

The Book of Hebrews

Part 6: The Heavenly Feast (Heb. 3:1)

I. Already Holy

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession...

(Hebrews 3:1)

This chapter begins with, *“Therefore, holy brethren...”* In studying Scripture it’s always helpful to ask *what is the “therefore” there for?*

In just two chapters, we have been immersed into a divine panorama of Christ’s nature and accomplishments. He is the radiant Son of God, the Revealer the Father, the One who reigns above all angelic beings, who formed the universe and holds it together, the One who is uniquely qualified to stand in our place and represent all of creation—the High Priest of heaven and earth who declares us to be *just as holy and innocent as he is*.

We also learned that we are truly his flesh-and-blood relatives—brothers and sisters who originate from the same Father. *Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters*.

Through Christ’s work, we have been restored to our original blessing as Image-Bearers who come from the Spirit-Breath of God (Genesis 1:26 & 2:7).

That is what brings us to the words: ***“Therefore, holy brethren...”***

This a tremendous statement of our identity. Let’s examine it in another translation:

1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, you are now made holy, and each of you is invited to the feast of your heavenly calling. So fasten your thoughts fully onto Jesus, whom we embrace as our Apostle and King-Priest.

(Hebrews 3:1 TPT)

Words like these can be difficult for us to believe and accept, and yet not as challenging as it was for the original readers of this letter.

The Hebrew people were established in the idea that holiness is something you strive after with everything in your life. You work for holiness by obeying the Law of Moses, and when you fail, you pay for it with sacrifices. You slaughter a living creature (which you most likely raised yourself) who absorbs your failures in their death so that your conscience can return to a state of peace. From there, you go back to working hard at being holy in order to secure God’s favor.

This is why the letter is written, starting back in the beginning of chapter one when it said the Son of God, the Creator himself, *made purification of sins and sat down*. The message is that we are already holy because what Christ has done in his final sacrifice.

We no longer have to *do anything* to secure God's favor and blessing. From God's perspective, our sins are no longer an issue between us. We are completely accepted and under his smiling gaze.

Keep in mind that the writer is speaking to people who have shown concerning behavior, enough to warrant a letter with serious warnings about what will happen if they choose to embrace the way of the Law. But even in their slip-ups toward unbelief, the writer definitively calls them *dear brothers and sisters of Jesus who have been made holy*.

This is the same thing we see happening with the Corinthians when Paul writes to the Greek community of believers there with the intention of addressing some serious issues, including sinful behavior that was being swept under the rug... This is how he begins the letter:

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

(1 Corinthians 1:2)

Before dealing with any "issue" in our lives or in other people's lives, we must know how God sees us. We must break out of our own limited perspectives and self-judgments, and hear and accept these heavenly words... *Dear brother of Jesus ... Dear sister of Jesus ... You are holy ...*

Your Father—our Father—does not see your darkness ... He does not hold your sin against you ... He sees you pure and innocent and good ...

II. Partaking in the Feast of the Trinity

This opening verse then adds another dimension of our identity:

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling...

The Greek word for "calling" here was often used to invite people to a feast. It was a *call* to come to a place where tables were set with food, surrounded by celebration and fellowship.

Our main "calling" in life as children of God is to enjoy a special kind of feast.

20 Behold, I'm standing at the door, knocking. If your heart is open to hear my voice and you open the door within, I will come in to you and feast with you, and you will feast with me.

(Revelation 3:20 TPT)

This is the call given to one of the worst church groups in all of the New Testament—the *church of Laodicea*. They were apathetic and disconnected from the grace and power of God, and Jesus still comes to invite them to return to their number one calling.

What does it mean to come and “partake” of the feast?

The book of Hebrews is going to teach us what this means. If we take a step back and look at the overall letter, there are some powerful clues about this invitation.

The word “partaker” shows up three more times after this verse. In Hebrews 3:14 it says we are *partakers of Christ*. Hebrews 6:4 says we are *partakers of the Holy Spirit*. And Hebrews 12:7-8 says we *partake of being sons of the Father*.

We are called to come and enjoy the presence of the entire Trinity. We are invited to commune with Jesus himself. We are invited to enjoy friendship with the Holy Spirit. And we are invited to know God as our Father, and to rest in the reality that we are beloved sons and daughters.

This is the trajectory of the entire letter—it is an invitation to a heavenly banquet (as is the New Testament). Hebrews 10, which contains the best summary of the entire letter in verses 19-25, sheds light on this. It gives an invitation to a specific place that held a table with food on it...

