the things which Jesus endured.

Have we ever been falsely accused or criticized by others when we have done something good or proper? Perhaps when we have tried to share some of God’s wonderful truths which are stated in the Bible, we were ignored or rejected, or even considered to be part of a cult. Let us, then, consider how Jesus, who was a perfect man, was falsely accused on many occasions by imperfect men.

On one occasion there was a Jewish festival, and many people were looking for Jesus. They asked, “Where is he? Among the mass of the people there was much muttered debate about Him. Some said, He is a good man. Others said, Not so: he is imposing on the people. ... When the Festival was already half over, Jesus went up to the Temple and commenced teaching. The Jews were astonished. How does this man know anything of books, they said, although he has never been at any of the schools? Jesus answered their question by saying, My teaching does not belong to me, but comes from Him

who sent me. If any one is willing to do His will, he shall know about the teaching, whether it is from God or originates with me. The man whose teaching originates with himself aims at his own glory. He who aims at the glory of Him who sent him teaches the truth, and there is no deception in him.” Many in the crowd rejected Jesus’ words and falsely accused him of being possessed by a demon.—John 7:11-20, *Weymouth*

On another occasion, after Jesus had explained what it meant to truly be considered a son of Abraham, he was again falsely accused. “Are we not right, answered the Jews, in saying that you are a Samaritan and are possessed by a demon? I am not possessed by a demon, replied Jesus. On the contrary I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. I, however, am not aiming at glory for myself.”—John 8:48-50, *Weymouth*

After performing the miracle of healing a man born blind, Jesus took the opportunity to share some important truths with the people by giving the parable of the good shepherd. The account continues: “Again there arose a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, He is possessed by a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to him? Others argued, that is not the language of a demoniac: and can a demon open blind men’s eyes?”—John 10:19-21, *Weymouth*

Consider how Jesus patiently and meekly endured such insults and false accusations. The Apostle Peter, who had witnessed these very things, describes it, saying, “When He was reviled, He did not answer with reviling; when He suffered He uttered no threats, but left His wrongs in the hands of the

righteous Judge.” (I Pet. 2:23, *Weymouth*) Jesus warned his followers to expect similar mistreatment during the Gospel Age, saying: “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub [*Thayer’s Greek Definitions*: prince of evil spirits], how much more shall they call them of his household?”—Matt. 10:24,25

Have we ever felt overlooked or forgotten by others? Consider Jesus, who on another occasion entered a village where ten lepers called out to him from a distance. They cried out: “Jesus, Rabbi, take pity on us. Perceiving this, He said to them, Go and show yourselves to the Priests. And while on their way to do this they were made clean. One of them, seeing that he was cured, came back, adoring and praising God in a loud voice, ... thanking Him. He was a Samaritan. Were not all ten made clean? Jesus asked; but where are the nine? Have none been found to come back and give glory to God except this foreigner? And He said to him, Rise and go: your faith has cured you.”—Luke 17:11-19

Do we sometimes feel alone in our Christian walk—at our job, at home, in times of ill health or in the midst of other difficult experiences? Consider the many occasions when Jesus was all alone, with no other human being beside him, and what he did to sustain himself spiritually.

After his baptism in the Jordan River, it is recorded that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, where he remained forty days. While there, he was “with the wild beasts.” (Mark 1:12,13)

He had no contact with other human beings during that period, yet he took great advantage of it. We believe Jesus spent those forty days meditating upon the Old Testament promises, prophecies, types and symbols, much of which was vital for his understanding.

Another way Jesus sustained himself when he was alone was by praying to his Heavenly Father, no doubt asking for help and guidance. Consider the following examples of this, as recorded in the Scriptures. "He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there, all alone." "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying." (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35) Thus we see how important prayer was to our Master in order to find comfort and strength during his ministry. Prayer is also vitally important to all those who are striving to follow in Jesus' footsteps. We are never alone when in prayer and supplication with our Heavenly Father.

When Jesus was with the Apostles at Gethsemane, he took Peter, James, and John a little further into the garden. As they went, Jesus began to be very distressed, and said to them, "My soul is crushed with anguish to the very point of death; wait here, and keep awake with me. Going forward a short distance He fell on His face and prayed. My Father, He said, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep." Two more times Jesus went to pray, and each time when he returned, he found the three sleeping. (Matt. 26:36-44, *Weymouth*) The Luke

account tells us that God answered Jesus' prayer, sending an angel to strengthen him.—Luke 22:43

NEVER FORSAKEN BY GOD

In the Scriptures, we are promised that our Heavenly Father will never leave nor forsake his people. God made this promise to various faithful ones during Old Testament times. His promise to Jacob was, "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Gen. 28:15, *NASB*) Moses' words to all the Israelites were: "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (Deut. 31:6, *NASB*) God said to Joshua following the death of Moses: "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."—Josh. 1:5

Similarly, King David reminded his son Solomon: "Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished." (I Chron. 28:20, *NASB*) The psalmist recorded the promise: "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes." (Ps. 118:6,8,9) If our Heavenly Father promised to not leave these faithful ones of the Old Testament, surely he will fulfill the promise given in the New Testament to all those who have dedicated themselves to follow in the footsteps of his Son. As

we are told: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper.”—Heb. 13:5,6

GOD SUPERVISES OUR EXPERIENCES

When trials came to Jesus, he did not consider them as being merely from the individual who was used to convey the experience. He saw them, rather, as being under the supervision of God. When he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, the Apostle Peter pulled out his sword and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his ear. However, Jesus said to Peter, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—John 18:10,11

A few hours later, when Jesus was on trial, the Roman governor Pilate asked Jesus: “Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to Him, You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You? Jesus answered, You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above.” (John 19:9-11, *NASB*) In proportion as we realize that all our experiences are under God’s supervision, we will recognize better the lessons which our Heavenly Father wishes us to learn in order to develop our faith and character-likeness to the Master.

We find this thought expressed in these verses from Hebrews chapter 12: “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” “[God] disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet

to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”—Heb. 12:7,10,11, *NASB*

Nothing can happen to us without the knowledge and permission of our Heavenly Father, who is working all things for our spiritual welfare. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”—Rom. 8:28; II Cor. 4:17,18, *NIV*

We will soon enter the Memorial season. As we do so, let us renew our efforts to consider Jesus often, both in private meditation and study, as well as in our meetings and fellowship with the brethren. As we are admonished: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”—Heb. 3:1 ■