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Studies in the Book of Hebrews – No.9

Studies in the Book of Hebrews.—No. 9.

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(Thursday Afternoon, Feb. 18, 1897.)

THAT same lesson that we had before us yesterday and the day before we still have: "We see Jesus," or the message, "Behold your God;" and we need to continue it until we do see him. We will read in the second chapter of Hebrews so that we may have this portion of the Scriptures fresh in our minds, and simply branch out to other scriptures to see more clearly the facts.

Now, I take it that all here reverence the Word of God, so that whenever the Word comes to us there is nothing to do but to accept it. But accepting it is not simply nodding one's head and saying, "That is so." That is not accepting it. A person would starve to death accepting food in that way. If one brings me food and puts it on the table, and I say, "Thank you. I believe that is good food. It looks good. It seems to be the finest kind of food. I thank you,"—I would starve to death if I never did anything more. That is not accepting it.

Now, the Word of God does not come to us to be looked at, admired, or wondered at; much less, of course, to be discussed and dissected; but the Word of God is life, and it comes to us to be life to us, and we accept it only when we let the life develop to its fullest extent, so that we may have through that life all that God designs for us.

We read the scripture, We see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Here we have the whole story of the gospel,—the Word made flesh, crucified, and risen in the flesh. That is the thing. Christ crucified and risen again in the flesh. That is clearly brought to view in that verse. There is no doubt about that.

We all agree that in this we clearly see Christ crucified and risen in the flesh, because we see him a little lower than the angels, that is, as man. That is the Word made flesh. We see him tasting death for every man. That is the crucifixion. We see him crowned with glory and honor. That is the resurrection, the raising up to the right hand of God. He tasted death for every man. Then for how many did he receive the life again?—For every man.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

He is not ashamed to call who brethren?—All he died for. What is the proof that he was not ashamed to call some persons brethren?—Saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren;" and the fact that he says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren," shows these brethren to be in what condition?—Ignorant of his name. They do not know God's name. So Christ in heaven, looking down upon all the poor, debased, oppressed people on earth, who knew not God's name, called them brethren; and in his love and pity he said to the Father, "I will declare thy name unto" them.

In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.

What for?—"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death." It is not enough for him to destroy death. He must destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And what else?—"Deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." A bondage of fear then.

Let us turn to the eighth chapter of Romans, and the tenth verse and onward:—

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit [what spirit?] of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

We are heirs. Mark, there are two different propositions—"Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." What is the difference of heirship with those who are joint heirs?—No difference. Now there is one of the most glorious lessons in this that the Lord ever told me. Children and heirs of God! I do not know how many have

read that as simply meaning that we inherit God's property. But the text says that we are heirs of God himself. Most of us perhaps have had poor parents; they could not leave us any property at all; but in spite of that, did not they leave us an inheritance? What is the principal thing, the chief thing that we inherit from our fathers?

(Voice.) A name.

Well, the mere title of course is nothing. It is the characteristics, the tendencies, the turn of mind,—that is what we inherit; so that every person in this world has an inheritance from his parents. We have read already in the first chapter of Hebrews, that Christ, the only-begotten Son, has by inheritance a better name than the angels, a shining forth of his glory, and we are joint heirs with Christ. O, we are coming here to the thing, if you will just hold your eyes upon it. That shows us a wonderful possibility. Heirs of God! You remember there is a Psalm which says, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance." I inherit *him* through the same Spirit of God. Through the eternal, divine Spirit we are made heirs, heirs of God. Then what does this mean? Inherit the characteristic of God? Is that too strong?

(A voice) That is just what it is.

I cannot explain it, because I cannot understand the Spirit of God. I cannot understand God's own existence; but here we have the statement, we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Then whatever Christ receives from the Father, that also, when we accept his Spirit, we inherit in him. Therefore whatever characteristics, whatever disposition, whatever thing the Son inherits from the Father, we as joint heirs, heirs of God himself, inherit in him.