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus... (Hebrews 10:19)

The “blood of Jesus” has made us pure and holy, restored our true identity. Because of this, we can confidently and boldly (this word also means “without any hesitation”) come to the *Holy Place*.

The Holy Place was a special area in the temple of Jerusalem that only the priests were able to access. (The common person did have “confidence and boldness” to enter it; hence the repeated invitations of the letter trying to break the readers’ minds open to this.)

Interestingly, this room had three items in it: an altar for incense, a sevenfold lampstand, and a table for bread.

Each of these items can correspond to a different Person of the Trinity. The oil-filled lamp speaks of the Holy Spirit. The bread speaks of Christ. The incense of prayer rises up to the Father, and it speaks to our restored intimacy as his children.

To enter the literal Holy Place in Jerusalem was to be symbolically surrounded by the Trinity. Our calling is to enter the true Holy Place of fellowship with God. We are dear brothers and sisters of Jesus, made holy, and therefore we are members of this Divine Family called the Trinity, and we are welcomed into their arms.

- **Note:** *In Revelation, right after Jesus says he is knocking on the door and inviting us to a feast, John (the one receiving this “revelation”) goes through an open door in heaven where he sees the true “Holy Place” and he is surrounded by these symbols.*

Our particular focus is the table, which is specifically explained in the previous chapter:

**2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place.
(Hebrews 9:2)**

We need to understand and embrace this invitation to come to the feast at this table. What does that mean?

The Song of Songs sheds some light on this. This is a prophetic book of poetry that unveils the believer’s journey of union and fellowship with God. The entire journey begins at a table (Song 1:12). Within a few verses it becomes a tree (2:3), and then it is described as a banquet hall—or, in the literal Hebrew, a “*house of wine*” (2:4).

The “tree” in the middle of the table and the house of wine gives a major clue. It speaks of us eating of the truth that Jesus was crucified on a tree for our sins. We take it like food into our hearts. We drink of the blood that Jesus called the “wine of the New Covenant.” This wine is what we drink in communion and it points to everything that is being unveiled in Hebrews.

So “*partakers of a heavenly feast*” is about partaking in the first part of that verse—that we are holy brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of the Trinity’s family. Our primary calling is to enjoy (or feast on) that reality.

We should enjoy it personally and we should enjoy it in the fellowship of other believers in worship, prayer, and conversation.

Note: *Every other more specific “calling” we have in our lives is meant to flow out of the higher calling of being a “partaker.”*

III. True & Life-changing Confession

This last part of this verse will give us even further instruction on *how to partake*.

With our identity and calling established, the verse goes on:

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession...

The word “consider” means to “fasten your thoughts fully” onto something. This is building on what was said in the previous chapter:

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

(Hebrews 2:1)

We are urged to fasten or “fix” our thoughts onto something specific—the message of Christ. This can be compared to pressing and turning a screw into wood. We are called to turn the Gospel over and over in our minds until it gets firmly rooted in there.

One way this happens is through difficulties. When we experience failure, when we make a mistake, when we feel judged (or when we judge others), when we are going through a wearisome time and want to give up—that is when we turn back again and again to the Truth. We come back to the communion table and remind ourselves and one another of the bigger story.

We are called to fasten our thoughts on “*the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.*”

The word “apostle” means *a sent one*. Jesus was *sent* by the Father to win our hearts over. Apostles were originally military figures sent by Roman Emperors to establish their dominion in newly conquered territory. Jesus came to establish the Father’s Kingdom of love, peace, and joy in our lives.

As High Priest, he is the One who took care of everything that keeps us from entering that Kingdom. He took our guilt and sins, and he gave us his identity, restoring us back to our true selves as God’s kids.

He is called here “*the High Priest of our confession...*” This is where we are given one of the primary ways we *partake* of the heavenly feast.

The Greek word for “confession” is defined as “something or someone we confess to be ours.”

In light of everything we’ve learned, this is not primarily about confessing “sin.” This is about confessing what is ours: that we are holy, that we are good, that we are pure and restored and healthy.

We eat at God’s table by putting the Word in our mouth. We confess to ourselves and to one another the truth about what Jesus has done.

This is how we fasten the message down into our hearts. Confession overrides our feelings and our experiences. As we confess the truth, it begins to transform our feelings and experiences.

Confession can happen in prayer, in worship, in spiritual conversation, in quiet meditation.

We do this already. We all confess—or “own”—things about ourselves. We confess our job title, our ethnicity, our upbringing, our personality style. Before any of that, we should learn to **own** our inheritance in God’s Kingdom.

