

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

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**Speaker:** Mr. Ernie Brown

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## Christ Seated: The Completer of faith - Sitting Down - Hebrews 12:1-3

From time to time, it has been necessary for me to move home to different parts of the country, because of changes in my work location. At one stage, I moved into a new house, just completed. I was one of the first to occupy a house on this new estate, so the building site was a very busy place, with all manner of craftsmen busy on the various houses still in course of construction. Very often, in the morning, I was just leaving home for my work when the builder arrived on the site to confirm his instructions for the day. I was always amused at his parting shot to his staff before he left them, on his way to another similar site, which he was also developing. With a cheery wave, he invariably said to his staff, "Well, that's it! I expect you lads will go home tired tonight!" In other words, he expected them to work so hard for him each day that, when they got home from work, they would be too tired to do anything other than have a bath, sit down, rest awhile, have a meal, and go to bed. The next day, having recovered their energy, they could then be expected to turn up for work, suitably refreshed, able to apply themselves diligently once more on his behalf

Even at the time, it occurred to me that there might be several reasons why someone should wish or need to sit down. Certainly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the various reasons for the Lord Jesus becoming seated are both instructive and significant.

Today we consider the statement in Hebrews 12:1-3: *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself; lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds".*

The beauty and perfection of the life on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ is a constant and consistent theme throughout scripture. The tributes are many. Let me give you a few brief examples, with a little explanatory comment.

Before we start, we must recognise that we shall never appreciate the perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ in anything like the measure in which God Himself does. Nevertheless, we are assured in scripture that we are intended to learn what scripture reveals about the Lord Jesus, and express our appreciation of what we have learned about Him, in praise and worship to God, and in suitable Christian witness and service.

As early as Leviticus 2, in the Meal Offering, we are given a typical outline of features that came to light in the Lord's life which are valid substance for worship.

Psalms 16 is the Psalm of the Meal Offering. That is, it gives us the feelings of Christ as He lived that perfect life. We get an inkling there, in verse 11, of what we have read in Hebrews 12. *"Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."* That is, anticipation of the joy awaiting Him at the terminus of His life on earth gave Him sufficient incentive to keep faithful to God during that life.

In Isaiah 43:2 we read the prophetic statement, *"The Lord shall be well pleased for His righteousness' sake. He shall magnify the Law and make it honourable."* Only the Lord Jesus fully exemplified this in every way.

Isaiah 53, that grand prophetic declaration about the life, death, resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus, says in verse 2, *"He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground"*. That is, His life was lived under the constantly approving eye of God. Moving into the New Testament, the accounts of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 affirm that there was no moral impediment to His going straight back to heaven there and then. However, His life on earth was not yet over. It was not yet time for Him to sit down.

Luke's Gospel, as a whole, depicts in a comprehensive way the Life of the perfect Man. That is, it is the record of Christ's perfect life lived on earth under the eye of God and to the glory of God. The ascension is the proper climax to the gospel record in Luke 24, and also the best possible starting point in Acts 1. Furthermore, He has been seated in heavenly glory at the right hand of the throne of God, but now in risen, ascended manhood.

1 Timothy 3:16, like Psalm 16, and also Hebrews 12, tells us that the only fitting end to such a life, the only fitting climax and terminus of such a life, is glory at the right hand of God. In 1 Timothy 3, the emphasis is not so much on the fact of His exaltation, but rather on the manner of His reception there. He was received up in glory. He was given a glorious reception.

Hebrews 2 says much about death. In particular, we are told there that through fear of death, men are in slavery all their lives. In becoming Man, the Lord Jesus entered into a condition in which it was possible for Him to die. Having come into the world, the perfect life of the Lord Jesus demonstrated Him to be the only One whose death could deliver men who trust Him as Saviour from such fear of death.

In Hebrews 11, we are given a roll of honour of those who died in faith, because they lived by faith. They are all wonderful examples to us. But at the end of the list of those worthies, we are directed in 12:2 to look away even from these grand examples, indeed from everything and everyone else, and concentrate our gaze on the Lord Jesus alone. In this, as in all things, Christ must have the pre-eminence. The right hand of the throne of God is the right place or station for one who lived such a life. It is the only proper terminus for the life of the Perfect Man. The only fitting climax for and tribute to such a perfect life!

We are told here that He is the Author, or Leader; of faith: In any community, the lifestyle and character of the leader, and his charisma, or lack of it, have a great effect on the life, character, loyalty and service of his followers. This is particularly true of the Christian community, whose leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, far outstrips, in any and every respect, any other leader the world has ever known. This has a tremendous effect on his followers. Christianity is essentially practical in its effects. The qualities of their perfect leader are bound to have a tremendous effect for good on all Christians, to a greater or lesser degree.

We are also told that he is the Finisher, or Completer, of faith. He is the One who has Himself completed the course. What was the incentive for Him? It was *“For the joy that was set before Him”*. Being omniscient, He knew in advance all that lay before Him, and for Him. His anticipation of His future exaltation at the right hand of God gave Him the incentive to live such a life. This enabled Him even to endure the utmost contradiction of sinners against Himself.

*“He endured the Cross, despising the shame.”* The constant approval of His Father in which He ever basked throughout His perfect life accentuated the suffering He must endure at the end of that life. But His perfection was seen supremely in His willingness to give up that life, in death, deliver it up to God, sacrificially. This brought that life to a fitting climax, and provided a righteous basis for the salvation of all who would believe on Him. What came upon Him from man He could afford to despise. What came upon Him from God He could not despise. That He must endure.