It is a mystery, but yet it is a fact that we have all received certain dispositions and tendencies from our parents. This inheritance is seen outwardly in the color of the hair and eyes, in the features, and in our movements and actions. These are our earthly birthright. Now just as we receive these earthly things from our parents, even so from our heavenly Father through the Spirit we receive his characteristics. That is our heavenly birthright.

We get this lesson in the fifth chapter of Romans: "For as by one man's disobedience [what was the result?] many were made sinners." By whose sin were many made sinners?—Adam's. Then we come into the world sinful, don't we? The inheritance we get from our parents,—their

characteristics, their tendencies, their evil traits,—you can see in any child. You can see the father in the child again, and all the evils that his parents committed, not only father and mother, but grandfather and grandmother for generations back. All the evil that they did for generations stamped that impress upon them, and that evil has stamped its impress upon us. We need not argue that. We know it. We all recognize that fact, because it has been discouraging, I doubt not, to many of us; and we have often taken it perhaps as an excuse for a failing, saying, "I inherited it." We say, "I cannot change this, because it is a part of my nature. I inherited it from my father or my grandfather." Take the tendency to drink. It is handed down through generations. It comes often from generations back, but it surely shows itself. Now these things are not fictitious; they are ourselves, aren't they? They are a part of our being,—they make us what we are; and *we* cannot change that. We know that we do not have to try to do these evils. They come out spontaneously.

Now take the whole verse. We have no difficulty with the first part, and if we accept the conclusion, we shall be happy:—

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Verse 19.

How is it that by the disobedience of one we have been made sinners?—We have inherited it. And now, by the offer of one in the flesh, we are to be made righteous in the same way. We have the contrast. Just as we came to be poor, fallen, sinful creatures, even so we shall be made righteous. What is righteousness?—Doing right. Then many shall do right; that is clear. And how will many do right?—By the obedience of One. Well, then, if I am made righteous by his obedience, if I do right by his obedience, where does he obey?—In me. What am I doing?—Letting him, submitting to the righteousness of God. Now there was read here the other day a few words from a testimony, and I will call attention to one sentence, which is as follows:—

I have the Word of the Lord plain and decisive that all who see the necessity of organization must themselves become an example by being organized.

What now is the first thing for us to consider? We have nothing to do with what others do, or with general organization, but the only thing that concerns us is our own individual organization.

How are we going to be organized? How is it going to take place? Are we going to do it? Shall I organize myself?—No. It is that same figure that we have already had. I am a living organization, am I not? Is not this body organized?—Yes; the various organs of my body are working together in perfect harmony, and every part is working. That is organization. They are working together perfectly, without any friction, without any lack of harmony, all agreed. What did I do to get myself organized in this way?—I was born so. Then how am I going to get that organization which the Lord wants me to have?—Be born again; become now, not an heir of my earthly ancestors, but an heir of God. That is clear. Is it clear to you? Now, which would we rather have while here studying,—which would you, as a company, rather have, an hour every day spent here in just a pleasant lesson (I do not say that you would get that if I conducted the class), or that as a result of the Bible study we should be organized, made free? Let us see how many there are here who believe that the Lord designs them to be different from what they are, and has something higher and better for them than they have ever received from him, namely, his fullness; who believe that there is a lack; who believe that there is that for us that we have not, the lack of which hinders us in our daily living, and in our work as we may be connected with the cause. Now let us see an expression. How many think that this is so? How many know that this is so? (The larger part of the congregation raised their hands.)