People confess they have anger problems; that they are addicts, that they are sick and weak... But our highest and truest confession should be our identity in Christ—that we are pure and holy and free just like our Older Brother. We need to “own” the fact that Jesus made us free—free from sin, free from addiction, and free from unhealthy personality traits.

You may not feel that’s the truth—but starting partaking of it and you will see that it is.

So, what about “confessing sin”? What about owning up to our shortcomings?

This is where we come to a major roadblock for people in accepting the message in Hebrews, both for people today just and for the letter’s original recipients. The question is, *how can we confess that we are righteous and holy and free when we still seem have so many struggles?*

There is absolutely place of confessing sin. We are called to expose darkness. But we have to understand what “darkness” is.

Throughout Scripture, darkness and light are often symbols for truth and deception. Darkness is a lack of light, and thus lack of truth. Anything “dark” in your life is not the truth about you. So, it does not change your confession of your true identity as a holy brother or sister of Jesus.

Now, there are dark thoughts and desires and actions that spring up from lies we believe and they can go on to wreak havoc in our lives. We remain God’s holy child, but our lives can be lost in darkness. Therefore, we must bring darkness into the light of truth.

So, if there are dark (“hidden”) things in your life that conflict with your identity in Christ, they need to be exposed. Keeping things quiet and not dealing with unhealthy behavior always leads to bigger problems.

Darkness should be exposed, but it this should be done in a health way, and in atmosphere of grace that honors and remembers a person’s true identity.

There is no fear of punishment in the Kingdom of God (1 John 4:18). Jesus has removed all sense of punishment at the cross. We are already forgiven by God—so in terms of confessing “sin” to God, we are not doing that to get him to love us or to not punish us. We’re already loved, and we’re already forgiven.

We “confess,” or to put it in better terms, we *expose* darkness, in order to get free and be washed in the truth. The truth is already there, waiting for light to shine on it.

An atmosphere of grace and honor does not accept darkness. It accepts the person. But it does not say “sin” is OK. Sin is hurtful and destructive.

An atmosphere of grace also doesn't mean there no restorative consequences. If someone confesses to something harmful that they are doing to others, there very well might need to be boundaries put in place as that comes into the light.

Sometimes those boundaries need to be very firm. If someone is hurting others from a position of power, they should be removed from that position in order to protect those who are being hurt—either temporarily or permanently depending on the issue.

But there should always be a focus toward healing. In the New Covenant, no matter what the issue is, we are called to forgive. We do not abuse someone who abused others. That is the way of Moses, “an eye for an eye.” We protect and guard those who have been hurt, but also work to help the individual find healing from whatever deception in their hearts is causing them to hurt others.

It's not about punishment or judgment, it's about a family who is called to learn their place in properly relating to one another under the grace of our Divine Family—Father, Son, and Spirit.

This is what it means to come to the Table! A table is a place of fellowship and transparency. At a table, you cannot hide yourself. Your face is visible to others. True fellowship around a table will mean letting other people into your journey.

Hebrews 10:19 did not call us to come boldly into the “outer court” of the temple. In the outer court, there were big public gatherings where you could easily hide yourself. Hebrews instead calls us into the Holy Place, where only a few people can fit at one time.

This exposes a major issue withing Christianity in the world that God is correcting. In big public gatherings we can come and hide—but at a table with a small group of people, not so much.

Christianity was forged and developed around tables way more than public temple-like gatherings. The larger gatherings are great for celebration and general teaching, but they are not the lifeblood of the church.

Some of us are wrestling with things alone in the dark and we need one another. We need to be shown grace and wisdom. Jesus works through his Body around the table of grace. He wants to use others to help us come back to our true confession—that we are the dear brothers and sisters, made holy.

This is how we partake of our heavenly calling!

Again, Hebrews 10 will reiterate these things when it says:

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place ... 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:19, 23)

Our confession should always be filled with HOPE. Jesus is the Hope and Light of our true selves.

If you struggle with addiction, expose that to God and others, and consider Jesus... He is the Hope of your true Freedom.

If you struggle with lust, expose that to God and others, and consider Jesus... He is the Hope and Reality of your pure heart; that you are made to see others as brothers and sisters.

If you struggle with anger, expose it, and consider Jesus... He is Hope of peace and reconciliation.

If you struggle with intense doubt and unbelief, expose it, and consider Jesus... He is the Hope of a faith-filled and courageous heart.

He reveals who you are.

Follow-up Encounter:

Prepare to take communion. Ask the Lord how you can come to the table. What does confession look like for you—both the confession of your true identity and the exposing of darkness?

Receive communion. Write down or share what is coming to your heart.