

## Hebrews 3:1-6

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, focus your attention on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. <sup>2</sup>He was faithful to the one who appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in God's whole house. <sup>3</sup>In fact, Jesus is worthy of greater glory than Moses, in the same way that the builder of a house has more honor than the house. <sup>4</sup>For every house is built by someone, and God is the one who built everything.

<sup>5</sup>Moses was faithful as a servant within God's whole house by testifying to the things that would be spoken. <sup>6</sup>But Christ is faithful as a Son over God's house. We are his house, if we hold on firmly to our confidence and the hope about which we boast until the end.

## Focus Your Attention

### I.

Do you understand what it is like to be proud of your heritage? Genealogy sites make a living from people who want to learn more about where they came from. Many people can look back 100 years, or even 200 to find interesting tidbits of information about their family heritage. But for most, going back any further than that gets a bit murky.

The Letter to the Hebrews was a letter written to people of Jewish descent. It's easy to tell that this is the case because of the many references in the letter to the worship life of Israel and the many Old Testament references.

Jewish people were proud of their heritage. And why not? Theirs was a culture that could trace its roots back much farther than the typical 1- or 200 years. They could go back for thousands of years. In all of human history, only *one* nation could claim to have ever been a Theocracy, ruled directly by the One True and Only God—the God of the Bible. That nation was Old Testament Israel.

For literally thousands of years they had been God's special, chosen people. Their history of their nation started with Abraham, to whom the specific promise of a coming Messiah, or Savior, had come. The promise was passed down to his descendants Isaac and Jacob, and on down the line.

400 years of the slavery of the Israelite people did not change the fact that they were chosen by God. Eventually God sent Moses to change everything for their nation. It was under Moses that Israel became a Theocracy. Though Moses was the face of leadership to whom everyone turned, it was understood that Moses spoke directly for God. It was God himself who set the laws and governed the people. Moses was the most trusted servant of the Most High God who carried God's instructions to the people, and took the peoples' problems and concerns and questions directly to God.

"Moses was faithful in God's whole house... <sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful as a servant within God's whole house by testifying to the things that would be spoken" (Hebrews 3:2, 5, EHV).

There were good and valid reasons to be proud of their heritage and look back. It was natural for Jewish Christians to look back with pride to Moses. It was Moses who had given them the Law. The Moral Law was in there, to be sure, but so was the Ceremonial Law, which dictated to them exactly how they were to worship and when they were to worship and what the sacrifices were to be for their worship.

Therein lay the problem. They were focusing their attention on the past. As glorious as the past was in Jewish history, to focus on it meant that they were focusing on the law. The reason this letter was written was that there was a movement among these Jewish Christians to give up Christianity and go back to Judaism. Pride in their heritage was leading to a lack of focus on the reality. Even Moses understood that he wasn't the be-all to end-all. "Moses was faithful as a servant within God's whole house by testifying to the things that would be spoken" (Hebrews 3:5, EHV). Moses pointed ahead to something else. These Jewish Christians seemed to be looking in the rearview mirror. Their attention was focused on the past.

### II.

Where do *you* focus your attention? Do you realize how much time you have to focus attention

wherever you will?

When the cold front moved through this week and the winds turned cold and the weather report included a wind chill reading for the first time in months, did you worry that you might not have enough wood in the woodpile to keep you warm throughout the coming winter, or did you just walk confidently to the thermostat and flip the switch to “heat”? You didn’t even bother reviewing the settings in your program from last year. You just know that it’s set to your preferences, and your house will be as toasty warm as you want it to be.

There are so many other modern conveniences of life available to you, as well. You don’t have to spend hours in front of the wringer on your washing machine and then taking clothes out to the line to dry. You can put your dirty dishes into a machine, out of which they come nice and clean without much effort. Meal preparation has been cut drastically because you have a grocery store with an ever-increasing array of items from which to choose. You can even get grocery delivery if you don’t want to waste your valuable time shopping.

So many mundane jobs to just stay alive have been simplified beyond anything the ultra-wealthy could imagine just a few generations ago. So much time saved. What do you do with it all? Where *do* you focus your attention?

How much of your attention is focused on God? Is the hour of worship on Sunday morning a chore? Perhaps you would like something more like a fast-food drive through window. Just pull up, order what you want from some menu of choices, make your token payment, drive off and be done with church—and God—for the week.

In the 167 hours of the week you *aren’t* in a worship service, how many times do the names “God” or “Jesus” cross your lips? How many of those are just epithets and exclamations of astonishment at some situation of life rather than the names of God spoken in a worshipful or reverent way in prayer and devotions?