It seems to be quite general. Why is it so?—Because we are not organized. And what are we going to do to get that organization? How are we going to get it?—By yielding to the Lord. How long do we suppose the Lord wants us to wait for that? In other words, is there a point of time in the future that God has fixed when all these blessings, and the fullness of the blessing, will come upon us, so that we must not expect it yet? What time does the Lord give to man?—To day; now is the accepted time. We shall come across that later, as we study the next chapter of Hebrews. The Spirit says, to-day, "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Notice, it does not say, an evil heart of stealing; an evil heart of fighting,

an evil heart of blasphemy, but an evil heart of unbelief. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." One day comes after another, but each day as it comes is "to-day," and that is the only time God has given. The glorious fact, therefore, is that even this very day, if we are willing really to hear the voice of the Lord, we may as individuals be organized on the Lord's perfect plan. We read in the sixty-first of Isaiah:—

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Now the Lord speaks that word "liberty," and when the Lord says a thing, what is there?—The thing itself. The Lord says to all captives, "Liberty." Then what has everybody?—Liberty. The chains are broken, and there is nobody that need sit in bondage, because liberty has been given him. Everybody that sits in bondage is, therefore, a willing slave, a willing captive. Nobody need be bound. That is good. The Lord has spoiled principalities and powers; yes, has disarmed them, triumphed over them. He has entered into the strong man's house, and bound him, and spoiled his goods, taken away his armor in which he trusted. Then, when Christ in us obeys,—mark, when Christ *in us* obeys,—how much power has the devil against us?—None. When we allow Christ to fill us through the Spirit, so that we are filled with all the fullness of God, then we have power "over all the power of the enemy." What is our part?—Submission.

Now, that same work of submission is enough for you and me all the rest of our lives. To submit, to give up, and to keep giving up, or rather, to keep *given up*, as new experiences arise, is all we have to do; and it will occupy all our time. There is work enough for us, then, to hold still, and let the Lord fill us with his Spirit, and work us. That does not mean laziness; it is passive activity, if you please; it means being just as active as the Lord himself was; because Christ himself living in us will be just the same as he was when he was here on the earth.

So work. O, there is work enough for us to do. "This is the work of God that ye believe," and believing is receiving: "For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on his name.*" So that believing Christ is receiving him. Well, we will go further:—

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

The Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh just as freely as the air we breathe; but just as people shut the air out of their houses, just so they shut out the Spirit of God. Every man in the world may be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh just as freely, and without measure, for every one. God wishes us to be filled with the Spirit, as our lungs are filled with air. This reference to the air reminds me of the creation of the first perfect man. God made him of dust. And what did he breathe into his nostrils?—The breath of life. Just simply breath. His own breath he breathed into him, did he?—Yes. But what was that breath?—Life. God breathed his breath into man, and man went on breathing. Breathing what?—The breath of life. What was that breath of life,—what do we breathe?

(A voice) Air.

What is air, then?—It is God's breath. If we knew this not only physically, but spiritually, we should be much more alive than we are. Read in Ex. 14: 21, of the time when the children of Israel were at the Red Sea:—

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and what was the result?—The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. Now what a wonderful change there was by a little shifting of the wind. The wind shifted so strongly that night that a thing happened that never happened before nor since. But let us read the inspired words of Moses the next day: "With the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap." Ex. 15: 8. So then the air or wind is the breath of God's nostrils. That breath God breathes into us day by day, every minute, yea, many times a minute,—his own life. Very good. When God made that first man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, what kind of man was he?—A living man. Yes, but as to his character?

(A voice) Good.

The Lord God saw everything that he had made, including man, and behold, it was very good. The life that God breathed into man was God, and so long as man continued to acknowledge that his life, his breath, came from God, he remained good. Suppose that at every breath we acknowledged him, then what kind of beings would we be?—Good. We would not say that we were good, but the Lord himself would say that. We can never say of ourselves that we are good, and we do not need to, for the Lord is the only true judge of goodness, and no one is good except whom he calls good.

Now we come to the last part of the text quoted in Isaiah: "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." The tree is organized, is it not, perfectly? Every tree is organized, and all on one general plan, although you cannot find any two alike. It is the infinite variety of God, but it is all perfection. Now we are to be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. In the natural tree we see the manifestation of the life of God, in its selection of proper nourishment. The roots take up that which is good for it, and reject that which is not good. It is a present thing. What gives life to everything on this earth? That is, what is the immediate cause? What is it that all vegetation depends upon?—The sun. Christ is the Sun of righteousness. We are to be trees of righteousness, therefore the sun that is shining upon us is the Sun of righteousness, and that is not far removed from the sunshine that we see, because that teaches us of it. More than that, it is the glory of God. It is the shining of God upon us. But now we speak simply of light which comes to us in this world. What is it that is the life of the tree?—Sunshine. If light does not shine upon the tree, it will not grow. There will be no life there. So Christ says, "I am the light of the world."