First and foremost, the life of the Lord Jesus on earth was lived for and before the eye of God, and for the pleasure of God. The answer to that life, Hebrews 12:2, is also, first of all, for the pleasure of God. It is to the delight of God that that which should have been seen in man, the first man, natural man, Adam, and all other men, has indeed been seen, and that in full measure, in the life on earth of His beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God has been equally quick to give His answer to such a life. Christ was *“raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”* (Romans 6:4). Again, *“God shall straightway glorify Him”* (John 13:32). Furthermore, He has been seated in heavenly glory at the right hand of God. In Proverbs 8:30, we are informed that the enjoyment of personal relationships within the Godhead was nothing new. *“Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him”*. What is new is that He is now there, in heaven, in a condition in which He was not there before, in which He did not subsist in eternity. He is there in risen, ascended manhood. He is there as a man.

A fair question to ask is, ‘Does it matter?’ Indeed it does! The Lord Jesus lived the only life ever lived on earth which was perfect in every way. However, even such a life could not secure salvation for us. Only the delivering up to death of that life, in sacrifice for sins, would suffice. What utter folly for anyone else to even think that anything else done by anyone else could ever merit favour with God!

*There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin,  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven, and let us in.*

The summing up of the Law given in Luke 10:27 is most striking. *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.”*

This has only once ever been fulfilled in this world. Matthew outlines the Lord as the only man who ever loved the Lord

His God with all His strength. Mark shows the Lord, the Perfect Servant, loving the Lord His God with all His mind. Luke, who presents the Lord as the Perfect Man, paints the picture of the Lord loving the Lord His God with all His soul. John's Gospel shows us how the Lord Jesus loved the Lord His God with all His heart.

Only because such a life has been lived by Him, as detailed in the Gospel record, can a reflection of that be seen, in measure, in us. Even then, of course, not in the degree, or quality, or consistency, seen in the life of the Lord Jesus between Bethlehem and Calvary. Probably the nearest men have ever come to it is in the early years of the Christian church, recorded in the early chapters of the Book of Acts; there we have the record of the early Christians loving their neighbours as themselves. They had *"all things in common"*, taking *"from each according to his ability"*, and giving *"to each according to his need"*.

Up to now, we have only referred to the second of our three verses. That is not by oversight or neglect. The exhortations in verses 1 and 3 concentrate our attention on verse 2. We have been thinking about the utter propriety of the fact that sitting on the right hand of God, with the dignity that confers, is entirely appropriate for the Lord Jesus Christ, as a tribute to the wonder, fullness and perfection of His life upon earth.

Verses 1 and 3 tell us that the Christian's vision and consideration of Him there, and knowledge of why He is there, produces a clean, positive, worthwhile life. This gives us the stamina and the courage to represent Him here in a manner worthy of Him, without giving in to the temptation to be so weary we feel like giving up. Let us hear the challenge of verse 1 again. *"Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run the race that is set before us"*.

Very good. What does it say to us? It tells us that the Christian life is a race, not a sprint but a marathon. To be effective in that race, we need to lay aside every unnecessary weight. There are many things in this life which are not necessarily evil in themselves. However, they might well hinder us in what should be our main object in life, that is, following our Lord Jesus Christ, and being here in this world on His behalf. Top-class athletes put to one side things that they might well otherwise enjoy, so that they might be most effective in what is most important to them. So, fully committed Christians are prepared to do without things which they might well enjoy, but which would limit their usefulness to their Lord and Master.

Sin is an entirely different matter. As far as the race of life is concerned, while weights might slow us down, sin absolutely paralyses our usefulness to the Lord Jesus. There is no such thing as condoning any sin committed by a Christian; sin, where it occurs, must be identified and confessed. Then it will be forgiven, as we learn in 1 John 1:9. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Our verses here remind us that the best way to avoid these drawbacks is to spend time, and spiritual energy, in considering the Person and perfect life of our Lord Jesus Christ. How do we do this? Read, study, meditate upon and pray over what is said about the Lord Jesus Christ in all the scriptures. Think about what the Bible says about Him, His personal qualities, His life on earth, His moral perfection, the way He spoke, the way He acted, the way He served God, the way in which He reacted to what others did to Him and said to Him.

The various scriptures we have referred to about the wonder of the perfect life of the Lord Jesus amply confirm this. We see, then, that it is no mere academic matter to think about why the Lord Jesus is presently sitting down at the right hand of God. First of all, it gives us right thoughts of Him, His perfection, and the great wonder of a life lived on earth which was glorifying to God and for the delight and pleasure of God Himself to behold. Secondly, for ourselves, as well as being good for our own souls to think of Him, such consideration has the practical effect upon us that it gives us the moral strength to follow His example. Then, in our own measure, we can live lives that glorify God and let other people know what kind of Saviour we trust. Then, they, in their turn, are given the challenge as to what extent if any what they know about the Son of God has had any effect on them. The first effect is to bring us back to the understanding that nothing that we could ever do in our lives could give due answer to God for the sins we have committed against Him. Only the value to God of the death of Christ upon the Cross of Calvary can avail to cleanse away our sins and make us fit for the presence of God. Then, and only then, can we respond to the exhortation with which we began.

*"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds"*.

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