You don’t have to hunt and fish to survive any more, but we do it anyway—for fun. Since the drudgery of housework has been lessened by modern appliances, we have more time for entertainment options. Even if you are a TV cord-cutter, there are so many options these days—Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube, or any of a growing number of internet video streaming services. Besides all the entertainment options on TV and connected devices, there is leisure time to devote to gaming or recreational activities of every kind imaginable.

Where do you focus your attention? How much is your attention focused on God? Our potential problem isn’t that much different from that of the Jewish Christians for whom this letter was written. Our backward focus isn’t necessarily one of heritage, looking back to the law of God that was designed to point ahead to Christ, but back to a pre-Christian life—one that focuses only on what the sinful nature desires.

### III.

“Focus your attention on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. <sup>2</sup>He was faithful to the one who appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in God’s whole house” (Hebrews 3:1-2, EHV).

Those Jewish Christians had been focusing a lot of attention on Moses. They were all prepared to abandon Christianity to go back to all the rules and regulations of Synagogue worship that had been going on for centuries. It was their heritage. Perhaps it was even comfortable. The Sabbath days. Passover. The Great Day of Atonement. The Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. Customs and traditions had developed around all these things that had been in place for more than 1,000 years.

“Focus your attention on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. (Hebrews 3:1, EHV). With one sentence the writer grabbed their attention. On the big screen of their minds these Jewish Christians could see the scene of the Great Day of Atonement being carried out. On that day every eye

was focused on the high priest. One part of that special day involved two goats. One was killed as a sin offering for the people. Then the priest placed his hands on the head of the second goat and confessed the sins of the people. After he had done so, the second goat was released into the wilderness, symbolically carrying the sins of the people away from them as the scapegoat.

Jesus is declared to be the apostle and high priest by the writer. Apostle means “sent one.” Jesus is the One who was sent by God the Father into the world to redeem the world. He did this as the Great High Priest. Not only was he the one making the sacrifices, he served as both the scapegoat, taking the sins of the people on himself, and the other goat, offering himself as the sacrifice on the cross to pay for the sins of all people of all time.

“In fact, Jesus is worthy of greater glory than Moses, in the same way that the builder of a house has more honor than the house. <sup>4</sup>For every house is built by someone, and God is the one who built everything” (Hebrews 3:3-4, EHV). Why would the Jewish Christians want to focus backward on Moses? Certainly they could look at Moses and see all the history that surrounded Moses as part of the House of God. He had been the mediator of the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law of God. He had led the People of Israel to the Promised Land, under God’s direction. But God is the builder of that house. Jesus, as the builder of all things—as the Creator God—deserves more honor than Moses.

Really the writer focused their attention to the fact that Jesus paid for all kinds of improper focus people of every generation engage in. As the scapegoat and perfect sacrifice, Jesus paid for the Jewish Christians and their focus on the past. As the scapegoat and perfect sacrifice Jesus paid for all the times we shift focus from him to recreational activities and entertainment options. He even paid for our missed opportunities for worship, or the ways we have wanted to or tried to trivialize worship and turn it into just another show rather than a reverent communion with God to hear from him and to thank him.

#### IV.

“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, focus your attention on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess” (Hebrews 3:1, EHV). The readers of this letter—both those for whom it was originally written and we today—are holy brothers and sisters. Holy means two things— <sup>1</sup> perfect and without sin and <sup>2</sup> set apart for God’s purposes.

You are holy. You have been called by the Holy Spirit. Jesus carried off your sins as the scapegoat and paid for them as your perfect sacrifice. You are perfect in the sight of God because you have Jesus’ righteousness and wear it as your heavenly garment.

You are holy. You have been set apart for God’s purposes. You have been set apart to focus your attention on Jesus. Remember that every item you own is just a trifle, a temporary trinket that will last only as long as your lifetime. Remember that every activity you engage in without your focus on him is just wasted time.

“Moses was faithful as a servant within God’s whole house by testifying to the things that would be spoken” (Hebrews 3:5, EHV). Moses knew that God’s promise would be fulfilled. He didn’t know the details—the how or when, but he knew that God always keeps his promises.

“But Christ is faithful as a Son over God’s house. We are his house, if we hold on firmly to our confidence and the hope about which we boast until the end” (Hebrews 3:6, EHV). Sometimes we call might call our church building the house of God. That is certainly true, in the sense that we all gather together here to worship the Lord. But “We are his house.” Jesus once told his followers that the Kingdom of God is within you. You carry around the house of God inside you all week long. Don’t listen to any religious leader or spiritual teacher who would pull your attention aside from the forgiveness of sins won for you by Jesus to rules taught by men.

Are you proud of your heritage? Keep your focus on Jesus. If it is he who is your heritage you will always have something to be proud of. Because he calls you a holy brother or sister, you have a heritage that will bring you to heaven. Amen.