Light is life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." His life comes to us now, and life is power. You can see that in the sun; the power of the sun draws innumerable tons of water into the skies every day. Light is life and power in the tree. Why is it that the tree grows, and is just what it ought to be?—Because every ray of light that shines to it is received. This brings the sap, the nourishment, food, to every part of the tree, and causes it to grow. The tree

simply takes every ray of light that comes to it. Suppose we were to do just the same way, then we would grow trees of righteousness.

The tree does not reject the sun nor a single ray of light, but all that comes to it, it takes gladly and absorbs, taking it into itself. That light is life, so that the tree is perfectly organized. Just so with us, if we will simply drink in the light, and that is the life of Christ. Then God will live in us, and will chose for us just the same as in the tree. We do not know anything, but he will think for us. What does he say?—Call upon him while he is near. How near is he?—"In thy mouth and in thy heart." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." If a man forsake his ways and his thoughts, what is there left of him?—Nothing.

What ways and what thoughts, then, are to be ours?—God's. Can I do as God does?—No. Can I set myself to thinking God's thoughts?—No. But he will think in us just what he wants us to think. He will not think for us such infinite thoughts as he thinks for himself, for he has not made us infinite; but he will think in us everything that he desires us to think, and will work in us perfectly to will and to do his good pleasure. Then we will be organized, reorganized, made new. It is God thinking and acting in us. We read yesterday: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened." Rom. 1:21. ("For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down *reasonings* and *every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God*, and bringing into captivity every thought, to the obedience of Christ." The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Then when men think for themselves, not perfectly submitting to God, that he may think in them, just to that extent they are fools, no matter how learned. But when a man will yield soul and body to God, the Spirit of God will cast down these human reasonings, which are but vain imaginations, and the wisdom of God alone will be manifested. Now if God should think in every one of us assembled in

General Conference, would there be any mistakes made? Would there be any hap-hazard work?—No. He would think the same thing in all of us. All are made in different phases. He has made no two trees of the forest alike, and he has made no two of us alike; but coming together with God thinking in each of us, there would not be any human wisdom, but only the wisdom of the Spirit of God. Then everything would be done exactly right, and nothing would be done that ought not to be done. The command to us is explicit: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."—When? Is it only when he gets up and gives testimony in meeting? Is it not just as well when he engages in business?—Certainly; for there is no limit. Then of course we must speak differently from what we have been speaking, for we must confess that many things have heretofore been spoken at random. How often we hear the brethren say, when they are not sure about some action or suggestion, "We have acted according to the best light we have." Now what is "the best light we have"?—It is Christ, the light of the world, the wisdom of God; and he says, "Who-soever followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Then whoever follows absolutely the best light he has, need never be in doubt.

Now one question: Since such certainty is possible for us, do we not assume a great and fearful responsibility when we venture to go ahead in what we call the Lord's work, without knowing to a certainty that it is God himself that is doing it. Dare we do so in this Conference? Shall we not rather allow the Lord to organize us, by filling us with his Spirit? Then Christ will be our wisdom and our strength, as well as our righteousness.

Evening Services.

AS ARRANGED by the committee having the matter in charge, the evening services in the church at College View will be conducted according to the following: Wednesday, Feb. 24, J. E. Graham, captain of the "Pitcairn." Thursday, Feb. 25, Luther Warren. Friday, Feb. 26, E. J. Hibbard. Sabbath A.M., Feb. 27, M. C. Wilcox. Sunday evening, Feb. 28, I. D. Van Horn. Monday, Mar. 1, S. H. Lane. The following evenings to the close to be occupied by A. T. Jones. It is understood that this schedule is subject to change, if it be considered necessary.